



Easter Message 2024

“For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is your life is revealed, then you also will be revealed with him in glory.” (Colossians 3:3-4)

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Easter is a privileged time in which we are invited to discover the risen Jesus truly alive and present in our lives! In his 2023 Easter Vigil homily, Pope Francis exhorted us to “revive the beauty of that moment when we realized that he is alive, and we made him the Lord of our lives.”

As the Lord of our lives, Jesus invites us to a deeper relationship with him. The Catechism of the Catholic Church tell us that “God tirelessly calls each person to this mysterious encounter with Himself. Prayer unfolds throughout the whole history of salvation as a reciprocal call between God and man.” (CCC, 2591) Prayer helps us take a step towards Jesus, truly embracing him and all that he offers. This growth in the spiritual life is crucial if we are to experience the revitalization of our diocese and the deep personal renewal that the Lord wants us to experience.

That is why in this year of prayer in preparation for the Jubilee 2025 (<https://www.iubilaeum2025.va/en.html>), I am encouraging everyone to grow deeper in prayer and intimacy with Jesus. Some of the areas that Pope Francis has highlighted include prayer in the parish community (the Eucharist, Liturgy of the Hours, Eucharistic Adoration), prayer in the family (grace before meals, beginning/end of day prayers, lauds on Sunday), young people’s prayer (prayer events and meetings with youth), retreats, catechesis, and prayer in monasteries and sanctuaries.

(https://www.iubilaeum2025.va/content/dam/iubilaeum2025/foto-sezioni/2024-anno-della-preghiera/insegnaci-a-pregare/pdf/ENG_Sulla-preghiera-A5-76P-SITO.pdf).

To that end, I am inviting all parishes and faithful of the diocese to consider the following:

- 1) Offer one hour of Eucharistic Adoration every week, praying for vocations to the priesthood and family life, and diocesan and parish needs, especially our efforts to support our parish priests through the CLI Called for More program and the accompaniment and formation of lay leaders, including our catechists, youth ministers and young adult leaders.
- 2) Rediscover the practice of daily Mass as much as possible and the regular celebration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation and come to experience the grace and mercy that flows from these Sacraments.
- 3) Take part in the CCCB’s webinar series, “A Great Symphony of Prayer”. Dr. Josephine Lombardi (St. Augustine’s Seminary) will present the four parts of the spring series titled “A

Great Symphony of Prayer: The Our Father as a Programme of Life.” The first of four webinars takes place on April 2. Visit <https://www.cccb.ca/announcement/a-great-symphony-of-prayer-the-our-father-as-a-programme-of-life/> for more information and to register.

- 4) Consider making a personal or group retreat. The Villa Madonna Retreat House in Rothesay serves the people and parishes of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Saint John by providing facilities and programs that aid the process of spiritual renewal, faith development and evangelization. For information on current programming at the Villa Madonna or to book a group or personal retreat, contact Veronica Wilson, Administrative Director, at villa.admin@nb.aibn.com. For information on curating a Catholic retreat, contact Jim Anderson, Director of Missionary Discipleship Formation, at janderson@dioceseofsaintjohn.org.
- 5) Participate in the Holy Hour of Mercy on Divine Mercy Sunday, April 7, 2024, at 3:00 pm at the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception (and livestreamed via <https://www.facebook.com/DioceseofSaintJohn> for those outside the Saint John region), preceded by the Divine Mercy Novena of Chaplets (<https://www.thedivinemercy.org/message/devotions/novena>), beginning on Good Friday.
- 6) Join me at the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception on Monday, April 8th at the 12:10 Mass as we respond to Pope Francis’ invitation to Catholics to annually renew the act of consecration to the Immaculate Heart of Mary (<https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/prayers/documents/20220325-atto-consacrazione-cuoredimaria.html>) on the Solemnity of the Annunciation of Our Lord. Additional resources are available from the Archdiocese of Toronto at <https://www.archtoronto.org/contentassets/415f85fc71064cf7a3810483bccb187d/consecration-resources-for-annunciation-2024.pdf>

Led by the Holy Spirit through the Gospel and the Eucharist, we are called to raise up disciples who are joyfully living out the mission, proclaiming the Good News of Jesus Christ, and making disciples of others. Prayer is the foundation of our evangelization efforts because, as Pope Francis reminds us, “when evangelizers rise from prayer, their hearts are more open; freed of self-absorption, they are desirous of doing good and sharing their lives with others” (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 282).

In this year of prayer in preparation for the Jubilee 2025, may the reality of the risen Jesus resonate in our hearts and propel us into the world as missionary disciples eager to share the joy of the Gospel with all we encounter along our way.

Jesus Christ is risen! He is truly risen! Alleluia!



✠ Christian Riesbeck, CC
Bishop of Saint John

March 27, 2024