



ROMAN CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF SYRACUSE

OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

240 E. ONONDAGA STREET, SYRACUSE, NY 13202-2608

June 4, 2022
Vigil of Pentecost

Dear Sisters and Brothers in the Risen Lord,

Pentecost is all about stepping out and putting into practice the words of the Risen Jesus found in Acts 1:8 before his ascension into heaven: *"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."* It is about stepping out of our comfort zones into the real world in which we live carrying with us the Gospel of Jesus Christ and aiding people's encounters with the Risen Lord.

Three years ago this very day I stepped out into the gathering space of the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception to be introduced as the 11th Bishop of Syracuse. After 30 years as an ordained priest for the Diocese of Ogdensburg, on that June day I found myself in a totally new and, yes, strange environment! Yet, from that moment onward I have experienced the working of the Holy Spirit in seeking to respond to Jesus' call: "Follow me" (Jn 21:19). Even in the midst of some significant challenges, I have experienced the joy of the gospel – the joy of sharing the Good News of Jesus Christ with the people of Central New York, including the North Country, the Mohawk Valley, and the Southern Tier.

I have very much enjoyed traversing the Diocese of Syracuse from North to South and West to East. Its natural beauty and the beauty of her people have been instrumental in allowing me to call this portion of the Lord's vineyard my "home" – not my home away from home, but my home! In my first message to this diocesan family three years ago, I stated that I wanted our parishes to be places in which all persons would feel welcomed and at home. This is still my hope. Yet, during our listening sessions which have recently concluded, I heard that some folks have not had such an experience and feel rejected and unwanted.

In part, I believe that this unfortunate circumstance is due to the fact that faith, in general, needs to take deeper root in each of our lives. One constant theme of the listening sessions was the need for catechesis – continued learning of the Catholic faith for all stages of life's journey. How does faith and daily life meet no matter what age, we are? Coupled with this need is that of having a more universal vision of Church. The focus of the story of Pentecost is all about opening doors and going out to all nations to tell the Good News. When we look at the origins of the Catholic Church, it goes from focusing on one's self in an Upper Room to directing one's attention to the other – in Rome, in Spain, in India, in Persia, etc. In terms of today, it means we cannot just focus on the needs of one parish, but the needs of the entire Church of Syracuse from Oswego,

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Pulaski, and Camden to Boonville, Rome, and Utica, from Central Square, Syracuse, and Lafayette, to Fayetteville, Chittenango, and Cazenovia, from Cortland, Whitney Point, and Greene to Windsor, Binghamton, and Endicott.

So, how do we as a local Church address these issues facing us? Well, as I am fond of saying, the Holy Spirit has been a moving and on this Pentecost 2022 it is my privilege to share with you two concrete means by which we will begin to address concerns coming from the listening sessions.

The first is the use of the “Vicariate Forane” in the Diocese of Syracuse as found in the Code of Canon Law (Canons 553-555). This method of pastoral care was introduced into the structure of the diocesan Church by one of the great pastoral bishops of the Catholic Church, St. Charles Borromeo. He did so to ensure that in various regions of a diocese there would be greater cooperation among clergy in service of the People of God, along with better communication with the Diocesan Bishop and the Diocesan Curia or Staff.

This is precisely my goal in establishing the new vicariates, coupled with the idea that the work of spreading the Gospel is not just the Bishop’s role or that of the Diocesan Staff, but we are all in this together! I want to again thank those priests who have agreed to assume the role of “Vicar Forane” for the new vicariates. Their role will be most important in fostering greater collaboration between parishes and within Pastoral Care Areas (PCAs), along with promoting greater cooperation with clergy and lay leaders alike.

It really is all about teamwork and that is why we will also be taking a new approach to catechesis in the Diocese of Syracuse – A TEAM APPROACH TO FORMING DISCIPLES. This new model for our parishes and PCAs will be represented in changes that will happen to various offices charged with Evangelization, Family Life, Faith Formation, and Pastoral Leadership. As of July 1, 2022, the offices will be:

- ***Office of Pastoral Leadership*** will serve as the Bishop’s liaison to Parish Life Directors and Deacon Administrators;
- ***Office of Adult and Ministerial Formation*** (formerly the Office of Formation for Ministry) will focus on formation for Adults and Lay Leadership, as well as, incorporate the staff and programs from the Office of Evangelization;
- ***Office of Family/Respect Life*** will focus on the areas of Marriage and Baptismal Preparation, Family Life, and Respect Life issues;
- ***Office of Child and Family Catechesis*** (formerly the Office of Catechesis) will focus on Parents and Early Childhood, Grades K – 6, and First Penance/First Eucharist;
- ***Office of Adolescent Catechesis & Discipleship*** (formerly the Office of Youth and Young Adult Ministry) will focus on Grades 7 – 12, Confirmation, and Young Adult Formation.

More specific information on the role of these offices will be provided to our pastors, parish life directors and ministerial leaders in the days to come.

Some may be wondering what happened to the Office of Evangelization, especially since in the post-Conciliar period after Vatican II “evangelization” has been the catch phrase of what we are supposed to be about?! And that is the point, evangelization – the sharing of the Good News of Jesus Christ – is not the work of one office, but is the focal point of all ministry. This simple fact is why Pope Francis in the restructuring of the Roman Curia put “Evangelization” as the first dicastery or department from which everything flows and named himself as the prefect or head of the dicastery.

For me, all our diocesan offices are an extension of the office and ministry of the bishop, and all will share in the evangelization effort which is central to the mission and service of bishop as teacher, sanctifier, and shepherd. I want to assure you that this realignment is not meant to put evangelization on the back burner – just the opposite! I want it to be the very heart of all we do as a Diocesan family.

I have always had the foresight that when I take on a new assignment, I don’t go into it to change everything. However, day by day, it is my intention that my vision and the vision of the church I serve become more Christ’s vision for His Church. Having taken the time to study my surroundings, consult with others both clergy and lay, to hear of the faithful’s needs and concerns, and most of all to pray, I feel it is time for us to begin to work towards a new Pentecost in our Church and in our world.

In speaking of this new Pentecost back in 1974, the late Belgian cardinal, Leon Joseph Suenens advised:

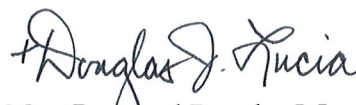
“Christ cannot live his life today in this world without our mouth, without our eyes, without our going and coming, without our heart. When we love, it is Christ loving through us. This is Christianity.”

“Hope is not a dream, but a way of making dreams become reality.”

More than ever, as we enter into the three-year Eucharistic Revival, it is my hope that each of us will seek to stir into flame the gift of the Spirit we have received at our Baptism and in Confirmation. For me, these are exciting times where we can let shine not just our faith, but the accompanying virtues of hope and love.

Thank you for your continued prayerful support and be assured of my continued prayers for each member of our Diocesan family. Happy Pentecost! Happy Spirit Day! May it be kept burning brightly in our lives.

In the Name of Jesus,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "Douglas J. Lucia". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a cross symbol at the beginning.

Most Reverend Douglas J. Lucia
Bishop of Syracuse