



OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

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15 March 2020

Third Sunday of Lent

My dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Over the past few days, our Diocese has responded quickly and proactively to mitigate the spread of COVID-19. As I listen to the concerns of the faithful, I want to assure you that I have great concern for each of you.

As we take these measures, please be assured of my closeness in prayer. We are in a period of uncertainty and rapid change. This can be unsettling. Many are experiencing feelings of worry, panic, fear, and doubt. Please join me in taking a moment to be still and remember Jesus' promise that He will be with us always. Let us approach the Heart of Christ and, like Saint John the Beloved, rest there for a moment. Let us surrender our fears and our worries as we pray: *Jesus, we trust in You. Jesus, we hope in You. Jesus, we love You.*

First and foremost, I want each of us to respond to this pandemic with prayer. Let us speak to God who longs to hear our voices! We ask God to heal those who are sick, to comfort those who are anxious, and to bless all those who provide care to the infirmed. We ask God to protect our Nation and to stop the rapid spread of the disease. Our response is first a response with prayer. *Jesus, you are the Divine Physician. You are with us. We ask for healing and deliverance.*

While there is currently no obligation to attend the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, our devoted priests will continue to offer Mass. The Holy Eucharist is our Source, our Strength and our Hope! As we recall the truth that Christ's Presence provides for us a safe resting place, a place of comfort and stillness, a place of rest and healing, let us pray: *Jesus, thank you for your Presence in the Blessed Sacrament. We draw near to You and unite our hearts with your Sacred and Eucharistic Heart. We turn to you for comfort and healing. Be with us now Lord in our time of need.*

Just as Saint Joseph protected the Holy Family, we turn to Saint Joseph to protect us at this time of uncertainty and pandemic. We turn to Saint Joseph and entrust ourselves, our families, and our Diocese to his care and intercession. *Saint Joseph, we entrust to you all people in the Diocese of Allentown. We seek your intercession and protection. Saint Joseph, pray for us!*

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We can also use this time as an enhanced aspect of Lenten penance. With arms open and a loving gaze, He calls us to repentance. We can take comfort that He looks on us with nothing but Love. *Jesus, we come to you and repent of our sins.*

During this time when the obligation to attend Mass is lifted, if you are not attending Mass, I encourage you to pray the Rosary and read the Sunday Scripture.

*Holy Mary we, your children, turn our eyes to you and trust in your maternal care and protection. Please watch over the faithful of the Diocese of Allentown and lead us closer to Your Son. Protect us from evil and come speedily to our aid. Please bring healing and comfort to those who are suffering. We seek your protection, O holy Mother of God; Graciously hear our petitions and protect us from all dangers, O glorious and blessed Virgin Mary. Amen.
Mary, our Mother and our Confidence, pray for us.*

Sincerely yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Alfred A. Schlert".

Most Reverend Alfred A. Schlert
Bishop of Allentown