



OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

DIOCESE OF SCRANTON
300 WYOMING AVENUE
SCRANTON, PENNSYLVANIA 18503-1279

July 1, 2020

Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

As the calendar turns to July this week, it is hard to believe just how much has changed in our lives over the last four months. With summer now upon us, things may be gradually returning to normal in some ways – but the threat of COVID-19 is still very present in our communities.

With the virus surging in many parts of our country, we need to be more vigilant than ever in exercising precautionary measures to keep us all safe. While all parishes in the Diocese of Scranton are now able to hold in-person Masses, this is not the time for us to let down our guard. I want to thank you – our faithful people, as well as all of our pastors and parish life coordinators – for your continued patience in following all of the safety protocols in your parishes.

As a people of God, we always need to think about how our actions impact others. Maintaining proper social distancing and wearing face masks are vital in preventing the spread of this virus. They are also acts of charity, helping to safeguard our fellow parishioners, our community and ourselves. Right now, we do not have a vaccine for the coronavirus, but we do have something that is just as important: We have the ability to help keep each other safe.

I'm thankful that so many of you have stepped-up to help your parishes stay safe at this time. From volunteering to make sure people are properly welcomed and healthy – to sanitizing your church after Mass – each action is truly making a difference to protect those around us.

While our capacity for attendance might be temporarily limited – the love of God knows no limits. If nothing else, this difficult time has helped to emphasize to us how important the communal celebration of the Eucharist is.

While the Sunday obligation to attend Mass remains suspended at this time – you and I know very well that nothing can replace coming together as a faith-filled community for the shared celebration of the Eucharist. These past months have reminded us that for as challenging and difficult as the journey may have been, Jesus alone is our light, our hope and our strength.

This coming weekend, we'll listen to very familiar and encouraging words of Jesus from Saint Matthew's Gospel: "*Come unto Me, all you who labor and are burdened, and I will give you rest.*" (Matthew 11:28)

We've all been burdened and stressed these last few months, haven't we? Yet, as always, we manage to find a hopeful way forward through the grace of God and Jesus' abiding presence in our lives. As we continue to re-gather as a local church week-by-week, may the Good News of Jesus be the message that we spread far and wide. It alone has the power to provide hope and to impart lasting peace to those who open their lives and hearts to Jesus.

You, your family and loved ones are always in my prayers. Please stay safe and well.

Faithfully yours in Christ,

† *Joseph C. Bambera*

Most Reverend Joseph C. Bambera, D.D., J.C.L.
Bishop of Scranton