



DIOCESE OF ST. CATHARINES

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MEMO

To: All Clergy and Religious in the Diocese of St. Catharines

From: Bishop Gerard Bergie

Date: April 24, 2020

- The Gospel for this Sunday is the Road to Emmaus. This passage of scripture has always had a special meaning for me. My episcopal motto, *Mane Nobiscum Domine* (Stay with us Lord), is taken from this passage. This simple plea from the two disciples assumes even greater significance as we confront the reality of the coronavirus pandemic. We need the Lord to stay with us so that we do not become discouraged or lose hope. The eyes of the disciples were opened and their hearts set on fire by the Risen Lord. He will do the same for us, especially in the gift of the Eucharist. We hear His Word and receive His Body and Blood at the Mass we are privileged to celebrate each day. May this 'Emmaus experience' bring us hope and joy during these challenging times.
- As we continue to deal with the consequences from the COVID-19 pandemic, I wish to clarify any confusion that may exist regarding the Sacrament of the Sick. In March, I shared with you the names of the priests who have been authorized to visit the Niagara Health Care Hospital sites. This was a request that came from the Health Care System. They wanted to limit the number of priests who visit hospitals. This protocol does not apply to nursing homes. Each parish is responsible for the pastoral care of Catholics who reside in long-term care facilities within the parish. If someone needs to be anointed, then the pastor or associate-pastor should respond. This can be 'complicated' during a pandemic. The facility may not allow you to enter, even though the family may wish their loved one to be anointed. Things can become even more difficult if the resident has COVID-19. If you are requested to anoint a resident with the virus, then please ensure that the facility has all the PPE (Personal Protective Equipment) available before you agree. We must be courageous in serving God's people, especially the dying; however, we must always take the necessary precautions. You need to be protected. During this Easter season the Risen Lord offers to us the same words that he shared with his disciples, "Be not afraid." May we continue to faithfully serve the people entrusted to our care without fear or undue anxiety. Thank you for all that you do to bring comfort and healing to so many throughout the diocese. Please be assured of my prayers and profound gratitude.

- In solidarity with a number of Episcopal Conferences throughout the world, all dioceses and eparchies in Canada are asked to consecrate their dioceses to Mary, Mother of the Church, next Friday, May 1, 2020. We are asked to seek her maternal protection during the coronavirus pandemic. I will be doing this at the Cathedral, during a live streamed Mass in honour of St. Joseph the worker. The Mass will be celebrated at 12 noon. I invite you to consider consecrating your parishes at this time. When we receive the prayer from the CCCB, it will be sent to you. Please share this information in parish bulletins, websites or Facebook.

- On Sunday, May 3, there will be a Holy Hour at 3 p.m. in the Cathedral to celebrate The World Day of Prayer for Vocations. This will be live streamed, and I ask that you make this known to your parishioners. We should all be praying for an increase of vocations to the priesthood, diaconate and to the consecrated life in our diocese. Although you cannot be present physically, please join me spiritually in prayer and adoration.

- Please pray for the repose of the soul of Reverend Cornelius Kingston, C.S.C., who died on Sunday, April 18, 2020. Father Kingston was 98 years old. As we pray for the repose of the soul of Father Kingston, we extend our sincere sympathy to the Holy Cross Fathers and to all who mourn his loss. *“Requiescat in pace.”* An obituary is included with this memo.

- I ask that you continue to remember in your prayers the victims of the mass shooting in Nova Scotia. We also pray for all of those affected by this senseless tragedy, especially the grieving family members of those who have died. May our Lord grant them comfort and peace.

- I wish to share with you a portion of a letter from Father Stephan Kappler, President and Chief Psychologist at Southdown. I provide it for your information.
 “Today, I am pleased to announce the opening of our Virtual Walk-In Clinic for Clergy, Vowed Religious, and Lay Ecclesial Ministers as an expansion of our tele-psychological services. We understand that the reality of this pandemic may cause a lot of stress, anxiety and depression, trigger difficulty with impulse control, and impact faith and spirituality. The intent of this solution-focused service is to ensure timely access to the high quality mental health and spiritual care provided by Southdown, especially during this challenging time of social distancing due to COVID-19. All of our therapists, spiritual directors and non-clinical service providers are available for this online service. The initial intake with an individual will be by telephone and we will use a secure and PIPEDA compliant Zoom platform for all subsequent confidential sessions. The Southdown Virtual Walk-In service is available between the hours of 8:30 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. Eastern Daylight Time (EDT), Monday to Friday, and can be accessed by calling 289-763-1478 to book an appointment. The intake and two sessions will be provided at no cost and any additional appointments will be provided as needed through our out-patient service on a fee for service basis.”