



April 5, 2020
Palm Sunday

Dear Friends in Christ,

Throughout this Lent, we have been compelled to fast from our shared presence with one another and with God in worship and common prayer. This adopted “absence” is most acutely felt now as we enter Holy Week, beginning with Palm Sunday and cresting with the Easter celebration of Jesus’ Resurrection.

The Body of Christ still lives and breathes, sighs and keeps watch with Jesus as we seek the mercy and joy that he alone can bring us. I especially want you to believe that though you may not have been able to go to confession, be anointed or receive Eucharist, God’s compassion and saving love seek you out wherever you are: at home, in hospitals or nursing homes, in places of shelter or outdoors.

In these extraordinary days, there has been frequent mention of opportunities for what is called a “plenary indulgence” for ourselves and those for whom we pray. A plenary indulgence removes all the temporal punishment due to sin (Catechism of the Catholic Church n. 1471). It is an act of trust that thanks to the merits of Christ’s cross, the Church through the power of the keys entrusted to Peter and his successor Pope Francis can provide a healing remedy for us poor sinners and channel grace to all who are hurting or sick, before and after death.

During this time of pandemic, a plenary indulgence is available not only to the sick or to health care workers, but for all the Catholic faithful. We should express our spirit of detachment from any sin, (e.g., by saying, “I hate sin”), have the intention to go to Confession and receive Holy Communion when it is eventually possible again, and right now, pray for the Pope’s intentions in *one* of various ways: make a visit to the Blessed Sacrament, read Scripture for at least 30 minutes, pray the Rosary, make the Way of the Cross, recite the Divine Mercy chaplet or the Litany of the Sacred Heart for the following intentions: an end to the pandemic, relief for those afflicted, and eternal salvation for those who have died.

Be clear: no one during these challenging days is denied the grace of salvation, which stands abundantly available to all. We should find solace and consolation, and be thankful that with great charity for our neighbor we can be good stewards of the life and faith given to us.

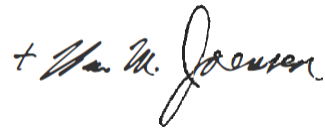
And in a joyful, positive spirit, I heartily recommend you look at the attached suggested Family Practices (worthwhile for individuals, of course) that you might try during this week’s Triduum—the three days of Holy Thursday, Good Friday, and Holy Saturday. Thanks to our Diocesan Pastoral Center Staff (John Gaffney, Adam Storey, Mayra Moriel de Banuelos, Jessica Hernandez, Frs. Trevor Chicoine and Michael Amadeo) who assembled these resources.

If that isn’t enough, you might check out my most recent [YouTube message](#). And, if you don’t tune into your own parish’s live-streamed celebration of the Triduum and Easter, we will

be streaming our liturgies from St. Ambrose Cathedral on Holy Thursday at 5:30 p.m., Good Friday at 3 p.m., Holy Saturday Easter Vigil at 8 p.m., and Easter Sunday at 10:30 a.m.

Jesus is the heralded Messiah whose entry into Jerusalem is met with great acclaim before his former fans fall silent. Jesus is the light that scatters darkness and all that holds us bound, including the specter of disease. We do not leave Jesus alone this Holy Week, for we believe that he loves us and suffers for us, with us. We love you, Jesus! We want to live with you, now and forever!

Faithfully in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "+ Wm. M. Joensen". The signature is written in a cursive style with a small cross at the beginning.

Most Rev. William M. Joensen, Ph.D.
Bishop of Des Moines