



+ January 26, 2022

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Happy New Year! As we begin 2022, I wanted to write to you about where we have been and where the Holy Spirit may be leading us as we walk together on our journey of faith.

As I reflect on the last year, I find myself incredibly grateful for the gift of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit has guided us through challenging times and presents us with the wonderful opportunity to be still, to listen, and to renew our relationship with Jesus and our dedication to his mission. It is through our Risen Savior that we have the strength, the patience, the love and the wisdom to move forward as one Body of Christ.

Even with the challenges of the past year, we as Church continued to carry out our mission of making Christ present, accompanying one another and sharing the joy of the Gospel. I believe the greatest blessing of 2021 for our local Church was to have a full year of uninterrupted access to the sacraments, especially the celebration of the Paschal Mystery in the Mass.

With tens of thousands of Masses celebrated during this pandemic, we have had no known cases of the virus spreading among congregations. This good news indicates that our mitigation efforts are working, and that renewing our presence at Mass is safe. It is because of this that I recently lifted the dispensation from the Sunday obligation and welcomed everyone back to Mass. These past few weeks it's been very life-giving to see more people at Mass and our parish communities beginning to rebuild!

I recognize we are tired of this pandemic, but we must not forget the vulnerable among us who rely on us for their safety. We have effective vaccines, which I highly encourage everyone to receive. We have layers of mitigation to help us minimize spread. We have a responsibility to care for the common good, and we have done a wonderful job thus far.

By now, I hope you are aware that we launched an archdiocesan-wide Pastoral Planning effort last year, which parlays nicely into the current global synodal process led by Pope Francis. These efforts ask each of us to truly listen to the Holy Spirit and discern: How am I personally called to live my faith? How are all of us, as Church, called to manifest the Body of Christ today? I encourage each of you to spend time in prayer that we may be sensitive to the promptings of the Holy Spirit to know the will of our Father that we might embody the mystical Body of Christ.

In addition to Pastoral Planning, I created a Racial Justice and Cultural Diversity Commission to help guide our archdiocesan efforts around intercultural competency and find ways to address the sin of racism. This is needed more than ever given the social unrest and the continued presence of racial aggressions and disparities felt by many of our brothers and sisters. We continue to pray for unity and seek ways to bring our Church closer together.

This past year was also incredibly painful for our Native American brothers and sisters. I wish to assure each of you that the Catholic Church is here for you today and we seek to journey with you on your path toward healing. Working with our Native American Advisory Board and the Washington State Catholic Conference, we began a significant research project to share the stories and experiences of Native Americans in the Archdiocese of Seattle, which at one point extended to Idaho. We believe this effort will shed light on the Native American experience with the Catholic Church in this region, with the goal of helping foster healing and strengthening the relationship between our local tribes and the Catholic Church.

Lastly, the Archdiocese of Seattle signed on to several environmental petitions concerning the dire need to increase our care for our common home. Understanding the connection between our Catholic faith and the importance of caring for creation and its direct impacts on the poorest of the poor is vital. This is an area of focus that we will continue to expand upon this year.

Looking ahead to this year, I have great hope.

This year I pray that each of us may continue to grow in our relationship with Jesus Christ and be drawn ever deeper into the divine life of love that is the Blessed Trinity. The Trinity – the Father who wills; the Holy Spirit who works; and the Son, Jesus, the Word made flesh – is the foundation of our Catholic faith. We are created by God and for God, and through the Church, especially the Eucharist, we enter into the “new and eternal covenant” with God, through Jesus Christ.

How are we experiencing the movement of the Holy Spirit? What is God’s will for us and for the Church? What concrete expression of Christ are we called to embody in the Church today? How are we called to share the love and joy of Christ with others? I encourage each of you to pray about these questions and listen for the response of the Holy Spirit. To help us with this, I am particularly drawn to this prayer of St. Paul who reminds us that we are “partners for the Gospel”:

And this is my prayer:
that your love may increase ever more and more
in knowledge and every kind of perception,
to discern what is of value,
so that you may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ,
filled with the fruit of righteousness
that comes through Jesus Christ
for the glory and praise of God.
(Philippians 1:9-11)

Thank you for your continued faith. Let us use our faith to help others grow in theirs. I pray that each of you feel the love and joy of our Lord this year. Please know that I continue to pray for you, and I ask for your prayers as well. As always, I remain,

In the Heart of Christ,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Paul D. Etienne". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "P" and "E".

Most Rev. Paul D. Etienne, DD, STL
Archbishop of Seattle