

Jesus



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

Jesus

Festival Letter - Epiphany - AD 2021

In 2002, during my first year serving as your bishop, I thought it might be helpful to share an annual letter on some topic of our Faith as well as to officially announce the *fasts and the feasts* of the coming liturgical year. I never intended these letters to be particularly scholarly but instead to be rather like what a pastor might place in a parish bulletin or in these days might post on social media. As some degree of physical infirmity has now limited my ability to preach and personally minister across the twenty-six counties of our Diocese, I have decided to send this one last Festival Letter to you in this year and some months before I officially retire. My first Letter in 2003 was devoted to the subject of Prayer. In this my final Festival Letter and very deliberately during these days of covid, confusion, quarantine, and fear, I would like to briefly teach once again something more about Jesus. This one name, *yesterday, today, and forever* (Hebrews 13:8), must always remain the very heart and soul of everything that we as Catholic Christians know and believe.

The very name Jesus is truly inescapable in our world. Believers in Christ exist on every continent of our planet, but the enemies of Christ or those who are simply indifferent are also present almost everywhere. In western culture hostility to Jesus and his teaching seems to be increasing, while in other places in the world enthusiastic faith in him seems to be growing. His name is therefore widely invoked in prayer with the utmost reverence but also spoken thoughtlessly or even sacrilegiously as a swear word. For us living today in the Church of Peoria, just like for those early Christians Saint Paul addressed in his letter to the Church in Philippi, faith in Jesus must always be foundational for who we are and how we try to live. As the Apostle taught, perhaps quoting from a very early Christian hymn: *God raised him high and gave him the name which is above all other names so that all beings, in the heavens, on earth, or under the earth should bend the knee at the name of Jesus, and every tongue should acclaim Jesus Christ as Lord.* (Philippians 2:9-11)

Scholars explain that the name Jesus comes from the Hebrew *jesua*. Jesus is actually a variant form of Joshua, used not unlike the modern English names of Jack for John or Bob for Robert. Joshua in the Old Testament was the successor of Moses and the first of the Judges. His name means *Yahweh is salvation*. As the last Book of the five books of the Law had once foretold about a future Messiah: *I will send them a prophet like you from among your own people, and you are to obey him. I will put my words into his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him.* (Deuteronomy 18:18) In the New Testament, the name Joshua or Jesus was explicitly given to Mary and Joseph for the promised child. This was certainly a most appropriate name for the one who would be an even greater prophet than Moses. As the Letter to

the Hebrews was to say about Jesus: *He deserves a greater glory than Moses, just as the builder of a house is more honored than the house itself.* (Hebrews 3:3)

The faith of Christianity boldly proclaims that *there is no other name under heaven by which we must be saved.* (Acts 4:12) For believers, Jesus is the full revelation of who God is and what God is all about. He is *the reflection of the Father's glory, the exact representation of the Father's being, and he sustains all things by his powerful word.* (Hebrews 1:2) Jesus is given to us as the *Word made flesh* (John 1:14), the incarnation of the co-eternal Son of God, and as the Creed of the Church also confesses, *of the same substance* as the Father. Losing nothing of his divinity, from an amazing abundance of grace, he shared fully in our humanity, even in our mortality, so that we could live forever. He became a part of what we are so that we could share in a part of what God is. With the Father and the Holy Spirit, he is *true God from true God.* There really can never be a distinction made between Jesus and the full revelation of Almighty God. As Jesus himself taught: *He who sees me, sees the Father.* (John 14:9) So for anyone to intentionally call themselves a Christian, they must consciously make a personal decision to encounter Christ. I therefore encourage everyone in our Diocese to renew their faith in Jesus and then filled with zeal and conviction to boldly share this faith with everyone they meet.

For as disciples we are all called to give witness to the Gospel. Jesus is our Savior, whose death on the cross washed away the sins of the world. Jesus is our teacher, our priest, our mediator, our temple, our sacrifice, our intercessor, our Lord. Through water and the Holy Spirit, the Father now actually sees and loves in us what he sees and loves in his Only Begotten Son. In Jesus, God loved us first, and we are called to love God in return with our whole heart, mind, strength, and soul and then in gratitude to love our neighbor as our self. This is the redemptive circle of love that is at the very heart of the Christianity. Through grace, we can live in the experience of the love that God has lavished upon us. It was for this great love that we were created and redeemed.

How does someone first get to know Jesus or how does someone renew this relationship if it has grown cold or perhaps even been ruptured? The first thing to remember is that just as truly as Jesus died on the cross for us, *Christ is risen! Christ is truly risen!* Jesus is not some distant personality to study from a past of nearly twenty centuries. He is alive, present, and available to us in our world today. Through the power of Holy Spirit, we can actually meet him, learn from him, bring our questions to him, be helped and comforted by him, follow him, be challenged and changed by him, even be *born again* in him.

We can actually hear his very voice in the scriptures. Like the two disciples who met the Risen Lord on the road to Emmaus, we too might well marvel: *Were not our hearts burning within us, as he spoke to us on the way and as he opened the scriptures to us?* (Luke 24:32) Then in the quiet of our hearts, in a moment of grace we should be willing to take the risk of saying *yes* to Jesus and follow him, perhaps for the first time or again and again throughout a life long journey of faith. We can also meet him and serve him in the needs of our neighbor, especially the poor

and the sick. We can savor his Real Presence in the Eucharist and know him in the other Sacraments, and in prayer and devotion. We can discover his consoling love in the community of the Church. As Paul wrote to the Church of Colossi: *He is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning and firstborn of the dead. So that he himself might come to have first place in everything.* (Colossians 1:18)

It is according to God's plan that we do not make this journey alone. We not only have fellowship with one another but we also have the saints, that *cloud of witnesses* (Hebrews 12:1) to inspire us and ceaselessly pray with us and for us. We also have the holy angels to guide and watch over us. In a very special way, we have Our Lady, the Mother of Jesus, and as gifted to us from the cross, our own Blessed Mother as well. As Saint John Paul II the Great once taught, Mary does not just teach us about Jesus and his Gospel but actually introduces us to the Lord. As the very first one to believe in Christ, from the crib to the cross, Mary shows us how be overshadowed by the Holy Spirit, to be courageous and faith filled disciples, who are called to live in intimate union with her Son.

In this Year of Grace 2021 and for the rest of our lives, let us all in various and individual ways, try again make room in our hearts for the Lord. His Holy Name is the name of greatest splendor, for time and for eternity. If we possess Jesus we are truly rich beyond all compare. Even in these days of pandemic, of radical change, of scandal, even of persecution, Jesus is the sure magnet that directs us all safely to himself. In some extremely difficult times many centuries ago, Saint Ambrose once encouraged the people of his own Diocese of Milan with the following teaching: "If you wish to heal your wounds, He is the doctor. If you are burning with fever, He is the spring. If you are oppressed by sin, He is justice. If you need help, He is strength. If you are afraid of death, He is life. If you desire heaven, He is the way. If you flee darkness, He is the light. If you search for food, He is nourishment. *Taste and see that the Lord is good. Happy those who shelter in Him.*" For all of us who seek to *shelter* in the Lord and put our faith in him, let us listen again to the very last words that Jesus himself spoke before ascending into heaven: *All authority in heaven and earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that commanded you, and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.* (Matthew 28:18-20)

Bishop Lou and I, united in faith on this awesome Solemnity of the Epiphany, pray constantly for your health and protection, as we implore the blessing of Almighty God, the Father, + the Son, and the Holy Spirit upon all in the Catholic Diocese of Peoria.



✠Most Reverend Daniel R. Jenky, C.S.C.
BISHOP OF PEORIA

Festival Letter 2021 – 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.

While during this time during the Covid pandemic there is currently no obligation to attend Mass, we hope that the new year brings a return to our normal liturgical practice. Some dates may be subject to change to accommodate changes due to the pandemic.

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 1st, and the evening of Sunday, April 4th.

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 2021, will occur on the 17th 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, March 30th.

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 3rd 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 7:25 P.M. CDT in Peoria (7:17 P.M. CDT in Danville and 7:29 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 11th 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 2nd of April.

The Ascension of the Lord will be commemorated on Sunday, the 16th 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 23rd of May.

The Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ will be celebrated on Sunday, the 6th 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 to the Priesthood.

On Saturday, the 29th of May at 10:30 in the morning in the Cathedral, I will ordain two new priests for the Diocese of Peoria.

I hope to invite and encourage the clergy, consecrated men and women, and lay-faithful to join with me at this great celebration. All priests serving in the Diocese of Peoria are expected to participate in the Ordination of a Priest. Except the need to tend to the dying, no other pastoral duty or personal obligation is of greater importance than welcoming our new brother to our presbyterate.

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 2021.

In the Year of Our Lord 2021, the Solemnity of Saint Joseph, the spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary, will be celebrated on Friday, March 19th. As this falls on Friday during Lent, the obligation to abstinence and fasting is lifted for that day.

The Solemnity of the Annunciation of the Lord will be celebrated on Thursday, 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 Sunday, the 15th of August.

The Feast of Saint Crescent, whose relics are solemnly enshrined in Corpus Christi Church, Galesburg, is celebrated on Friday, 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 Friday, 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 is celebrated on Monday, the 1st of November and as it falls on a Monday, is not a Holy Day of Obligation. The Commemoration of All the Faithful Departed is observed on Tuesday, the 2nd of November.

The Solemnity of Christ the King will be celebrated on Sunday, the 21st of November.

The Church will celebrate the beginning of the new liturgical year of grace and prayer on the First Sunday of Advent, the 28th of December, in the Year of Our Lord 2021.

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

As the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe, the Patroness of the Americas, the 12th of December, falls on a Sunday this year, the Mass celebrated for that day is of the Third Sunday of Advent. Celebrations for Our Lady of Guadalupe should be celebrated on another day or appropriately incorporated into the celebration of the Third Sunday of Advent.

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

The Solemnity of Mary, the Mother of God, is celebrated on Saturday, the 1st of January in the Year of Our Lord 2022 and is not 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 2021 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.