



Diocese of St. Thomas in the U.S. Virgin Islands

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Office of The Bishop

PASTORAL LETTER

of his Lordship Bishop Jerome Feudjio

Diocese of Saint Thomas in the United States Virgin Islands

"The Vibrant Eucharistic Community that Believes, Adores, and Celebrates"

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

At a time when Eucharistic revival is so much needed, I joyfully announce a special Holy Year of the Eucharist for the Diocese of St. Thomas in the US Virgin Islands beginning on the 27th of November 2022 - the First Sunday of Advent through the 26th of November 2023. This special year of the Eucharist will coincide with the second year of the three-years Eucharistic revival project put forward by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops.

As we embark on this spiritual journey, I would like to recall the text from 1 John 1:3 which states: "That which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you also may have fellowship with us; and our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. And we are writing this that our joy may be complete."

In line with this scripture text, I urge that we become a vibrant Eucharistic community that believes, adores, and celebrates. For indeed what we celebrate is not 'something' but is 'Someone' and His name is Jesus - the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

The Church's mission, from time past, is to bring about unity: "*Ut unum sint* - That they may all be one". Our unity finds its source in the communion between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The Eucharist becomes our source of unity, and as we unite we celebrate the source and summit of our Christian life. Communion is, *par excellence*, a hinge for the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church.

In the month of June 2021, the Bishops of the United States met together in view of writing a document on the Eucharist. It became evident in these deliberations that the Church as communion is fractured. This is a cause of great concern, not only on a theological level but also on our existential being as the people of God.

In the First Millennium of the Church, schisms and heresies were not lacking, just as today the pew and Gallup polls make evident the heresy around the Eucharist - Catholics not believing in the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharistic species.

In light of this, I urge you all to have a deeper devotion to the Eucharist. Eucharistic devotion should once again be restored. Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament should be part and parcel of our lives, as individuals, families, prayer groups and parish communities alike. We cannot talk and preach ABOUT Jesus all the time if we do not spend hours before Him, talking TO Him. There is a difference between talking to someone and talking about someone. We need to talk TO Jesus, then we can go out to the whole world and talk about the One we have spoken to: *Dominus est* - It is the Lord.

We should not think of adoration, benediction, and Holy Mass as archaic. This special year of the Eucharist exhorts us to leave behind a mediocre way of approaching the Holy Eucharist. We need to climb up to the Upper Room where we can truly behold the Eucharistic Jesus and boldly say, 'It is the Lord present in his body, blood, soul, and divinity.'

This Diocesan Eucharistic journey on which we are on is, gratefully, spearheaded by our own Fr. John Kennedy Mark and his team from all three islands of our Diocese. We are so grateful to them for giving us guidelines on how to live and celebrate this special year. There are great benefits for us when we embark on this Eucharistic journey. This journey enables us to better appreciate the importance of the Holy Eucharist in our lives.

In my first pastoral letter in 2021, entitled "Taste the Goodness of Forgiveness", I called your attention to the theme of Forgiveness. I would like us to note the special bond between the Sacrament of Reconciliation and the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist. The forgiving community, in the State of Grace, is one that can live, celebrate and partake of the Sacrament of the Eucharist. As St. Augustine has rightly said: 'We become what we receive' - making us Eucharistic people.

Dear People of God, 'I feel a very strong necessity of reconciliation from the inner being of each member of our diocesan community, in a genuine and sincere commitment to forgive one another and rebuild true love and authentic fraternity. From Faith, as Christians, we can make it possible'. This is what I had said in my first pastoral letter and once again reiterate these same words.

Therefore, I encourage you to take the Sacrament of reconciliation seriously, and to forgive each other sincerely, without hesitation. More importantly, I urge you to receive Holy Communion with great reverence, and to devoutly adore Jesus in the Most Blessed Sacrament.

As we journey towards the Eucharistic congress, may we remember that we are an Advent people, pilgrims on a journey towards the Heavenly Jerusalem. When Christians do not adore, celebrate, and partake of the Eucharist, they spiritually starve themselves to death.

In conclusion, let us remember that 'to be a Christian, beyond Sacramental life is to manifest the beauty of the heart of God which we acquire through grace. Then only through challenge of our faith is our capacity to be as loving and charitable as God is in Himself'. Similarly, I offer the same admonition given by St. Pope John Paul II in his encyclical letter *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*:

By giving the Eucharist the prominence it deserves, and being careful not to diminish any of its dimension or demands, we show that we are truly conscious of the greatness of this gift. We are urged to do so by an uninterrupted tradition, which from the first centuries on has found the Christian community ever vigilant in guarding this 'treasure.' Inspired by love, the Church is anxious to hand on to future generations of Christians, without loss, her faith and teaching with regard to the mystery of the Eucharist. There can be no danger of excess in our care for this mystery, for 'in this sacrament is recapitulated the whole mystery of our salvation' (no. 61).


I urgently invite you to pray for the success of our Diocesan Year of the Eucharist in conjunction with all Catholics "Created Anew by the Body and Blood of Christ, Source of our Healing and Hope".

We beseech the Lord present in the Eucharist to grant, through the intercession of Our Mother Mary Conceived Without Sin, a renewed faith in the Holy Eucharist.

May the ancient prayer of Jean Jacques Olier (1608-1657), resound daily in our lives:
"Oh Jesus, living in Mary, come and live in me your servant, in the spirit of your own holiness, in the fullness of your power, in the perfection of your ways, in the truth of your virtues, in the communion of your mysteries. Subdue over every adverse power, in your own Spirit, for the glory of the Father. Amen."

While wishing you a fruitful Eucharistic journey, I impart on all of you my episcopal blessing.

Faithfully yours in Christ,


+ The Most Rev. Jerome Feudjio
Bishop of St. Thomas in the US Virgin Islands.
Given on this the First Sunday of Advent
November 27, 2022

