



ROMAN CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF SYRACUSE

OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

240 E. ONONDAGA STREET, SYRACUSE, NY 13202-2608

November 13, 2025

Dear Diocesan Family,

On Tuesday, November 4, the Church called to mind St. Charles Borromeo, a true pastor of the Church. He was known for his deep humility, zealous service of the poor, and steadfast commitment to the Gospel and holiness of life. St. Charles Borromeo lived in Milan, Italy, in the mid-1500s. He came from a noble and wealthy family and was destined for a life of wealth and comfort.

He chose instead to be a priest, and at the young age of 27, he was chosen to be the Archbishop of Milan. In a short time, he became known for the extraordinary care he gave to his people. He was noted for his pastoral visits to parishes and insisted on being present to his people: walking among them, teaching, feeding, and caring for them. When the plague struck Italy during his time as archbishop, he remained in the city, where he ministered to the sick and the dying, helping those in need. He saw to it that his own earthly possessions were converted into money for medicine for the poor.

St. Charles taught catechism, found the sick and elderly places to stay, established schools, and ran the diocese. He lived a life of prayer. He once said, “Here all kinds of poor will be housed, outsiders as well as Milanese; men, women, and children, because charity knows no distinction of nations, and we are all brothers and sisters in the Lord.”

St. Charles Borromeo is one of my heroes in life, and I wish I could receive regular counsel from him as a bishop. I certainly pray to him for his guidance and read his extant writings. Yet, I also find his way of life alive in another bishop of our day: Pope Leo XIV, Bishop of Rome, who made the following statement to reporters last Tuesday evening: “In the first place, the role of the church is to preach the Gospel.” Citing Matthew 25, he said, “Jesus says very clearly that at the end of the world, we’re going to be asked, ‘How did you receive the foreigner? Did you receive him and welcome him or not?’ And I think that there’s a deep reflection that needs to be made in terms of what’s happening” [in the present moment in our world – ed. Note].

This leads me to the statement released by the New York State Bishops today, the Memorial of St. Francis Xavier Cabrini—the first American Saint and the Saint of Immigrants—titled “For You Too Once Were Aliens.” As one of the signers of this statement, I am both inspired and challenged by its message. I invite the members of our diocesan family to read it carefully, pray over it, and to consider joining me in making the “Cabrini Pledge.”

Faith • Hope • Charity

In the final weeks of the Church's liturgical year, you and I are invited to focus on the Last Things, particularly the Last Judgment and Christ's Second Coming. As Matthew 25 reminds us, "Whatsoever you and I do to the least of our brothers and sisters, we do to [Christ]" for good or ill. This is why my brother bishops and I clearly state: "However, most important to recall is the law of Christ set down in the Great Commandments: To love God with all our hearts and to love our neighbor as ourselves. All other imperatives are subject to this law of charity, and it is concerned neither with legal status nor country of origin. As individuals and as a society, we are bound to follow this supreme command and to make all our actions consistent with it, to the best of our abilities, even in difficult circumstances."

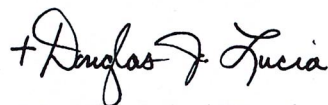
I know some will accuse the Catholic Church of meddling in politics and violating the rule of separation of Church and State. This could not be further from the truth! Rather, as St. Charles Borromeo and St. Francis Xavier Cabrini did in their respective eras, the present world situation is calling all men and women of goodwill—but especially those who claim to be believers—to remember the gospel message of Jesus Christ and to use it as one's guiding light in dealing with the situations confronting our society. As the Letter of James directs you and me: "To be doers of the word and not hearers only" (Jas 1:22).

This same letter goes on to state: "What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him? If a brother or sister has nothing to wear and has no food for the day, and one of you says to them, 'Go in peace, keep warm, and eat well,' but you do not give them the necessities of the body, what good is it? So also faith of itself, if it does not have works, is dead. Indeed someone may say, 'You have faith and I have works.' Demonstrate your faith to me without works, and I will demonstrate my faith to you from my works" (Jas 2:14-18)

In a short while, it will be our national feast of Thanksgiving. A time when you and I not only give thanks but also call to mind the less fortunate. This year, let us not forget both the documented and undocumented members of our communities, made in the image and likeness of God, as you and I are. Let us assist them with our prayers and works, just like other immigrants and aliens who came to a new world seeking a better life, and especially one where they could live out their faith in God.

Peace and blessings!

In the Name of Jesus,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Douglas J. Lucia". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style. A small cross is written to the left of the first name.

Most Reverend Douglas J. Lucia
Bishop of Syracuse