



BISHOP OF HAMILTON

Dear Friends,

This is Tuesday, March 17, 2020 – the day after Masses and other programs were cancelled within the Diocese of Hamilton. The advice of public health professionals, concern for the health of Chancery employees and their families, for Priests, Deacons, and parishioners, caused us to declare the radical shutdown. Just when we need Him most, we cannot celebrate Mass as a community of faith – hear His Word proclaimed, eat the Bread of Life.

This is quite a Lenten fast. We hunger for the food that satisfies the longing of our heart – the source and summit of the Christian life. We hunger because we care for the greater community – those whose lives are at risk if they catch the dreaded virus, those who already have it and don't yet know, and the children – born and unborn.

Yesterday I heard birds singing – a beautiful and refreshing sound after a winter without. The sound lifted my spirits! One bird, then another – harbingers of Spring – a promise of happier times ahead! Let us do the same – lift drooping spirits by kind words and thoughtful actions, by reaching out to neighbors alone in their homes, perhaps in need of assistance and care, certainly needing cheery voices, some good news, and a small break from the tedium of being at home alone.

Know that Priests of the Diocese are celebrating Masses – praying for parishioners, for the sick, for the dead – as we always do – now without the gathered assembly. The people are not forgotten – in fact, you are remembered now more than ever. Many years ago, when I was Bishop in Labrador, I was aware that parishioners in smaller more isolated villages did not have access to the Eucharist for several months at a time. It is still the reality there today. We can learn from them. Pray the Rosary – it is a powerful prayer and a reflection on mysteries of our faith. Read the daily Scripture readings. Watch the Pope's Mass from Casa Santa Marta – live-streamed every day – or watch one of the other televised Masses on local channels.

“Lift up your hearts! We lift them up to the Lord. Let us give thanks to the Lord our God. It is right and just! It is truly right and just, our duty and our salvation, always and everywhere to give You thanks, Lord, holy Father, almighty and eternal God.” We repeat that little dialogue at every Mass. It is precisely what we must do now. During this time of trial, give thanks for the blessings we experience – the love of family and friends, the courage of healthcare and public health professionals, the availability of necessities to help us remain healthy, the bravery of those who are in quarantine or self-isolating, the awareness that we will get to the other side of this test and gather once again to sing and pray our thanksgiving together!

Sincerely in Christ and Mary Immaculate,

† Douglas Crosby, OMI

(Most Rev.) Douglas Crosby, O.M.I.,
Bishop of Hamilton

/cd