

ROMAN CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF ALBANY

CONFESSION & GENERAL ABSOLUTION

(In the time of COVID-19)

March 21, 2020

Bearing in mind the Note from the Apostolic Penitentiary (03.20.20), the provisions of Canon Law (especially can. 961, paragraph 2) and the Rite of Penance (especially paragraphs 31-34), it is good to remember some crucial principles regarding the sacrament of reconciliation as a whole and general absolution in particular.

As of March 22, beginning at 8pm, we will be in a situation of “grave necessity” with respect to the granting of permission for general absolution in certain cases. This is due to the Order of Governor Cuomo (03.20.20), which means it is not possible for people to celebrate individual confession/reconciliation (cf. Rite of Penance, n. 31).

Therefore, priests may give general absolution in *certain* cases. Please contact either of the Vicars General—Fr. David LeFort (cell – 518.441.5570) or Fr. Bob Longobucco (cell – 518.441.8931)—to see whether the conditions are in place for the giving of general absolution, and only then to receive the necessary mandate by the Vicar General (cf. Rite of Penance, n. 32). As is always the case, if you must give general absolution immediately due to some unforeseen and urgent situation (that is before checking with either of the Vicars General), you must notify one of them as soon as possible after the absolution has been given.

It should be remembered that serious sins that could not be confessed at the granting of general absolution should be confessed in due time (CIC, can. 962, paragraph 1 and Rite of Penance n. 33-34). This is, in part, to maintain the importance of the actions of the penitent in the celebration of the sacrament (cf. Rite of Penance, n. 11).

Where a person is in the painful situation of not being able to receive sacramental absolution, a perfect contrition coming from a love of God, accompanied by a sincere request for forgiveness and the firm resolution to go to sacramental confession as soon as possible, obtains the forgiveness of sins, even mortal ones (CIC, can. 1452).

The supreme good or principle is, of course, the salvation of souls.

With the express approval of Bishop Scharfenberger, given at the Chancery: March 21, 2020

