

CONSECRATION OF THE DIOCESE OF BRIDGEPORT TO THE SACRED HEART OF JESUS

Saturday, November 5, 2016
St. Augustine Cathedral, 1:00 PM – 5:00 PM

This is the first of four preparatory essays for the Consecration of the Diocese of Bridgeport to the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

I. The Meaning of Christian Pilgrimage

Hearing the word “pilgrimage” might bring to mind images of men and women of long ago, trekking over difficult, hilly terrain, on their way to a distant church, in which to pray, offer reparation, and ask the Lord for particular graces and blessings. But pilgrimages are not just from times past. They are still very much part of the Church’s life. Pilgrimages are privileged, spiritual opportunities for all of us to grow in our faith.

Just as our whole lives are a journey through time, with the goal of that journey being to reach safely the presence of Christ Himself, so too a pilgrimage is a journey made by a person of faith to a site which holds some deep spiritual significance.

When Pope Francis called the whole Church to observe the Jubilee Year of Mercy which is now underway, he explained why making a pilgrimage is especially appropriate for this Year. He wrote:

The practice of pilgrimage has a special place in the Holy Year, because it represents the journey each of us makes in this life. Life itself is a pilgrimage, and the human being is a *viator*, a pilgrim travelling along the road ... May pilgrimage be an impetus to conversion: by crossing the threshold of the Holy Door, we will find the strength to embrace God’s mercy and dedicate ourselves to being merciful with others as the Father has been with us (MISERICORDIAE VULTUS, 14).

Our diocesan family of faith will have the opportunity to make such a pilgrimage on **Saturday, November 5th**. Rather than traveling to a far-off place, the destination of our diocesan pilgrimage will be St. Augustine Cathedral in Bridgeport so that as many people as possible may take part. At the Cathedral that day, each pilgrim will have the opportunity to pass through the Holy Door and to receive the Jubilee Indulgence, to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation, and to be present as Bishop Caggiano consecrates the Diocese of Bridgeport to the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

Pilgrimages are special; they’re out-of-the-ordinary. A necessary aspect of making a pilgrimage is to approach it with a spirit of openness to deeper personal conversion. Pilgrimages help us to be intentional about turning away from sin, so as to be capable of a deeper fidelity to the Gospel.

The grace of this pilgrimage is open even to the sick and the homebound, who are invited by our Bishop to unite themselves in prayer with those physically making the pilgrimage to the Cathedral on November 5th, and to offer their sufferings for the needs of our local Church.

Together with Pope Francis, who reminds us that “mercy is a goal to reach, and requires dedication and sacrifice,” let us pray that we, together with our brothers and sisters across our diocese, will respond enthusiastically to this invitation, so that our diocesan pilgrimage and consecration on November 5th will be a day of joy, and of lasting grace, for this local Church in this Jubilee Year of Mercy.