

ST. MARY'S-STONY HILL, WATCHUNG



Bishop James
Checchio

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

One of my great joys as your bishop is to travel about the many parishes of our diocese. Although I have told you before, I want to say again how gratifying and encouraging it is to me to meet so many of you who seek to deepen your friendship with Jesus and support one another on this path. As we prepare to celebrate Christmas, the gift of Emmanuel, God with us, we are invited anew to rediscover God's great untiring love for us and that it is really He who seeks us out. The mystery of the Incarnation, is that God became one of us. The second person of the Holy Trinity assumes our humanity in all ways but sin in the person of Jesus Christ. The Father chose to send us his only Son so that we might become more like God and know the real meaning of love. The celebration of Christmas brings this great hope and promise to each of us again.

As we ponder in prayer, meditating on the Christmas mystery, let us remember how those who learn about the presence of the newborn Christ respond. The night of His birth, the heavens opened and the choirs of angels descended to sing praise to God and to adore the newborn Christ. Shepherds in their night watch came to adore the newborn King resting in the arms of the Blessed Virgin Mother. And of course, in due time the wise men from the east came in search of the new King and fell down in adoration before Him. The bible makes clear for us that the proper response to this great mystery of God's love becoming flesh is indeed an outpouring of our love in return to Him! This is called adoration, which is an act of love from the heart that belongs only to God. Christmas beckons our hearts to profound adoration of God made flesh for us in Jesus.

With that thought in mind, let me now tell you about a new opportunity for adoration beginning next month in our Pastoral Center. We will begin a dedicated time of Eucharistic Adoration each morning beginning at 9 a.m. and concluding with 11:45 a.m. Mass each day that our Center is open.

Eucharistic Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament is a wonderful way that the mystery of the Incarnation remains a gift for our Church. Jesus promised to remain with His Church until the end of time. One way He does this is in the gift of His presence in the Holy Eucharist. When we come to adore the Lord in the Blessed Sacrament, we are transported back to the nativity in Bethlehem in a sense as we are mystically joining those first choirs of angels who sang His praises, we are among the shepherds who come in humility, we are the wise who still seek Him.

This new initiative of Eucharistic Adoration at our Pastoral Center is a needed opportunity to anchor all that we do in our diocese in prayer. You might remember this as a focus of my pastoral letter, rooting all our pastoral and evangelization efforts in prayer. Hence, we started daily Mass at the Pastoral Center last year, and now we extend the prayer of our Mass with Eucharistic Adoration. As you well know, if we do not start with sincere prayer of the heart, asking our Lord to bless and inspire our efforts, then our pastoral work, our outreach and efforts at evangelization will be hollow, and could end up being directed by ourselves, rather than by Him. Indeed, genuine prayer of the heart moves the heart of God. We will pray before our Eucharistic Lord for vocations to the priesthood and religious life; we will pray for all of our priests, deacons, religious, seminarians and all who faithfully and generously serve in ministries in our diocese. We will pray for our generous benefactors, our sick and dying and all who reach out to us with special prayer requests. I know in many of my travels throughout our diocese so many of our faithful present me with prayer requests. I will join these needs to those of the adorers who will come to pray before our Eucharistic Lord at the Pastoral Center.

The gift of Christmas is not meant to be for a day or even a season. No, the gift of Christmas is for us to live more fully every day in the truth that God so loved the world that He gave us His only Son, not just once two thousand years ago, but He renews that promise, "I am with you" every day of our lives as He becomes present on our altars, as He abides in the midst of His Church through the power of the Holy Spirit. We are so blessed!

Soon in the new year, you will hear more ways that you can be part of our Eucharistic Adoration in the Pastoral Center. You are most welcome to come and pray and we will also provide ways that you may send in your intentions to have them prayed for before our Eucharistic Lord.

So, I take this opportunity to send you joyful Christmas greetings and to thank you for your perseverance on the path of your friendship with Jesus! I want you to know that you are deeply loved by God and it is indeed a great joy for me to be your shepherd here in the Diocese of Metuchen, and to love you as our Lord asks me to. May all of our priests, deacons, religious and all lay faithful find renewed graces and new hope in the celebration of Christmas and the abiding truth that God has come to save us, He desires to be with us. Yes, the good news of Christmas is that God so loved the world that He gave us His only begotten Son. Come, let us adore Him!

+ James F. Checchio

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Bishop of Metuchen

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