



April 3, 2020

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

In facing our present reality of COVID - 19, we would like to be in touch with all of you as we approach the holiest week of the Church Year. This latest health crisis has caused many to lose their employment, while others may have seen the curtailment of their regular income. People have been deeply affected through the economic downturn. Our daily lives have been influenced by the provisions of the federal and provincial governments and social (physical) distancing has entered our everyday lives. Our experience of Church has totally changed as a result of the suspension of the Eucharist and the closure of our churches; we no longer have gatherings for the celebration of the Eucharist and the Sacraments. We have all had a sense of being overwhelmed and have even experienced some fear and anxiety as we see many structures and ways of doing things being totally changed. It is in the midst of all these changes that we want to affirm that the Lord is with us and that the Church continues to be concerned for all of us.

This entire situation has forced us to review and evaluate all that we do. We may have less time in the work place, but greater time with our families. Many have taken to social media to be in contact with one another and to discover how they can reach out to their neighbor in new ways. Suddenly, we have more opportunities to catch up on our reading or on our life of prayer. In our prayer, we continually raise up to God those affected by the Virus; all the health care workers who care for the sick and we remember all in leadership positions who have to make difficult decisions regarding this crisis. Here in our archdiocese, we continue to function with many Zoom meetings with the priests and leaders of our parishes so that we can support one another and carry on with our mission, at this time.

In the midst of this reality, we want to remind us of Jesus who promised “to be with us always until the end of the age” (Matt 28:20). In present circumstances, we depend on this promise and we seek to find how this promise is being fulfilled, as we search for small signs of his presence in our lives. We encourage all of us to intensify our prayers for Divine protection and intervention. The example of the psalmist inspires us when we read “Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord. Lord, hear my voice! Let your ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications!” (Psalm 130:1-2).

Our faith reminds us of the provident care and love of our God. One of the passages that can give us great consolation is from the letter to the Romans: “Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will hardship, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For we are convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 8:35, 37-39).

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The words of our Holy Father's recent message also give us wonderful direction for our daily lives:

How many people every day are exercising patience and offering hope, taking care to sow not panic but a shared responsibility. How many fathers, mothers, grandparents and teachers are showing our children, in small everyday gestures, how to face up to and navigate a crisis by adjusting their routines, lifting their gaze and fostering prayer. How many are praying, offering and interceding for the good of all. Prayer and quiet service: these are our victorious weapons.

What the Holy Father describes when fostered in our homes, will help us and our children discover that the home can be a domestic Church. (*A resource that may be helpful in the celebration of "Holy Week at Home" accompanies this letter.*)

The COVID 19 Virus has rapidly spread all over the world. Doctors and scientists are still learning about its transmission and complications. We should not spread unnecessary panic and fear, but let our attitude be compassion and care for others. Thus, we need to take all the precautionary measures necessary in the spirit of charity for all. We also need to be prepared for any eventuality.

As we approach this Holy Week, we are aware that we will indeed have a very different experience of this holiest week of the Church's Year. We realize that many priests and parishes have made a variety of efforts to be in touch with parishioners and we support all these efforts to reach out to all. For the coming week, our hope is that we will grow as a diocesan family and join together as we celebrate the various liturgies of Holy Week through live streaming. These sacred moments will be celebrated at St. Mary's Cathedral in the presence of only a handful of people and will be live streamed to anyone who wishes to follow us and participate in these online celebrations. These liturgies will give us a different but real opportunity to journey again with the Lord in his last days and to be renewed in our baptismal commitment. The schedule will be as follows:

Palm Sunday	11 am	Good Friday	3 pm
Monday-Wednesday	8 am	Holy Saturday	8 pm
Holy Thursday	7 pm	Easter Sunday	11 am

Our hope is that these liturgies will bring blessings on all of us as the Archdiocese of Halifax-Yarmouth and that we will experience the oneness that we have as the Body of Christ in this area of Nova Scotia.

May the Lord in his suffering, death and resurrection bring peace to all of us as we deal with this COVID - 19 Virus.

Sincerely in the Lord,



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Archbishop of Halifax-Yarmouth



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