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April 1, 2021
Holy Thursday

Greetings Clergy, Religious, and People of God of the Diocese of Saskatoon:

Greetings to you all as we approach another Holy Week and Easter Season! The COVID19 pandemic has brought a whole new reality and set of circumstances for us all. Our Lenten journey in the wilderness with Jesus features a renewed sense of vulnerability and brokenness in our world. However, it has also been a time of tremendous generosity and blessing.

The People of God across our diocese have responded to the challenge of needing to exercise distance in their normal relationships with others and be very conscientious about issues such as personal cleanliness and discretion about 'normal activities' – by being that much more generous and caring. We have seen this in the way that our parishes have been materially and otherwise supported across the diocese. But more to the point – we have seen many, many examples of outreach and caring in our local communities. In a global pandemic when everyone is affected, the little, local, personal things really matter! We should also acknowledge and not forget the many sacrifices people have made to stop the spread of the virus. Such sacrifices – which involve people taking great sacrifices to refrain from meaningful everyday routine activities – are significant ways in which the People of God have been caring for each other.

Thank you all so very much for showing what it means to strive to have the same mind and heart as that of Christ Jesus during difficult and extraordinary times.

I have been saying to many these days that I really do not think that things will entirely go back to the way they were before COVID19. And, frankly, this may be helpful, if we experience the kind of change – the growth – that comes from what we have experienced and features renewed generosity, care, and a greater empathy as we respond to others inspired by the great love and care that God shares with us.

During this upcoming season, I encourage us all to continue to care and pray for each other during this difficult time. As Pope Francis recently reflected, our 'prayer' and 'words' have a particular impact during this difficult time in the world. As he states:

“...may we be increasingly concerned with “speaking words of comfort, strength, consolation and encouragement, and not words that demean, sadden, anger or show scorn” (*Fratelli Tutti*, 223). In order to give hope to others, it is sometimes enough simply to be kind, to be “willing to set everything else aside in order to show interest, to give the gift of a smile, to speak a word of encouragement, to listen amid general indifference” (*FT* 224). *Through recollection and silent prayer*, hope is given to us as inspiration and interior light, illuminating the challenges and choices we face in our mission.”

The Holy Week and Easter season reminds and renews our awareness that nothing can come between us and the great love of God in Jesus Christ. May these extraordinary times – which call from us extraordinary faith, hope and love – continue to be a time of strengthening and renewal for us all.

May the Holy Week and Easter season be a time of healing and renewal for us all.

Sincerely in Christ,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "+ mshagemoen". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

✠ Bishop Mark Hagemoen