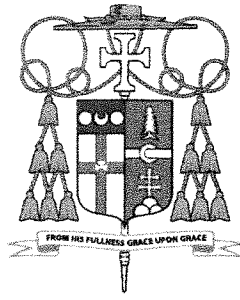


DIOCESE OF HARRISBURG
OFFICE OF THE BISHOP



(717) 657-4804
FAX (717) 657-1370
4800 Union Deposit Road
Harrisburg, Pennsylvania 17111-3710
Bishop'sOffice@hbgdiocese.org
www.hbgdiocese.org

April 2020

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Christ, our Pasover, has been sacrificed. Alleluia!

Each year we sing these ancient words, praising the Lord for doing the mightiest of deeds: sacrificing His only-begotten Son as the unblemished Lamb to set us free from sin and death.

Yet, as Easter draws near, our unusual and anxious Lenten journey might not leave us ready to sing “Alleluia!” Never could we have anticipated this Lent would be one of suspended Masses, closed church buildings, and social distancing. Never could we have anticipated this Lent would seem to remove us from physical contact with our faith practices. It is hard to sing “Alleluia” in the midst of all this loss. Yet, this is precisely what our faith draws forth from us.

For, on the darkest of nights, the light of Christ pierces the darkness with a flame of hope that lifts up our sullen spirits and points our hearts to the Risen One. Loss gives birth to gain, death rises to life, and the sealed tomb opens up to let in the bright promise of a brand new day. And, indeed we sing, “Alleluia!”

As Christ’s disciples, we are renewed once more with the knowledge that with the Risen Lord by our side, neither darkness nor despair, not even the devastation of the coronavirus, can overcome us. Christ assures and reassures us time and again that all His suffering, our suffering, will lead to glory. Because of His sacrifice on Good Friday, not even death can defeat us.

This year, our Easter celebrations will most certainly be unusual. Although we cannot gather together in person, Christ will still be with us. He will embrace us and hold us fast during these uncertain times. And, we will be knit together by the power of the Holy Spirit gathering us into the Church across the face of our Diocese.

I am reminded of our Lord’s words in the Gospel of Mark when He says, “Take courage. It is I. Do not be afraid.” With these words our Lord calmed his terrified disciples and then, getting into their storm-tossed boat, calmed the storm on the Sea of Galilee. You and I need to remember our Lord’s words and let them keep us from anxiety and fear during our current storm. Jesus is in our boat. Do not be afraid and know the peace of Easter.

Wherever we find ourselves this Easter on our life’s journey, may Christ’s Paschal Mystery be our joy and hope. And may we never stop singing, “Alleluia!” for the mighty things the Father has done and is doing even now for us in Christ Jesus.

Sincerely in Christ,

Most Reverend Ronald W. Gainer