

Holy Thursday Morning Reflection to Priests
Most Reverend Michael F. Burbidge
April 9, 2020

Dear Brothers: This morning we were to be together in the Cathedral of Saint Thomas More for the celebration of the Chrism Mass. Yet, the cathedral is empty due to the ongoing and devastating impact of the coronavirus pandemic. As we persevere through these unsettling times, I am sure we are experiencing many emotions. We are sad in knowing the number of those who are suffering and those who have died due to the virus. With an uncertain future, we may have anxiety and even fear. In the inability to minister to our people in the way to which we are accustomed, we may be disappointed and frustrated. These emotions are real and understandable, and we need to speak about them with Our Lord in our daily prayer. Ultimately, we have to surrender all that we are experiencing to him with renewed trust in his promise to be with us in our time of need and to protect and deliver us.

In addition to some of the emotions I mentioned and which are very real to me, there is something else I am experiencing at this time: *a sense of unity*. At first that may sound ironic. I have been unable to be with you, to visit your parishes, schools and campuses throughout this crisis and to celebrate confirmations and the other sacraments. I miss being with you and our people. However, through all of this, I have experienced our unity even in the midst of the social distancing that has been necessary. I feel united with you in prayer, which has become more essential than ever. I feel united with you in the new and creative spiritual and pastoral ways we have been reaching out to the faithful (and for which I am so grateful to you). I feel united with you in knowing we continue charitable works throughout our diocese and parishes, especially to those who need us the most. I feel united with you in the fraternal concern we have for one another. Today, dear brothers, as we make our Holy Hour in the presence of the Source of our unity, may we give thanks for the fraternity that is ours and pray that it will continue to foster and grow.

One of my bishop-friends was installed in his new diocese just before the outbreak of the coronavirus. His homily that day focused on a hymn that was sung at the Mass: *Jesus, Hope of the World* (from the Mass of the Americas). When I returned home I asked our cathedral choir director if we could sing that hymn at this year's Chrism Mass, and the answer was yes. It was almost providential. Could there be a more crucial time to be reminded that *Jesus is the Hope of the World*? While we are not together to sing the hymn, the words bring us and our parishioners the consolation we need:

Jesus, hope of the world, Jesus, light in our darkness, shepherd your people in love; shatter the darkness of death; banish our doubt and fear. Come to us, O Heart's Desire! Come, Lord Jesus! Come to us, Son of God! Come, Lord Jesus!

Dear brothers, at this moment in time throughout our world and nation and within our Church, it is essential that we renew our sacred duty to be the Lord's instruments in assuring his people that *in him alone* they will find hope in the midst of despair, and light in the midst of darkness. Our homilies and talks will assist us in conveying these truths but our example is even more important. If we are to convince others that Jesus is the hope of the world, then now more than ever, they need to see our deep faith, confidence and courage. They need to see our perseverance and steadiness in the midst of crisis. They need to see our total reliance on the Lord and the joy that is ours in following him.

To bring Jesus, Hope of the World, to others, we must allow him to be the source of hope in our lives and priestly ministries. We must discover and experience our hope in prayer, Eucharistic adoration and through the help of our Blessed Mother. That message is so clear in the book that I and so many of you have read *In Sinu Jesu*. Prayerfully reflect on the words and promises of Jesus recorded in the book that speak about hope:

"Come to me full of expectant hope and I will do the rest."

"Continue to listen to me. Continue to obey me. You will not be disappointed in your hope."

"Those who are close to my most pure Mother and invoke her as Mediatrix of all Graces will not be disappointed in their hopes."

"My Mother raises souls when they fall; she instills in them a loving confidence in my loving mercy, a readiness to believe in my merciful love, a desire to come into my presence and to expose to me, the divine physician, the wounds suffered in spiritual combat. My Mother is the Mother of Holy Hope. One who entrusts himself to my Mother will never fall into despair."

"Be at peace. Trust in my infinite tender love for you and in the abiding friendship of my heart, for you are mine and I am yours and I will not forsake you, nor will you be disappointed in hope."

"To adore me in the Eucharist is to demonstrate that all your hope is in me. To adore me is to show me that your count not on yourself nor on others but on me alone."

"You are but my instrument. I ask you only to take your place faithfully and peacefully before my Eucharistic face. I will do all the rest. Believe in my promises and go forward full of thanksgiving and hope."

Dear Brothers: As you kneel before the Blessed Sacrament today, renew your priestly promises and your commitment to draw closer to the Lord in the presence of the Holy Eucharist and under the protection of the Holy Mother of God. In doing so, you reflect your firm belief that *in Jesus alone* we find our hope and experience the grace to go forth each day, especially in this time of crisis, and convince others that *Jesus is the hope of the world!*

Mary, Our Lady of Hope, Mother of the Church, Mother of Priests, pray for us today and always. Amen.