



## DIOCESE OF ST. CATHARINES

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### THE CHANCERY

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### MEMO

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

From: Bishop Gerard Bergie

Date: May 1, 2020

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- In the Gospel for the Fourth Sunday of Easter, Jesus states: “Very truly, I tell you, anyone who does not enter the sheepfold by the gate but climbs in by another way is a thief and a bandit. The one who enters by the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep hear his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has brought out all his own, he goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow him because they know his voice. They will not follow a stranger, but they will run from him because they do not know the voice of strangers” (John 10:1-5). I wish to sincerely thank all of you for your many efforts to reach out to the ‘flock’ entrusted to your care. You are not being strangers to your people; although they may not be physically present, they are able to hear your voice and follow. I am edified by the many creative ways that pastors are trying to reach out to parishioners. During this pandemic, it is so critical that we all stay connected to avoid feelings of isolation. In verse eleven of this chapter (not part of the Gospel passage), Jesus states, “I am the Good Shepherd.” Thank you for being such ‘good shepherds’ to your people during these difficult times. This Sunday we also acknowledge our need for more shepherds in our diocese as we pray for an increase of vocations.
- May is the month that is traditionally dedicated to Our Blessed Mother. Pope Francis has asked that, during this month, families be encouraged to prayer the Rosary together. I have provided a link to the prayers that the Holy Father has asked to be offered with the Rosary. We know that families have often been referred to as the ‘domestic church’. This takes on greater significance during this time of pandemic when people are not able to gather in their parish churches for prayer and worship. There is the Catholic tradition of having holy water, images of Christ, His mother, and the saints, in prominent places in the home. These sacramentals can help families create spaces for family prayer.  
[http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/letters/2020/documents/papa-francesco\\_20200425\\_lettera-mesedimaggio.html](http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/letters/2020/documents/papa-francesco_20200425_lettera-mesedimaggio.html)

- Today is the Feast of St. Joseph the Worker and it seems to take on greater significance during this time of pandemic. Comparisons have been made between the 1918-20 Spanish flu and the coronavirus pandemic. I believe that there are two striking differences. The Spanish flu killed many more people, especially the very young. It is interesting to note that two of the three Seers of Fatima died from this pandemic. Francisco Marto died in April 1919 and his sister, Jacinta Marto, died in February 1920. For this reason, we should seek the intercession of Our Lady of Fatima as we fight Covid-19. This virus seems to be more fatal for the elderly and medically compromised. It will also take a greater toll on the economy as compared to the Spanish flu. In this regard, we should have recourse to St. Joseph the Worker. We can seek his intercession for all workers, especially those front-line workers. He can also assist the over one million Canadians who are now out of work. As governments look to gradually restart the economy, let us not forget the power of faith. Let us turn to St. Joseph the Worker for his example and intercession. St. Joseph pray for us!
  
- Last week I spoke about pastoral care for long-term care facilities during a pandemic. There is a specific protocol for anointing someone with Covid-19 that has been developed for the hospitals. This should also be used at long-term care facilities. If you are asked to anoint a resident with Covid-19, please contact me before responding to ensure that you have the proper PPE and know the protocol.
  
- I am very pleased to inform you that Father Denis Grecco has been appointed rector for St. Peter's Seminary. I wish to thank Father Grecco for his years of service as a faculty member at St. Peter's Seminary and wish to assure him of my prayers and best wishes as he takes on this new position. I am also very grateful to Father Steve Wlusek who served many years as seminary rector.
  
- For your information, the Holy See has postponed the following international events in response to the coronavirus pandemic. The 52<sup>nd</sup> International Eucharistic Congress will be in September of 2021. The World Meeting of Families will now take place in June 2021 and World Youth Day will be held in August 2023.