



## **DIOCESE OF JOLIET**

### **Prayer For A New Bishop**

Good and gracious God,  
You have always been present to your Church  
giving it a Shepherd's care.

Our Diocese has been blessed again and again  
with generous, wise, and loving Bishops.  
In Your kindness, we ask abundant blessings  
be bestowed upon Bishop Conlon  
for the years he served  
the people of the Diocese of Joliet  
with the heart of a Missionary Disciple.

We come once again in need of a shepherd.  
Send your Spirit to guide the deliberations  
that will lead to the appointment of a shepherd  
with a heart like Your Son.

We ask this through our Lord, Jesus Christ,  
Your Son, who lives and reigns with You  
and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.  
Amen.

## TAKING UP OUR CROSS

Jesus tells us that we are to take up the cross if we are to be His followers. We all know of the cross. In these times the crosses we have embraced may be different than any other in our lifetime. There is the cross of staying safe and helping elderly parents to stay safe. It is sometimes a burden to communicate to others the importance of social distance. We might already be burdened by the thoughts of the fall and what school will look like for children. This anxiousness is a new heaviness on many levels. The crosses we carry may have caused a shortness of understanding with others. It is hard to communicate with a face covering or mask. It is a true burden for the children who are not understanding all that is taking place. These are new crosses.

Today the Lord invites us to look at the process of the cross. We can reflect on the difference between the heaviness of the cross we carry and the pain of the cross. These are two different doorways to embracing that to which the Lord invites us. At times we can get caught up in the heaviness of our cross. We might reflect on the burden that it is. To do this we might try to avoid it. The pain of the cross is a different experience. We live in a society that longs to have pain taken away. I know when I go to the dentist they cannot numb my gums soon enough. I think about all the shelves of pain relievers at our stores and pharmacies. All of this allows the pain to be removed or at least masked for a while until the meds wear off. We like to avoid pain. This unites us.

So when Jesus asked His disciples to pick up their cross, He invited them to start the journey. Before we experience the pain of the cross we must first lift up the cross. This is the starting point. It is a commitment to a journey to carry the cross. At times we like to shift the weight of our cross. Sometimes we re-adjust and sometimes we ask for help. The Lord expects us to do all these things. He expects us to ask for help. Every journey of the cross begins with us picking it up. May we do so with courage.

This past January I ran my first virtual race in Indianapolis. It was a 53 mile run/walk to be covered over a period of 30 days. Participants were asked to log their miles and post their time when they finished. The figure of 53 was symbolic of the number of miles of the expressway that loops the city, I-465. It was a great challenge and focus for me. It began with registering. It began with a commitment. It began with a choice. Jesus is asking us to make the decision to carry our cross. He knows we will re-adjust the weight, we will ask for help and at times we will lose sight of the goal, but nothing takes away the decision to begin.

Jesus is asking us to begin and He will go with us every step of the way.



Father John Ouper