



Bishop Hicks' Column



September 2021: "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever!"

What is your favorite season? Even though I am a big fan of warm weather, my favorite season is the fall. I love the brilliant colors as the leaves change and the breezes at night become cooler. During my five years of living in El Salvador, I missed having four seasons. That country has just two seasons. Residents used to joke and say, "We have two seasons in El Salvador, 'hot' and 'hotter.'" Actually, their two seasons are the dry and rainy seasons, and yet they are still both very "hot."

In the Midwest, we are blessed with the four seasons. They provide us not only with changes in the weather and temperature, but they also serve as a reminder that as time moves forward, everything in life changes. The Book of Ecclesiastes reminds us. "For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven: a time to be born, and a time to die."

As Catholics, we believe with all the changes in our lives, God is constant. His love is unchanging and unwavering. St. Paul in his letter to the Hebrews proclaims boldly, "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever." And therefore, he exhorts us, "Through him then let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge his name. Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God."

Many of you are familiar with the play and movie, "A Man for All Seasons." Based on the life of St. Thomas More, it highlights someone who heroically remains true to God and to himself in the midst of a changing world. He demonstrates the ability to adapt to all circumstances and times around him, while never surrendering to the external pressures to reject or bend his principles and values.

Like St. Thomas More, we are called to be men and women of all seasons. The world around us not only seems to be changing at a rapid pace, but

also at times it seems that our society and culture are going crazy as they shift their values and principles. Throughout this rollercoaster ride of changes, we are invited to keep our eyes focused on Christ. He is our Lord, Redeemer and Savior. His love, mercy and compassion never change. In other words, he is our rock, our solace in the storm of incertitude.

Every morning I begin my day with a Holy Hour. As I pray, I sometimes glance outside the window in my chapel that overlooks a grouping of trees, and I am reminded of the changing seasons. Currently, the trees are full of bright green leaves. Yet, I know they will not remain that way. Soon they will change colors, then die, fall to the ground and eventually bud back to new life. As I reflect on the changing seasons, sometimes I catch myself saying, "I cannot believe how quickly time is passing."

At the end of this month, I will celebrate the completion of my first year as the bishop of Joliet. During this time, the seasons have changed, and I too, with the grace of God, have tried to navigate these changing times and issues. Like everyone in the world, my first year has been filled with ups and downs, triumphs and challenges, joys and sorrows. Again, it has gone by like a "blink of the eye." Yet, throughout all the moments of rain and sun, I try to keep my gaze steady on Jesus. He helps me to carry the cross in my times of trial and rejoices with me in the times of joy. Therefore, when people ask me, "How do you feel about being the bishop of the Diocese of Joliet." I consistently and wholeheartedly respond, "I feel both happy and blessed!"

As I approach my second year here in the Diocese of Joliet, I know that things will continue to change and the craziness in our world will take on different shapes and forms. However, as I take these next steps, I do so with faith, hope and trust in God and with great gratitude for all of you. We are in this changing world together, and truly, "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever." †