

## **Bishop Gainer Suspends Holy Week and Easter Masses**

### ***Directive Follows Decree from Pope Francis***

**HARRISBURG, Pa.** – March 26, 2020

Bishop Ronald W. Gainer regrettably announces that no public Masses will be celebrated for Palm Sunday, Holy Week or Easter. This difficult decision was made after careful consideration of the decree (In time of Covid-19 (II)) issued by Pope Francis, and in following the recommendations of state and local government and, most especially, out of continued concern for the health and wellbeing of the faithful during these unprecedented times.

“Our Diocese, our nation and our world are experiencing the unthinkable with the coronavirus. With this global pandemic in mind, the Holy See, Pope Francis, has decreed that all Holy Week and Easter Masses will be celebrated, but that countries impacted by coronavirus and in cases where restrictions regarding the assembly and movement of people are in place, the bishop and priests may celebrate without the presence of the faithful. With the restrictions and recommendations from our state government, and in consideration of the highly contagious nature of this virus, it would be irresponsible of me to open our parish while still in the midst of this pandemic,” said Bishop Gainer. “Please know the impact of this announcement is not lost on me. I too am deeply hurting by not being able to gather with the faithful for the celebration of Mass.

“Although we cannot come together for public Masses during this holiest time of year, our priests will celebrate Palm Sunday, Holy Week and Easter Masses. Many of our Parishes are live streaming these Masses and I encourage the faithful to participate in Mass through these online means.”

Parishes throughout the Diocese have been asked to bless the palms used on Palm Sunday and to make them available for parishioners at a later date. The Chrism Mass in which the Holy Oils used in celebrating the sacraments are blessed and which traditionally is held during Holy Week, and includes a gathering of all priests from the Diocese in order to renew their priestly promises, has also been postponed. Parishes within the Diocese have been asked to prepare worship aids and distribute them to parishioners, allowing the faithful to more actively participate in the Holy Week and Easter Masses remotely. Additional information on live stream options and resources for parishioners are available on the Health Alerts page of the Diocesan website, [www.hbgdiocese.org/coronavirus](http://www.hbgdiocese.org/coronavirus).