



March 19, 2020

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,



I know many of the faithful were distressed at the decision to suspend the public celebration of the Mass. My brother bishops, your pastors and I know your yearning for the Eucharist and we all pray that the necessity of this extraordinary measure will soon pass. Added to the physical, economic, and emotional suffering many are experiencing in our community is the spiritual hunger for “the source and summit of our existence” that, as Catholic Christians, we feel at the loss of the Mass. This suspension highlights the centrality of the Mass and the vital importance of the Holy Eucharist for us. I eagerly anticipate again sharing in the Lord’s Supper with you as Catholic Christians.

I wish to share two important things with you by means of this letter. Firstly, how proud I am about the response of our local Church to this crisis demonstrated both by your prayers and also by efforts to reach out to those who are vulnerable, especially those who live alone and our elderly sisters and brothers who are at an increased risk because of their frailty. I know you are demonstrating charity in many other ways as well, such as your patience when facing long lines in the stores or your small gestures of kindness to those who are anxious during this time of trial.

Secondly, I know you are praying with fervour for divine intervention in this crisis. We are united in Christ when we pray, together or alone, in His name. May I encourage us all together to make an extra effort to implore God’s providential intervention in this time of trial? What I am asking is for us all to increase our prayers—to lift our voices in the supplication to God our Father for those afflicted at home and abroad, for medical health practitioners, for our leaders, and for all who are anxious or who face many difficulties as a result of the impact this virus has on our community.

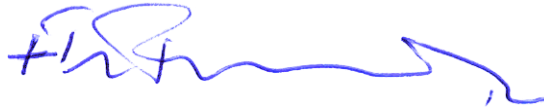
Some specific examples of prayers we might employ are: praying the Rosary alone or with your family; or praying the Novena circulated by the Knights of Columbus or another novena prayer; or praying the Divine Mercy Chaplet or another prayer asking for the intercession of your patron saint; or taking a few moments at the start of the hour during the day to offer an Our Father, a Hail Mary, and a Glory Be to God. We know as people of faith that, even if we cannot publicly celebrate the great sacrament of the Eucharist, we still can offer our prayers that, through God’s grace, are a powerful help in these difficult times.

Thank you for your efforts and let us all continue to strive to be people who demonstrate the difference our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ makes in our lives by how we are His hands, feet and, voice in our community. I know we believe this moment in our history is a time for Catholic Christians to shine as “a light to the nations” and the “yeast that leavens” the bread of community life.

Thank you for the messages of support and for your prayers for me, my auxiliary Bishop Guy Desrochers, and for your pastors. I am keeping you in my prayers.

May our Blessed Mother and Saint Joseph intercede for us and may God be our hope and strength.

Respectfully yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'T. Prendergast', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

✠ Terrence Prendergast, S.J.
Archbishop of Ottawa