



DIOCESE OF VENICE IN FLORIDA

OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

October 8, 2014

My Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Greetings in the love and peace of Our Lord Jesus Christ!

As you may have seen in the news lately, the Diocese of Venice has been mentioned on a number of occasions. Much of the news has rightly focused on the positive actions taken by the Diocese and the large and small ways that our efforts are making a difference. Unfortunately, other news stories have chosen to focus on negative accusations against the Diocese of Venice, specifically against the Bishop, clergy, and lay faithful. Sadly, these unfounded claims have been made anonymously and perpetuated by some, suggesting that they were meant to create division instead of unity.

Earlier this summer, Pope Francis reminded us that "Diocesan life means a relationship with the Bishop, which must be realized and must grow continuously." One of the great joys of my vocation is to be with you as I travel extensively throughout the Diocese. You've openly shared with me your hopes, dreams and aspirations. These moments deepen our bond of communion as we grow together in Christ. In that relationship I seek to act with justice, charity, and for the well-being of the People of God entrusted to my care, even when such actions are unpopular.

Our first priority as a Diocese, and mine as your Shepherd, is to continue to grow in Faith and Holiness, as the Second Vatican Council and Pope Francis call us to do. As members of the Body of Christ, the Church, we are called to live out the fruits of our Baptism and Confirmation, in preserving, defending and sharing the teachings of Our Lord Jesus Christ and the Gospel of salvation as we have received them from the Apostles. Today, this is no easy task. Our Catholic Faith is regularly attacked, ridiculed and ignored. Like you, I have a duty and passion to safeguard our Faith, to share its teachings, and to cultivate its growth in Southwest Florida. Together, we must ensure stability so that future generations may also grow in Holiness and Faith.

As we celebrate our 30th Anniversary as a Diocese, there is much for which to be thankful. The Lord continues to bless our work. We continue to add new members both in existing parishes and with the establishment of new ones. Our Catholic Charities is expanding its outreach to the poor, the less fortunate and marginalized, offering help and hope throughout the Diocese. Countless charitable and pastoral initiatives are carried out in Parishes and by individuals in support of their brothers and sisters in need. Thank you for your participation in these good works.

Our Catholic Schools and religious education programs are flourishing, which will ensure that the next generations will continue to carry the light of Christ into the future. As well, I would be remiss not to thank parents who put the religious education of their children as one of their highest priorities.

Through generous support from so many of you and the steps taken to ensure financial accountability and responsibility, our Diocese is fiscally strong. This enables us to carry out needed spiritual, charitable and pastoral works and ensures that the Diocese will remain strong into the future. Thank you for making this possible.

Our Parishes are vibrant with worship, programs, and pastoral initiatives which celebrate, teach, and spread the Faith. The faithful in our Diocese continue to stand up and proudly defend the dignity of human life, the marginalized, and religious freedom. I have witnessed this first-hand as I have traveled around the Diocese and have seen for myself your fidelity and devotion. God bless you for the incredible work and good deeds that you do in living out your Faith. You are the reason our Diocese is so blessed. In a particular way, I thank and deeply appreciate our dedicated priests and religious for the tireless work that they do on behalf of the People of God.

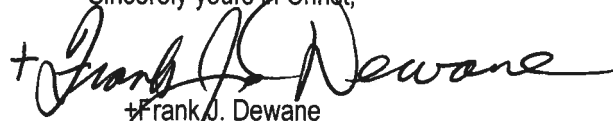
At the same time, there remains much work to be done. The needs of our Diocese are diverse and at times complex. As your Bishop and Shepherd of this Diocese, a role entrusted to me by our Holy Father, I take my responsibilities very seriously. However, no one individual can address all the diverse pastoral needs and challenges facing the Diocese, so I rely upon extensive consultation with priests, religious, and laity. It is my sacred obligation, through prayer and reflection, to make the best pastoral decisions for the good of the People of God. I listen, discern and take seriously the concerns of the faithful, even those that may disagree. I cherish and look forward to continuing this collaboration and consultation with you as we walk forward together on the path of Holiness.

Please join me in celebrating the good that happens each day in our Diocese thanks to the countless women and men of God like you who are the doers of your Faith. Be the Light of Christ by sharing this good news with others.

To the many who have sent notes of prayer and offered support, both publicly and privately, I sincerely thank you. Please continue to pray for me, your unworthy Shepherd, as I do for you, and for all the people of the Diocese of Venice as we continue to move forward sharing the joy of the Gospel of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

I remain prayerfully united with you in the love of Our Lord Jesus Christ and Mary our Mother.

Sincerely yours in Christ,


† Frank J. Dewane
Bishop of the Diocese of
Venice in Florida