

## EASTER MESSAGE 2021

Dear Brothers and Sisters in the Diocese of Peterborough,

As we enter the final days of Lent, we stand on the threshold of the Holiest Week of the Church's year, prepared to celebrate the great events of our Lord's passion, death, and resurrection. It has been an unusual Lent in many ways and a lot of people have remarked that Lent last year never seemed to end before we were back to it in 2021! By that calculation it has perhaps felt like the longest Lent in history.

The COVID-19 pandemic and its restrictions have brought much concern, anxiety and suffering to so many people and have certainly impacted the life of our parishes. Between closures, re-opening, capacity limits and safety protocols, it has been very difficult for us to gather in the usual way. Nonetheless, even with fears about a new wave of the virus, the rollout of vaccines promises that the end of this time of tribulation is in sight. I am grateful for all who have been able to return to our churches and look forward to the time when we can all gather again safely. I wish to thank the many people who have worked so hard to enable us to gather under unusual circumstances, including our priests and deacons, parish staff, and many committed volunteers. Across our diocese, legions of people have assisted with cleaning, implementing the required safety protocols, and using media old and new to reach out to parishioners. I also wish to thank the many people who have continued to support their parish financially through these challenging times, and especially during the periods of lockdown. Your generosity has been crucial to the life of the Church and is much appreciated.

We must be vigilant for a little while longer in adhering to the various precautions and protocols. It is natural to be growing frustrated with the pandemic restrictions and to long for an end to this. Perhaps, as we begin Holy Week, we could resolve to let go of some of that negativity, joining whatever hardship we have endured to the suffering of Jesus on the cross. This could be a transformational Holy Week and Easter season, if we but ask God for the grace to help us do that.

Mark's account of the Lord's resurrection ends on the subdued note that the women disciples fled from the tomb on Easter morning, saying nothing to anyone "for they were afraid." Yet we know that was not the end of the story, for the news of the resurrection was too good not to share. For those first disciples, joy overcame fear. Let that be so for us, in these challenging times: weighed down though we are with many concerns, let us be confident that the risen Lord is with us, and his presence fills us with the joy, hope and courage to face anything that may come.

May God bless you this Holy Week and Easter!

Yours in Christ,

+ Most Reverend Daniel Miehm

Bishop of Peterborough