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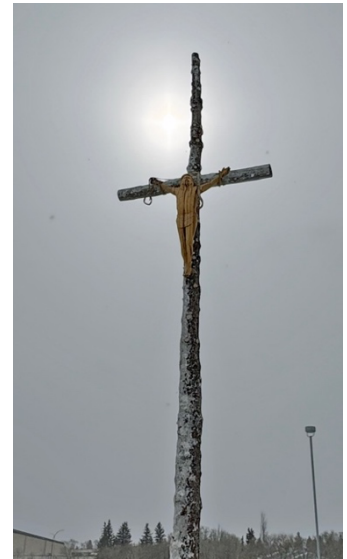
Holy Thursday, April 2, 2026

Greetings to you all as we approach another Holy Week and Easter Season!

We get ready to remember and celebrate the ultimate journey that saves the world! We anticipate the journey and the tension that come each year as we encounter Holy Week and the Easter Triduum. We again recall the manifestation of the great and loving gift of God, meeting the tragedy and complexity of human longing, coupled with human failing.

In Pope Leo's message for Lent, he describes the tension between our daily realities that may feature struggle and anxiety – and the transformative, spiritual focus that orients our preparation for Holy Week and Easter. He describes the journey of Lent to Easter as follows:

“Let us ask for the grace of a Lent that leads us to greater attentiveness to God and to the least among us ...Let us ask for the strength that comes from the type of fasting that also extends to our use of language, so that hurtful words may diminish and give way to a greater space for the voice of others....Let us strive to make our communities places where the cry of those who suffer finds welcome, and listening opens paths towards liberation, making us ready and eager to contribute to building a civilization of love.”



We enter another Holy Week – in many cases having experienced a failure to love over this past year. And yet, as Pope Leo reminds us, the resurrection is a breathtaking testimony to how love can rise again after great defeat. As he says, the power of Jesus' love “...shows that forgiveness does not deny the pain caused by betrayal, but it does prevent evil from having the last word.”

The Holy Father urges all of us to learn how to forgive because “to pardon one another is to build a bridge of peace.” He also points to the persistent response of the Lord to His sufferings and afflictions:

“[Jesus] does not take revenge. He does not return with gestures of power, but rather with meekness; He manifests the joy of a love greater than any wound and stronger than any betrayal.”

The challenges and tensions, the conflicts and wars, the degradation of adversaries and foes has become so commonplace. Bringing to bear a moral compass on these circumstances can seem like an illusion as we become increasingly lost in fiery exchanges and rivalries that continually burst upon us through an incessant electronic media seeking to engage us in this sinful void – itself empowered by the bad news and examples of our rampant failures to be constructive and respectful.

Perhaps this year's Holy Week and Easter Triduum is a call to look to the only response and antidote to this negative human spiralling. We experience now the Paschal Mystery! We again behold in awe the only response that has saved the world – that comes to an apex in Holy Week - when Our Lord Jesus Christ offers the unexpected, ultimate, and final confrontation between light and darkness, death and abundant life. What we recall and witness in the way of Jesus Christ is utterly amazing, astonishing, unbelievable!

St. Paul in his letter to the Philippians sums up the unique response of Jesus Christ, who uniquely goes on a wonderful, terrible path.

Firstly, Jesus Christ was in the form of God – *He was God*. Secondly, He did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, to be taken advantage of. Thirdly, He *self-empties* – empties Himself, taking the form of a slave. Who has ever done this? Especially if they had the unique ability to avoid or overcome with their power? Fourthly, He is obedient to the Father's plan to heal, redeem, and save the world – all the way to the point of death, even death on a cross. No one of such eminence and ability has ever done this! *This is why God exalted Him. This is why every knee should bend, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord!*

I so appreciate the words of Pope Francis, who stated that the celebration of the Passion of Our Lord needs to move us from distant admiration of Jesus Christ, to amazement at Jesus! He demonstrates *the greatest love the world has known – our salvation and new life passes through the wood of the Cross!* Destruction meets new life; hell meets heaven; and death meets resurrection.



Are we ready to open our eyes, minds and hearts to this kind of amazement?!

A blessed Holy Week and Easter season to you all!

+ *Mark A. Hagemoen*



Most Reverend Mark A. Hagemoen

Bishop of Saskatoon