



THE DIOCESE OF KALAMAZOO
OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

November 21, 2022

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

As we prepare to celebrate Thanksgiving Day, one of our most treasured national holidays, we have the opportunity to turn our attention away from all the problems of the world, so that we can pause to realize how blessed we truly are, and to give thanks to God for His abundant blessings. Thanksgiving urges us to take a much-needed break from the things that trouble us so that we can say “thank you” to those people, and for those things, that bring us joy and peace in spite of the challenges we face.

Among those challenges is the growing and strident divisiveness over abortion and all human life issues. In addition, we can easily be overwhelmed by the political and social issues that confront us, including racism, political divisions, inflation, wars in Ukraine and other parts of the world, the increased suffering of those most in need, and all the economic problems that cause everyone so much fear and anxiety these days.

And yet, when we pause and reflect, we have so much for which to be grateful. Most importantly, we give thanks for the gift of our faith, and in particular for Jesus’ Resurrection, which gives us the reason to live always in hope.

For us as Catholics, our reasons for thanksgiving are celebrated regularly every time we come together for the Holy Eucharist (whose name comes from the Greek word for thanksgiving, “ευχαριστία”). We are invited to give heartfelt thanks for the gift of life itself, for our parents and families, for the love that we share with spouses and children, for our friends, for our freedom as Americans, for our material possessions, for our intellectual gifts and talents, and for much, much more.

On Thanksgiving Day, we are invited to say a special “thank you” to God for our vocation as missionary disciples of Jesus, as we accompany the people we love, the people we work with, our neighbors—and even strangers and people we dislike—along our journey of faith. Gratitude is a powerful virtue. It opens our hearts to the healing power of God’s grace. It helps us look beyond our own selfish wants and fears to the gifts we receive from others and to the opportunities to share with others, and to return thanks to God, for all that He has generously given to us.

This Thanksgiving, let us give thanks to God for the precious gift of human life, and to make reparation for any times we have individually, or that our society has collectively, abused that precious gift. Let us offer prayers of gratitude for all the people in our lives who have shared their gifts with us. Let us say prayers of contrition for our sins, and then ask for the grace to forgive those who have harmed us in any way.

Healing and wholeness come about when our hearts are clean and when we can praise and give thanks to God, the Source of all our blessings. It is with this sense of abundant gratitude that I invite you to enter the new Liturgical Year about to begin the Sunday after Thanksgiving, November 27th. As we begin the Season of Advent may we do so with gratitude for the gift of our faith. May this new Church year help us to prepare our hearts and minds as we continue “waiting in joyful hope” for all the ways Our Lord wants to come to us.

I thank God for all of you—clergy, religious, and lay faithful in our beloved Diocese of Kalamazoo. May God be praised always for His goodness to us! And may we have the serenity, wisdom and courage to look beyond life’s challenges, and be humbled and grateful for all God’s abundant blessings.

Happy Thanksgiving, and may you have a hope-filled Advent Season!

Faithfully yours in Christ,

Most Rev. Paul J. Bradley
Bishop of Kalamazoo