



May 27, 2021

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

This past Sunday the Church concluded the Easter season with the observance of the Solemnity of Pentecost that celebrates the outpouring of the Holy Spirit and the beginning of the Church. Through the presence of the Holy Spirit in their lives, the disciples of Jesus changed the course of history through their bold proclamation of the presence and power of the risen Lord in the lives of God's people. To this day, the essence of this great feast of the Holy Spirit empowers us to love unconditionally, to serve and to embrace the mission of the Church.

This Pentecost comes at a time of remarkable hope and opportunity. We are gradually emerging from the restrictions of the COVID-19 pandemic. Recognizing many positive developments such as increasing vaccination rates, declining hospitalizations and a decreasing percentage of coronavirus cases, the Diocese of Scranton has been able to adjust our health and safety protocols.

I want to take this opportunity to personally welcome you back to Mass and encourage others who are in good health to begin returning to Mass. Only by joining with the community of believers, just as the nascent Church gathered at Pentecost, and through our participation in the celebration of the Eucharist, the source and summit of our faith, are we sustained with the life-giving nourishment of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ and our spiritual life renewed. We simply cannot live without the Eucharist! As Jesus himself tells us, "Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him on the last day. For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me and I in him." (Jn 6:54-56)

Brothers and sisters, God has spoken mightily to us in this past year. He has spoken to us about life and the true and lasting treasures that have been given to us through faith. I pray that we have listened carefully enough to set aside all that divides us and to go forth during these days filled with the power of the Spirit of God. Having been baptized into the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, it is our responsibility as His disciples to proclaim the truth of Jesus, to walk together as brothers and sisters, and to live His message of love, mercy, forgiveness and peace to all.

While the current health situation offers many signs of hope, it is also clear that the pandemic is still a present reality. For that reason, the Bishops of Pennsylvania have jointly agreed that the obligation to attend Sunday Mass and Holy Days should remain suspended at this time in order to not put undue pressure on those who may have pre-existing conditions or health concerns. Nevertheless, for those who have resumed other activities, there is no substitute for gathering together to celebrate the Eucharist and our faith.

Let us continue to pray for one another and especially for all those who have died from COVID-19 and their families and friends who grieve their loss.

Come Holy Spirit! Lead us back to the Eucharist and the fullness of life that we receive through the People of God – the Church of Jesus Christ!

Faithfully yours in Christ,

+ Joseph C. Bambera

Most Reverend Joseph C. Bambera
Bishop of Scranton