

## ***Bearing the Burdens, Uplifting the Cross of Christ***

Holy Thursday 2020 for the Diocese of Yakima

Most Reverend Joseph J. Tyson, Bishop of Yakima

Peace be with you! In his first Chrism Mass homily in 2013 as Bishop of Rome, Pope Francis makes a graphic and rich reference to the chasubles we wear as priests at the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. The Old Testament precursor to the chasuble was often referred to as the “ephod.” Onyx stones decorated the two shoulder pieces of this ancient chasuble. The names of the children of Israel were engraved on the onyx stones, six on each side. This ancient chasuble also had breast plates upon which were engraved the 12 tribes of Israel.

“This means,” Pope Francis went on to explain, “that the priest celebrates by carrying on his shoulders the people entrusted to his care and bearing their names written in his heart. When we put on our simple chasuble, it might well make us feel, upon our shoulders and in our hearts, the burdens and the faces of our faithful people, our saints and martyrs who are numerous in these times.”

That is what I am doing as bishop. That is what we are doing as priests all across the diocese. We cannot celebrate Eucharist in public. But we remember you in our private masses. We are carrying on our shoulders your burdens. We are remembering your faces even though we cannot be together. Your names are inscribed in our hearts this day as we celebrate Eucharist.

During this time of crisis due to the spread of COVID-19, let us lift onto our shoulders all the doctors and nurses. Let us remember in our prayer all the many first responders. Let us remember all those suffering from the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. Let us bring them here to this altar of sacrifice. Let us offer them to Jesus. Peace be with you.