



WILLIAM T. MCGRATTAN



BISHOP *of* CALGARY

May 26, 2020

Dear Faithful in the Diocese of Calgary,

As the Easter season concludes this weekend with the Solemnity of Pentecost we come to the end of May, the month in which we traditionally honour our Blessed Mother. This year in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, we consecrated our country and the Diocese to the protection and intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary who in scripture and tradition has always been the First Disciple.

On March 16, 2020, I announced that the public celebration of Mass in the Diocese of Calgary would be temporarily suspended and the Decree dispensing the Faithful from their Sunday obligation was issued. Since then our churches have remained open for private prayer and visits to the Blessed Sacrament. Confessions were celebrated and the Anointing of the Sick was available to those who requested them. Funerals and weddings took place while observing provincial safety measures which ensured safe distancing to protect the health of those attending and to prevent the spread of the virus in our community. During this challenging time, there also emerged in the Diocese the realization of the “domestic church” supported by our parishes through creative forms of pastoral outreach with the live streaming of liturgies and devotions that served to unite parish communities and families.

On June 1st, on the Memorial of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Mother of the Church, the public celebration of Mass will be reintroduced. This will take place under diocesan guidelines and directives that will allow for the Eucharistic liturgy to be celebrated in an appropriate and dignified manner. It will follow the restrictions on the maximum number of attendees allowed and ensure that the proper safety and health measures currently in place in the Province for Stage 1 of the Relaunch Strategy are followed. No parish is required to resume the public celebration of Mass until they are able to adequately implement the diocesan guidelines and directives. Please contact your local parish to enquire about the weekday and Sunday Mass schedules. A debt of gratitude goes out to all the priests who have strived to be pastorally present to their parishioners and who will prepare to welcome them back to the celebration of the Eucharist, “the source and summit of our lives” as Catholics.

The dispensation of the Faithful from their Sunday obligation will remain in place so that those individuals who may be vulnerable because of age, health conditions or who do not feel safe in the public celebration of the Mass at this time may choose to stay home and keep safe. The live streaming of Mass will continue both on weekdays and Sunday in the Diocese.

ROMAN CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF CALGARY

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I encourage the Faithful of the Diocese in the context of this Pastoral Letter to read the *Guidelines* from the website of the Diocese and understand the measures that are being taken in all of the Latin Rite Dioceses here in Alberta.

Like Mary, who herself was not exempt from the experience of pain and suffering, we have been tested in our faith during these last two and a half months when our normal life of faith as a Church, both here in our Diocese and throughout the world, has been restricted. I acknowledge the pain that many of the faithful have expressed in the experience of being deprived of the Eucharist which is so central to our life as Catholics. Such expressions of faith that were expressed to me personally ranged from frustration in accepting these measures for the health and safety of others to a humble realism that this would be temporary. I hope and pray that we will always remain united in our commitment to protect life, to care for the most vulnerable and for the law of charity which serves the common good of society to become the sign of the local church embodying Christ the Servant.

Lastly, I would also like to announce the dedication of our new Marian Shrine in Canmore on May 30th so that it will be able to offer its first Holy Mass with the faithful on June 1st. I pray that in the midst of this pandemic and in the light of God's providence, the dedication of the Shrine Church of Our Lady of the Rockies will be that light in the darkness and serve to strengthen the faith of those pilgrims who will journey to Canmore in the future to pray before Our Lady of the Rockies for her intercession in their lives of faith.

Mary, Mother of the Church, we intercede with you for our Lord's blessing upon our Diocese as we reintroduce the public celebration of Mass and dedicate our first Diocesan Marian shrine.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "William T. McGrattan". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

† Most Reverend William T. McGrattan
Diocese of Calgary