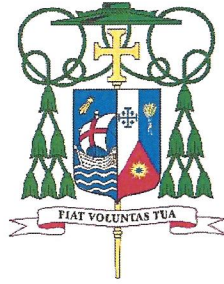


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## MEMORANDUM

**DATE:** April 17, 2020  
**TO:** All Clergy, Religious, Seminarians, Principals, Diocesan Staff and Religious Education Directors  
**FROM:** Bishop Oscar A. Solis  
**WHAT:** Easter Greetings; Divine Mercy Sunday; Clergy Retreat

**HAPPY EASTER!** I pray that you are safe and keeping yourself healthy. Our diocese remains open for its daily operation with only key staff in the Pastoral Center. Most are working remotely from home and visitors are strictly restricted. Same with our Catholic schools. Holy Week and Easter services in the Cathedral of the Madeleine without the congregation were live-streamed and went well. The diocesan website continues to offer information and resources the best we can. I hope yours too were grace-filled and continue to be so.

The coronavirus pandemic has really altered every aspect of our lives. Government restrictions brought confusion and disorientation in the exercise of our ministry in our parishes and schools. A few at first reacted with resistance and indifference probably thinking that the spiritual concerns outweigh anything else. I am grateful that God's grace brought us all to work together for the common good – to safeguard the lives of the sick and more vulnerable, and the spiritual benefit of the people of God we serve.

Thank you for carrying out the ministry in our parishes and schools and responding to their needs the best you can. It is gratifying to know of the various creative ways you are doing to reach out, connect with parishioners and students, offer Mass and other channels of God's graces to the faithful, and provide spiritual aids and class instructions on-line.

The situation is worse and no one knows how long it will be. However, one thing is sure – our mission as disciples of Christ goes on. The people of God need witnesses of the abiding presence of Christ in our community to help maintain their faith and hope in Him. It is important to bring our Church and school to their homes in time of isolation so we can continue to provide them opportunities and resources to learn and pray together with them as one faith family.

Our spiritual life and commitment are essential so that we remain faithful to our sacred responsibilities. The passion, death and resurrection of Christ remind us of the value of sacrifice and suffering as part of our calling. Genuine love is selfless and self-giving. We gain strength in prayer, unity in Christ and solidarity in our common mission.

God promises that he will be with us at all times. Easter helps us find a different perspective in the midst of the difficulties we face to see light in darkness, life in death, courage in fear, and hope in despair. On Divine Mercy Sunday, we celebrate God's endless love and mercy for us. Let us open our hearts to His grace to renew our faith so we can pray, Jesus we trust in you!  
Easter blessings!

## **DIVINE MERCY SUNDAY**

Our Church celebrates on the first Sunday of Easter Divine Mercy Sunday. St. John Paul II added this feast day as a personal devotion to Divine Mercy in 2000, the year St. Faustina Kowalska was canonized. She was a Polish nun who received a series of private revelations focused on the mercy of God. During her visions, Jesus gave Sr. Faustina the mission to communicate the message of Divine Mercy to the whole world. St. John Paul II declared her the messenger or secretary of God's mercy and said, it is the Easter gift that the Church receives from the risen Christ and offers to humanity at the dawn of the third millennium.

The image of the wounded heart of Christ described by St. Faustina expresses the beautiful reality of God's love, the source and fountain of His merciful love and the gift of reconciliation. This is not a new idea but the very core message of the Sacred Scriptures. The heart of the Gospel is God's infinite love and never ending mercy for His people that is celebrated and emphasized on this feast.

It resonates perfectly well during the Easter Season. The resurrection of Christ is the culmination of his work of salvation and the ultimate manifestation of God's mercy when we experience more deeply the redemptive and transformative love of God in the risen Christ, a love that converts every repenting heart to holiness. In her diary, St. Faustina wrote: *"Love is a mystery that transforms everything it touches into beautiful things that are pleasing to God. The love of God sets the soul free. Then it is like a queen, knowing nothing of the constraints of slavery."*

Pope Francis uses the word mercy often and an attitude that the Catholic Church and all believers must practice and live. The infinite mercy lifts our hearts, encourages us not to despair but to trust in God's willingness to forgive and be reconciled in spite of our sinfulness, He never gets tired of forgiving us. Let us not hesitate to ask this gift from our merciful Father through the Sacrament of Reconciliation. God's blessing like any other is not to be stored but has to be lived and shared. As we celebrate Divine Mercy Sunday, let us have the courage to say: **"Jesus, I trust in you,"** to renew our trust in God's mercy, to open our hearts to his saving love and to become missionaries of His mercy.

## **NOTE: CLERGY RETREAT 2020 CANCELLED**

The mandatory Diocesan Clergy Retreat scheduled the first week of June 2020 is cancelled. Uncertainties brought about by the Coronavirus pandemic and corresponding restrictions could well not be lifted by that time and decisions had to be made regarding hotel reservations and flight arrangements for the retreat director.

Each of us will be responsible for arranging our private retreat this year. Our Committee on Clergy Ongoing Formation will provide further update as to future plans and options there may be. For now, the June retreat is officially cancelled.