



OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

December 2, 2021

Prot. No. B 127/21

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

The mystery of the Church is our hidden union with the Redeemer. Christ, the head and cornerstone, formed a holy society to be His body and to remain always united with Him. St. John the Evangelist relates to us the image of Christ as the vine and the fruit that we, the branches, can bear by remaining in Him:

“Remain in me, as I remain in you. Just as a branch cannot bear fruit on its own unless it remains on the vine, so neither can you unless you remain in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever remains in me and I in him will bear much fruit because without me you can do nothing.” (John 15:4-5).

We are indeed an extension of Christ along with every member of the universal church. As the Church is united by the Holy Spirit, we carry out the Gospel through the manner of life that has been handed down to us through Sacred Scripture and magisterial teaching.

Every diocese is also a particular expression of the entire body of Christ. The Second Vatican Council taught that “[the diocese] constitutes a particular church in which the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church of Christ is truly present and operative” (Christus Dominus, 11). The bishop, having the fullness of holy orders, is a figure of Christ, who is assisted by his priests and deacons as well as pious and skilled lay persons, who help to make Christ’s Paschal mystery known and lived by each person in the diocese. Our beloved diocese came into existence in 1972 with the episcopal consecration of Bishop Michael J. Begley at the Cathedral of St. Patrick in Charlotte, North Carolina, and the Holy Father’s designation of the 46 counties of western North Carolina to which he and his successors exercise the offices of teaching, sanctifying, and governing.

Over the past 50 years, the Diocese of Charlotte has seen an enormous amount of growth in terms of population and pastoral needs. Through the decades, the clergy and lay

people of the diocese have responded generously and joyfully to new opportunities to live the faith and make Jesus known, loved, and served. Beginning with 53,000 Catholics and 69 priests in 1972, today more than 130 priests and 130 deacons serve a Catholic population of 515,000, and the number of Catholic ministries, agencies, programs, parishes, and apostolates has grown by leaps and bounds.

In order to celebrate the Diocese of Charlotte's semicentennial anniversary, I declare and proclaim that throughout the diocese, a special anniversary year is to be celebrated from January 12, 2022, the 50th anniversary of the Diocese of Charlotte, through January 12, 2023. During the pandemic, we have lived through a period of many trials, difficulties, and obstacles. By God's mercy, we continue to prevail. After much separation and isolation, we have in God's providence the ability to come together in celebration of our unity as one family of God. During this year, which in recognition of our golden anniversary will be themed "Faith More Precious Than Gold," (1 Peter 1:7), we will celebrate in the present with joy and devotion; we will have the opportunity to recall our past and celebrate our diocese's history; and we will resolve to strengthen our diocesan family and look for even greater ways to glorify God.

In preparation for this Golden Anniversary Year, I am grateful for the many priests, lay persons, and diocesan employees who have been working together to prepare resources, events, and programs to help groups, parishes, individuals, and the entire diocese to grow in the faith and in our identity as one ecclesial family. The resource manual for the celebration of this anniversary year is to be used by priests, parish administrators, societies of religious life within the diocese, and lay groups in order to celebrate devotedly along with their brothers and sisters throughout the whole diocese. In particular, I look forward especially to all of us gathering together again for the Eucharistic Congress in August 2022.

My brothers and sisters, let us recall once more that anything we celebrate in this anniversary year is a celebration of Christ. Whatever is good and praiseworthy in the diocese, which is composed of many branches connected to the true vine, comes from God. We are His instruments and cooperators in carrying out His message of love and reconciliation. And as Mary, the patroness of our diocese, is so closely connected with her Son's work for our salvation, we also draw close to her in this special year of grace. May Christ's hand guide our endeavors, and may Mary's mantle always protect our work to further Christ's Kingdom.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

+ *Peter J. Jugis*

Most Reverend Peter J. Jugis
Bishop of Charlotte

