



THE DIOCESE OF KALAMAZOO

Office of the Bishop

“Come to Me, all who are weary and find life burdensome, and I will refresh you.” (Mt.11:28)

April 4, 2022

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

We are rapidly approaching Holy Week, the most Sacred Week of our Liturgical Year, which celebrates the most important events of all time. We will remember the glory of Jesus' entrance into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, followed quickly by His Last Supper and arrest on Holy Thursday, His suffering, Death and Burial on Good Friday, and His Resurrection from the dead on Easter Sunday.

As we are all too aware, for the past two years, our participation in the normal activities of life, including the practice of our faith, has been restricted in a number of ways due to efforts to protect us all from the COVID-19 Virus. Now that society is returning to somewhat of a normal schedule of activities, it is also necessary for all of us to return to the regular, in-person practice of our faith. With this in mind, I have asked all our Pastors to return to the normal Liturgical practices, with some minor exceptions, while maintaining the continued diligent use of hygienic practices for everyone coming to our churches.

Given the circumstances in our society, which continues to be divided by economic, social and political unrest; and in our world, as war is raging in Ukraine and our hearts are deeply touched by so much suffering there, and in so many other parts of the world, we have more need than ever to be strengthened by our faith and renewed by the Hope of Easter. Jesus' beautiful invitation with which I began this Pastoral Letter to you, dear Faithful people of the Diocese of Kalamazoo, is the best way for us to find the comfort, rest, and strength we need. We need to accept Jesus' invitation – to truly come to Him and turn back to God. There is no better way to do that than in participating in the celebration of the Holy Mass, receiving the grace of the Sacraments, and being nourished by the Gift of the Eucharist. And there is no better time to do that than right now during these remaining days of the Season of Lent and to enter fully and prayerfully into Holy Week, Easter, and all the subsequent celebrations of Easter every Sunday.

As Bishop, it is both my privilege as well as my responsibility, to remind us all that we have a serious obligation to *“Keep Holy the Lord's Day,”* to be faithful in giving our worship to God by joining with our sisters and brothers in Christ every week for Holy Mass. I also invite you to go to Confession and avail yourself of the graces bestowed when you confess your sins and accept God's forgiveness. Our faith is meant to be lived out, daily, and we show our love to the One who created us and His Son who saved us through our participation in the Mass and the Sacraments. Doing this, along with our charitable service to one another, gives thanks to God for the Gift of our Salvation Jesus has won for us, which is what we celebrate most dramatically during these last days of Lent, Holy Week and Easter.

Our faith is what gives us focus and purpose as Catholics. Our faith prepares us for our Eternal Life with God in Heaven. May we be unified as the Body of Christ as we continue to ask for guidance from the Holy Spirit during our special Jubilee Year. Let us continue to pray as we do at each Mass for our Spirit of Mercy to *“inspire within us the desire to be like Jesus, Who won our Salvation and Who redeemed us from sin and death.”* May our dear Blessed Mother, to whose heavenly intercession and maternal care we just recently reconsecrated our Diocese, St. Augustine our Diocesan Patron, and the Communion of All Saints, intercede for us and encourage us regularly and faithfully to participate in the liturgical and sacramental life of the Church.

May we accept Jesus' invitation with all our hearts and *Come to Him Who promises to give us rest, refreshment, and Eternal Life.* May our Loving God bless you abundantly during this Holy Week and may the Joy and Hope of Easter fill your hearts throughout all the seasons of the Church year to come.

Faithfully yours in Christ,

Most Reverend Paul J. Bradley
Bishop of Kalamazoo