

BISHOP'S OFFICE
PASTORAL CENTER
40 NORTH MAIN AVENUE, ALBANY, NEW YORK 12203
FAX (518) 453-6795 • TELEPHONE (518) 453-6611

August 22, 2019

Feast of the Queenship of the Blessed Virgin Mary

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

During this challenging time, I want you to know that I recognize and share your sorrow and anger over new allegations of abuse in our Church. In these times we are also reminded of sins and crimes already proven to have been committed by spiritual fathers against their children. Our beautiful Catholic faith, which gives comfort through hardships and adds joy during life's great moments, can feel shaken. And, sadly, among you there are many who have suffered other types of abuse or trauma privately but now feel acutely painful memories reawakening when reading the news. My heart goes out to you.

Remember, my brothers and sisters, how Jesus was "living peace" for his apprehensive disciples in the midst of stormy seas. He is the Way, the Truth and the Life, and we have no reason to fear truth no matter how painful it may be. Life's sorrows and tumult teach us that it can be hard to lean into Jesus when we are in pain. Yet, precisely because of our faith, we understand all too well that all men and women have the capacity for evil and sin. It is the fallen humanity within our divinely instituted Church. This truth should not drive anyone away from our faith in Jesus himself or his sacramental presence but rather call each of us to deepen our reliance on the Lord, who in his Resurrection vanquished sin and evil. As we endure these challenges, our faith can and must grow stronger.

Please do not deprive yourselves, my dear brothers and sisters, of the sources of grace and strength we all need for our own burdens in life or for enduring what lies ahead. Do not rush to judge those who bring accusations forward, or those who are accused. Remember the counsel of St. Paul – where sin increases, grace abounds all the more. Graces abound for the survivors and their loved ones, and for the parishes where they should always be welcome. Graces abound, as well, for the accused, for whom our system of justice affords a presumption of innocence until proven otherwise. And we know, too, that graces abound for any sinner who seeks redemption even as he or she accepts just punishment. It is heavy lifting spiritually for all of us, to suspend the impulse to judge and take sides, but we are called to ensure all receive the respect due every child of God.

Our Blessed Mother knows more than any creature in God's Creation what it is to confront Evil. She relied on the peace and promises of her Son, pondering in her heart many terrifying things. It is to Mary, the Immaculate Conception, our Queen and our Mother, to whom I consecrated our diocese upon my arrival here, and it is to her care I

commend each of you every day, as we walk through the current challenges together. Thank you for your presence and for your commitment to our shared faith. God bless you.

Your brother and servant in Christ,

+Edward B. Scharfenberger

+Edward B. Scharfenberger
Bishop of Albany