

April 2019

# Easter Blessings!

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

As we gather on this Easter Sunday in the churches, chapels and communities of the four counties of our beloved Archdiocese of Newark, we proclaim, “He is risen!” The announcement of Christ’s resurrection — His victory over sin and death—is the most powerful message in human history. It proclaims the Good News of our salvation and it is the source of all our hope and joy!

Our Church has experienced its share of dark days over its 2,000-year history. The recent revelations of clergy abuse have certainly challenged us all to find the light of Christ in our present darkness while looking to the future with hope. As Archbishop of Newark, it is my particular obligation to proclaim the Good News of Easter joy while inviting all to work together to help our community acknowledge the sin, heal the wounds and rebuild and flourish. I believe that the experience of Easter joy calls us to reconcile, rise from the hurt and anger and renew our hope for the future. Our best efforts will only produce good fruit if we cooperate with the grace of God.

I would like to share with you a work already in progress; a new initiative called **FORWARD IN FAITH TOGETHER: Our Road Ahead**. It is a broad pastoral program that seeks to establish a foundation for healing to help alleviate the hurt and mistrust within our community, to reinforce the changes we have begun to implement, and provide a firm foundation for our missionary lives. **FORWARD IN FAITH TOGETHER** will ensure that we thrive as a community of missionary disciples, companions of our Risen Lord.

As Pope Francis stated, we are resolved to “*follow the path of truth wherever it may lead*” and create a road forward towards healing for all who have been harmed by abuse. We know we cannot proceed with healing until we have acknowledged the suffering and injury and cleansed the deep wounds from the past.

Yet, the path forward must involve far more than simply measures to address past transgressions. It must include an agenda for and commitment to the future. **FORWARD IN FAITH TOGETHER** calls for a more incisive engagement of the laity in the mission of their parish and the Archdiocese, as well as more direct and open communication with the clergy, religious, faithful and all people of good will. As a local Church, we are embarking on a process of pastoral conversion that makes the necessary changes in structures and strategies in greater service of our Mission.

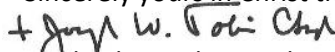
The work of **FORWARD IN FAITH TOGETHER** is supported by six key pillars, each representing an area of action that calls for our continuing commitment. They are: **1) Protection of Minors and Seminarians; 2) Accountability, Transparency and Communication; 3) Archdiocesan Pastoral Planning; 4) Lifelong Faith Formation and Education; 5) Ongoing Formation/Support of Clergy; and 6) Active Engagement of the Laity**. In the coming weeks, detailed steps for each of these pillars will be posted at [www.rcan.org](http://www.rcan.org).

I recognize this is an ambitious program and that we still face challenges ahead. It also is clear that much of this will take time to realize fully. Many of these initiatives already have been put into motion, while others will begin immediately.

Now, more than ever, we need to depend on God’s gracious care. Please join me in praying for our parishioners, clergy, lay ministers, religious women and men, parishes, schools and all the wonderful works of our Archdiocese. Please pray for me as well. I am deeply grateful for your patience and understanding as we begin to implement these important initiatives.

May the knowledge that our risen Lord leads us fill your hearts with hope as we move Forward in Faith Together.

Sincerely yours in Christ the Redeemer,



Cardinal Joseph W. Tobin, C.Ss.R.

Archbishop of Newark