

Dear Faithful in the Diocese of St. Augustine,

The last few weeks have caused many difficulties as daily life has been disrupted so dramatically. Moreover, the circumstances we have experienced and will experience during coming days may well prevent us from gathering for the Liturgies of Holy Week which lead to our celebration of Easter.

I am also aware that during the Lenten season, many seek the Sacrament of Reconciliation by attending parish penance services and partaking in regularly scheduled confessions. Regrettably, the access to the Sacrament of Penance has been considerably restricted during this Lenten season, as we continue to adhere to the national and local governments' procedures to protect the common good.

Mindful of this difficulty, as your Bishop, I wish to propose to you the other means of reconciliation, forgiveness, and mercy that our Church provides for these extraordinary circumstances. Since an individual confession has become almost physically impossible, please be attentive to the following other means of reconciliation (CIC 960):

The Church envisions a pastoral situation when the faithful are unable to partake in the sacrament and yet receive God's mercy. The gift of mercy is offered when, motivated out of love for God, the faithful express sorrow for their sins through a **Perfect Act of Contrition**. This act of perfect contrition provides forgiveness for mortal and venial sins until the faithful again have the opportunity to participate in the Sacrament of Penance. (CCC 1452)

May I ask that all who wish to make a "perfect act of Contrition" please do so. On this occasion make that contrition concrete by prayer for those who currently need it most or some special act of charity towards the needs of others. Then when we are able to gather for the Eucharist again, discern appropriately as to receive the Holy Communion, and as soon as possible, avail yourself to the individual celebration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

Sincerely,
Most Reverend Felipe J. Estevez, S.T.D.
Bishop of St. Augustine