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**Bishop of Aberdeen
Rt Rev Hugh Gilbert O.S.B.**

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PASTORAL LETTER FOR THE 5TH SUNDAY OF LENT

To be read and / or distributed at all Masses

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Easter is almost here. We might picture 'Easter' as a person, as someone coming to visit us. She comes with her cortege of feasts: Palm Sunday and Holy Week, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, Holy Saturday and especially the Easter Vigil and Easter Sunday - which then open out into the 50 days of Eastertide. Through signs and symbols, words and ceremonies, she brings us the Cross and Resurrection of Christ. She takes us to the heart of our faith. I encourage you to go out and meet her, not to miss the opportunity even if it disturbs usual routines or cuts across appealing alternatives. Let us thirst for the living God! Easter offers us wisdom and grace, the forgiveness of sins and peace with God. It is a chance to recover good priorities and tap into new energies. It is a time for the dry tree we are to experience a springtime and become green and fruitful again, and there is the goodness of coming together, of seeing our brothers and sisters in Christ.

"We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you, because by your holy Cross you have redeemed the world." My great hope for this diocese has always been that Christ becomes more real to us. The liturgies of Holy Week and Easter, the time we can give to personal reflection on the depths they contain, the opportunities for the Sacraments of Reconciliation and Holy Communion, are the "favourable time" for this to happen. "Our Saviour is ready for those who are thirsty" (St Athanasius). As a poet put it, Christ can Easter in us and "be a dayspring to the dimness of us".

We are living in uncertain times. We all know this! As Christians, we can be disconcerted too by aspects of the world of which we are part. They seem to threaten our humanity. At Easter, though, we can connect our lives to the risen Christ, just as the current year is inscribed on the Paschal Candle. "All time belongs to him and all the ages", ours too. At Easter, we can link up again to the great narrative of God's plan of salvation. We can refresh ourselves at the springs of our baptismal faith. We can realise what God the Father has given us by making us members of Christ and his Body, the Church, and recover a sense of responsibility for the world and environment in which we live. We can resonate with Pope Francis when he says, "We know well

that with Jesus life becomes richer and that with him it is easier to find meaning in everything" (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 266).

Someone once wrote. "In work we learn strength of character; in the family goodness of character." Let's add: in Holy Week and Easter, the character of Christ. Everything else passes. He doesn't. Let's go to meet Easter! "Our Saviour is ready for those who are thirsty."

Yours devotedly in Christ,
+ Hugh OSB

Hugh Gilbert OSB
Bishop of Aberdeen