

Alleluia! He is risen!

Dear Friends for Life,

I pray that all of you are safe and healthy, celebrating a very special Easter Week.

The last few weeks of our Lenten journey and more have been nothing short of surreal as we each have navigated uncharted territory dictated by the measures taken to mitigate transmission of the COVID-19 virus. We all went into “lockdown mode” and disrupted everything we know of modern-day life – going to school, to work, to the grocery store, even to church. But we did it to save lives, for the sake of the other.

Nevertheless, these efforts have been a great sacrifice on many levels and the hardship experienced financially, socially, and psychologically will linger. It is most providential, though, that on the glorious Feast of Easter itself we finally see a glimmer of hope on the horizon of this pandemic. It calls to mind the words of Pope St. John Paul II, “Do not abandon yourselves to despair. We are the Easter people and hallelujah is our song.”

There has been much suffering to be sure. We mourn deeply the loss of those in our families, our circles of friends, and all those people recorded in the daily mortality statistics whom we will never know; but we rejoice, too, in the hope for eternal salvation that was wrought for each of us at an even higher price by our Savior on the Cross. In this, we do not mourn as those who have no hope (cf 1 Thess 3:13). We resolve to live with joy, praise, and thanksgiving every day because we are sons and daughters in the Lord Who loves us so much that “He gave His only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him might not perish but might have eternal life” (Jn 3:16). As St. John Paul II emphasized repeatedly in *Evangelium Vitae* this is the foundation of our human dignity and the inviolability of innocent human life. The fullness of this earthly human life is to share eternal life with God, the one and only Author of all life.

It is especially fitting then to focus now on Divine Mercy. This upcoming weekend, the octave of Easter, we celebrate Divine Mercy Sunday. This great feast was instituted by St. John Paul II in 2000. After fulfilling certain requirements, one may gain a plenary indulgence which allows *complete and total forgiveness of all sins and all temporal punishment*. See <https://www.marian.org/> and <http://www.divinemercysunday.com/>

In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, we can use this opportunity to bring souls to God through devotion to Divine Mercy. It cannot be repeated sufficiently that this is the crux of our human existence, our everyday lives. Jesus said to St. Faustina: **"My daughter, encourage souls to say the chaplet which I have given to you. It pleases Me to grant everything they ask of Me by saying this chaplet. When hardened sinners say it, I will fill their souls with peace, and the hour of their death will be a happy one....Write that when they say this chaplet in the presence of the dying, I will stand between My Father and the dying person, not as the just Judge but as the merciful Savior"** (Diary, 1541) and **"Pray as much as you can for the dying....Be assured that the grace of eternal salvation for souls in their final moment depends on your prayer...."** (Diary, 1777)

St. Faustina wrote that it does not matter whether or not you are present at the bedside to pray, as “for the spirit, space does not exist.” Therefore, the power of “social distancing” in the battle of the

pandemic cannot be outdone by nor can it constrain the power of prayer! Thus, at every opportunity available, we should pray, especially the Divine Mercy Chaplet, for those in their last agony. The COVID-19 crisis has put a spotlight on the many souls each day in need of our prayers because of this infection, but it also has underscored the reality that this earthy life is both fragile and transient. Moreover, when the daily reports of death statistics fade into history, we should not forget that every day there are earthquakes, monsoons, car accidents, cancers and a multitude of other causes that claim many more lives—some without warning and proper spiritual preparation. But we can help them immensely—with our Rosaries and Divine Mercy Chaplets—around the globe!

In the same vein, all those involved in the abortion industry, from mothers to abortionists to politicians who sponsor abortion legislation, and most especially for the unborn children who experience the ultimate violence and human abandonment, need our prayers, our Divine Mercy chaplets, too. For the mercy of God is unbounded: *no sin*—not even the sin of abortion—is too big for the infinite mercy of God!

So, during this time of continued confinement, let us attach ourselves to the Cross of Jesus' suffering, for being a People of Easter gives us the hope and fortitude to endure and to accompany our brothers and sisters in this dramatic time of need. Let us also avail ourselves of the graces of Divine Mercy on this Divine Mercy Sunday, during the pandemic, and every day beyond.

Jesus, I trust in You!

God bless you,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'John', written in a cursive style.