



THE DIOCESE OF LAKE CHARLES

December 2, 2018
First Sunday of Advent

My Dear People of God,

In Southwest Louisiana we are not strangers to dangerous situations. We have faced hurricanes and the catastrophes they bring with perseverance and courage. Should we not face accompanying challenges in the Church with the same determination? With God's help we certainly can.

I think of this when we meet internal and external threats to the Church. From within there is evidence of infidelity to Church teaching, gross immorality, and violations of trust on a scale that defies comprehension. This is particularly disconcerting for those of us who grew up in an environment in the Church that, while experiencing challenges, strived to maintain standards and unity. Of course, the Church remains the Body of Christ. Its teachings, which come from our Lord Himself, have not changed. They still point the way to heaven for us. The Church is still both a human and Divine institution which possesses a coherent philosophical, theological, spiritual, and cultural foundation that lifts humanity toward God and away from self-destruction. When individuals in the Church forget or ignore this, they are laying the groundwork for great harm.

From outside, we have forces that seek to discredit the credibility of the Church, if not destroy it. Let us be honest. The Church's teachings are not in sync with many prevailing notions in fundamental areas like life, death, and marriage. Many have succeeded in marginalizing the Church in society. In certain instances some within the Church have even helped accomplish this goal.

And the world that the Church faces and to whom it seeks to preach the Gospel is shaken by its own formidable challenges. Technological advances, changes in communications, political upheaval, and forceful ideologies rise up to bring us invasion of privacy, terrorism, political unrest, uncivil discourse, and confusion. All things considered, we could easily become disillusioned, but this is not God's way.

I think of the night that began our Lord's Passion. Just before He entered the Garden of Olives, when all circumstances pointed to an ominous conclusion, He said, "In the world you will have trouble, but take courage, I have

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conquered the world" (John 16:33). This is Christ's message to us in the midst of scandals and confusion.

With this in mind and following months of prayer and reflection as your bishop, I have decided to issue the decree attached to this letter. The Church did not help construct the civilization of the last two thousand years by ignoring our behavior within society. We in the Church either transform society by witnessing to it or risk being absorbed by society through acquiescence. We in the Church either act as a pro-active force for good or retreat into irrelevance. For these reasons, this decree seeks to implement in our diocese a program of prayer and worship that moves us more closely to being who we are as Catholics. In this way, God might more easily work through us to give good example to our neighbors and build up the kingdom of God. Of one thing I am certain: We cannot continue to live as passive bystanders. A change is necessary, and it begins with the way we worship and pray. It is a humble step, but I think a positive one.

Much of what I propose in the decree involves parish life and our daily lives as Catholics. In the case of the Prayer to St. Michael the Archangel, originating with Pope Leo XIII in 1886, and Eucharistic processions, we are reaching into the rich treasure of Catholic prayer and practice. With the Ember Days, we are touching upon a tradition that was sustained within the liturgical reform of the Second Vatican Council (cf. *General Norms for the Liturgical Year and the Calendar*, March 21, 1969, #45). These proposals lay the groundwork for changes in the life of our parishes that, I pray, will be beneficial for a deepening of Catholic life. This is a beginning; more will follow, and we shall see where the Grace of God leads us.

The Devil and the forces of evil, which this iniquitous spirit unleashes, are not resisted with a "business-as-usual" attitude, nor has what some would call a "Catholic-lite" approach ever proved effective in facing challenges to the Church and the Gospel. When the disciples of our Lord complained that their attempt at combatting a demon was ineffective, they asked, "Why could we not drive it out?" (Matthew 17:19, Mark 9:28). To which our Lord answered, "But this kind does not come out except by prayer and fasting" (cf. Matthew 17:21, Mark 9:29).

May our Blessed Mother intercede for us. May God bless our labors, increase our faith, and strengthen our resolve. May we patiently, hopefully, and confidently rise to face this moment of crisis.

With my prayers and blessings, I extend also my gratitude for your support, as I remain

Sincerely yours in our Lord,



✠Glen John Provost
Bishop of Lake Charles



Whereas the Second Vatican Council affirms, “Christ entered this world to give witness to the truth,” and “to carry out such a task, the Church has always had the duty of scrutinizing the signs of the times and of interpreting them in the light of the Gospel” (*Gaudium et spes*, 3 and 4);

Whereas, in the present moment, the Catholic faithful and their shepherds, the Bishops, are keenly aware that the Church must be fortified by grace to live its mission of proclaiming the truth of the Gospel;

Whereas it falls to the diocesan Bishop to give suitable guidance in such times and, when necessary, to draw from the rich spiritual patrimony of the Church to equip those entrusted to his care with the spiritual tools necessary to meet the needs of their time;

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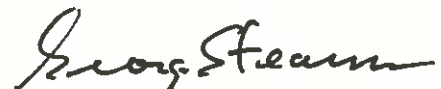
DECREES

1. That the Prayer of St. Michael the Archangel be recited following every Mass;
2. That every parish church conduct one hour of Eucharistic Adoration each week, excluding the week of 40 Hours Devotion assigned to the parish;
3. That in addition to the intention for vocations to the priesthood and religious life in the Diocese, 40 Hours Devotion include prayers in reparation for sins contrary to the Sixth Commandment, the healing of all victims of sexual abuse, and the conversion of sinners;
4. That, in order to foster a further devotion and love for the Most Holy Eucharist, each parish once a year conduct a Eucharistic procession on an appropriate day, such as the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception, the Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ (*Corpus Christi*), the Solemnity of Christ the King, the patronal feast day of the parish, the feast day of St. Peter Claver, the Solemnity of the Assumption of Our Lady (the Patroness of Acadiana);
5. That the faithful follow the universal law of the Church that all Fridays of the year are days of abstinence from meat; although, on Fridays outside of Lent, one may choose another suitable penance;
6. That Catholics are urged to observe the time honored tradition of Ember Days as days of prayer and fasting; Ember Days are the Wednesday, Friday and Saturday following the First Sunday of Lent, Pentecost Sunday, September 14 (the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross) and December 13 (the Memorial of St. Lucy);

Given at the Chancery of Lake Charles, Louisiana, on the First Sunday of Advent in the year of our Lord 2018 and effective 1 January 2019.


Glen John Provost
Bishop of Lake Charles




George Stearns
Chancellor