

Donum Veritatis

The Gift of Truth



Most Reverend Larry J. Kulick, JCL



Donum Veritatis: The Gift of Truth

Introduction

1 As I begin my fourth year as Bishop of the Diocese of Greensburg, I have been reflecting on the many pastoral visits to parishes, schools, celebrations, listening sessions and the other opportunities that I have experienced with the faithful of the Diocese. These encounters are important to me because they have brought me closer to you. I have been able to have meaningful and heartfelt conversations in which you have shared your concerns about our Diocese, our parish communities, our families, and our world. I have listened to parents and grandparents who have shared with me their worries about the continuation of our faith in their families. Teenagers tell me their desire to lead a more prayerful and faith-filled life despite the alternative choices today's culture offers, and ask me to provide them with instruction on how to pray. I have spoken with young adults who feel the pressure of our fast-paced world and the many cultural obstacles to the sanctity of marriage or single life and raising their families in the faith. In all these discussions with you, the message is consistent. People today are finding it difficult to set aside time for prayer, to participate in the Eucharist, to engage in parish life, and to live our faith in an increasingly secular, and sometimes adversarial, culture.

2 While these concerns may seem to be our current reality, we must also understand that the real Truth for our lives was given to us more than two thousand years ago. It is a truth that has been handed down through generations and, despite our worldly challenges, must be the spiritual inspiration and motivation in our daily lives. In fact, I am often edified by how many people desire to live the Gospel more faithfully and want to see the Church grow and live out her mission, despite the distractions of the world.



The Gift of Truth is the core of our faith.

3 *Donum Veritatis*, The Gift of Truth, was given to us by God the Father through the Holy Spirit. God sent us His Son, Jesus Christ, to be “the Way, the Truth, and the Life” (*Jn* 14:6). Through His words and His deeds, and most especially in His death and resurrection, Jesus proclaims the Truth—always. His Truth demonstrates the depth and power of God’s love for each of us, even in today’s uncertain temporal world. This is the core of our faith. We are called to proclaim this Gospel of Truth in all that we do in our daily lives and in our ministries. Our Holy Father, Pope Francis, summarizes this Gospel for all of us in his Apostolic Exhortation *Christus Vivit*, “God loves you; Christ is your Savior; He is alive” (*CV*, 130).

4 The Truth came into the world through the birth of Jesus when the Word became flesh. Born of Mary and raised in the Holy Family under the protection and

guardianship of Saint Joseph, Jesus learned the love of God from his parents. Pope Saint John Paul II tells us, “Together

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with Mary, Joseph is the first guardian of this divine mystery of God’s self-revelation in Christ” (*Redemptoris Custos*, 5b). Just as the angel announced the message of salvation to Mary at the Annunciation, the angel also appeared to Joseph to proclaim his role in salvation history. Just as Mary accepted the will of God in her life, so also did Joseph accept as Truth the revelation given to him, and he responded accordingly in faith. Just as Mary embraced her role in God’s redemptive plan, so too did Saint Joseph, serving faithfully and constantly as the custodian and guardian of God’s most precious treasures, His only Son, Jesus, and Mary, the Mother of the Incarnate Word. We are called to look to Saint Joseph as the perfect example of a humble servant who participates in God’s plan.

Saint Joseph is a model and guide for the Diocese of Greensburg.

5 As a husband, father, worker, builder, and dreamer, Saint Joseph also had an important role as protector of the Holy Family. That is why he is the protector and guardian of the Universal Church. As your Bishop, one of my most important responsibilities is to serve as protector and guardian of the local Church. Saint Thomas Aquinas wrote, “There are many saints to whom God has given the power to assist us in the necessities of life, but the power given to Saint Joseph is unlimited: It extends to all our needs, and all those who invoke him with confidence are sure to be heard.” Therefore, throughout history, Joseph has been given many patronages—he is the patron saint of fathers and the family, a happy death, immigrants, and workers, among many others. I humbly look to Saint Joseph as the model and guide for how I serve the faithful and lead our Diocese. It is clear to me that his patronages provide a vision for the Diocese of Greensburg. Over the next three years, we will be celebrating several milestones in the life of our Church. This year, we embark on the missionary year of the Eucharistic Revival and the Year of Prayer for the Universal Church. In 2025, we

commemorate the Jubilee Year in the Universal Church. In 2026, we will celebrate the 75th anniversary of the formation of our beloved Diocese of Greensburg.

6 For more than sixty years, the Diocese of Greensburg has been under patronage of the Blessed Virgin Mary with her title of Our Lady of the Assumption. Pope Saint John XXIII honored our Diocese with that patronage at the request of Bishop William G. Connare in 1960, and we will continue to honor Our Lady of the Assumption as the patroness of our Diocese. We will always trust in her intercession because she dwells in heaven body and soul with her Son. Pope Francis reminds us, however, that God also trusted Joseph, as did Mary, for her safety and care. Therefore, “Saint Joseph could not be other than the Guardian of the Church, for the Church is the continuation of the Body of Christ in history, even as Mary’s motherhood is reflected in the motherhood for the Church. In his continued protection of the Church, Joseph continues to protect the child and his mother, and we too, by our love for the Church, continue to love the child and his mother” (*Patris Corde*, 5i).



7 I am also reminded of the Year of Saint Joseph when Pope Francis explained that the aim of that special year was “to increase our love for this great saint, to

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a father in the shadows.” (cf.

encourage us to implore his intercession and to imitate his virtues and his zeal,” describing Saint Joseph as a “beloved father, a tender and loving father, an obedient father, an accepting father; a father who is creatively courageous, a working father,

PC). Recognizing Saint Joseph’s unique relationship with Mary and Jesus, I humbly entrust our shared work over the next three momentous years to the protection and guardianship of Saint Joseph, Protector of the Eucharist and Patron of the Universal Church.

8 In the following sections of this Pastoral Letter, I will outline my priorities and plans for the Diocese of Greensburg for these next three years. I entrust these priorities and plans to Saint Joseph’s intercession. Simply, Saint Joseph is the model that we, as a Diocese, should follow for each of these endeavors. Let us join together as a faith community and follow Saint Joseph’s example of responsive action to God’s will.

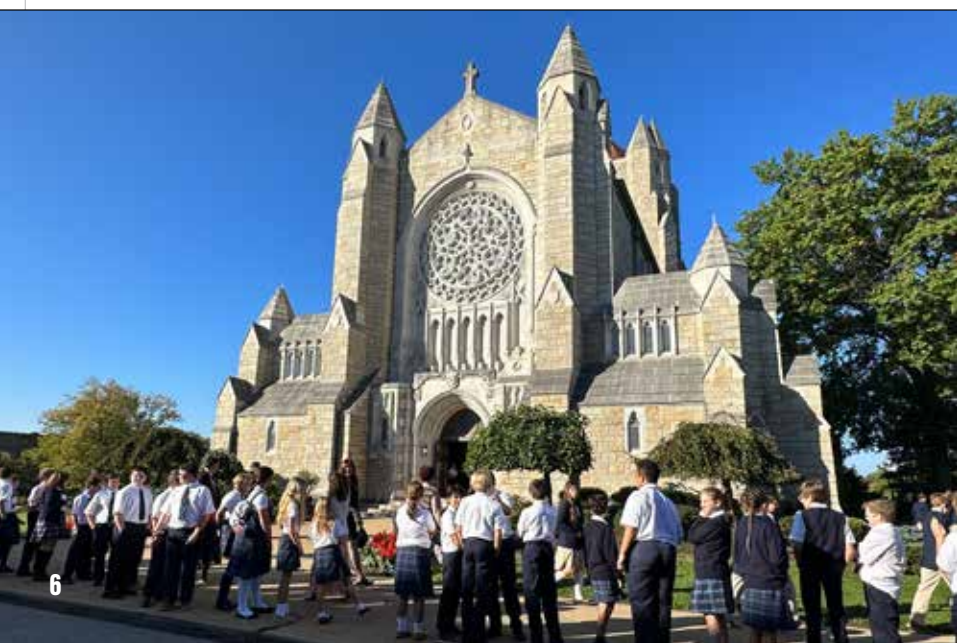
Protector and Guardian of the Local and Domestic Church

9 During the Synod on Synodality Listening Sessions across the Diocese between 2022 and 2024, one of the major concerns expressed and that I have also heard repeatedly during my visits to parishes is the diminishing role of the family in society and in the Church today. Many people approached me with concerns about their children and grandchildren not attending Mass and receiving sacraments. I know this is a painful reality for many of our families. However, I am encouraged by the signs of great hope. Over the past year as I traveled around the Diocese, I was delighted see more young families in the pews. I am equally happy with the 22% increase in enrollment in our Catholic schools despite the population declines in all four counties.

Our Diocese must respond to the needs of young families with innovative outreach.

10 While this is indeed good news, this growth may not continue without meeting the needs of young families in our Church. I have committed the Office of Faith, Family, and Discipleship to design responsive, family-friendly programs that reach out to our youth and young families with programing that is flexible to fit to their schedules and particular needs. As technology evolves, the way in which our young people learn and process

information has changed. I have requested that our programs and activities exemplify the best use of these technologies as teaching tools that meet our young people where they are in their faith journey. Through experiential evangelization and catechesis, such as our “Know Him” events last year, we hope to reach our families with dynamic programs that invigorate and excite them as we invite them to establish a relationship with Jesus Christ.



11 Saint Joseph is the shepherd of the Holy Family, just as the bishop of the local Church is the Shepherd of the Diocese. As your Shepherd, it is my sacred obligation to strengthen our parishes and local communities. Faith formation and Catholic education that establish strong moral leaders is a major priority of my episcopacy. To take a more proactive and direct role in the faith formation efforts of our youth and families, after consultation with our clergy, I am establishing Regional Directors of Faith and Discipleship. These leaders will enable all parishes to begin the process of developing programs that meet the current formation needs of our families, most especially our youth. By working together on innovative and experiential methods of formation and evangelization, we can meet the needs of our people and change the narrative of shrinking numbers of participants in the life of the Church.

12 These professionally trained Regional Directors will provide the necessary catechetical and faith formation support to allow our pastors, priests, and permanent deacons to focus on sacramental and parochial ministries. Working together with one another, these Regional Directors can create the best resources and practices to reach both our youth and adults in ways

that meet the present needs of the Church while preserving the Truth of the Gospel. Through sharing resources of staffing and materials between parishes, we are able to reach a greater number of families and offer them transformative Catholic experiences. When parishes align their resources, we are able to provide the youth and young adults a more comprehensive and complete catechetical experience than single parishes working alone. Through this shared effort, we can also offer families a choice of experiential catechetical sessions, including intergenerational or family catechesis and The Catechesis of the Good Shepherd. I am confident that through these efforts, we will have an increase in those seeking Christian Initiation as older youth or adults. This increase will require a more robust Christian Initiation process offered in our parishes that meets the needs of families joining the Church or requesting the Sacraments of Initiation. I have requested the Office of Faith, Family, and Discipleship to align our sacramental policies and Christian Initiation preparation programs to form disciples in a family-friendly manner that provides inspiring and meaningful catechesis and keeps the faithful connected to their respective parish communities.

13 In addition to having trained leaders of our parish programs, it is also critically important that our catechists are properly trained and knowledgeable about the faith so that it is passed on faithfully and in the fullness of Truth. The Office of Faith, Family, and Discipleship has recently released a new certification policy for all those who share the faith in our parish faith formation programs and our Catholic schools. These certification courses are designed to form those in ministry to accompany the faithful in our parishes and schools to encounter Jesus and become intentional disciples. The certifications offer meaningful formation opportunities for catechists and parishioners, no matter their level of expertise. The expanded certification guidelines offer the possibility for our Diocese to partner with Catholic colleges, universities, and institutions to provide specialized training and advanced degrees for those in positions of leadership.

14 I am very pleased to say that Catholic schools in the Diocese of Greensburg are doing an exemplary job of forming the next generation of leaders. While each of our schools is unique, they all have the same mission that combines Catholic faith and teachings with academic excellence, a partnership with parents in the faith formation of their children, higher standards for student achievement, and

extracurricular activities that embrace technology and modern learning styles. We are forming and creating an integrated system of schools. I am proud that our schools seek to form the entire person. Our academic curriculum integrates faith, Christian service, leadership, and preparation for a life of discipleship. To support our youth and families, all of our schools now have professional counselors available to them in partnership with Catholic Charities, and we are the first diocese in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania to have a police force that is proactive in keeping our children safe. Generous financial assistance is available for our families to obtain a Catholic education, thanks to the Saint Pope John Paul II Tuition Opportunity Partnership (TOP) and the Educational Improvement Tax Credit (EITC) programs. I am grateful to the many parents, grandparents, business owners, and donors who have generously supported the EITC program on behalf of our Diocese. I encourage all families with children in our Diocese to enroll in our Catholic schools. Because EITC donations have nearly doubled over the last two years, Catholic education is more accessible and affordable to prospective students. Over the next three years and beyond, I am confident of the continued growth and excellence of our twelve Catholic schools in our Diocese through all of these efforts.

The Diocese must partner with families to invigorate the Domestic Church.

15 Let us consider that through the earthly fatherhood of Joseph, Jesus first encountered the heavenly fatherhood of God. While Jesus is fully God and knew the Father's love from all eternity, he still needed to learn from human experience a father's

love, which he did from Saint Joseph. Saint Joseph loved this child. As a responsible parent, he made sure Jesus was fed, clothed, educated in the Law, and trained in a trade. Saint Joseph taught

Jesus to pray and be of service to others and through his example, Jesus learned to do the will of the Father. Pope Benedict XVI teaches, "God wanted to be born and grow up in a human family. In this way he consecrated the family as the first and ordinary means of his encounter with humanity. Jesus was introduced by Mary and Joseph into the religious community and frequented the synagogue of Nazareth. This reveals the most authentic and profound vocation of the family: that is, to accompany each of its members on the path of the discovery

of God and of the plan that he has prepared for him or her" (*Angelus*, 12/31/2006). It is my prayer that our families continue to emulate the love and support that Saint Joseph offered to the holy child, Jesus.

16 Despite our best efforts, and the magnificent immersive programming planned, Church personnel and schools are not going to solve the issue of disaffiliation amongst our youth and young adults by themselves. According to the seminal *Going, Going, Gone* study released in 2017, the top two reasons for Church disaffiliation amongst our young people were (1) that they do not believe in God or religion and (2) the influence of parents or family. This information helps us recognize that our young people are leaving the Church because they do not have a relationship with God and that they are not living the Gospel in their homes. I know this is distressing, but I do not blame our families. The Church needs to be in better service to our families, especially with all of the challenges they face from the culture. I commit our Diocese to be in service to our families, who are the household or Domestic Church, and the parishes that nurture them. That is why our Diocese and parishes must

form partnerships with families in their communities. Parents and guardians receive the role to be the primary educators at their child's baptism. It is imperative that we work together to equip and form them in this vocation. When we work together in this parental catechetical partnership, the effective sharing of the faith is possible.

17 It is also the responsibility of all the faithful to support our families, particularly parents with young children. While many of our parishes have a welcoming spirit to parishioners, families, and visitors attending Mass, I am calling on all to make a special effort to recognize and welcome parents of young children. It takes great effort for parents to bring their young children to Mass each week. Many just succumb to the pressure and resist joining their parish

communities for the comfort of home and a less chaotic morning. Once inside our churches, we sometimes forget our Christian hospitality and view younger children as a distraction to our participation in Mass. Jesus said, "Let the children come to me, and do not prevent them; for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these" (*Mt* 19:14). As you gather in holy worship, recognize that young children or young parents are present in front of the Holy Eucharist. Understand their desire to discover the Truth in life and welcome them into our communities as they wrestle with the challenges of culture and society. Indeed, our young families have much to offer our Church in their search for meaning and purpose and to make a difference in our world. Let us embrace them and help them raise strong Catholic and moral leaders through our example and accompaniment.



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Protector and Guardian of Vocations

18 While we are not told much about Saint Joseph in the Gospels, we are told that he was a “righteous” man, a “just” man in his relationship with God and as a result, was in a right relationship with his neighbors. (cf. *Mt 1:19*) He lived in and for the Truth, who is his foster son Jesus, and this can be seen in his response to the call of God to nurture and care for his family. This immediate response to God is most important proof of Saint Joseph’s holiness.

19 For a man so significant to the life of the Church, it is remarkable that the Gospels do not record a single word spoken by Saint Joseph. He silently keeps watch over the Holy Family and observes the work of God in the world. But the silence of Joseph is not passive. The silence of Joseph results in his action. At the moment of Joseph’s annunciation, he “did as the angel of the Lord commanded him” (*Mt 1:24*). When the angel of the Lord told Joseph to take the Holy Family and flee into Egypt, he “rose and took the child and his mother by night and departed for Egypt” (*Mt 2:14*). Saint Joseph always did as the Lord instructed him to do, leading him on a path of holiness.

What is God calling me to do in my life?

20 One of the central messages of the Second Vatican Council is that God calls all people to holiness. However, each of us finds our path to holiness in a different way. At confirmation and other gatherings with our young

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people, I often challenge them not to ask the question, “What do I want to do when I grow up?” but rather, “What

is God calling me to do in my life?” Whenever we respond to God’s call as Saint Joseph did, we will find a life of happiness, joy, and fulfillment. I encourage our young people and our young at heart to explore God’s calling for them, whether it be marriage, religious life, priesthood, the permanent diaconate, or a committed single life. I encourage everyone in our Diocese to build a “culture of vocations” because all these vocations lead to holiness, lead us to Christ.



21 I am grateful to our native clergy who have responded graciously to the expanding responsibilities placed upon them. Many of our native clergy are serving as pastor or administrator of multiple parishes while also undertaking additional diocesan roles and offices. They are tireless in their efforts because it is no secret that we have a shortage of native priests in the Diocese of Greensburg and they are devoted to their vocation. While we are blessed to have a wonderful group of seminarians studying to become priests, the number of ordinations to the priesthood does not replace the number of priests eligible for retirement each year. We are grateful to our priests who remain in active ministry past the normal retirement age. Our retired priests are generous in their efforts to bring Christ to our parishes and faith communities. They are a blessing to our Church.

22 We are also fortunate to have international priests, who travel from faraway places and their own families to minister to ours. Like Saint Joseph, it may not have been the life or plan they had for themselves, but they responded to God’s call. They are a blessing and have become part of the fabric of our Diocese. The special gifts that our international priests offer to us include our opportunity to see the diversity and missionary nature of the Catholic Church. They also are a wonderful example to us of piety, humility, and deep spirituality. They are filled with joy and happiness, which is reflected in their missionary efforts and spreads through our parishes. We pray for additional international priests to come to our Diocese, that they may continue to meet the staffing needs of our parishes and sacramental needs of all the faithful, and we are grateful to their respective Bishops and Dioceses for sharing them with us.

23 With the current number of priests diminishing, we are also blessed to have several permanent deacons who provide critical service to our parishes with liturgical, pastoral, and administrative support. The vocation to the permanent diaconate is one of service, but different from the vocation to priesthood. Permanent deacons are clergy in the Church, but many of them also have full-time jobs outside of the Church and have families of their own. I am grateful for their commitment to the Church and our parish communities that they serve. We continue to receive vocations to the permanent diaconate, and I am proud of the dynamic formation program that we have developed and that continues to be refined to help these men with their human, spiritual, intellectual, and pastoral formation. I encourage the men of our Diocese to discern the permanent diaconate as a way of dedicated service to the Church.

24 I am also grateful for the legacy of women religious in our Diocese, who have formed in our faith several generations of Catholics. Many of our women religious are reaching retirement, and our Diocese will continue to support them and their ministries.

We also look to new religious orders of women to partner with our Diocese to continue the spread of the Gospel, and we pray for more women to consider religious life as a source of joy and fulfillment.

25 With the decline in vocations to the priesthood and religious life, the Church in the United States has become even more dependent on lay ecclesial ministers. In our Diocese, lay ecclesial ministers serve as Directors of Religious Education, Pastoral Associates, Liturgy Coordinators, Youth Ministers, and in numerous other roles. Their calling is rooted in the call received in baptism, confirmation, and for many, the sacrament of marriage. (cf. Pope John Paul II, *Christifideles Laici*, 23) I am grateful for their willingness to serve the people of the Diocese of Greensburg in these various ministries. In order to support their ministries, I have requested the Office of Faith, Family, and Discipleship to offer training to those currently serving in these ministries and to those considering a call to minister in the name of the Church so that we may continue to better serve the people of the Diocese.

The establishment of a marriage catechumenate to support new families.

26 The marriage of Mary and Joseph is a purification and renewal of the Sacrament of Marriage. While the original couple of Adam and Eve were the source of sin, Joseph and Mary provide a New Covenant from which holiness spreads through the world. As Pope Benedict XVI reminds us, “The Holy Family of Nazareth is truly the ‘prototype’ of every Christian family which, united in the Sacrament of Marriage and nourished by the Word and the Eucharist, is called to carry out the wonderful vocation and mission of being the living cell not only of society but also of the Church, a sign and instrument of unity for the entire human race” (*Angelus*, 12/31/2006). The marriage of Mary and Joseph serves as a perfect model of how to guard, reveal, and communicate love, and will provide our guide as we strive to enrich our own marriage catechumenate here in the Diocese of Greensburg.

27 On multiple occasions, Pope Francis has expressed his desire for the Church to offer a better and more thorough preparation of young couples for marriage that is broad in its approach, rooted in the core message of the Gospel (the Kerygma), and inspired by the Order of

Christian Initiation of Adults to celebrate marriage and family life with greater awareness. This marriage catechumenate will continue to work with couples as they are preparing for marriage. But we are called as a Diocese to go beyond that. The marriage catechumenate of the Diocese will also support the newly formed family after the wedding through the first years of marriage and early years of parenting. In this way, the Church can support young families through the unique challenges of marriage, in difficult times, and with encouragement to invest in their marriage and family. In doing this, we can demonstrate our Christian belief that marriage was established by God as a path to holiness and a way of life that brings dignity to the human person. We will also continue to advocate the Church’s teaching on marriage between one man and one woman for the whole of life as a sacramental expression of God’s love and Christ’s relationship with the Church. Just as Saint Joseph and the young Holy Family experienced struggles in Bethlehem, Egypt, and Nazareth and found support in these communities, let our young families find support in our parish communities.

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Protector and Guardian of Our Christian Anthropology

28 As we work to assist young families through our marriage catechumenate efforts, offering opportunities for parents and young children to find a home in the Church, I recognize that these efforts are rooted in the Christian belief of the dignity of the human person and the complementary natures of men and women, as evidenced in the Holy Family. As Pope Saint John Paul II states, “Mary is the Lord’s humble servant, prepared from eternity for the task of being the Mother of God. Joseph is the one whom God chose to be the ‘overseer of the Lord’s birth,’ the one who has the responsibility to look after the Son of God’s ‘ordained’ entry into the world, in accordance with divine dispositions and human laws” (*RC*, 8f).

God reveals Himself to humanity through our bodies.

29 Christian Anthropology considers who and what the human person is based on God’s revelation in His word and through our bodies. Indeed, our body is a revelation from God, and by and through it He teaches us. Through this divine teaching, we understand the full dignity of the human person. God is the creator of our human nature. He has created us, he has made us: “God created man in his image; in the divine image he created him; male and female he created them” (*Gen* 1:27). We give acknowledgement to His plan and the manner in which He fashioned us in the way that we live as individuals and in the way that we respect the created dignity of the other in all of our interactions with them.

30 I fully believe that a renewed understanding of Christian Anthropology is what is needed most in the Church today. It is through this understanding of how we, as individuals, are created by God, and why the failings of today’s culture are totally inconsistent with our faith. We must take an active role in promoting the dignity of all life in our culture at every educational level from the Domestic Church to Catholic colleges and universities. The dignity of the human person is the foundation of a moral vision for society and of all the principles of our social teaching. It must be a standard requirement for our Catholic universities as they are part of the Church. Pope Francis, in a recent address to the International Federation of Catholic Universities, emphatically stated, “A Catholic university must make choices, choices that reflect the Gospel. It must take a stand and clearly show in its actions, ‘getting its hands dirty’ in the spirit of the Gospel, for the transformation of the world and in service to the human person” (*Address*, 1/19/2024).



31 While I realize that I cannot give a complete presentation on Christian Anthropology in this letter, I find it important to state a few main points for our reflection on Saint Joseph and the Gift of Truth. As Saint Joseph helps us to orient the Holy Family in time and space through his genealogy in a particular way, Christian Anthropology helps us to understand the origin, nature, and destiny of human beings. Just as Saint Joseph’s genealogy reveals to us that Jesus is the Messiah, our Christian Anthropology sees the created order, and the human body in particular, as a way that God reveals Himself to us.

God loves each human being into existence.

32 Each human being exists because of a sovereign, loving act of God, which makes every human life sacred. It is a biological fact that a unique human being comes into existence at the moment of conception. The DNA in that single-cell embryo contains all the instructions needed to develop into a fully formed human being. However, Scripture indicates that although we come to exist at a specific moment in time, God has always known and loved us: “The word of the Lord came to me saying, ‘Before I formed you in the womb I knew you’” (*Jer* 1:4-5). Scripture also praises God, saying, “For You formed my inmost being; You knit me together in my mother’s womb. I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made” (*Ps* 139:13-14). Each of us is specifically intended by God. Our lives come from God and belong to Him. And because all life belongs to God, abortion, murder, capital punishment, euthanasia, and all crimes that offend the dignity of the human person are grave evils that we must combat.

Our body and soul are redeemed by Christ's death.

33 Another important aspect of this Christian Anthropology that we must remember is that our body is a gift, but ultimately, does not belong to us. Scripture reminds us, “You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore, glorify God with your body” (1 Cor 6:19-20). Yes, Jesus redeemed us; He purchased our salvation at the price of His own blood and His own life! Clearly, Scripture is telling us that our bodies are not tools to simply use as we please but should be treated as tabernacles of the Holy Spirit. Christ offered his entire self—body, blood, soul, and divinity—to the Father that our body and soul may be saved.

34 Therefore, we must note that we are not merely our body or our soul. We are the union of the two and must value both. Although we can distinguish body and soul intellectually, they unite to make us one being. It is much like the flame from a candle. Although one can distinguish the light of the flame from its heat, one cannot put the heat over here and the light over there. They are so together as to be one. It is like this with our body and soul and therefore, both our body and soul are important to our identity. Limiting our identity solely to our “thoughts and feelings” discounts our body as God’s creation, while limiting ourselves to only our body as a “collection of chemicals and interactions between them” denies our soul, free will, and our ability to decide right from wrong. We must recognize the importance of the human soul as our animating principle that guides our choices and our free will.

As a body and soul, we can have a lasting relationship with God because Jesus rose from the dead.

35 As Catholics, we must defend this understanding of the human person and advocate in every situation for the dignity of the human person. The book of Genesis leaves no other interpretation: our body and soul are made in the image and likeness of God. God did not give these attributes to any other of His creations, not even the angels. To say that we have a spiritual soul is to say that we have the breath of God within us and are made in His image. It also says that we have intellect and free will. It is our dignity to unite two orders of creation, the material and the spiritual, in our one person. It is through both our body and soul that we have a relationship with the Risen Lord, who is alive and present with us today. This is our glory, and it is the central reason why our body will rise one day, gloriously transformed, and be restored to our spirit.

Protector and Guardian of Christian Death

36 Saint Joseph is recognized as the patron saint of a happy death because the Blessed Virgin and Jesus were present at his side at the time of his death. This tradition of the reverence of the death of Saint Joseph reminds us that care for the body is important because the body is created in the image and likeness of God and is an important witness to our belief in the resurrection of the body. Sadly, there has been a decrease in funeral rites. This is not a situation isolated to the Diocese of Greensburg. Many families are choosing not to have a funeral Mass or even prayers for their parents, grandparents, or loved ones. While I am sure they have their own reasons that may be rooted in today’s culture of convenience and immediacy, we must consider the importance of the dignity of the body, both while we are alive and after the soul has returned to God. I am calling on the faithful to return to the roots of spiritual dignity of the body at the time of the death of a loved one, and make the Mass of Christian Funerals a central practice of the funeral rite. Let us honor our deceased with the Holy Mass, to which they have a right by their baptism. It is through this Rite of Christian Funerals with its three stations that we have the assurance of the proper commendation of the soul of the deceased to the mercy of God and pray for the repose of their soul. To assist in this ministry of caring for the dead, I encourage all parishes to have active bereavement ministries to assist in the funeral liturgy for the deceased and to comfort those mourning their passing in a spirit of Christian hope.



“As Catholics, we must advocate in every situation for the dignity of the human person.”

The funeral rites of the Church recognize the sacredness of the body.

37 The Church does not prohibit cremation in preparation for the body's disposition, unless it was chosen for reasons contrary to Christian doctrine. However, the Church prefers the body be present for the funeral liturgy, as its presence expresses the Church's belief in the resurrection of the body at the end of time. (cf. *CIC* 1176.3) The funeral rites of the Church recognize the sacredness of the body through the blessing with holy water, the placing of the funeral pall, and honoring the body with incense. The presence of the body at the funeral Mass is a physical sign of the person whom we are commending to the mercy of God precisely because we are so identified with our body, the body that received the sacraments, provided for those in need, and expressed love for others. Just as God became flesh through the Incarnation to communicate his love to us, we are beings whose bodies express our love to God and others.

38 Although cremation has become a popular option for convenience or financial reasons, we must not forget the dignity of the body. Ideally, if a family chooses cremation, the cremation should preferably take place after the funeral Mass. It is possible to choose a cremation casket or a rental casket for this purpose. In addition, there should always be a Rite of Committal after the cremation in which the cremated

remains are buried in a grave or entombed in a mausoleum. According to *Order of Christian Funerals*, "the practice of scattering cremated remains on the sea, from the air, or on the ground, or keeping cremated remains in the home of relative or friend of the deceased are not the reverent disposition that the Church requires" (*OCF*, 417). To demonstrate the respect of the human body, all cremated remains must be interred in a dignified and sacred space in a cemetery or mausoleum.

39 There are some who have told me that they are concerned that their family may not follow their final wishes, which include a funeral Mass and proper burial. I encourage you to plan your funeral arrangements in advance and share these plans with your family. Pennsylvania law requires funeral directors who accept prepayment funeral contracts to deposit the funds in a trust or in a burial insurance policy until the need arises. I know this can be overwhelming. But, when you prayerfully consider preplanning, you are providing comfort to your family as your wishes have been expressed and difficult decisions have been made in advance. I would also encourage you to contact the Catholic Foundation of the Diocese of Greensburg for information and guidance on preparing your legacy giving, estate planning, and funeral arrangements.

Protector and Guardian of Immigrants

40 We know the Holy Family were immigrants and refugees, as Saint Joseph took his family to Egypt to avoid persecution. Imagine how they



risked their lives to travel to a new land, learning some of the language, and facing the anxiety of trying to find food, shelter, and comfort. Pope Francis reminds us, "The Holy Family had to face concrete problems like every other family, like so many of our migrant brothers and sisters who, today too, risk their lives to escape misfortune and hunger. I consider Saint Joseph the special patron of all those forced to leave their native lands because of war, hatred, persecution, and poverty" (*PC*, 7d). Through Saint Joseph, we learn

to understand all should be welcomed and allowed work to sustain themselves and their family. This welcoming requires an immense commitment that includes acceptance, understanding, and love.

Our immigrant ancestors built our parishes.

41 For many of us, we are the sons and daughters, grandsons and granddaughters of immigrants who traveled from their homes to settle Western Pennsylvania. Through their determination to make a life in their new country, they built our workforce, our communities, and our churches. We are the beneficiaries of our ancestors who, despite all odds, left their homelands to seek a better life for their families and future generations. These immigrants of the 20th century strengthened our nation and made Western Pennsylvania a place of opportunity and industry. Brick by brick, in their new communities, immigrants built many of the parishes of our Diocese. More recently, our international priests have

enriched our parishes with their culture, their vibrancy, and their love of Christ and the people they serve. As our Diocesan priests retire, we are in need of more international priests to maintain the sacramental and spiritual needs of the Diocese. However, in working to bring these international priests to our Diocese legally, we are acutely aware that our immigration laws are often cumbersome and time-consuming. We must continue to be grateful to our international priests who navigate these legal issues to come to our Diocese for the benefit of all of us. We must take action to ensure reforms will be made to the immigration system that those who wish to build up our region may be able to do so in a legal and just manner.

“ We are the beneficiaries of our ancestors who, despite all odds, left their homelands to seek a better life for their families and future generations. ”

42 Our region has deep roots in the Ukrainian Catholic Church. The Ukrainian refugees, displaced due to the current situation in Eastern Europe, have come to Western Pennsylvania, seeking safety, a place to worship, work, a sense of belonging, and a promising future. Working with the Ukrainian Catholic Archeparchy of Philadelphia, the Diocese of Greensburg has embraced arriving Ukrainian newcomers through the efforts of Catholic Charities, Office of Communications and Evangelization, and other Diocesan offices. These efforts demonstrate that when we welcome immigrants who follow the legal process and we work with business and community leaders to find meaningful opportunities and proper housing, the entire region and the Church can positively grow from their presence in our local community.

43 The support of Ukrainian refugees does not diminish our intention to provide help for all refugees who have the proper documentation. This project is important, however, first and foremost, because it is right and just. In addition to the moral imperative, it is also fruitful for our region because there is a great need in the workforce in our Diocese. We have worked in partnership with local businesses to find jobs for those displaced, and we can do so because of the connections we already have with those of Ukrainian heritage living in our region. While this effort is still in its infancy stages, it serves as a powerful pilot program for future immigration efforts in our Diocese.



Protector and Guardian of Workers

44 Saint Joseph is the patron saint of workers. Like our parents and grandparents, Saint Joseph understood the value of hard work and serves as an example to all of us as we carry out our daily vocations. It is from Saint Joseph in which “Jesus learned the value, the dignity, and the joy of what it means to eat bread that is the fruit of one’s own labor” (*PC*, 6a). It is no secret that our population is aging; in fact, about 45% of our parishioners across the Diocese are age 55 or older. With many approaching retirement, we need to realistically ask, “Who will replace them?” Without workers, our region will lose employers and be passed over by new industry with positions that offer a self-sustaining wage. There is a critical need to retain the younger generation in our region. Our area’s birth rate is steadily declining, so focusing on our youth and fostering an opportunity-based community will assist in slowing the population decline.

We are created with a vocation to work.

45 Pope Francis teaches, “We were created with a vocation to work. Work is a necessity, part of the meaning of life on this earth, a path to growth, human development, and personal fulfillment” (*Laudato Si'*, 128). Accordingly, we must support and rebuild our local communities and industries to foster self-sustaining positions of employment. This must be done by providing opportunities for academic education and professional development, as well as skilled training in the trade industries.

46 To ensure the economic future for our region and for all across the Diocese, I am taking an active role in working with community partners to ensure that employment opportunities are available for all. Making our

region vibrant again is critical for our families, our communities, and our Church. Stemming the tide of those leaving our area to seek better opportunities elsewhere is the only way to address the decline in our population.

47 We must also, as disciples of Christ, address the needs of those who live in or on the margins of poverty. That is why I fully support our parishes’ and Catholic Charities’ efforts to address housing, food insecurity, and other financial burdens for all low-income individuals and families, encouraging a thriving community. However, we must also invest in these individuals that they may find dignified work that favors creativity and promotes self-worth. (cf. *LS*, 128)

Care for the environment includes care for workers.

48 Pope Benedict XVI teaches, “Our duties towards the environment are linked to our duties toward the human person” (*Caritas in Veritate*, 51). Both must be respected. In the four counties of our Diocese, we have inherited a tremendous legacy. We enjoy the beauty of the mountains, the crisp streams and creeks, and the bountiful land that produces food for our tables. Following the example of Saint Joseph, these earthly benefits allow us to provide financially and sustain our families. With the responsibility of caring for God’s blessings, we must also be mindful of the places that powered our economic engine for generations while providing financial viability for current families.

“... I am taking an active role in working with community partners to ensure that employment opportunities are available for all.”

discarded. These industries employed the people who funded the building of our Diocese and

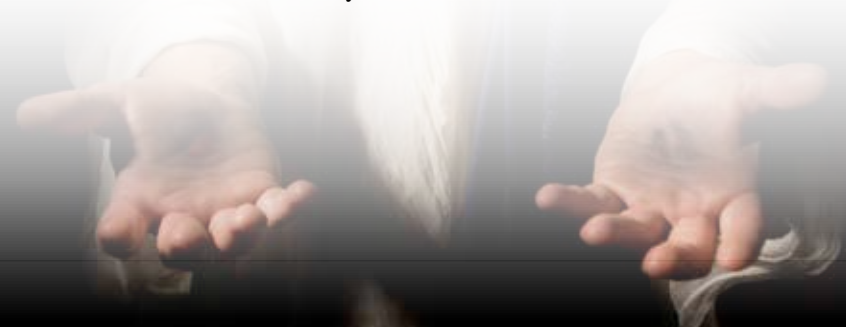
remain for many a source of employment, sustenance, and health care.

49 The only way our region can progress in population growth and economic sustainability is to ensure that we are not forgotten and left out of the transition from the old industrial economy to an innovative digital economy that provides work for the people in our region. As we transition from fossil fuels to new, cleaner forms of energy, good and meaningful employment opportunities must be afforded to our people to stay in our region. We must be creative in finding new ways for economic prosperity that make our environment more sustainable and preserve the beauty of Western Pennsylvania. Pope Francis states, “Any approach to an integral ecology, which by definition does not exclude human beings, needs to take account of the value of labor” (*LS*, 124). Therefore, I encourage everyone to advocate and make our voices heard to our government and business leaders for fairness and justice of our workers who helped manufacture the steel, wood, glass, and energy that built our country’s prosperity.

Protector and Guardian of the Eucharistic Lord

50 Saint Joseph is first and foremost a loving disciple of his foster son, Jesus. He and Mary had Jesus to themselves in their home in Nazareth, the first Eucharistic Adoration chapel, where they wondered and adored the Son of God. Saint Joseph served as the original caretaker of the Bread of Life when Saint Joseph held the Infant Jesus in his arms and made his house a tabernacle for the God made flesh. Through his labor, Saint Joseph feeds Jesus, who, through His labor of the cross, feeds us with His Body and Blood. I often have reflected on how Saint Joseph, as a quiet witness of the Lord, would spend time pondering his experiences with Jesus in his heart. Saint Pope John Paul II states, “Joseph experienced both love and the truth—that pure contemplative love of the divine Truth which radiated from the humanity of Christ—and the demands of love—that equally pure and selfless love required for his vocation to safeguard and develop the humanity of Jesus, which was inseparably linked to his divinity” (*RC*, 27e). Following Joseph’s example, we must contemplate and spend time with the Lord in Adoration to experience God’s love that reinvigorates us for our Christian vocation.

51 To increase our devotion to the Lord, I encourage every parish to provide opportunities for Eucharistic Adoration over the next three years. I have requested that our Office of Faith, Family, and Discipleship coordinate evenings of reflection quarterly in each Deanery for men and women that include a speaker and time for group discussion, Eucharistic Adoration, and the Sacrament of reconciliation to promote discipleship throughout the Diocese. In addition, I intend to reinstitute the practice of the Forty Hours Devotion in each of our seven deaneries. I have asked the Office of Faith, Family, and Discipleship in consultation with the Men’s and Women’s Ministries of the Diocese to prepare resources for these gatherings. May Saint Joseph, protector of the Holy Family who cradled the Christ Child in his arms, guide us to Our Lord in the Eucharist so that we may cradle Him in our hearts.





Do not be afraid of having an encounter with God and receiving God’s mercy.

52 As we work to build a Eucharistic culture in our Diocese that fosters discipleship and increases devotional life in our parishes, we must also be mindful of our faults and failings and seek out God’s mercy in the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Pope Francis reminds us that Saint Joseph “teaches us that faith in God includes believing that he can work even through our fears, our frailties, and our weaknesses” (*PC*, 2g). We cannot have a full Eucharistic Revival without the full communion experienced in the Sacrament of Reconciliation. As Pope Saint John Paul II reminds us, “The two sacraments of the Eucharist and Penance are very closely connected” (*Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, 37). The Sacrament of Reconciliation prepares us to fully embrace the Eucharistic Lord, and the Eucharist calls us to an ongoing personal conversion. I encourage all parishioners to regularly participate in this beautiful sacrament of forgiveness. Do not be afraid of receiving God’s mercy! To make this sacrament more widely available, I also direct all of our parishes to have regularly scheduled times

weekly for confessions and for the faithful to frequently avail themselves of the Sacrament.

53 Saint Joseph listens to God not only with his mind and intellect, but with his heart, entering into communion with God through listening. Like Saint Joseph, we are also called to increase in spiritual development, becoming more intentional disciples through intimate encounters with Jesus in the sacraments and prayer. We will offer discipleship retreats on a regular basis for all people of the Diocese to have this intimate encounter with Jesus, experiencing the proclamation of the Gospel in a clear and powerful way and renewing their participation in the sacraments. These retreats will be opportunities to listen and hear God’s call to you in your life and experience a way to live our faith in the modern world through prayer and the Church community. I encourage everyone to deepen their relationship with the Lord and become His disciple in new ways through participation in this retreat and grow their life of prayer.

Let us respond to God’s call as we move into the future.

54 In this pastoral letter, I have shared with you my vision for the Diocese of Greensburg over the next three years, which include the creation of Regional Directors for Faith Formation to assist parishes reach the next level in sharing the faith in our communities, building a culture of all vocations including the establishment of a marriage catechumenate, partnering with parents to strengthen the Domestic Church in our Diocese, forming a renewed understanding of Christian Anthropology including care for the body after death, our commitment to the legal immigration of Ukrainian refugees and others, the promotion of our region for economic prosperity through new and sustainable industries through partnerships with government and businesses, and the development of a Eucharistic culture through increased opportunities for Adoration, Reconciliation, and discipleship formation.

55 I know this vision is ambitious, but I am confident that in working together as the clergy, Diocesan and Parish Staff, and, you, the faithful of the Diocese of Greensburg, we will build a more engaging and welcoming Church in each community through the intercession of

Saint Joseph. This will be a new way of building up the Church and a new idea of being parish. Keeping our parishes active and vibrant requires all of us to embrace a new way of building up the Body of Christ through parish partnerships and removing the silos that isolate one parish from another. We must work together to keep all 78 of our parishes strong and vibrant. We must make strategic use of all our facilities to meet the needs of all our people and provide programs that proclaim our faith clearly and proudly. In building partnerships where all parishes share staff and resources, my vision of keeping all of our parishes open as beacons of hope and the truth to reach future generations can be realized. I am often amazed at the unique identity and charism of each parish community, and I am confident that every parish will work in the spirit of cooperation so that every parish remains a vital part of the one Body of Christ. We are stronger together.

“ We must work together to keep all 78 of our parishes strong and vibrant. ”

56 Three years ago, I chose as my episcopal motto “Christ is the Truth.” Over the last three years, I have worked to be truthful with you and to share the Truth of the Gospel in all of my pastoral visits. Pope Benedict XVI expresses the importance of the Truth and how we must root all that we do in the Truth to find happiness and true human fulfillment. Truth is a gift from God. He states, “Truth, and the love which it reveals, cannot be produced: they can only be received as a gift. Their ultimate source is not, and cannot be, mankind, but only God, who is himself Truth and Love. This principle is extremely important for society and for development, since neither can be a purely human product; the vocation to development on the part of individuals and peoples is not based simply on human choice, but is an intrinsic part of a plan that is prior to us and constitutes for all of us a duty to be freely accepted. That which is prior to us and constitutes us — subsistent Love and Truth — shows us what goodness is, and in what our true happiness consists. It shows us the road to true development” (*CiV*, 52). Saint Joseph recognized his foster son as the Truth and dedicated his life to living in the Truth. My prayer for our Diocese is that we may do the same and live according to the Truth so

that we might experience the love of God which never fails.

57 Let us also remember that we are not alone in these actions. Just as the Holy Spirit guided Saint Joseph, we too are guided and directed in the same way. In the face of situations outside of his control, including a wife pregnant by the power of the Holy Spirit, the closed doors of the inn, the threat of Herod searching for his son, an unexpected flight to another country as a refugee, Saint Joseph repeatedly embraced the voice of the Holy Spirit that said, “Do not be afraid.” He trusted in the Truth and allowed it to shape his mind, heart, and life. Like Saint Joseph, let us also respond to God’s call to “Do not be afraid” as we move forward into the future of the Church of the Diocese of Greensburg.

58 I now dedicate the next three years in the Diocese of Greensburg to Saint Joseph, the guardian and protector of the Virgin Mary and Jesus. There will be multiple opportunities for the faithful to celebrate the missionary year of the Eucharistic Revival in 2024, the Jubilee Year of the Universal Church in 2025, and the 75th anniversary of the formation of our Diocese in 2026 under the intercession of Saint Joseph.

These three years of dedication to Saint Joseph will conclude on March 19, 2027.

59 On this Solemnity of Saint Joseph, I hereby place the Diocese of Greensburg and our shared efforts during these next three years under the protection and guardianship of Saint Joseph. Through his intercession, may Saint Joseph lead us to an encounter with Jesus Christ. May Saint Joseph model for us the Truth of Christ, who is love and mercy, so that we may joyfully share Him with one another.

60 I invite everyone join with me in praying for the Intercession of Saint Joseph:

Saint Joseph, Guardian of the Holy Family, Protector of the Church, Fosterer of Vocations, Adorer of the Eucharistic Lord, and silent model of God’s mercy and justice, show us the paths that lead us closer to Christ.

Guide the Church of Greensburg with your protection, so that we may live in God’s truth. Inspire our families to be committed to love one another and to make our homes places in which the Gospel is shared.

O Terror of Demons, protect us through your powerful intercession from all evil and sin in the world, and from the temptation and influence of Satan.

Through your holy intervention, may we find joy and fulfillment in our work, the strength to uphold the dignity of human life, a welcoming spirit to the migrant and those in need, and the peace of a happy death.

Help us to become faithful disciples of your son and our Lord, so that we may experience His presence in our lives as you did at Nazareth. Amen.

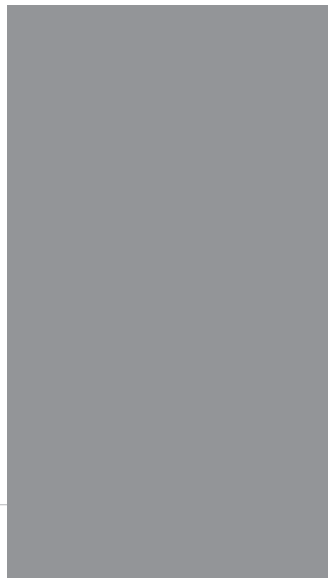
“Through his intercession, may Saint Joseph lead us to an encounter with Jesus Christ.”



Given this 19th day of March 2024
at Blessed Sacrament Cathedral
Greensburg, Pennsylvania

+ *Larry J. Kulick*

Most Reverend Larry J. Kulick, JCL
Sixth Bishop of the Diocese of Greensburg



Abbreviations Used

- 1 Cor = *First Letter of Saint Paul to the Corinthians*
- CIC = *Code of Canon Law*
- CiV = *Pope Benedict XVI, Caritas in Veritate*
- CV = *Pope Francis, Christus Vivit*
- Jer = *Book of Jeremiah*
- LS = *Pope Francis, Laudato Si'*
- Mt = *Gospel of Matthew*
- OCF = *United States Catholic Conference of Bishops, Order of Christian Funerals*
- PC = *Pope Francis, Patris Corde*
- RC = *Pope Saint John Paul II, Redemptoris Custos*



Diocese of Greensburg

**723 E. Pittsburgh St.
Greensburg PA 15601**

DioceseofGreensburg.org