



DIOCESE OF SACRAMENTO

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OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

March 17, 2020

My Dear Friends in Christ:

The Lord God has awakened us to conversion during this Lenten Season as we more closely unite ourselves with our neighbors in California and around the world responding to the alarming pandemic of the Coronavirus, COVID-19.

The decision to suspend public celebrations of the Mass, along with the other necessary public health precautions, does not suspend the evangelical urgency of repentance and renewal during this Lenten Season. We are particularly called to give witness to personal repentance and renewal for the sake of our own salvation and the redemption of the world.

The outbreak has disrupted some of the habitual Lenten approaches and attitudes forcing us to re-examine our individual and ecclesial disposition to this Sacred Season. Our common baptism is a share in the royal priesthood of the Lord Jesus. St. Paul reminds all the baptized in his letter to the Colossians: “Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ on behalf of his body, which is the church.” (Col. 1.24) Though the public celebration of Mass is suspended, all the disciples of the Lord Jesus need “to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God, your spiritual worship.” (Rom. 12.1) These words of Pauline wisdom should direct our personal and pastoral conduct during this difficult public health emergency so that the Lord’s healing mercy may continue to bear fruit in our personal lives and the life of the Church in Sacramento.

This public health emergency should make us reconsider the kind of prayer, fasting, abstinence, and charity needed for ourselves as well as the Church. God’s mysterious providence is working in the midst of the confusion among political leaders and public health officials. Though this moment may not be how we imagine Lent, heed the words of St. Paul to the Corinthians: “Behold, now is a very acceptable time; behold, now is the day of salvation.” (II Cor. 6.2) Let us practice the evangelical qualities of patience, prudence, gratitude, and joy. Pray that the Lord may grant us the clarity of faith to see the wise and merciful hands of the divine potter tenderly molding us into the image and likeness of His Son, Jesus.

May our Blessed Mother Mary stand together with us in the shadow of her Son’s cross so that we might come to know the joy of His glorious resurrection. May her tender intercession bring healing to all who are afflicted, eternal rest to those who have died, and comfort to all those who mourn. May her maternal affection cause us not to lose hope but to hunger more deeply for the Bread of Life and thirst more longingly for the Chalice of Salvation.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Jaime Soto".

+Jaime Soto
Bishop of Sacramento