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To: The Clergy and Parishes of the Diocese of Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island

Date: April 9th, 2020

Today begins the Paschal Triduum, the great three days at the heart of our liturgical life and indeed our faith. The liturgies which begin this evening and end at evening on Easter Day are in fact one liturgy, one action, broken up over three days. Today we recall actions of our Lord during the last meal he ate with his disciples. Generally understood to be set in the context of a Passover meal, his actions give us in both word and deed the command that we are to fulfil in our lives: “that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another” (Jn. 13:34). His words and actions in the meal give us the sacrament which feeds and sustains us in the work of love, and which gives us a foretaste of the kingdom banquet. It is for this reason that the tradition of clergy renewing their ordination vows been connected to Maundy Thursday. The command to love, the demonstration of humble service, the gift of the Eucharist is not for clergy alone, it is for the whole church, all those who follow Jesus. It is our role to lead in loving and serving “the people among whom you work, caring alike for young and old, strong and weak, rich and poor” (BAS p.646) and for priests to preside at the “celebration of the mysteries of Christ’s body and blood”. We could not gather at the Cathedral this year for our usual time of quiet preparation for Holy Week and for the renewal of vows. I have seen the messages from clergy around the diocese of how they have missed this event. I assure you that I did too. I encourage you to take some time today to read the ordinal and to reflect on the vows you have taken.

At the liturgy which was scheduled for last Thursday we would have marked the transition of the Rev. Shirley Cole from an Associate Parish Priest to Stipendiary ministry we would also have installed the Revs. Brenda Drake, Paul Friesen and Lisa Vaughn as Honorary Canons of All Saints Cathedral. Like so much else in this time, we can consider that this has taken place virtually. The time will come when we will be able to mark these transitions in a liturgy.

Both the liturgies for the ordination of a Deacon and the ordination of a Priest, make reference to “carrying out other duties (or ministrations) as may be assigned from time to time”. Sometimes I see people smile at these words thinking of how this gives a lot of power to the bishop and in fact it does give me some latitude. At the moment I think that these “other duties” are all about how we are searching for ways to continue to lead in worship and in service. Yes these other duties have been assigned, not by my choice but by circumstance. I have said several times in communications over the past three weeks that I have been greatly impressed by the amazing and creative ways people are finding to lead worship, gather for fellowship, teach and study and meet basic human needs. Some of this has involved the use of technology in new ways (for us). Some of this has involved older technology like telephones and the mail. Adaptation takes plenty of energy and many find themselves well outside their comfort zone. Although there have been some incredible things happening in parishes and by and large congregations understand the need to experiment, I am sure that there is still opposition to the changes taking place. Please take the time simply to “be” in the midst of all the “doing”. Be a priest or deacon, pray, read scripture, read a book for study or pleasure. Be quiet when you can, be a spouse, a parent, a brother or sister, be a son or daughter. Give yourself the grace to be human, to know the anxiety of this time and not to worry about the demands to have it all figured out. Check in with your spiritual director, call a friend or colleague, stay connected. Be aware of your stress level and if it grows too great please reach out for help.

Over the past few weeks I have thought about how clergy in previous eras have been at the center of leading communities in times of crisis. Offering comfort, pastoral care, inspiration, gathering the community and offering the sacraments of the church. These latter two are not possible at this time, not in the traditional way. These are times of challenge for many aspects of our life, the life of our communities and our country. The challenge is no greater than that faced in the foundation of our faith and our calling. "We praise and glorify you, most merciful Father, because in your great love of our human race you sent your only Son Jesus Christ to take the form of a servant; he came to serve and not to be served; and to teach us that he who would be great among us must be the servant of all; he humbled himself for our sake, and in obedience accepted death, even death on a cross; therefore you highly exalted him and gave him the name which is above every name" (BAS p.656)

Today's prayer from the Corrymeela Community put some of my anxieties into their proper place. We are not called to save, it is not our role to defeat death that is the work of God, instead our role is to lay aside all other things and to love.

Prayer for April 9<sup>th</sup>, 2020

God who washes our feet,  
God who commands us to love:  
before the prayers in the garden,  
and the stations of the cross;  
before the tomb and the spices  
and the stone they put in place,  
there was this moment  
when you showed us what it meant  
to be divine.  
May we not forget  
that the power to defeat death  
was not what you wanted us to imitate.  
It was to lay aside all other things  
and to love. Amen. [www.corrymeela.org](http://www.corrymeela.org)

With thanksgiving for your ministry,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "+ Ron Cutler".

The Most Reverend Ron Cutler  
Archbishop of Nova Scotia & Prince Edward Island