

A unique and special time for prayer, hope and care

Together with all Canadians, the Catholic Bishops of Canada are following with deep concern the current developments in Canada and throughout the world regarding the rapid global spread of Coronavirus (COVID-19) which can in certain cases be the cause of serious illness and even death.

The pandemic is now also spreading across Canada. This new virus is understandably a source of anxiety and fear for many. Practical information on responding to the virus and mitigating its spread is available from local public health officials, as well as from the federal and provincial governments, and should be heeded. Catholic faithful are invited to consult their local diocesan/eparchial websites for the preventive measures to be followed for pastoral care and liturgies. Concern for each person and the common good must always be paramount.

As Catholics, we see in every illness a reminder of our own mortality, as well as an invitation to share in Christ's ministry of healing. In the face of suffering and sickness, Christians are to be credible witnesses to the Lord's enduring love, providence and power in our midst. His mercy and care are always present and available.

We will soon be celebrating Easter – Christ's triumph over death as the Lord of life and the source of ever-lasting hope. The spread of the COVID-19 virus is a moment for Catholics to offer special prayers of intercession for the healing of those infected, for the protection of the elderly and infirm who are at greatest risk, for the prevention of the disease's spread, and for the courage and strength of care providers who minister to the sick, their families and those most in need.

In keeping with Our Lord's teaching, and as part of the sacred tradition for Lent, it is appropriate whenever possible that our prayer be strengthened by fasting, by other expressions of Christian charity or works of spiritual and corporal mercy.

We entrust our country and especially those affected, as well as their loved ones and caretakers, to the powerful and maternal intercession of the Virgin Mary, Mother of Christ and

ours.

13 March 2020

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