



OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

DIocese OF BRIDGEPORT

238 Jewett Avenue • Bridgeport, Connecticut 06606 • 203-416-1352 • FAX: 203-371-8323

February 22, 2014

PASTORAL LETTER ANNOUNCING THE FOURTH SYNOD OF THE DIOCESE OF BRIDGEPORT

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ:

Since the foundation of the Diocese of Bridgeport in 1953, the Catholic Church in Fairfield County has seen tremendous growth and much change. Three generations of Catholics have celebrated their Sacraments, been educated in our Catholic faith and received pastoral assistance through the generous ministry of our clergy, women and men in consecrated life, and lay leaders. Our parishes, schools, hospitals, nursing homes, soup kitchens as well as many programs sponsored by Catholic Charities have touched the lives of countless people. We can be proud of what we have accomplished together during these past sixty years with the grace of the Lord Jesus!

As I begin my ministry as your shepherd, I invite you to join me in preparing for the future of our diocesan Church, both mindful of the challenges that lay ahead of us but also with a spirit of hope and confidence. Each generation and every age has faced its own difficulties; yet, the gift of faith that has been placed into our hearts by God always remains. This faith not only remains in us but must be passed onto the future generations. Pope Francis, in his Encyclical Letter, *Lumen fidei*, (38) states:

The transmission of the faith not only brings light to men and women in every place; it travels through time, passing from one generation to another. Because faith is born of an encounter, which takes place in history and lights up our journey through time, it must be passed on in every age. It is through an unbroken chain of witnesses that we come to see the face of Jesus.

We are such witnesses of Christ in the twenty-first century, here in Fairfield County! We are the Apostles of the New Evangelization to those around us and those who come after us. But how do we fulfill so great a mission?

To answer this question we need to look to our past. Through the wisdom of my predecessors, our Diocese celebrated three Diocesan Synods in 1961, 1971 and 1981. These convocations of the clergy and the faithful were held both to assess the needs of the Diocese at the time.

As the Fifth Bishop of the Diocese, I recognize that the time is right to come together as a single diocesan family composed of clergy, religious and lay faithful to plan for our future, or if you will, to build a bridge from where we are today to where we want to be as a Diocese in the years to come. Many of you have expressed to me tremendous interest in this idea along with your readiness to participate. Therefore, after consulting with the College of Consultors, Presbyteral Council and other groups and members of the laity, relying upon the grace of God, I have decided to convoke the Fourth Synod of the Diocese of Bridgeport.

The theme of the Synod is *“Building a Bridge to the Future Together.”* The Synod will involve over four hundred delegates chosen from the faithful, clergy, religious, church-affiliated organizations, parishes, schools and ecclesial movements present in our Diocese. We will meet in five General Sessions between September 19, 2014 and September 19, 2015.

However, before these General Sessions can begin, I request your kind participation and input. Soon we will have a special website (www.2014synod.org) where you can voice your ideas for the Church and answer pertinent questions. Every parish and school will be asked to conduct a listening session with key leaders in order to ascertain the topics to be examined by the Synod. Moreover, I will meet personally with you at the five Listening Sessions (one in each Vicariate) in May and June. Afterwards, I will establish Study Committees to evaluate your comments and present them to the delegates prior to the General Sessions.

I am pleased to announce the appointment of Monsignor Dariusz Zielonka as the Director of the Synod, whose priestly zeal, competence and service will be of invaluable help to me in guiding the work of the Synod in the months ahead. I also look forward to announcing the members of the Synod Commission who will help Monsignor Dariusz and me to organize the Synod in the coming days.

Such a great undertaking must always start with divine inspiration and be directed by it. For this reason, I entrust the Fourth Synod of the Diocese of Bridgeport to the patronage of the Blessed Virgin Mary under the title of Our Lady of Fatima, whose intercession I humbly invoke. Moreover, I ask the intercession of two new saints: Saint John XXIII who convoked the Second Vatican Council and Saint John Paul II who further carried out the implementation of the conciliar decisions. I also ask that you keep the intention of the Fourth Diocesan Synod in your daily prayers.

May the Lord who is the source of all good things bless our efforts and bring them to fulfillment.

Sincerely yours in Christ,



Most Reverend Frank J. Caggiano
Bishop of Bridgeport