



OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

September 11, 2020

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

On the morning of the Resurrection, Mary Magdalene found the empty tomb and believed that the body of Jesus had been stolen. Overwhelmed with grief, she said, "They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him" (John 20:13).

As many of you may already know, there was a recent break-in at our Cathedral and the tabernacle was stolen. What is most disturbing is that the Blessed Sacrament was also taken. Like Mary Magdalene, we have experienced the cruel reality that they have taken our Lord and His location is unknown. What have they done to him?

A day after the theft, a parishioner of the Cathedral formed a search party and the tabernacle was found dumped in shallow water not far from the Cathedral. Two pieces of the ciborium, the container within the tabernacle for the Sacred Hosts, were also found in the water. It is my hope and prayer that the Hosts dissolved in the water.

Some have speculated that this theft was for nefarious reasons by people involved in the occult. I believe that the motivation was for money. The video footage seems to support this theory. The first thing the thieves did when they entered the Cathedral was to empty the boxes that contained money for candles and the poor.

How should we respond to this tragedy?

The Blessed Sacrament has been desecrated and our Eucharistic Lord has been harmed at the hands of thieves. When this happens, the Church in her wisdom asks that we make reparation for the harm that has been done.

With this in mind, I ask you and the clergy of our diocese to join with me in a month of reparation. It will begin on Monday, September 14, which is the Feast of the Triumph of the Cross, and conclude on Monday, October 12, which is Thanksgiving Day. You will be given a simple prayer that I ask you to recite on a daily basis. I have also asked the priests to celebrate the Mass in honour of the Most Blessed Sacrament once a week.

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During this month there will also be opportunities to reflect on the mystery of the Eucharist and our belief that through the miracle of the Mass, the bread and wine become the Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity of Jesus.

Do we truly believe this teaching and do our actions reflect what we believe? I have been told about an evangelical protestant who said to his Catholic friend, "If I really believed, like you say you do, that Christ himself is in that tabernacle, I'd be crawling up the aisle on my hands and knees."

Jesus is in all the tabernacles throughout our diocese and world. It is also true that at every Mass we participate in the representation of the one sacrifice of Christ on Calvary and the Heavenly Banquet with all the angels and saints. What an incredible grace to be able to attend Mass and to receive our Lord!

During this month let us work at strengthening our love for the Lord in the Eucharist. This would be our greatest act of reparation.

The Cathedral break-in occurred during the early morning of the feast in honour of Mary's birthday. I pray that through her prayers and example, our faith will be strengthened in her Son who is the Bread of Life.

Yours sincerely in Christ,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Gerard Bergie". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned to the right of the typed name below it.

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