



***Message of Hope to Eastern Catholics
From EASTERN CATHOLIC BISHOPS OF CANADA
In Response to the COVID-19
EASTER 2020***

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ,
Dear Parishioners,
Dear Friends and Members of the Universal Family,

We, the Eastern Catholic Bishops of Canada, greet you with the peace of the Risen Christ.

We implore, as brother bishops, the grace of the Lord who "*with death, He overcame death*" (1 Cor 15:26), to sustain us during these dark times in human history that are disrupting our daily lives, unmasking our fragility, affecting our life cycle and, with their deep silence, invading our intimacy.

Nevertheless, we owe it to ourselves to bethink that scourges and pandemics have marked periods of history and have not spared the first Christians: Leprosy during the life of Jesus, plague from the earliest days of Christianity under the Roman Empire and other calamities. During that time, the Fathers of the Church and the people of faith have devoted themselves with bravery and love in the fight to save mankind. That's how, rooted in their Faith and their Hope, they have alleviated their apprehensions and have contributed in the advancement of science and medicine.

Together, with you, we will support each other throughout this difficult trial of Coronavirus. At this decisive moment of extremely rare gravity, we are confronted with our uncertainties, our fears and our anxieties. This revives our concerns about our basic needs and the questions we raise about our Faith and our becoming.

In reality, COVID-19 has highlighted inequalities and shortcomings in our societies. It has exacerbated the fault lines of our globalized economies and boundless consumption. Undoubtedly, the world awaits a new social order that will be interpreted at the end of this universal upheaval, as well as a redefinition of spiritual, human, societal, economic and political landmarks as we Catholic Bishops are committed to achieve in the light of Christian faith and ethics.

To this end, our message today is a message of hope. We encourage you, during this precarious time, to hold onto:

- The Word of God, the Source of life.
- The Teaching of the Church, the Body of Christ.
- The Mother of God, the First believer.
- The Community and the Family, the Source of selflessness and concern for others.
- The Christian values: Faith, charity and hope.
- The Human values: Solidarity, fraternity, respect for others and so on...

During this period, we must be comforted in our spiritual and social proximity. Even if our stone churches are closed, our consciousness as pastors and leaders is at your service.

What's important is that this physical confinement does not become, in any way, a selfish withdrawal or an abdication of our responsibility for mutual assistance. The obligation of confinement, whether voluntary or imposed, should not in any way waive the obligation of solidarity and love of neighbor.

On the other hand, let us beware of the drifts implying that the pandemic is a divine punishment or an anger of God. On the contrary, we must scrutinize the signs of the times to renew our faith in the Good News "*God is Love*" (1 John 4:10), to look to the future with hope and to pass on the standards of convergence with the other.

We are comforted by the prompt and dignified decisions made by our civil and spiritual leaders and their firm and sincere intention to preserve order and social harmony. We invite you, therefore, to comply with the security instructions, despite their strictness, for your own good and for the good of all. Pope Francis has defined it well: "The defense of life" is a human reality which involves all Christians, "precisely because they are Christians and because they are human".

We salute our brothers and sisters of the Eastern Churches for their resilience during these precarious times.

We salute our friends and fellow believers who have generously embarked in charitable and philanthropy works, as well as the front-line healthcare providers and their colleagues who brave the dangers and risk their lives to save others. We pray for the innovative scientists and researchers who are tirelessly working to find the appropriate remedies and vaccines against this insidious virus.

Finally, during this Holy Week and in these times of uncertainty, where we are strengthened by the Communion of the “Last Supper”, burdened by the Calvary, completely torn down at the foot of the Crucifix, let us be confirmed in our faith during our ascent towards Easter, while hoping to be blessed and filled with the joy of the Resurrection.

Christ is Risen! He is Truly Risen!

EASTERN CATHOLIC BISHOPS OF CANADA

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