



OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

DIOCESE OF METUCHEN

St. John Neumann Pastoral Center • P.O. Box 191, Metuchen, New Jersey 08840-0191

November 19, 2021

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

It is a joy to be traveling again to our parishes, offering the Eucharistic sacrifice and visiting with you, the Catholic faithful of our diocese. Over the past six months I have been to almost every parish in the diocese to celebrate Mass. During the pandemic, not being able to visit our parishes was one of my hardships. Gratefully, the cathedral became my regular place to celebrate liturgies and that was wonderful, but I missed going to our 89 other parishes and seeing all of you who live and worship in them. This Thanksgiving, as we thank God for all the things He has blessed us with, my Mass intention will certainly include my desire to visit with you again.

I wanted to write to you as we begin this Advent Season. If you have not started attending weekly Mass in person, Advent would be the perfect time to begin doing so. Advent is the season where we open up our hearts more fully for the Lord's coming. We remember His being born of the Virgin over 2,000 years ago, while preparing for His future coming at the end of time. We also prepare ourselves to meet Our Lord as He comes to us in the present, most especially through His presence in the Eucharist. In my prayers of thanksgiving, I always thank God for this great gift He gives us. The Eucharist sustains us. When we receive Him worthily, our venial sins are forgiven, we're built up in grace and virtue and thereby strengthened to live as Jesus' faithful disciples in our world today. He helps us to persevere and be faithful in our marriages and families, in our workplaces and schools, or wherever we find ourselves. He strengthens us for the Mission of carrying on His work.

Your partnership is critical to this Mission. If you have already returned to the weekly celebration of Holy Mass, take a look around and see who is not there. Will you become an ambassador to others, telling those who have not yet returned about why you go to Mass and how it strengthens you? Your witness is part of your Mission and it could be the invitation someone needs to return to Mass. Remember, God entrusts to each of us, through our Confirmation, the strength to witness to Him. This includes sharing with others what He has done for each of us. Your sphere of influence is your "mission land." It is important that your witness be shared not only with the adults in your life, but the children, too. By doing so, you pass on your faith to them. Your example of attending Mass weekly leaves a lasting mark on the children, not only those in your own life but, all around you. It is your witness that encourages their faith and embodies all they learn through our Catholic schools and parish religious education programs, which offer them a solid foundation in our faith. We cannot take for granted these avenues of catechesis or the influence of our own witness!

This upcoming year provides a perfect opportunity to renew our efforts to bring souls to Christ. As a diocese, we are celebrating our 40th year now. We opened the year with a beautiful Mass and celebration at our Cathedral on November 19. It was wonderful to see people from all our different parishes present. We prayed for everyone who makes up our beautiful diocese. This anniversary gives us the perfect opportunity to recommit ourselves to the Lord as His disciples throughout these four counties of New Jersey. It is up to us to build His Kingdom here, and if we do not respond, who will? Let us recommit to being fed by Him at weekly Mass as we join in the great prayer of Thanksgiving in praise of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The Eucharist provides us nourishment for our journey and sustains us in our work of discipleship – how we need this nourishment and sustenance.

I look forward to seeing you again soon. May this Advent be a beautiful time of preparation for Jesus' coming into our world and into each of our lives more fully. He desires to fill us with Himself and provide for all our needs. Will we respond in kind? I am grateful for you and to be on this journey together. Know of my love and prayers for you too, and please, pray for me! Our Christmas will be more joyful than ever, given our preparation throughout this Advent Season.

Yours in Christ,

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