



ARCHDIOCESE *of* KINGSTON

Archbishop Mulhall's Pastoral Letter Fourth Sunday of Lent March 22, 2020

My dear faithful of the Archdiocese of Kingston and the Diocese of Pembroke,

I am writing to you on the Fourth Sunday of Lent. Across each of our dioceses, the provinces, the country and the continent, Sunday Mass has been celebrated in private by our pastors. This Sunday has been a unique experience as we feel the absence of a Sunday Mass together. Many other ordinary activities in our communities have been cancelled while citizens are being asked to remain at home as much as possible. There is a growing realization that this state of affairs could continue for some time.

With this letter, I wish to ask for your fervent prayers for those in every branch and aspect of health care. The vocation of health care has always been dear to the Church's ministry and these individuals will be asked to generously give of themselves for the care of those expected to be infected with the virus. Let us also pray for those in public office and for, those in positions of authority in religious houses, homes, institutions, parishes and dioceses as they struggle with many challenges including the health and financial care of all. These are unprecedented times in our lives, and we pray that the Lord's wisdom be abundantly granted.

The speed with which these events have developed has been breathtaking. Perhaps the most disturbing and disquieting aspect of this past week has been the sense of uncertainty and insecurity which has been created. Faced with the prospect of living in such uncertainty for some time, we each experience the anxiety of the unknown. Knowing that no simple answers are available, it is vital that we ask the Lord to grant the grace to heal this anxiety with a true sense of consolation. Let us first be thankful to the Lord for His continued blessings and never cease to give Him proper praise. And let us pray for the grace to place our absolute confidence in the providence and care of the Lord. We know in faith that He wishes us to receive His abundant gifts. We also know that it is difficult to accept such gifts unless we humble ourselves in His presence. I warmly invite you to pray with me the psalm given to us this week in the Sunday liturgy, the well-known and well-loved Psalm 23.

What a paradoxical gift it is that we are confronted with this reality in the very heart of Lent! This season of grace provides a blessed opportunity both to experience our utter dependence upon the Lord, in addition to forming a true religious sentiment of petition. Let this sentiment of petition be strong and pure. Let it be the petition of the people of Nineveh so beautifully upheld by the Lord in the Gospels. With such a grace there can be no room for division. Let our communion be strong, our charity constant, and our humility a fragrant offering to the Lord.

The cancellation of our public Easter celebrations is hard to imagine; yet, it is a provision which is very likely to take place. Our Holy Father has provided guidelines and assistance for the living of our faith in these days. The Bishops of Ontario will continue to assist one another, and the Archdiocese/Diocese will provide guidelines in the coming days and weeks for the faith life, as well as the financial concerns for our parishes.

My dear faithful, please know of my blessings and prayers in these difficult days.

+Michael Mulhall
Archbishop of Kingston
Apostolic Administrator of Pembroke

Psalm 23 (NRSV)

The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.

He makes me lie down in green pastures;
he leads me beside still waters;
he restores my soul.

He leads me in right paths
for his name's sake.

Even though I walk through the darkest valley,
I fear no evil;
for you are with me;
your rod and your staff —
they comfort me.

You prepare a table before me
in the presence of my enemies;
you anoint my head with oil;
my cup overflows.

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me
all the days of my life,
and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord
my whole life long.