

The Real Presence



Eighteenth Festival Letter of
✠ Most Reverend Daniel R. Jenky, C.S.C.
BISHOP OF PEORIA

The Real Presence

Eighteenth Festival Letter - AD 2020

Divine Revelation is the way that Almighty God personally invites us to know, love, and serve Him. It is God's self-communication of the fullness of truth, revealed in Scripture and Tradition. Being grounded in true doctrine is therefore absolutely necessary for living our precious Faith. Yet today, we are forced to admit that for several generations, the Church may not have effectively passed on even some core elements of Catholic Christianity to those whom may now constitute the majority of our members. A shocking example is evidenced by a recent opinion poll that indicates that in the United States, more than half of today's Catholics may no longer believe in the Real Presence of Jesus in the Holy Eucharist. This failure in faith and conviction has happened despite the fact that the received teaching goes back to Apostolic times and has always been held as foundational to our Catholic identity. So as your bishop, I believe it is a grave personal obligation for me to try to state as clearly as I am able some basic truths about the Blessed Sacrament.

We are a Eucharistic Church, whose life and service revolve around the gift of the Eucharist. Just as truly as Christ ascended into heaven, so truly he descended into the Sacraments, *until he comes again in glory*. As the Catholic Catechism teaches, the Eucharist "is the Sacrament of sacraments," empowering us to appreciate and then live all the other Sacraments. We are baptized and confirmed into a Eucharistic community. Reconciliation restores us to grace so that we may worthily receive the Eucharist. The Sacrament of Holy Orders is intrinsically connected to Eucharistic service. The covenant of Holy Matrimony is based upon Christ's spousal love for the Church embodied in the Eucharist. The Anointing of the Sick heals and restores to wholeness in Christ, corporally present in the Eucharist. As Saint Thomas Aquinas once so succinctly summarized: "The Eucharist contains the entire spiritual wealth of the Church."

Certainly the Blessed Sacrament is the richest possible symbol of our Faith, but through the transforming words of Christ and power of the Holy Spirit it also truly makes present what it signifies. Jesus clearly bestowed enormous importance to the Bread and Wine of the Last Supper. He took pains to prepare for the holy meal, expressed special instructions, and invested certain gestures with new meaning. He then gave a personal commandment: *Do this in memory of me*. (Luke 22:19) His unambiguous words: *This is my body, this is my blood*, rather obviously mean: "This is truly me, this is myself." Rather than speaking metaphorically, he intentionally established for the community of his disciples an outward sign that effected an entirely new reality. After his passion and death, the Risen Christ would continue to abide with them and confirm them by his Real Presence at each and every celebration of the Eucharist. On the first Easter Sunday, two disciples after traveling with Jesus and even listening to him along the road to Emmaus,

only finally recognized him at the *breaking of the bread*. It is this very same awesome reality which today the Western Church calls the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass and which the Eastern Church celebrates as the Divine Liturgy. It could quite accurately be asserted that Christ's living presence in the Blessed Sacrament is the most real thing men and women of faith may ever experience in this passing world.

As the Apostle Paul teaches, in the earliest New Testament witness to faith in the Real Presence: *The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ?* (1st Corinthians 10:16) The word Paul uses for participation in the Eucharist is *koinonia*. This Christian theological term indicates much more than mere social fellowship but rather a new mode of existence. The experience of *koinonia* plunges believers into a true participation in the life of Christ and a sharing of that life with one another. Again, this sharing is not given simply as a metaphor but rather as a truly life changing encounter with Jesus. Just a "form" of spiritual communion would certainly have been an alien concept to early Christianity where participation in the Body and Blood of Christ was understood as only being possible because bread and wine truly became the Body and Blood of Christ.

The institution narratives of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, the rich theology of John regarding the Lord's Supper, as well as the testimony of the Fathers of the Church all give persistent evidence for a shared faith in the Real Presence of the Risen Christ in the Eucharist. This ancient witness is well exemplified by Saint Ignatius of Antioch: "The Eucharist is the medicine of immortality, the antidote to death, and the gift of everlasting life in Jesus Christ." As Saint Irenaeus explains: "Our way of thinking is attuned to the Eucharist, and the Eucharist in turn confirms our way of thinking." Saint Augustine observes: "The reason these things, brothers and sisters, are called sacraments, is that one thing is seen, while another is understood." Saint Gregory of Nyssa also expresses the unchanging conviction of the ancient Church: "Through the Eucharist, the body comes into intimate union with its Savior. The immortal body of God, by entering the one who receives it, transforms his entire being into its own nature." Or as that bold and eloquent preacher, Saint John Chrysostom summarizes in shockingly realistic language: "To show the love he has for us, he made it possible for those who desire, not merely to look upon him, but even to touch him and consume him and to fix their teeth in his flesh and to be commingled with him, in short, to fulfill all their love."

It is a defined dogma of the Catholic Church, revealed by the Holy Spirit and preserved from any possibility of error, that the Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity of Jesus Christ are truly and substantially present in the Most Holy Eucharist. This is not an opinion to be measured against any opinion poll but rather Divine Revelation as expressed by the absolute authority of Scripture and Tradition. The Lord once said: *Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood shall live forever, and I will raise him up on*

the last day. (John 6:54) So for any Catholic to deny the Real Presence is in a certain sense to deny Jesus and place themselves outside of the convictions of our Faith. The clergy and faithful therefore share a perennial responsibility before Almighty God to pass on Divine truth to future generations, *in season and out of season*, uncompromised and undiminished. As the Second Vatican Council insisted in the Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation: “The Church in her teaching, life, and worship, hands on and perpetuates to all generations all that she herself is and all that she believes.”

There is a long established theological dictum, *lex orandi, lex credendi*, which could be translated as “the law of what is prayed, is the law of what is believed.” How we pray is certainly integral to how we believe. I rather suspect that it was not so much our teaching about the Real Presence that has changed during some recent decades but instead a noticeable decline in our ritual reverence and recognition. What had once been universal practice in any Catholic church regarding attentive silence and a whole bundle of other rituals such as genuflecting, blessing with holy water, the Sign of the Cross, kneeling, intentional architecture, the location of the Tabernacle, multiple candles, bells rung during the Liturgy, carefully prepared sacristies and sanctuaries, the care of sacred vessels and linens, prayers before and after Mass encouraged a kind of shared awe before something experienced as numinous and wondrous. Contemporary American culture tends to be relentlessly informal and sometimes our churches may seem more like hotel lobbies than an awesome House of God. The technical theological term for Divine worship is called *latría*, that is the honor and worship we offer exclusively to Almighty God. It is Catholic doctrine that the Most Blessed Sacrament is at all times to be given the *latría* of the Church, because through the power of the Holy Spirit, the consecrated Bread and Wine truly become the glorified Body and Blood of Christ. We therefore rightly recognize and adore the Most Blessed Sacrament as our Lord and our God.

Reverence for the Real Presence can certainly be enhanced through regular instruction, Benediction, processions, visits, holy hours, and quiet times of personal prayer before the Tabernacle. These Eucharistic devotions are obviously also intended to deepen our conscious recognition of the centrality of the Real Presence of Jesus within the liturgy of the Mass. Quiet Masses, sung Masses, solemn Masses, and especially the ordinary ritual Masses for weddings and funerals are certainly great opportunities to witness to our faith in the Eucharist as a pastoral gift to those who may have been poorly catechized or even have fallen away. Where there are a sufficient number of Eucharistic ministers, I also strongly recommend that Holy Communion be offered under both the forms of bread and wine for the sake of the fullness of the sign instituted by Christ. In all circumstances, the greatest possible care should be devoted to public worship in the preparation of homilies, and the training of servers, readers, ushers, and musicians.

It must always be remembered that it is at Mass where Jesus gathers the Church into the Eucharistic assembly. It is at Mass, that his Word is proclaimed and heard, preached and pondered. It is at Mass where Jesus renews in our very midst his One Perfect Sacrifice on the Cross, because it is at Mass, where we *proclaim the Lord's death until he comes* (1st Corinthians 11:26). It is at Mass where Jesus our High Priest offers the atoning sacrifice of praise and thanks to his Father. It is at Mass where through the power of the Holy Spirit the whole substance of the bread and wine are transubstantiated, that is fully and completely changed into Christ's true Body and Blood. It is at Mass where through that same Spirit we may actually become a part of what we receive. It is at Mass where the presence of Jesus becomes both the source and the summit of our entire life as Catholic Christians. It is at Mass where the way we live is formed and the way we serve is inspired and sustained. How could we ever dare neglect Sunday Mass or fail to share with future generations the infinite treasure of the Real Presence of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ in the Blessed Sacrament.

The First Letter of John begins with some striking words that describe the sheer wonder, perhaps even the spiritual rapture of a disciple who had personally known Jesus: *What existed from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked upon and touched with our hands.* (1st John 1:1) In the Most Holy Eucharist, that same intimate contact with the *Word made Flesh*, is just as possible for us today as it was for the Lord's first disciples. Jesus is our Lord, our Savior, our Teacher, our Priest, and our King, who together with the Father and the Holy Spirit is now and forever adored as our good and gracious God. In the Blessed Sacrament, we actually *taste and see the great goodness of the Lord.* There is a much revered prayer in our Catholic tradition called the *Anima Christi* which expresses the faith, hope, and especially the intense love of believers for Jesus Christ truly present in the Holy Eucharist.

Soul of Christ, sanctify me.
Body of Christ, save me.
Blood of Christ, embolden me.
Water from the side of Christ, wash me.
Passion of Christ, strengthen me.
O good Jesus, hear me.
Within your wounds, hide me.
Never permit me to be parted from you.
From the evil enemy defend me.
At the hour of my death call me
and bid me to come to you,
that with your saints I may praise you
for age upon age. Amen.

May the Catholic Diocese of Peoria, its clergy and religious, its young and old believers, its parishes and schools, its ministries and charities be intentionally centered around the Real Presence of the Lord Jesus Christ in the Most Blessed Sacrament. May this faith always be the unshakable conviction of our Holy Church: *O Sacrament Most Holy, O Sacrament Divine, all praise and all thanksgiving be every moment Thine.*

+ Daniel R. Jenky C.S.C.

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BISHOP OF PEORIA

La Presencia Real

Carta Festiva Decimoctava - AD 2020

La Divina Revelación es la manera en la que Dios Todopoderoso nos invita personalmente a conocerlo, amarlo y servirlo. Es la comunicación que hace Dios mismo de la totalidad de la verdad, revelada en las Escrituras y en la Tradición. Estar cimentados en la verdadera doctrina es absolutamente necesario para vivir el tesoro de nuestra Fe. Aún así hoy, estamos forzados a admitir que por varias generaciones, la Iglesia no ha transmitido de forma efectiva algunos elementos esenciales de la Cristiandad Católica a aquellos que pueden constituir hoy la mayoría de sus miembros. Un impactante ejemplo de ello es la reciente encuesta que indica que en los Estados Unidos, más de la mitad de los católicos ya no crean en la Presencia Real de Jesús en la Santa Eucaristía. Este fallo en la fe y en la convicción ha sucedido aún a pesar de que la enseñanza recibida se remonta a los tiempos Apostólicos y siempre se ha mantenido como fundacional de nuestra identidad Católica. Por lo que como Obispo vuestro, creo tener una grave obligación personal de tratar de establecer con la mayor claridad que pueda algunas verdades acerca del Santísimo Sacramento.

Somos una Iglesia Eucarística, cuya vida y servicio gira alrededor del don de la Eucaristía. Así como Cristo ascendió verdaderamente al cielo, así de verdadero es que desciende en los Sacramentos, *hasta que vuelva otra vez en gloria*. Como enseña el Catecismo de la Iglesia Católica, la Eucaristía es “el Sacramento de los Sacramentos”, que nos permite apreciar y luego vivir los demás sacramentos. Nosotros somos bautizados y confirmados dentro de una comunidad Eucarística. La Reconciliación nos restaura a la gracia para poder recibir la Eucaristía. El Sacramento del Orden esta intrínsecamente conectado al servicio Eucarístico. La alianza Matrimonial está basada en el amor esponsal de Cristo para con la Iglesia encarnado en la Eucaristía. La Unción de los Enfermos sana y restaura la integridad en Cristo, corporalmente presente en la Eucaristía. Como resumió concisamente Santo Tomas de Aquino: “La Eucaristía contiene la totalidad de la salud espiritual de la Iglesia”.

Ciertamente el Santísimo Sacramento es el símbolo más rico de nuestra Fe, pero a través de las palabras transformantes de Cristo y el poder del Espíritu Santo hace verdaderamente presente aquello que significa. Jesús claramente le dio gran importancia al Pan y al Vino en la Última Cena. Además de que se tomó la molestia de preparar la santa cena, dio instrucciones especiales y dotó a algunos gestos con un significado nuevo. Después dio un mandamiento personal: *Hagan esto en memoria mía*. (Lc 22,19) Sus palabras inequívocas: Este es mi cuerpo, esta es mi sangre, significan obviamente “Esto es verdaderamente yo mismo.” En vez de hablar de manera metafórica, Él intencionalmente estableció para la comunidad de sus discípulos un signo externo que

conllevaba una realidad completamente nueva. Después de su pasión y muerte, el Cristo Resucitado continuaría permaneciendo con ellos y confirmándoles de Su Presencia Real en cada momento y en cada celebración de la Eucaristía. Durante el primer domingo de Resurrección, dos discípulos después de haber viajado con Jesús y de haberle escuchado camino a Emaús, lo reconocieron finalmente en la *fracción del pan*. Es esta misma realidad maravillosa, la que hoy en día la Iglesia de Occidente llama el Santo Sacrificio de la Misa y a la que la Iglesia de Oriente celebra como la Liturgia Divina. Puede decirse con gran certeza que la Presencia viva de Cristo en el Santísimo Sacramento es lo más real que todo hombre o mujer de fe puede experimentar en este mundo que pasa.

Como nos enseña el Apóstol San Pablo en uno de los primeros testimonios de fe en la Presencia Real en el Nuevo Testamento: *La copa de bendición que bendecimos, ¿no es acaso comunión con la Sangre de Cristo? Y el pan que partimos, ¿no es comunión con el Cuerpo de Cristo?* (1Corintios 10,16) La palabra que usa San Pablo para describir comunión es *koinonía*. Este término de la teología cristiana indica mucho más que un mero compartir social sino que es un modo nuevo de existir. La experiencia de *koinonía* sumerge a los creyentes en una verdadera participación en la vida de Cristo y en un compartir de esta vida con los demás. Nuevamente, esta comunión no se nos da simplemente como una metáfora sino como un verdadero encuentro con Jesús que cambia nuestra vida. Una simple “forma” de comunión espiritual ciertamente hubiese sido un concepto extraño para los primeros cristianos; donde la comunión del Cuerpo y Sangre de Cristo era entendida únicamente posible porque el pan y el vino verdaderamente se convertían en el Cuerpo y la Sangre de Cristo.

La narrativa de la institución en Mateo, Marcos y Lucas, la abundante teología de Juan en relación a la Última Cena, al igual que los testimonios de los Padres de la Iglesia, todos nos dan una constante evidencia que compartían la fe en la Presencia Real de Cristo Resucitado en la Eucaristía. Este testimonio antiguo está bien ilustrado por San Ignacio de Antioquia: “La Eucaristía es la medicina inmortal, el antídoto de la muerte y el don de vida eterna en Cristo Jesús.” Como explica San Ireneo: “Nuestra manera de pensar armoniza con la Eucaristía, y a su vez la Eucaristía confirma nuestra manera de pensar.” San Agustín observa: “La razón para que estas cosas, hermanos y hermanas, se llamen sacramentos, es que una cosa es la que se ve, mientras otra es la que se entiende.” San Gregorio de Niza también expresa esta convicción inmutable de la Iglesia primitiva: “A través de la Eucaristía, el cuerpo entra en una íntima unión con su Salvador. El cuerpo inmortal de Dios, al entrar en el que lo recibe, transforma todo su ser entero en su propia naturaleza.” O como lo resumió el audaz y elocuente predicador, San Juan Crisóstomo en un lenguaje sorprendentemente real: “Para mostrar el amor que nos tiene, hizo posible para quien lo desea, no únicamente contemplarlo, pero más aún tocarlo y consumirlo y clavar los dientes en su carne y estrecharse con Él y saciar todas las ansias del amor.”

Es un dogma definido por la Iglesia Católica, revelado por el Espíritu Santo y preservado de toda posibilidad de error que el Cuerpo, Sangre, Alma y Divinidad de Jesucristo están presentes verdadera y substancialmente en la Santísima Eucaristía. Esta no es una opinión susceptible de ser medida con una encuesta de opiniones sino más bien una Revelación Divina expresada por la autoridad absoluta de las Escrituras y de la Tradición. El Señor dijo una vez: “El que come mi carne y bebe mi sangre vivirá para siempre y yo lo resucitaré en el último día.” (Juan 6,54) Así que para todo católico, el negar la Presencia Real es de cierto modo, negar a Jesús y ponerse a sí mismo fuera de las convicciones de la Fe. El clero y los fieles comparten una responsabilidad constante ante el Dios Altísimo de transmitir esta verdad divina a las futuras generaciones, a tiempo y a destiempo, sin concesiones y sin disminuirla. Como insistió el Concilio Vaticano Segundo en su Constitución Dogmática de la Divina Revelación: “la Iglesia, en su doctrina, en su vida y en su culto perpetúa y transmite a todas las generaciones todo lo que ella es, todo lo que cree.”

Hay un antiguo adagio teológico, *lex orandi, lex credendi*, que puede ser traducido como “La ley de la oración es la ley de la fe.” La forma en que oramos es ciertamente parte integral de la forma en que creemos. Tengo la impresión que no fue tanto nuestra enseñanza en relación a la Presencia Real la que cambió en estas últimas décadas sino que ha habido una disminución notable en nuestros ritos de reverencia y reconocimiento. Lo que una vez fue práctica universal en toda la Iglesia Católica en relación al silencio atento y muchas otras costumbres y ritos tales como la genuflexión; bendecirse con agua bendita; la señal de la Cruz; arrodillarse; arquitectura monumental con una clara significación; el lugar del Tabernáculo; múltiples velas; las campanas tocadas durante la Liturgia; sacristías y santuarios preparados con cuidado; el cuidado de los vasos y lienzos sagrados; las oraciones antes y después de la Misa; todas estas prácticas ayudaban a suscitar el asombro ante una experiencia sagrada y maravillosa. La cultura Americana contemporánea tiende a ser implacablemente informal y muchas veces nuestras Iglesias pueden parecer más como vestíbulos de hotel que la maravillosa Casa de Dios. El término teológico para la Alabanza Divina es *latria*, esto es el honor y alabanza que le ofrecemos exclusivamente al Dios Altísimo. Es doctrina Católica que al Santísimo Sacramento se le ha de dar en todo momento la *latria* de la Iglesia, porque por el poder del Espíritu Santo, el Pan y el Vino consagrados verdaderamente se transforman en el Cuerpo y la Sangre glorificados del Cristo. Por ello nosotros reconocemos y adoramos ciertamente al Santísimo Sacramento como nuestro Señor y nuestro Dios.

La reverencia hacia la Presencia Real puede ciertamente mejorar a través de la instrucción regular, la Bendición con el Santísimo, las procesiones, las visitas, las Horas Santas y los momentos personales de oración en silencio ante el Tabernáculo. Estas devociones Eucarísticas están obviamente dirigidas a profundizar nuestro reconocimiento de la centralidad de la Presencia Real de Jesús dentro de la Liturgia de la Misa. Misas en silencio, Misas cantadas, Misas solemnes y especialmente los ritos ordinarios de las

Misas de boda y funerales son ciertamente grandes oportunidades para dar testimonio de nuestra fe en la Eucaristía como un don pastoral para con aquellos que han sido pobremente catequizados o que han abandonado la fe. Donde hay suficientes ministros Eucarísticos, yo recomiendo fuertemente que la Santa Comunión sea ofrecida bajo las dos formas de pan y vino por el bien del signo total instituido por Cristo. En cualquier circunstancia, el mayor cuidado posible ha de ser dirigido al culto público en la preparación de las homilías y en el entrenamiento de los servidores, lectores, ujieres y músicos.

Siempre deber ser recordado que es en la Misa donde Jesús reúne a la Iglesia en la asamblea Eucarística. Es en la Misa que su Palabra es proclamada y escuchada, predicada y ponderada. Es en la Misa donde Jesús renueva en medio de nosotros su Único y Perfecto Sacrificio en la Cruz, ya que en la Misa es donde *proclamamos la muerte del Señor hasta que vuelva* (1Cor 11,26). Es en la Misa donde Jesús nuestro Sumo Sacerdote ofrece el sacrificio expiatorio en alabanza y gratitud al Padre. Es en la Misa donde por el poder del Espíritu Santo la sustancia total del pan y el vino son transustanciados, son total y completamente cambiados en el Cuerpo y Sangre de Cristo. Es en la Misa donde a través del mismo Espíritu podemos actualmente convertirnos en lo que recibimos. Es en la Misa donde la presencia de Jesús se convierte en la fuente y la meta de nuestra vida como cristianos católicos. Es en la Misa donde la manera en que vivimos se forma y la forma en que servimos es inspirada y sostenida. Cómo podríamos atrevernos a descuidar la Misa dominical o no compartir con las generaciones futuras el tesoro infinito de la Presencia Real de nuestro Señor y Salvador Jesucristo en el Santísimo Sacramento.

La primera carta de San Juan inicia con unas sorprendentes palabras que describen la maravilla y tal vez hasta el rapto espiritual del discípulo que ha conocido a Jesús personalmente: *Lo que existía desde el principio, lo que hemos oído, lo que hemos visto con nuestros ojos, lo que hemos contemplado y lo que hemos tocado con nuestras manos.* (1Juan 1,1) En la Santísima Eucaristía, el mismo contacto con el *Verbo hecho Carne*, es posible para nosotros hoy así como lo fue para los primeros discípulos. Jesús es nuestro Señor, nuestro Maestro, nuestro Sacerdote y nuestro Rey, quien junto con el Padre y el Espíritu Santo es hoy y siempre adorado como nuestro buen y misericordioso Dios. En el Santísimo Sacramento es que podemos verdaderamente *gustar y ver qué bueno es el Señor*. Hay una venerada oración en la tradición Católica llamada Anima Christi que expresa la fe, esperanza y en especial el intenso amor de los creyentes por Jesucristo verdaderamente presente en la Santa Eucaristía.

Alma de Cristo, santifícame.

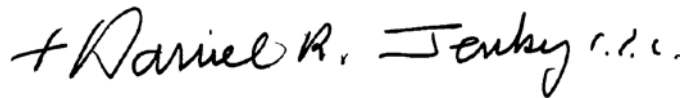
Cuerpo de Cristo, sálvame.

Sangre de Cristo, embriágame.

Agua del costado de Cristo, lávame.

Pasión de Cristo, confórtame.
¡Oh, buen Jesús!, óyeme.
Dentro de tus llagas, escóndeme.
No permitas que me aparte de Ti.
Del maligno enemigo, defiéndeme.
En la hora de mi muerte, llámame.
Y mándame ir a Ti.
Para que con tus santos te alabe.
Por los siglos de los siglos. Amén.

Que la Iglesia Católica de Peoria, su clero y sus religiosos, sus creyentes jóvenes y mayores, sus parroquias y escuelas, sus ministerios y caridades estén intencionalmente centradas en la Presencia Real del Señor Jesucristo en el Santísimo Sacramento. Que esta fe sea siempre una convicción inamovible de nuestra Santa Iglesia: *Oh Sacramento Santo, Oh sacramento Divino, toda alabanza y acción de gracias sean siempre dadas a Ti.*

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Daniel R. Jenky, C.S.C." with a small cross symbol at the beginning.

✠Most Reverend Daniel R. Jenky, C.S.C.
OBISPO DE PEORIA

Festival Letter 2020 – Calendar

In the early centuries of Catholic Christianity, when calendars were uncommon and often imprecise, a bishop would send out an annual “Festival Letter” to announce the proper dates for observing the fasts and feasts of the Liturgical Year. It was not uncommon to also use such a letter as a means of instruction for the faithful. I have established this custom in our Diocese both to foster a greater love for the liturgy and to afford myself an additional opportunity for teaching.

Dear brothers and sisters, the glory of the Lord has shone upon us and shall ever be manifest among us, until the day of His return. Through the rhythms of times and seasons, let us celebrate the mysteries of our salvation.

Let us recall the year’s culmination, the Sacred Easter Triduum of the Lord: His Last Supper, His Crucifixion, His Burial, and His Rising, celebrated between the evening of Thursday, April 9th, and the evening of Sunday, April 12th.

Each Easter, as on each Sunday, Holy Mother Church makes present the great and saving deed by which Christ has conquered sin and death.

From Easter are reckoned all the days we keep holy:

Ash Wednesday, the beginning of Lent, in the Year of Our Lord 2020, will occur on the 26th of February.

Ash Wednesday and Good Friday are days of fast and abstinence. In commemoration of the Lord’s death on the cross, all Fridays of Lent are days of obligatory abstinence. Abstinence from meat is also recommended on all the Fridays of the year.

The annual Chrism Mass, during which the priests renew their ministerial commitment, will be celebrated in the Cathedral on Tuesday of Holy Week, April 7th.

No other activities or pastoral responsibilities, except the need to tend to the dying, should keep a priest from attending the Chrism Mass. I also invite the faithful of our diocese to join us for this celebration as they

keep their priests in prayer.

The Church will keep her most solemn night of vigil and prayer to celebrate the Resurrection of Christ on Saturday, the 11th of April. According to the ancient and universal practice of the Church, the Easter Vigil may not begin until after nightfall. In Central Illinois, sunset is estimated to begin at 7:35 P.M. CDT in Peoria (7:27 P.M. CDT in Danville and 7:40 P.M. CDT in Moline). The Easter Vigil at the Cathedral will be celebrated at 8:15 P.M.

On Divine Mercy Sunday on the Second Sunday of Easter, the 19th of April, I encourage my Vicars Forane to work with the clergy, religious, and laity in their area to prepare a common celebration at a central location for the conclusion of the Novena of Divine Mercy which will begin on Good Friday, the 10th of April.

The Ascension of the Lord will be commemorated on Sunday, the 24th of May, according to the decision of the bishops of the Illinois Province.

Pentecost, the joyful conclusion of the Great Fifty Days of Easter, will be celebrated on Sunday, the 31st of May.

The Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ will be celebrated on Sunday, the 14th of June.

Any Catholic in a state of serious sin is obligated to approach the Sacrament of Reconciliation at least once between Ash Wednesday and Pentecost Sunday. All Catholics are especially urged to confess their sins during the penitential season of Lent, during Advent, before the great festivals, and regularly throughout the year.

In a special way our Divine Savior gave the Church the gift of the Sacrament of Holy Orders to make present the Paschal Mystery for all people of every time and place. This year, the Diocese of Peoria will celebrate the Sacrament of Holy Orders at the Ordination of Transitional Deacons.

On the Sixth Sunday of Easter, the 17th of May at 10:30 in the morning in the Cathedral, I will ordain two new transitional deacons for the Diocese of Peoria.

I invite and encourage the clergy, consecrated men and women, and lay-faithful to join with me at this great celebration.

Likewise, the Pilgrim Church proclaims the Passover of the Lord in the feasts of the Holy Mother of God, the Apostles, and the Saints, and in the Commemoration of the Faithful Departed for the Year of Our Lord 2020.

In the Year of Our Lord 2020, the Solemnity of Saint Joseph, the spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary, will be celebrated on Thursday, March 19th.

The Solemnity of the Annunciation of the Lord will be celebrated on Wednesday, the 25th of March.

The Dedication of the Cathedral of St. Mary of the Immaculate Conception is celebrated on the 15th of May and is a Solemnity in the Cathedral and a Feast in the Diocese.

The Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary is celebrated on Saturday, the 15th of August, and as it falls on a Saturday, is not a holy day of obligation in the year 2020.

The Feast of Saint Crescent, whose relics are solemnly enshrined in Corpus Christi Church, Galesburg, is celebrated on Thursday, the 27th of August, as a solemnity in the Shrine-Church.

The Feast of St. Therese of Lisieux, patroness of our diocesan vocations program, will be celebrated on Thursday, the 1st of October. Prayers

and activities in support of priestly vocations are encouraged to take place. The Diocesan Novena for Vocations in her honor will begin on the 23rd of September.

The Solemnity of All Saints, a holy day of obligation, is celebrated on Sunday, the 1st of November. The Commemoration of All the Faithful Departed is observed on Monday, the 2nd of November.

The Solemnity of Christ the King will be celebrated on Sunday, the 22nd of November.

The Church will celebrate the beginning of the new liturgical year of grace and prayer on the First Sunday of Advent, the 29th of December, in the Year of Our Lord 2020.

The Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary will be celebrated on Tuesday, the 8th of December this year; this is the Patronal Feast of the Diocese of Peoria and is a holy day of obligation.

The Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe, the Patroness of the Americas, is celebrated on Saturday, the 12th of December.

Christmas will be on Friday, the 25th of December.

The Solemnity of Mary, the Mother of God, is celebrated on Friday, the 1st of January in the Year of Our Lord 2021 and is a holy day of obligation.

To better enjoy the infinite treasury of merit won by our Divine Saviour, in accord with the *Enchiridion Indulgentiarum* and the *Ceremonial of Bishops*, “the diocesan bishop in his own diocese may bestow the papal blessing with the plenary indulgence, using the proper formulary, three times a year on solemn feasts, which he will designate....”

As Bishop of Peoria, I am happy to bestow such blessing with the plenary indulgence during the Year of Our Lord 2020 at the end of Holy Mass for the great Solemnities of Easter Vigil, Pentecost Day, and

Christmas Eve.

Further, to enhance the devotional life of the faithful and the liturgical life of our parishes, I have encouraged a return to the practice of Rogation Days to mark the change of seasons. I have requested the Holy See to confirm these days as part of the official calendar of our local Church. Pending their confirmation, I encourage pastors to observe these Rogation Days in the Diocese of Peoria:

January 22nd to coincide with the national day of prayer and fasting for the dignity of human life.

March 24th to highlight the beginning of the growing season, associated with the Solemnity of the Annunciation

June 23rd to pray for healthy growth and good weather, associated with the Nativity of St. John the Baptist

September 13th to highlight the fruits of the harvest, associated with the Triumph of the Cross

December 7th to highlight the family, associated with our patronal feast of the Immaculate Conception.

To Jesus Christ, who is, was, and who is to come, the Lord of all time and history, be endless praise, for ever and ever. Amen.