



## DIOCESE OF FAIRBANKS

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OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

1 April 2020

### **An Urgent Request- Day of Fasting & Prayer 3 April 2020**

My Dear Brothers and Sisters:

In a recent conversation, a woman said to me, “Bishop, amidst this pandemic and all the awful things happening in our world, I am finding this to be the best Lent I have ever experienced. My life has been slowed down. I have time to focus on prayer and in fact, I am praying more, thanks to the various devotions, Mass, Stations, Morning Prayer, etc., that have become so readily available through social media. My family is communicating more, we don’t rush out the door to our next hurried event and we are sharing meals together regularly.” These words from a faithful Catholic woman reminded me of the words written in the verses from the prophet Joel:

*“Yet even now—oracle of the LORD—  
return to me with your whole heart,  
with fasting, weeping, and mourning.  
Rend your hearts, not your garments,  
and return to the LORD, your God,  
For he is gracious and merciful,  
slow to anger, abounding in steadfast love,  
and relenting in punishment.” (2:12-13)*

As we face the painful difficulty of experiencing the holy longing that suspended Masses and church buildings being closed brings, I invite us to turn more intently and deeply toward Christ. I ask that you join myself, and the priests and religious of the Diocese of Fairbanks, in a Day of Fasting and Prayer on Friday, April 3, to ask for the grace to draw closer to Christ and in praying for an end to this pandemic. I ask you to follow the guidelines for a day of fasting just as we would on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday. Also, I highly encourage you to set aside family time to pray in an intentional way: The Stations of the Cross, The Prayer to Our Lady of Guadalupe to End the Pandemic, The Holy Rosary, or any other devotions and various litanies. St. John Paul II, wrote in his document, “The Role of the Christian Family in the Modern World”, this reminder regarding the importance of prayer and the family:

*“The dignity and responsibility of the Christian family as the Domestic Church can be achieved only with God’s unceasing aid, which will surely be granted if it is humbly and trustingly petitioned in prayer.”* (§59)

I want to personally share with each of you that I truly agonize over the fact you are not able to be physically present at Mass. Your parish priests feel the same way; they miss you and the fullness your participation at Mass brings. However, I urge you with a mighty and steadfast faith to know for certain, that during our daily Masses, when we say, “Pray brothers and sisters that my sacrifice and yours be

acceptable to God the Almighty Father,” this includes your sacrifices--anything and everything that is within you. We sincerely offer every wound, trauma, anger, hatred, rejoicing, thanksgiving, worry and concern that lives within you and we place them on the altar as your personal sacrifice. Christ’s Sacrifice, in the Mass, transcends space and time. This is why we pray in the Eucharistic prayer, “In your compassion, O merciful Father, gather to yourself all your children scattered throughout the world.” No matter where we are scattered through the world, we experience the fruitful effects of the One Eternal Sacrifice.

I thank you and your family for participating in prayer and fasting as we draw more closely united in heart and mind as the Mystical Body of Christ, while asking Jesus the Divine Physician, to heal our world of this horrific pandemic. May the words of Ps 51:12 be ever on our lips in prayer: “A clean heart create for me, God; renew within me a steadfast spirit.”

Sincerely in Christ,



†Most Reverend Chad W. Zielinski  
Catholic Bishop of Northern Alaska  
Diocese of Fairbanks



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