

Holy Week is time for openness to Lord

By Bishop Matthew H. Clark

As I write to you on this Monday of Holy Week, I do so in the fond hope that the days ahead will hold special blessings for you and your loved ones. I have the privilege of presiding at Holy Week liturgies at Sacred Heart Cathedral, and want you to know that you will be in my prayer during all of them.

One of the recurring themes of my Holy Week prayers since I have been a bishop is the goodness of the people among whom I serve. I hope I have told you often enough that your faith and goodness are an inspiration to me, and that your good example is a great encouragement to me to keep growing.

In recent months, for a variety of reasons, I have had some significant conversations with a wide range of people in our diocese.

These contacts have made me especially aware that your faith and the goodness to which I just referred are often born out of your struggles to face the suffering and sacrifice to which daily life so often calls us.

I think of parents who are deeply saddened because their children have turned away from our community of faith. I remember people whose employment situations have become quite shaky and



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who deal with all of the pain such uncertainty can bring. I ache for gay and lesbian Catholic people I know who must endure the ugly things said about them by uninformed people. I mourn with good friends who have experienced the sudden loss of loved ones, and with some who have experienced multiple losses in recent weeks.

As I remember them — and others like them — tonight, I thank them for the way in which they invite me and help me to understand the events of Holy Week. They remind me that Jesus did not give himself up in love for us to exempt us from the pain and frustration of the

human condition. Rather, he died so that we might be freed from the bondage of sin and be strengthened to live in love in even the most demanding of life's situations.

I hope that you will not be timid about placing before the Lord during Holy Week whatever it may be that brings pain to your life or to the lives of your family members and friends. Such openness to the Lord can do much to heal because it can help us to put all things in proper proportion. It can also remind us that finally it is Christ's love rather than any of life's passing circumstances that will last.

I encourage you, if the circumstances of your life will allow it, to participate with your parish community in the liturgical celebrations of Holy Week. To be with our brothers and sisters on these occasions can be a wonderful gift. They remind us that we are not alone in our human struggles or in our journeys of faith. They remind us that we all have human needs, that none of us is perfect, that life is without purpose if we do not live it in love.

In any case, please pray for all of us who share your faith that as we celebrate the mystery of the passion, death and resurrection, we will imitate him in word and work, and become more like him in all things.

Peace to you.

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