



Roman Catholic Diocese of Saskatoon **OFFICE OF THE BISHOP**

123 Nelson Rd
Saskatoon SK S7S 1H1

www.rcdos.ca

Phone: 306-242-1500

Fax: 306-244-6010

Toll free: 877-661-5005



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Greetings to you all as we approach another Holy Week and Easter Season!

I always find that when I come to Palm Sunday and the beginning of Holy Week, I am faced with a sense of tension and dichotomy. What unfolds is the great and loving gift of God, meeting the tragedy and complexity of human longing coupled with human failing.


In Viktor Frankl's famous work, "Man's Search for Meaning," one of his quotes about suffering and meaning is: "What is to give light, must endure burning."

We begin Holy Week – having experienced this past year the call to be light – but also to endure burning. Indeed, we have even been consumed. The challenges, the tensions and conflicts, the polarizations we have all experienced – in our world and country, our communities, and our families – have been very challenging and uncharacteristic of what we would call an acceptable normal.

And yet, the feature of tension has always been part of the Paschal Mystery. It is a key feature of the Gospel – and it comes to an apex in Holy Week when Our Lord Jesus Christ offers the unexpected, ultimate, and final confrontation between light and darkness, death and life – abundant life – to the full. What we recall and witness again in the way of Jesus Christ is utterly amazing, astonishing, unbelievable!

St. Paul in his letter to the Philippians sums up the unique response of Jesus Christ, who uniquely goes the wonderful, terrible path.

Firstly, He was in the form of God – *He was God*. Secondly, He did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, taken advantage of. Thirdly, He emptied Himself, taking the form of a slave. Who has ever done this? Especially when they had the unique ability to avoid or overcome? Fourthly, He was obedient to the Father's plan to heal, redeem, and save the world – all the way to the point of death, even death on a cross. No one with such status and ability has ever done this. *This* is why God exalted Him. This is why every knee should bend, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord!

 In all things we are *rooted in Christ*,
in His desire to bring God's love to all peoples.

Pope Francis has stated: *“There are many people who admire Jesus: He said beautiful things; He was filled with love and forgiveness; His example changed history, and so on. They admire Him, but their lives are not changed. To admire Jesus is not enough. We have to follow in His footsteps, to let ourselves be challenged by Him; to pass from admiration to amazement. What is most amazing about the Lord and his Passover? It is the fact that he achieves glory through humiliation. He triumphs by accepting suffering and death, things that we, in our quest for admiration and success, would rather avoid.... Jesus did it for us, to plumb the depths of our human experience, our entire existence, all our evil. To draw near to us and not abandon us in our suffering and our death. To redeem us, to save us.”*

The Pope concluded that the celebration of the Passion of Our Lord needs to move us from distant admiration of Jesus Christ, to amazement at Jesus, who demonstrates the greatest love the world has known – our salvation and new life passes through the wood of the Cross! Destruction meets new life; hell meets heaven; and death meets resurrection.

Let us ask ourselves: Why did Jesus die on the cross for us? Why did humanity crucify Christ? Do we still crucify Christ? If so, what does Christ show us as a new way?

These are questions that must be faced and asked. Don't rush the answer... sometimes that is the problem. Let us ask the questions, and stay in the eerie, mysterious silence of the response of Jesus Christ on the cross, before rejoicing in the unbelievably good news of Easter.

A blessed Holy Week and Easter season to you all!

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "+ Mark A. Hagemoen". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

✠ Most Reverend Mark A. Hagemoen
Bishop of Roman Catholic Diocese of Saskatoon