



## WISCONSIN CATHOLIC CONFERENCE

**April 9, 2020**

### **STATEMENT OF THE CATHOLIC BISHOPS OF WISCONSIN ON THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC**

Dearly Beloved,

The celebration of Christ's resurrection and the promise of salvation is a special source of joy and hope during these challenging times. As we approach Easter and our celebration of the Holy Triduum, we write to express our profound admiration for the many ways that you are witnessing to Christ in the current pandemic.

We join Pope Francis, who on Palm Sunday, recognized “the *real heroes* who come to light in these days: they are not famous, rich and successful people; rather, they are those who are giving themselves in order to serve others.” They are the medical care teams, first responders, cleaning crews, transportation providers, grocery store clerks, civil servants, charitable service staff, elected leaders, and numerous other anonymous individuals. Countless human lives and civil order would not survive but for their sacrifice. Let us unite in prayers for their protection and in thanksgiving for their work.

We also give thanks for the many faithful who continue to work tirelessly to ensure that spiritual and material assistance is made available to those in and outside our Church. The clergy, religious, and lay leaders who serve the Church, especially our brother priests, have excelled in continuing to minister through hectic and uncertain times. It is with grateful prayers we acknowledge their fidelity. Masses, including Holy Week services, and other devotions will continue to be live-streamed and available online. Every Wisconsin Catholic diocese is actively facilitating new and innovative ways to sustain parish life. We ask that you continue to support your parish as you are able through prayer, financial assistance, and socially distant participation. We are grateful for your continuing generosity.

We also thank you for your prayers and faithful worship from home. Staying home is a sacrifice, but one that will prevent the spread of the virus. We recognize the uncertainty and fear that many are experiencing and the real desire to seek solace in the Eucharist. However, we reflect on the words of our Lord, “No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends.” (John 15:13) By limiting our movements and worshipping at home, we show true love for our neighbor. May that love, and the knowledge of God's love and protection, give you peace and comfort.

In a time when the frailties of our social order are evident, we must strive to protect the most vulnerable – the elderly and infirm, children (born and preborn), the victims of domestic abuse, the hopeless, the homeless, the hungry, those with disabilities, the unemployed, and the

immigrant. We urge individuals to act from home – by investigating the needs of charitable entities, reaching out to those who live alone, and contacting elected leaders to make certain the vulnerable receive critical services. As we meet the challenges of this pandemic, medical treatment, including the development of vaccines, government aid and operations, charitable services, and our daily actions must always make certain to uphold and protect the dignity of all human life.

Now more than ever, let us run to embrace our blessed Mother, who stood stricken at the foot of the Cross, but who later rejoiced in the resurrection of her beloved Son. May we feel consoled by her and in so doing console others, especially those who feel excluded and lost. As Pope Francis says, “May we not be concerned about what we lack, but what good we can do for others.”

Through charity and patience as one body in Christ, we will overcome the present moment and continue to build a more just and compassionate world.

May God bless you this Easter and keep you and your loved ones always in His loving care.

Most Reverend Jerome E. ListECKI, Archbishop of Milwaukee

Most Reverend Donald J. Hying, Bishop of Madison

Most Reverend David L. Ricken, Bishop of Green Bay

Most Reverend William P. Callahan, OFM Conv., Bishop of La Crosse

Most Reverend James P. Powers, Bishop of Superior