



DIOCESE OF METUCHEN

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April 27, 2020

My Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ, Brother Priests, Deacons and Seminarians, Faithful Consecrated Women and Men Religious,

I write to you with great hope and confidence that God is close to us in these very difficult days. We must never doubt that our daily concerns are His concerns too. And no one knows our needs better than Jesus' own mother, Mary.

We already have turned to her with trust and confidence this past year when our diocese was consecrated to Jesus through Our Lady of Guadalupe. This has been one of the highpoints of my own spiritual journey with Mary as my companion and guide in my walk of discipleship with her Son, Jesus Christ, and I continue to witness firsthand in our diocese a renewed fervor and desire to serve God and His Church in our parishes, schools and institutions.

I was so grateful to learn through the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, along with the Canadian Conference of Bishops, of a truly spiritual response to the struggles we are facing with this pandemic. Archbishop Gomez of Los Angeles, who serves as the U.S. Conference's president, will lead prayers of consecration to Our Lady that our Holy Father Pope Francis, had last year given as a new feast in the liturgical calendar under her title, Mary, Mother of the Church.

Indeed Mary, who is the Mother of the Church and of each one of us, has a deeply intimate concern for us. In her motherly care, we will invoke her to look with tender mercy and compassion on the struggles, sickness, suffering and death that many have experienced in these past weeks due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Ultimately, we know that only God can bring us the miracle of healing, peace and new life. Our Lady understands the mystery of God's will more than anyone.

Therefore, with confidence again in turning to Mary, I invite our whole diocese to join me in prayer this Friday, May 1 at 4 p.m. for a live streamed Mass from the Cathedral of St. Francis. I ask too that you tune in earlier at 3:30 p.m. when a live streamed recitation of the Holy Rosary will be led by some of our good religious sisters of our diocese. As we join in prayer across our diocese, we will be supernaturally joined to the Body of Christ spread throughout the

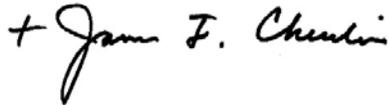
United States and Canada, all seeking the protection and help of Mary, the Mother of the Church. May is our Blessed Mother's month in particular, so how appropriate we will join together on this day to implore her help and remind us of her closeness to us!

In these days, Mary sees and supports us as we work to defeat this terrible scourge on our land and world. She joins with us in reaching out to our faithful parishioners, the sick, dying, and mourning. She guides the work of our dedicated medical and scientific community as they labor so heroically in caring for the sick and finding cures. She comforts us as we bury the dead, assisting our cemetery workers and funeral directors. She guides our teachers and parents and all those carrying on the work of educating our young, especially in the knowledge of truth and our faith. Finally, she assists us as we care for the poor too during these days, who are so often the ones who suffer most from the economic downturn that afflicts us too. Yes, we need to turn again to ask her to lift us up at this time and bring us closer to her beloved Son, Jesus Christ.

I carry you all in my prayers and thoughts each day, even as we are socially distanced, you are close to me. I ask you to continue to pray for me and the good works of our diocese too. Please join in prayer on May 1 as we begin Mary's month!

With renewed best wishes, I remain

Yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "James F. Checchio". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial 'J'.

Most Reverend James F. Checchio, JCD, MBA
Bishop of Metuchen