



DIOCESE OF ALBANY

# *Hearts Aflame*

## EUCCHARISTIC CONGRESS

### A Letter from Bishop Ed Scharfenburger to be read at Pastoral Council meetings

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

It is with great joy and anticipation that I am announcing a major event for the Diocese of Albany. On September 22, 2018, at the Shrine of the North American Martyrs in Auriesville, we will be holding the *Hearts Aflame Eucharistic Congress*.

In our Catholic tradition, a “Eucharistic Congress” is a special gathering led by the bishop focused on our Lord Jesus in the Eucharist. It is a time of joy, fellowship, prayer, and unity. This will be a spiritual event, hallowed in part by the very ground on which it is held. We will celebrate Mass, host inspirational speakers, have a Eucharistic Procession, and offer activities for children. My hope is that the Holy Spirit will make this a powerful time of spiritual renewal for our entire diocese.



Often when I see sports stadiums packed for big games—the NFL playoffs come to mind—I often wish we could muster as much enthusiasm for our faith. The truth is that we have far more to celebrate: we have a Savior, Jesus Christ, who offers forgiveness, grace, and eternal life!

To continue the sports analogy, our Hearts Aflame Eucharistic Congress will be like a Catholic “Super Bowl” where we celebrate our faith with enthusiastic joy!

In the Diocese of Albany, our “stadium,” so to speak, is the Shrine of the North American Martyrs in Auriesville. It was built to hold ten thousand people, but there has not been a “Super Bowl” held there for decades. In recent years, smaller gatherings at the Shrine—which have been very powerful—have convinced me that the time is right for a large diocesan gathering.

So this fall, on September 22, I ask that the Shrine become a pilgrimage site for Catholics from every corner of our diocese. I want to be very clear: I invite every single Catholic in our diocese to attend, as well as our non-Catholic friends and family.

In particular, I ask that parishes make a coordinated effort to bring large groups of parishioners to Hearts Aflame. For some parishes, this may be a caravan of cars; for some it may mean chartering a bus; other parishes may have creative ways to bring youth groups or Knights of Columbus councils. More details about how to promote the event in your parish will be forthcoming in the months ahead.

We are most recognizable as Catholic when we gather in unity around the Blessed Sacrament. I hope you will join with me this fall as we ask the Lord Jesus to set our Hearts Aflame!

Sincerely Yours in the Peace of Christ,

*+Edward B. Scharfenburger*

Most Rev. Edward Scharfenburger  
Bishop of the Diocese of Albany