



Diocesan Centre
Coursington Road
Motherwell
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Rt Rev. Joseph Toal STB KC*HS
Bishop of Motherwell

25th March 2021

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

As we look forward to Holy Week, beginning this weekend with Palm Sunday, it is with much relief that we can now return to the public celebration of our faith, and I extend a very warm welcome to those who will venture out to Mass, while reassuring those who will remain at home that you are very much in our prayers. The celebration of Holy Mass, and our participation in it, are at the centre of our Catholic faith, and not being able to be physically present during the lockdowns of the past year has been a trial. Hopefully we now return in good spirit and with renewed energy and commitment to share in the Lord's goodness to us and to thank him for his blessings.

The last year has been a difficult time, and we need to pray that the seeds of recovery will continue to grow and that we can regain some of what has been lost, as well as appreciating all that has been learned. Life always moves on and we do need to adapt to our changed circumstances and the requirements now placed upon us. These do require continued vigilance and patience as we strive to protect one another and ensure our churches are safe as well as welcoming.

We keep in our memory and prayers all who have suffered because of the pandemic, particularly those who have been seriously ill, those who have lost loved ones, those distressed or isolated, all whose lives have been badly disrupted. We pray also for those who have died trusting that they will share in the Lord's Resurrection, the celebration of which we look forward to on Easter Day. We offer prayers of gratitude for all who have given so much of themselves in caring for others, especially the sick and those in need of care and protection. The efforts made by so many, both professionally and voluntarily, have been inspiring and have ensured that our services have been maintained and that there is the possibility of recovery and renewal.

Through Holy Week we follow Our Lord's path of suffering and unite our own life experience with his, thus gaining strength to carry our crosses and the trials that come our way, while quietly coming to terms with our own humanity, its fragility and inevitable end here on earth. As we move from the pain and sadness of the Lord's Passion and Death on Holy Thursday Evening and Good Friday, we look forward with renewed faith to the joy of Easter and our firm hope of sharing in his Resurrection. The possibility of being present at Mass again and of receiving Our Lord in Holy Communion will surely bring much consolation and blessing as we seek to grow in love of him and each other. May his words to the disciples at the Last Supper – *"Love one another, just as I have loved you"* - resonate in our hearts and minds as we renew our baptismal promises and our desire to be faithful witnesses to Jesus in our own time.

Although the numbers attending will be restricted, I will concelebrate the Annual Mass of Chrism with some of the Diocesan priests in Our Lady of Good Aid Cathedral on Holy Thursday, April 1st, at 11am. The Mass will be live-streamed by Sancta Familia Media and will also be available through the Diocesan Media. I invite you to follow the Chrism Mass, during which the Oils will be blessed and the priests will renew their Priestly Promises, and to pray with us and for us.

I pray for the Lord's blessing upon you and all your loved ones this Easter, thinking also of the people of our own country and, indeed, of every country in our world. May we feel the protection of God over, among and within us, and may the light of the Risen Lord bring new hope to places and moments of darkness and uncertainty. May the intercession of Our Blessed Lady and St Joseph also bring protection and solace and keep us in communion with Our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

Yours in Christ

+ Joseph Toal

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