

“Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer.”

Romans 12:12

May 5, 2022

My Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,



OFFICE of the BISHOP

Thank you for your discipleship through which our Church sustains and grows. I pray this Eastertide allows you to rediscover the symbol and power of our faith as a light which can dispel the darkness & represent new beginnings. This is what we are called as Catholics to proclaim and live!

Regardless of whether or not you are a steady consumer of news, you know this has been a difficult time in the life of the Catholic Church. All of us have been praying fervently for the family of our Church and our parishes to heal. We have a profound responsibility to survivors of abuse in the Church - and to their families and friends who suffer with them. Of course my responsibility goes beyond prayer. Understandably, you are looking to me for leadership on the path forward. This has been a priority focus since I was ordained as your Bishop in 2014 and prior to my arrival for more than 10 years with the Diocese of Brooklyn. If you are interested in more detail, a collection of my actions during my tenure as Bishop can be found at www.rcda.org/offices/protecting-children-young-people. **Pope Francis reminded us during Holy Week, “With Jesus, it is never over, never too late. With God, we can always come back to life.”**

Yes, this is indeed a challenging time. But that does not represent the full story of the Catholic Church. Our 126 parishes are serving you, their faith communities, *daily* bringing a range of ministries and sacraments to life for individuals and families - and the Diocese continues to serve each of them as a partner to help them fulfill the Great Commission which Jesus gave to His Church: “Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Matthew 28:19). Our Diocesan specialized services for parishes are in a constant state of innovation, looking for the next great idea or adaptation of an existing service/resource/ministry etc. to help the parishes better serve their communities. ***Within each individual parish is where we know the Catholic Church and the propensity for the fulfillment of our mission comes to life!***

Some parishes still struggle to get worshippers back but they remain open and serving those who *have* returned while reaching out to those who have not. COVID brought challenges we never would have imagined but I can assure you we continue to try our best to abide by public health regulations while also meeting your spiritual needs. If there was any doubt before, it became clear that our parishes and Diocese are ***stronger together. In fact I encourage you to talk to your parish leader about their partnership with the Diocese and that impact to your local community.***

As your Bishop, I pray I have offered good reason for you to believe in me and the truth about the direction we have been moving for several years, despite what the news media may have you think. ***Your support of the Diocesan Appeal is not for benefit of the Diocese as an entity itself - rather it is as a key mission and logistics partner/resource for your parish and the 125 others in our 14 counties.*** Yes, the Diocese underwrites the education of religious formation programs for priests, deacons and nuns. Yes, the Diocese underwrites programs to benefit the poor and marginalized who are our friends and neighbors. Yes, the Diocese underwrites the administrative structure managing our 22 Catholic schools. So, your support of the Diocesan Appeal underwrites those initiatives too. ***But, the principal expenses of the Diocese – and our primary responsibility - are to provide comprehensive support services and expertise to each parish to remove or minimize burdens that are necessities of parish administration.*** The priority is for your parish leader and their staff to focus on ministry to the faithful.

Much like the impact of declining offertory in the parish, a reduction in revenue for the Diocesan Appeal will impact the services the Diocese can provide to parishes. I understand that you may have the inclination to withhold support to voice discontent. ***My prayer, however, is that you reflect on the alternative: your support can affect positive change!*** God calls us to be active stewards of His Church – essential to its sustenance and growth. If we instead rely solely on action by our neighbors, what is the impact to our branch - your parish - or even the vine - the Diocese? We are stronger together, we thrive together, and we are disciples in faith together. Your investment in your parish offertory and Diocesan Appeal combine to bring to life the ministries from which our hearts are nourished. If the practice of your Catholic faith brings value to your life and you pray for a culture of others living a life in Christ, won't you join us in stewarding and strengthening our Church by making your gift to the Diocesan Appeal today?

My commitment to you is toward a stronger future for our Catholic Church. I am grateful to you and your family for however you will accompany me on this journey.

Yours in Christ,

+Edward B. Scharfenberger

Edward B. Scharfenberger
Bishop of Albany



**Diocesan
Appeal**