



THE ROMAN CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF LAS CRUCES

Office of the Bishop

August 11, 2020

Dear Parishioners,

I greet you in our Lord Jesus Christ!

As you probably all know, every year the priests in the diocese gather around their bishop on two occasions to pray together, discuss the diverse pastoral realities of the parishes and to strengthen priestly fraternity and missionary thrust in their ministry to the farthest corners of the diocese and beyond.

This year, COVID-19 forced us to postpone our annual priest convocation that is usually held during Holy Week. Looking ahead to our annual fall retreat together and considering the difficult time your priests have all gone through with Covid-19 and other challenges, I am planning our next gathering of priests to spend a time of retreat, rejuvenation and reflection on our priesthood, and to grant us greater fraternity and zeal for the mission that Christ has entrusted to us. I am conscious of the conditions under which our priests minister in this diocese. Most are alone in the parish, many have multiple sites at which to celebrate Mass, the distances are vast and to add to the complexity, we come from all over the world. In addition to all of this, during this past year our priests have had to minister under constantly changing parameters and seek new ways to bring the sacraments to the faithful. We are brothers in the priesthood, but fraternity is created, not automatic. And so, to help us build fraternity and renew our priestly zeal so that we may better minister to our people, in lieu of the November retreat this year, I desire to take our presbyterate to the Holy Land. What better place than the Holy Land, the 5th Gospel, to renew and rejuvenate us in our priesthood.

The plan, God willing, is to depart from the diocese on **Thursday, October 15th** and return on Tuesday, **October 27th**. During our absence, I am asking the diocesan deacons to attend to parish services so that as many priests as possible may join in this retreat.

Presuming that the state of affairs in October are favorable and we are indeed able to embark on this time together, I am turning to parishioners asking that you consider supporting your priests both financially and through prayer to be able to accompany me on this pilgrimage. The weekend of August 29-30, a Second Collection is being taken up throughout the parishes of the diocese to provide everyone with an opportunity to offer financial support for this pilgrimage.

It is worth recalling the fundamental value of the spirit of communion, prayer and common pastoral activity on the part of our priests, with a view to an effective witness of sacramental brotherhood and a more effective evangelizing action throughout the diocese. I am confident of your generosity and your willingness to support your priests.

Please know that you continue to be in my prayers as we seek to nurture our diocese; please pray for me too. I entrust you to the care of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

In Christ,

+ *Peter Baldacchino*

Most Reverend Peter Baldacchino
Bishop of Las Cruces