

OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

DIOCESE OF SCRANTON
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SCRANTON, PENNSYLVANIA 18503-1279

January 2022

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

With the dawn of a new year, my prayer, like many of yours, is a prayer for peace: peace in our hearts, our families, our world, and within our Church. This season also affords us an opportunity to reflect upon where we have been – and more importantly – to look ahead to where we are going. As always, we give thanks to our generous God for the many blessings He has bestowed on us as we look forward to a future full of hope for us all (Jeremiah 29:11).

In 2019, you may remember that we began a pastoral planning initiative in the Diocese of Scranton with the goal of proactively looking at our local church in the present moment, while recognizing the opportunities and challenges ahead. Even during the COVID-19 pandemic, this blueprint planning process has been ongoing. To make sure everyone in all of our parishes is familiar with this continuing effort, I want to share with you the following document, *Vision 2030: Creating Parish Communities Rooted in the Life of Jesus Christ*.

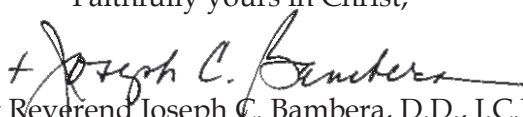
As you will see in the following pages, our Diocese faces significant challenges due to changing demographics in our 11 counties, from fewer people maintaining membership in our parishes to a diminishing number of ordained priests to serve our spiritual needs. At the same time, however, while our numbers have decreased over the years, the faith of our people continues to be strong and opportunities to proclaim the Good News of Jesus abound. With many people in our communities identifying as Catholic but not registered in our parishes and others not ascribing to any religion at all, our mission to invite them into our churches and show them the love of Jesus is more vital than ever. In so doing, through God's grace, our witness to Jesus will strengthen our parishes and also sow seeds for vocations to the priesthood, diaconate and consecrated life that are so necessary to the life and ministry of our Church.

Based on all of the information contained in this document, you will see that it is inevitable that changes will become necessary in some of our parishes. Although it is not our plan to modify all of our parish structures at one time, it is important for you to know that different things will prompt change at different times in different places. While change is never easy, the most effective pastoral planning processes take place when everyone is actively informed and engaged. All of us – clergy and laity alike – must be able to look at the realities we are facing honestly and objectively. Prayer and honest dialogue with all of you will help us discern what God's will is for us as a Diocese at this time in our history.

Because of our Baptism, each one of us has a role to play in the Church. In working together to create vibrant parish communities, we must all proclaim the Good News of the Gospel through our words and the service we offer to our brothers and sisters. Each one of us must become an 'eager evangelizer,' sharing our love and faith in Christ.

As we embrace our future over the next decade and beyond, may we trust in the power of the Holy Spirit as our surest helper and guide. I look forward to walking with each one of you in this ongoing pastoral planning process as together we work to keep our Church a strong and vibrant beacon of hope for all.

Faithfully yours in Christ,


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