Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

Greetings and peace in our Lord Jesus Christ! If there is any truth in the saying “absence makes the heart grow fonder,” our fondness for the sacraments, especially the Eucharist, and one another should be growing leaps and bounds. Circumstances surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic seem to change by the hour. Since my last message to you, our governor, like those in other states, has issued a “stay at home” order at least through April 6.

Especially given the continued spike in confirmed cases throughout the Hoosier state, the suspension of public Mass as well as all liturgical, sacramental and pastoral restrictions remain in place. Please understand that this is not so much to protect our priests, although we certainly need them to be healthy and able to serve, as it is to protect lives while maintaining our primary focus on the salvation of souls. In the case of this pandemic, there is a fine line between being heroic and being an agent of spreading the virus.

The effects of this pandemic in just a couple of weeks are already taking a great economic, emotional, mental and spiritual toll on many in our families and communities. We must remain particularly attentive and concerned for the poor, vulnerable and elderly. Even amid “social distancing” and the “stay at home” order, the archdiocese and parishes continue to provide services to those in great need, especially in terms of food and shelter. Each of us can do our part, even from a distance, checking in on family members, friends and neighbors. Let us be especially aware of those who may be overwhelmed with anxiety, depression, fear and loneliness.

Where some see challenge, others may see opportunity. Certainly, this is a time of challenge and hardship. For those of faith, this can also be a time of opportunity. Some people have told me about how they are taking the opportunity for spring cleaning, going through boxes of memories and looking at old photos. As both individuals and families, we might take the opportunity for deepening our prayer life, examining our conscience, spiritual reading, reflecting on scripture, studying to better understand Catholic teaching and count our blessings.

Let us not lose heart in these difficult days and even weeks. Let us hold each other in prayer. Let us not forget that we are beloved children of God who have been claimed by Jesus Christ as co-heirs with Him in the everlasting Kingdom of God. In the last days of the Lenten Season, let us remember that we continue to bear the cross with Jesus in this life so as to share in his victory and glory in eternal life. In every household, let us remain Christ-centered.

With assurance of my continued prayers and best wishes, I remain

Sincerely yours in Christ,

+Charles C. Thompson
Archbishop of Indianapolis