



Dear Friends in Christ,

Last Sunday we began our entry into Holy Week by our ritual procession to commemorate Jesus' glorious final journey into the city of Jerusalem. We walked with Jesus in order to remember that he always walks with us. We listened and participated in the reading of the Passion according to Saint Matthew reflecting on the many characters whose interaction with Jesus led him to die on a cross and to abandon himself to the will of the Father in his great outpouring of love in the embrace of the wood of the cross. The haunting cry, *'Eli, Eli, sabachthani – my God, my God, why have you deserted me?'* joins with the chorus of women, men and children who throughout the centuries have cried in similar ways under the burden of violence, oppression, marginalisation, illness, fear and in so many ways beside. These final words of Jesus in Matthew's Gospel remind us of his identification with us, and at the same time the profound trust he placed in the Father to hear his cry. As St Paul so beautifully reflects, 'His state was divine, yet Christ Jesus did not cling to his equality with God but emptied himself to assume the condition of a slave...even to accepting death on a cross' (Phil 2: 6-8).

So dear friends, we enter this Holy Week mindful of the closeness of Jesus who walks with us. We know his death on the cross and been laid in the tomb are not the last word for God raised him on high.

We will wash feet, we will remember the Last Supper as our living memorial of Jesus' presence to us in his Body and Blood, and we will gather to venerate the cross on Good Friday and as we do we bow before him, the one who bows toward us with a loving gaze of hope in our despair, comfort in our sorrow, joy in our sadness, and ultimately with the promise of eternal life in our dying. We will celebrate the never-ending joy of Easter and Jesus' constant presence to us wherever we are.

Pope Francis' invites the Church throughout the world now to walk together in a way that no-one is left behind. He calls the disciples of Jesus to listen deeply to the reality of the questions of peoples' lives and to accompany them in ways which lead to hope, purpose and conversion which leads to the renewal of the Church led by the Holy Spirit. May our celebration of the Triduum (Holy Thursday, Good Friday, Easter Day) ignite in us the flame of faith. This is an exciting time for the Diocese of Sale as we take deliberate and intentional steps journeying together as disciples of Jesus Christ.

May the joy of Easter flow throughout our diocese in the hearts of our clergy, religious, families and all those who have been claimed by Jesus the Christ, risen from the dead in history and for history.

May Jesus who shattered the darkness of sin and death lead us by his light, truth and love.

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