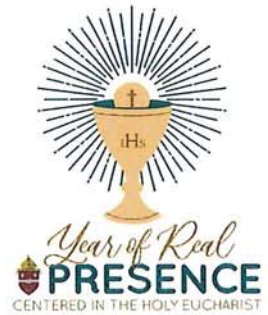




## OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

Mailing Address  
POST OFFICE BOX F  
ALLENTOWN, PENNSYLVANIA  
18105-1538



Lent 2022

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

During the Season of Lent, the Church invites us to meditate on the Cross of Christ and His journey to Calvary. The biblical accounts of the Passion powerfully tell us of the trials, sufferings, and pains Our Lord bore for the forgiveness of our sins. They also communicate His enduring love for humanity.

A particular detail in the Gospel of John is worthy of our reflection, especially during our Diocesan Jubilee Year of the Real Presence. Saint John tells us that when the soldiers saw Our Lord expire on the Cross, one of them *“thrust his lance into his side, and immediately blood and water flowed out”* (John 19:34). Certainly, this final blow to Our Lord’s Heart conveys that He truly died that Good Friday. However, the Fathers of the Church saw this to mean so much more. His ultimate sacrifice on the Cross gave birth to the Sacramental life of the Church: the cleansing waters of Baptism and the lasting nourishment of His Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity in the Holy Eucharist. From that very place of His torture and death flowed the Sacraments that give us true life and sustain us along our earthly pilgrimage.

This is significant for us as Catholics, especially as we try to bear our own share of the Cross in life. It could be a health issue, a financial burden, a loss of a family member, a strained relationship, or a sense of loneliness. Perhaps we are struggling to live out all that Christ commands us in Scripture and need help in living out the teachings of the Church. There is no way to avoid the difficulty of the Cross, but there is a way to bear it well.

Remember that the same Lord who exhorts each of us to *“take up his Cross and follow me”* (Mark 8:34) also gives us the invitation: *“Come to me, all you who labor and are burdened, and I will give you rest”* (Matthew 11:28). We bear these crosses well by coming before Him—Who is truly present on every altar, in every monstrance, and in every tabernacle—and uniting ourselves to His Sacrifice and His Cross. From His Heart, He pours out for us every grace that we need to carry our burdens. In a special way, the Real Presence of Our Lord in the Holy Eucharist gives us the assurance that, no matter the cross or the difficulty we face, He bears it with us. He remains with us in this Sacrament. This truly is the center of our Catholic faith.

Throughout this Sacred Season, I invite you to be intentional about spending time with Our Lord in the Holy Eucharist, His Real Presence. Thank Him for the blessings in your life and lay before Him the burdens that weigh you down. Ask Him to help you carry these crosses. Please use Lent as an opportunity to make a good confession acknowledging where you have failed and asking for His Mercy. Draw close to the pierced side of Christ, even if it has been a while since you have encountered Him in the Sacraments.

On Saturday, March 19<sup>th</sup>, the Solemnity of Saint Joseph, we will gather as a diocesan family at the Cathedral of Saint Catharine of Siena for a Eucharistic Congress. This is an opportunity during this Lenten Season and our Jubilee Year of the Real Presence to re-center ourselves on the power of the Holy Eucharist through witness reflections, opportunities for the Sacrament of Penance and Eucharistic Adoration, and the celebration of Holy Mass. Our Eucharistic Congress will be an occasion to seek that "fount of life" that flows from His pierced Heart—and to unite our share in the Cross to His. I encourage you and your family to participate in this great day.

At the beginning of the Chaplet of Divine Mercy, we pray: "*O Blood and Water, which gushed forth from the Heart of Jesus as a fount of Mercy for us, I trust in You.*" This Lent, I pray that each of us will draw closer to Our Lord in the Sacraments. Please be assured of my prayers for you and your loved ones before the Real Presence of Christ in the Holy Eucharist.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Alfred A. Schlert". The signature is written in dark ink and is preceded by a small cross symbol.

✠ Most Reverend Alfred A. Schlert  
Bishop of Allentown