



OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

April 7, 2020

This Easter we will celebrate the Resurrection of Jesus in a way very different from anything that we have experienced in the past. You will not be able to come to your parish church and your priests will celebrate Mass without a congregation. This is so foreign to our Catholic way of life. This is not easy to accept; however, the spiritual sacrifice we make today will benefit many people tomorrow and for weeks to come. We will help to prevent the spread of the deadly coronavirus.

The Passion, Death and Resurrection of Jesus, teaches us that the sacrifice of one benefits the many. Jesus suffered and died for us so that He could save us from the darkness of sin and separation. He rose from the dead in order to lead us to heaven and to eternal union with Him. The sacrifice of Jesus brings us great hope and healing. Our own daily sacrifices also help to bring hope to many others.

In His victory over sin and death, Jesus showed us that good can come from what is bad. We see in the Resurrection accounts that whenever people encountered the Risen Lord, there was a personal transformation. The doubt and sadness was turned to confidence and joy. It was understood that Jesus had not left them and that He had risen and that they would see Him again. Jesus was able to bring good from His own suffering and death. His Resurrection gave people hope. Given our current situation, this simple fact takes on greater significance.

As the world copes with the effects of Covid-19, it is my hope and prayer that, like the disciples, we too will be strengthened by the fact that Jesus Christ has risen from the dead. May fear and confusion be replaced with courage and hope. May the sadness that comes from a people who long for our Eucharistic Lord, and from clergy who desire to be with their parishioners, be replaced with the joy of the Resurrection. We have to believe that good can come from all of this and that one day soon we will be together again. This is the 'good news' that will sustain us during these difficult days.

We know that the Risen Lord offered His disciples the gift of peace. I wish to conclude with the words of St. Paul that give meaning to this gesture for people of faith. "Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:7).

May you have a peace-filled Easter.

Yours sincerely in Christ,

Most Reverend Gerard Bergie, D.D.
Bishop of St. Catharines