



Diocesan Centre
Coursington Road
Motherwell
ML1 1PP

Rt Rev. Joseph Toal STB KC*HS
Bishop of Motherwell

25th February 2022

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

I hope this finds you well.

We are all saddened and perturbed by the Russian invasion of Ukraine and our thoughts and prayers are very much with the people of Ukraine, both at home and those here in Scotland. I have passed on the promise of our prayerful support to Fr Vasyl Kren, the priest of the Ukrainian Catholic Parish in Scotland. I am sure we will be generous in giving any material support requested for those displaced and deprived or damaged by the war. Pope Francis has asked us to keep Ash Wednesday, March 2nd, as a Day of Prayer and Penance for Peace. This call gives added impetus to us marking Ash Wednesday as always as our special Day of Fasting and Abstinence.

The attack of Russia on Ukraine is seen as a wake-up call for us to be aware of the threats that can arise in world order and the fragility of the peace we have had in Europe in recent decades. Lent is an appropriate time to be sensitive to our human weakness and fragility and to renew our willingness to turn again to God and place our lives and our world in his hands. On Ash Wednesday the words *"Turn away from sin and believe the Gospel"* ring in our ears and the forty days of Lent are our opportunity as individuals and communities to turn again to God with renewed faith and fervour and to allow the Lord to imprint his words and presence deep within us. It is indeed a time to wake-up and be ready spiritually for what lies ahead.

A strong part for us as Catholics in being alive and ready is our participation in the life and worship of the Church, and this is particularly important as we recover from the damaging effects of the pandemic which has disrupted so much of what we normally do. For this reason, we are restoring in Scotland the Sunday Obligation to attend Holy Mass from the 1st Sunday of Lent, March 6th, and I encourage all those who are well and able to come to Mass. It is our way of living our faith and reaching out to God in our great need. We are never disappointed because the Lord is truly with us in the mysteries we celebrate and fills us with his love, mercy and peace, making us able to face whatever lies ahead for ourselves and our world. We need the Lord and we need to come to him and know his saving power in our lives, and *"Now is the favourable time, this is the day of salvation"* as St Paul instructs us on Ash Wednesday.

As I write this letter, I look forward to concelebrating the Holy Mass in St Andrew's Cathedral, Glasgow tomorrow, during which Bishop Bill Nolan will be installed as the new Archbishop of Glasgow. The prayers of all in Motherwell are with him, and we ask the Lord to bless and protect him as he continues his episcopal ministry in the great city of Glasgow.

With my prayers and best wishes.

Yours in Christ.

+ Joseph Toal

T: +44(0)1698 269114 F: +44(0)1698 275630 W: www.motherwelldiocese.org E: chancellor@rcdom.org.uk

The Roman Catholic Diocese of Motherwell is a Charity registered in Scotland - Number SCO11041