

The CATHOLIC *Islander*

APRIL 2025



Finding Joy:

The Jubilee Year of Hope in the USVI

SISTERS OF ST. THERESE OF THE CHILD JESUS OF BUEA

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FROM *the bishop*

“Renewing Hope: Strengthening Our Faith, Serving Our Community” Message for the 2025 Bishop’s Appeal

***From the Most Reverend Jerome Feudjio, Bishop of the Diocese of
St. Thomas in the United States Virgin Islands***

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

As we embark on the Jubilee Year 2025, marked by the theme ***Pilgrims of Hope***, we are reminded of our sacred journey toward Christ, a journey rooted in faith, love, and service. The Bishop’s Appeal is a vital part of this pilgrimage, offering us the opportunity to renew our hope in tangible ways as we support the ministries that sustain our Diocese of St. Thomas in the Virgin Islands.

Our sacramental life is at the heart of who we are as Catholics. The Bishop’s Appeal ensures that every person, young and old, can encounter Christ in the sacraments – whether it is through baptism, Eucharist, marriage, or reconciliation. Your generous support helps us train clergy and lay ministers, provide materials, and maintain our sacred spaces for spiritual events.

Catholic education is a beacon of hope for the next generation. Through your contributions, we provide scholarships, enhance our schools, and support teachers dedicated to forming young minds in the truth of the Gospel. Together, we empower our children to grow in faith, knowledge, and virtue.

Vocations are essential for the future of our Church. Your support nurtures young men and women responding to God’s call to the priesthood and religious life. By investing in their formation, we ensure that our Church continues to grow in holiness and service.

Communications play a crucial role in evangelization. Through media, outreach programs, and publications, we bring the Good News of Christ to those who might otherwise never hear it. Your generosity helps us share the hope of the Gospel across the Virgin Islands and beyond.

Lastly, our sacred spaces of evangelization are churches, chapels, and mission sites where the faithful gather to worship and grow. Your contributions to this appeal help maintain these spaces, making them places of beauty, welcome, and spiritual renewal.

This year, let us walk together as Pilgrims of Hope, renewing our commitment to building up the Church in our Diocese. May your generous participation in the 2025 Bishop’s Appeal be a reflection of your faith and love for Christ and the Church. †

Yours sincerely in Christ,
Most Reverend Bishop Jerome Feudjio
***Bishop of St. Thomas in the United States
Virgin Islands***



Renewing Hope: strengthening our faith, serving our community.

WAYS TO GIVE

You can give a payment or consider using the Pledge Plan for monthly or quarterly payments.

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Transfers and appointments in the Diocese of St. Thomas, USVI

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Re: Transfers and appointments in the Diocese of St. Thomas, USVI

In the light of the pastoral needs of our diocese, I would like to inform you of the following transfers and appointments of clergy and personnel to various parishes and institutions,

DIOCESAN CHANCERY

Effective Dec. 28, 2024

Rev. Andrea Filippucci, Vicar General
Rev. Marcel Gham, Chancellor and Moderator of the Curia
Rev. Anthony Abraham, Vicar for Clergy and Religious
Rev. Louis Kemayou, Vocations Director
Rev. Robert Kenfack, Coordinator of Safe Environment

ST. THOMAS – ST. JOHN DEANERY

Effective Jan. 15

Rev. Mathias Njong, Rector
Ss. Peter & Paul Cathedral, St. Thomas
Rev. Marcel Gham, Parochial Vicar
Ss. Peter and Paul Cathedral, St. Thomas
Rev. Modeste Digwou, Administrator
Holy Family, Tutu
Rev. Yacob Lonfo Fopa, Parochial Vicar
Holy Family, Tutu
Rev. Joseph Nguete Toko, Administrator
Our Lady of Perpetual Help, Mafolie
Rev. Anthony Abraham, Pastor
Our Lady of Mount Carmel, St. John
Rev. Godfrey Chandya, Parochial Vicar
Our Lady of Mount Carmel, St. John
Rev. Ronan Sarmiento, Administrator
St. Anne, Frenchtown

ST. CROIX DEANERY

Effective Jan. 15

Rev. Louis Kemayou, Pastor
Holy Cross, Christiansted
Rev. Rodrigue Takoudjou Dzomo, Sabbatical/In residence
Holy Cross, Christiansted
Rev. Robert Kenfack, Administrator
St. Patrick, Frederiksted
Rev. John K. Mark, Parochial Vicar
St. Patrick, Frederiksted
Rev. Touchard Tignoua, In residence (per tempus)
St. Patrick, Frederiksted
Rev. Dominic Ukagba, Administrator
Ss. Joachim and Ann, Barrenspot, Kingshill
Rev. Andrea Filippucci, Pastor
St. Joseph, Mount Pleasant, Frederiksted

DIOCESAN CHAPLAINCY

Effective Jan. 15

Rev. Ronan Sarmiento, Coordinator
Diocesan Youth Ministry
Rev. Yacob Lonfo Fopa, Coordinator
Apostleship of the Sea and Cruise Ship
Rev. Marcel Gham, Coordinator
Hispanic Ministry

DIOCESAN BUILDINGS AND FACILITIES

Rev. Louis Kemayou, Director
(St. Croix Deanery)
Rev. Modeste Digwou, Director
(St. Thomas-St. John Deanery)

SCHOOLS

Effective Dec. 28, 2024

SS. PETER AND PAUL CATHOLIC SCHOOL

Sister Edith Itor, Principal
Rev. Ronan Sarmiento, Vice Principal
Ss. Peter and Paul Catholic School
Mr. Modestus Ugo Dike, Master of Discipline

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Most Rev. Jerome Feudjio

Bishop of the Diocese of St. Thomas in the Virgin Islands



Catholic Charities: Providing Help, Creating Hope

BY BERNADETTE PATRICK

During this Jubilee Year of Hope, we take a deeper look at the vital work being done by Catholic Charities of the Virgin Islands (CCVI), the charitable arm of the Diocese of St. Thomas in the Virgin Islands. Guided by the principles of our Catholic faith, CCVI is committed to uplifting the most vulnerable members of our community, particularly the homeless and underserved.

As a nationally affiliated, faith-based nonprofit, CCVI operates under the leadership of a volunteer board and a dedicated team of compassionate professionals. Their mission is clear: **to assist, advocate for and restore dignity to those in need.**

A Lifeline for the Vulnerable

CCVI provides an extensive range of **essential services** to individuals and families facing hardship. These services support the homeless, the mentally ill, those struggling with substance abuse, and the elderly who are homebound. Programs include:

- **Emergency shelters** – Offering refuge for those without a home in St. Thomas and St. Croix
- **Soup kitchens** – Providing hot meals daily on St. Thomas, St. Croix, and St. John
- **Street mobile outreach** – Delivering food, clothing and hygiene kits to the homeless
- **Transitional housing** – The St. Teresa of Calcutta House of Hope in St. Croix offers temporary housing and life skills training for self-sufficiency
- **Medical assistance** – Monthly medical clinics at the Bethlehem House Shelter in St. Thomas and health services on St. John, including dental and psychiatric care
- **Rental and utility assistance** – Helping families in crisis remain in their homes
- **PATH** – Assisting individuals experiencing chronic homelessness
- **Summer camps** – Providing safe and enriching programs for children



A Community in Action

Every day, the three **soup kitchens** in the Virgin Islands serve over **500 hot meals**, ensuring that no one in the community goes hungry. Through the **Street Mobile Outreach**, CCVI extends its reach beyond its physical location, bringing vital resources to those living in the streets.

The **St. Teresa of Calcutta House of Hope** offers a beacon of hope for individuals striving to regain independence. This program provides residents with employment support and basic life skills, setting them on the path toward self-sustainability.

Answering the Call to Serve

The work of Catholic Charities Virgin Islands is made possible through **the generosity of donors and volunteers**. As we journey through **Lent**, a season of spiritual renewal and acts of mercy, let us consider how we can make a difference:

- **Volunteer your time** to serve meals or assist at shelters
- **Donate** food, clothing, household items or financial gifts
- **Offer professional services**, such as medical or counseling support

Every contribution – big or small – helps CCVI continue **empowering families and strengthening communities.**

To learn more or to make a donation, visit www.catholic-charitiesvi.org, email info@catholiccharitiesvi.org or call **340.775.8518**.

Together, through faith and action, we can bring hope to those who need it most. †





Daughters of the Holy Family

Finding Joy:

The Jubilee Year of Hope in the USVI

DEAR MONSIGNOR AND REVEREND FATHERS, DEAR DEACONS,
DEAR MEMBERS OF THE INSTITUTES OF CONSECRATED LIFE AND SOCIETIES OF APOSTOLIC LIFE
DEAR BROTHERS AND SISTERS IN CHRIST,

IN HIS PROVIDENCE, GOD HAS GRACIOUSLY BROUGHT US TO A NEW YEAR. IT IS AN ORDINARY JUBILEE YEAR IN THE CHURCH, WHICH POPE FRANCIS DECLARED THE YEAR OF HOPE - A THEME WE SHALL TALK ABOUT SHORTLY. AS WE STAND AT THIS THRESHOLD, OUR HEARTS ARE FILLED WITH GRATITUDE FOR THE ABUNDANT BLESSINGS WE RECEIVED OVER THE PAST YEAR. WE HAVE WITNESSED GOD'S HAND AT WORK IN OUR LIVES AND OUR DIOCESE, GUIDING US THROUGH CHALLENGES AND CELEBRATING WITH US IN MOMENTS OF JOY.

At the beginning of this year, I address myself to you as your servant and shepherd; I extend my heartfelt thanks to each of you for your unwavering dedication and support in our Christian communities. Your commitment to the Kingdom of God, manifested here in the U.S. Virgin Islands and beyond, has been a source of strength and inspiration. Together, we have continued to build a community rooted in faith, hope, and love, and it is with this spirit that we look forward to the year ahead.

Reflecting on 2024

First of all, let us look back at where we have come from and at the major highlights of the year 2024.

The past year has been filled with significant milestones and moments of grace for our Diocese. Very importantly, we celebrated the 250th anniversary of our Cathedral Church, the Cathedral of Saints Peter and Paul. It was a historic, year-long event in which we commemorated God's fidelity. Those were months to honor the faith of those who have been here before us, the legacy of their dedication and witness, and recommit ourselves to fully live the faith we profess.

This historic event was marked by the visit of His Eminence Christophe Cardinal Pierre, Apostolic Nuncio to the United States of America. He brought us the encouragement of the Holy Father, lived among us a few days, and bore witness to the faith. He was glad to visit all our parishes, hold sessions with us, teach, answer questions, and learn. The Nuncio experienced life as we live it, and took back with him good sentiments from his visit.

In the course of last year, we were blessed with the ordination of a new priest, Rev. Ronan Nee Sarmiento. It was a joyous occasion that brought renewed vigor to our clergy and our Diocese. The ordination of a priest is always great news.

In connection to vocations, while we pray for more vocations, we thank God for our seven seminarians: five of them are studying in three seminaries, and two are on canonical experience in our Diocese. I installed these two into the ministries of lector and acolyte last year, as part of their preparation for ordination as priests. God willing, we may soon witness the ordination as deacon of one of them, and later of the other. Let us keep all these young men in our prayers. Thank you for the support you give for the training of seminarians. As you know, we do not have a seminary of our own, and it costs us about \$40,000 to have

each of them in the seminary for a year. May God bless you for your past and continued generosity.

Additionally, we welcomed a new religious community into our Diocese, The Sisters of St. Therese of the Child Jesus of Buea. Four members of their community are now present among us, to join our parish communities and schools in witnessing to the risen Jesus and spreading God's kingdom in our beautiful islands through their various ministries. They join the other communities already present in our Diocese, namely: the Missionaries of Charity, the Daughters of the Holy Family and the Franciscan Handmaids of the Most Pure Heart of Mary. May God bless their ministries with abundant fruits.

The foregone were some of the major and impactful events. But we cannot lose sight of all the other activities that brought the grace of God into our lives. Throughout the year, the sacraments were celebrated across the Diocese, strengthening our bonds of faith and community. Each baptism, confirmation, and marriage was a reminder of God's presence in our lives and His unending grace. And every time we celebrate the Eucharist, anoint the sick, and celebrate all other sacraments and sacramentals, God renews his presence among us.

Most certainly, we had difficult moments as well last year in our families and parish communities; perhaps, we lost family members and friends or encountered some setback, difficulty, or even hardship. These served to remind us – as the Scriptures tell us – that there is a time for everything, the joyful and otherwise. We offer these to God as part of our human existence, as we ask him to accompany us throughout this new year.

Embracing 2025: A Year of Hope

Now, let us turn our attention to this new year we have begun.

As we embark on this year, we must remember that it is an ordinary Jubilee Year. The Holy Father, Pope Francis, declared it the Jubilee Year of Hope. In his

letter announcing the Jubilee Year, Pope Francis reminded us that "Hope does not disappoint" (Rom 5:5), and he called us to a renewed encounter with the Lord Jesus, the source of our hope. This message encourages us to look to the future with an open spirit, a trusting heart, and a far-sighted vision.

To live this Year of Hope, let us draw inspiration from the numerous resources made available to us. Our 2025 Compendium contains some of them on its final pages. Many resources are also available on our Diocesan website, the website of the United States Catholic Conference of Bishops, and the website of the Jubilee Year of Hope itself. I invite you all to prepare more activities at the level of our parochial communities that will help us live out the year more meaningfully. In these activities, in addition to those we previewed in the pastoral calendar included in our 2025 Compendium, let us think more about the young people, bring them to God, and help them live the year as well.

We already set the pace for this Year of Hope before the close of last year. Even before the Holy Father officially inaugurated the Jubilee Year, our Diocesan Advent Missions thus far turned our gaze to the Jubilee. It is incumbent on us, especially on the Pastors and Administrators of our Parishes, to ensure that this spirit with which we prepared for the Nativity of our Lord Jesus is carried with us throughout this Year of Hope.

One of the highlights of this year will be the pilgrimage to Rome. This pilgrimage, organized in the context of the Year of Hope, offers a unique opportunity for spiritual renewal and communal bonding. Ninety pilgrims are preparing to go on this holy journey after Easter this year. Due to logistical limitations, not many of us can make it to Rome. However, we can organize other activities and even local pilgrimages to participate in this year and share in the graces.

In the course of the year, let us also remember in a special way our sick and shut-ins. They are an integral part of our

community, and it is our duty to pray for them, visit them, and offer our support. Let us ensure they feel the warmth of our love, the strength of our prayers, and the hope that the Gospel brings us. Joining the ministry of the sick would be a wonderful way to let the Holy Spirit touch us this year, and touch others through us. In the same context, let us continue to support our Catholic Charities as they care for the homeless and less privileged. These, and other activities that we carry out, will give a practical dimension to our faith, and our celebration of the Year of Hope.

A new impetus for the year 2025

What new impetus can we have this year in our Diocese?

Before the close of last year, we did some consultations within the Diocese. In this context, we met with the pastoral councils of all the parishes. These meetings helped us in a process of discernment that took into account the spiritual, pastoral and other climates in the parishes and institutions, the needs and hopes of our parish communities, and a thorough evaluation, especially of the human resources available to attend to the said needs.

Following these meetings, I made some transfers and appointments of pastoral personnel in favor of the needs of the Diocese. I invite everyone to welcome the new priests and personnel with open hearts and to collaborate with them in their ministries. Notably, we introduced the function of Directors of the Diocesan Buildings and Facilities for each of our two deaneries and the Coordination of the Apostleship of the Sea and Cruise Ship. There are many needs in our communities, but we are restrained by available human and material resources to attend to all of them. We must keep being grateful to God, to our benefactors within the Diocese and the missions, and to each and everyone in our Diocese, for the contribution being made every year to support the ministries.

In our schools, the faculty and staff are dedicated to improvement and progress. They are committed to the education of our children, helping them grow in wisdom, knowledge, faith and morality. And this is in spite of the tough financial situation in our schools. Despite the challenges, our schools are making significant strides, and we are confident in their continued success. Therefore, as we mark Catholic Schools Week this year,

let us celebrate the strides we have made, and renew our commitment to support these institutions that have educated and impacted the lives of so many people in the past decades. We continue to count on the collaboration of the parents and alumni in the life of the schools.

Concluding thoughts

To conclude, as we journey through this Year of Hope, let us all strive to be ever more welcoming. Each of us is called to be a guest house, sharing Jesus with those who join us. Our hospitality and openness are reflections of our faith and love.

Later in the year, I shall announce a Convocation in our Diocese. It will bring together representatives from our parishes and institutions. This gathering will provide an opportunity to discuss the life of our Diocese and plan for the future, ensuring that we continue to grow and thrive as a community.

May this year be filled with hope, renewal, and abundant blessings for each one of you. Happy New Year, a Year of Hope! †

Most Rev. Jerome Feudjio,
*Bishop of St. Thomas in the
Virgin Islands*



Statement on recent immigration changes

Recent changes in U.S. immigration policy have significant implications for immigrants and their families. These changes have caused widespread concern and anxiety among our community members, some of whom could be directly affected.

The Catholic Church, guided by its social teaching, has always upheld the dignity and rights of every human being, regardless of their immigration status. Our faith teaches us to welcome the stranger and to see Christ in every person, especially those who are vulnerable and marginalized. As it is written in the Gospel according to Matthew, “For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me.” (25:35)

The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) has consistently advocated for comprehensive immigration reform that respects the dignity of immigrants while ensuring the security of our nation. We echo the sentiments expressed by our fellow bishops across the country, who have called for policies that are just, humane, and compassionate.

We recognize the right of nations to regulate their borders and enforce immigration laws. However, these laws must be implemented in a manner that respects the inherent dignity of every person and protects the unity of families. The recent policy changes that increase deportations and restrict asylum seekers are deeply troubling and risk causing harm to the most vulnerable among us.

In solidarity with the USCCB and other dioceses, we call upon our government leaders to reconsider these policies and to work towards a more just and humane immigration system. We urge our community to stand in solidarity with immigrants, offering support and assistance to those in need. Our Catholic Charities of the Virgin Islands is ready to continue providing food and other essential services to the needy.

Let us remember that our faith calls us to act with love, compassion, and justice. Together, we can build a society that respects the dignity of all people and reflects the values of the Gospel.

In Christ,

Most Rev. Jerome Feudjio
Bishop of St. Thomas in the Virgin Islands



Make your *joy* complete

BY DEACON DAVID CAPRIOLA

EVERYONE APPRECIATES FEELING JOYFUL AND WE CAN PROBABLY THINK OF A HOST OF THINGS THAT BRING JOY TO OUR LIVES. FAMILY IS AN OBVIOUS PLACE TO START.

Whether we are part of a large extended family or a smaller intimate one, our experiences with them have undoubtedly brought many opportunities for joy throughout the years. Both our sons have made life immeasurably joyful for my wife and me. We have celebrated countless joy-filled moments and memories with them.

Many of us find joy in our careers, work lives or volunteer tasks. My own ministry in the diaconate often fills me with joy from the fulfilling interactions with others and, after 37 years in the classroom, I still find joy in teaching.

Our world gives us a multitude of avenues to encounter joy. The entertainment and mass media industries exist to create it, and humans have a long history in seeking it.

We all have our favorite movies, television shows, books, games, sports, activities and social media platforms that make us happy. They can be very effective too. On nights when I lie in bed, tossing and turning with negative thoughts, I can often quickly curb them by turning on the television to stream a favorite show until I eventually fall asleep.

They have the ability to entertain and distract us from the strains of

daily existence, but unfortunately cannot be counted on to last forever. Though many are significant and comforting, they remain temporal in nature. At some point, such joys end, and we are left seeking another to replace it.

As people of faith, we believe that there exists a lasting joy, one that never ends and fulfills us completely. This is the joy that stands apart from anything that this world can create to appease our longing for happiness. It is the joy of God.

As Christians we encounter this joy in our experience of Jesus in the Gospels. In his papal encyclical *Evangelii Gaudium* (The Joy of the Gospel), Pope Francis states, “The joy of the Gospel fills the hearts and lives of all who encounter Jesus.” (2013)

So often in life, we can be frustrated and disappointed when in one moment there is joy, but eventually it leaves or loses its effect, but the eventual dissipation and contingency of those things that provide joy have no bearing on this joy. There is no timeline or limitation on the joy of the Gospel. It is infinitely abundant and eternal in its nature, as is its source, Our Lord himself.

Jesus is our joy. In the encyclical, the Holy Father invites all Christians “to a renewed encounter with Jesus Christ. (Whenever) we take a step toward Jesus, we come to realize he is already there, waiting for us with open arms. Our joy, then, is rooted in the person of Jesus.” (EG 2013)

In one of his homilies, Pope Francis offers the practical implications of this joy:

“Christians should not look like solemn and saddened people who have just come back from a funeral! Even when we experience great distress, our joy is not taken away from us, because we know we are infinitely loved by God. But joy does not mean living from laugh to laugh. Joy is not entertainment. It is something else. Christian joy is peace, peace that is deeply rooted, peace in the heart, the peace that only God can give. This is Christian joy.

This is our breath as Christians.” (2018)

The simplicity of this joy should not conceal its challenge. It calls us away from the attractive allurements of human life. We may not find it so easy to avoid seeking comfort and consolation in what the world offers to satisfy our desire for convenience, pleasure, and happiness.

It is very natural to feel resistance to replacing the superficial joys with the joy that Jesus invites us to embrace, but our uneasiness should not deter us from pursuing it. In the Gospel story of the rich young man, we see the challenge that completely embracing Jesus can pose if we are still too tied to our worldly joys.

A young man of some wealth approaches Jesus with a question of what it takes to be saved and enter the Kingdom of God. Jesus first tells him to live a moral life and abide by the commandments. Having done so all his life, Jesus now presents the remaining obstacle for the young man to achieve his desire and find true joy

with God, “Jesus, looking at him, loved him and said to him, You are lacking in one thing. Go, sell what you have, and give to the poor and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me.” At that statement, the young man’s face falls, and he goes away sad, for he has many possessions. Jesus looks around and says to his disciples, “How hard it is for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God!” (Mk 10: 21-23)

Earthly treasures can have a very strong hold on our lives. They can blind us to embracing the absolute and everlasting joy found with following Jesus and entering the Kingdom with Him.

In order to overcome this challenge, we need to have a more spiritual perspective on what is most important in life. Tangible possessions can never fill the heart and give to us what only spiritual joy can provide.

Our hearts must long for a deeper awareness of and love for the Lord. There is no substitute or alternative.

Though it takes a demanding commitment from the believer, God is there to help and support us in our determination. Once attained, the joy we encounter is profoundly dynamic in its ability to transform us. Jesus himself proclaims this truth in the Gospel, “I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and your joy may be complete.” (Jn 15:11)

Our experience with this joy enables us to recognize that nothing else is really needed once we embrace it. The joy of Jesus as expressed in the role of the disciple who follows the Gospel brings us a deeper understanding of what God has done for us and why that knowledge is all that matters in life.

Experiencing the great love that God has for us is a grace so immense and powerful that it literally enables us to clear away every obstacle that can cloud our vision or block our path. Its deepest strength can be found in the Eucharist where we become intimately one with Jesus in His real presence.

If we have faith in this truth, then every opportunity to receive Communion or adore Jesus in the sacrament will be met with excitement and joy beyond any comparison. We will approach him with goose bumps and enthusiasm that lift our souls to spiritual ecstasy.

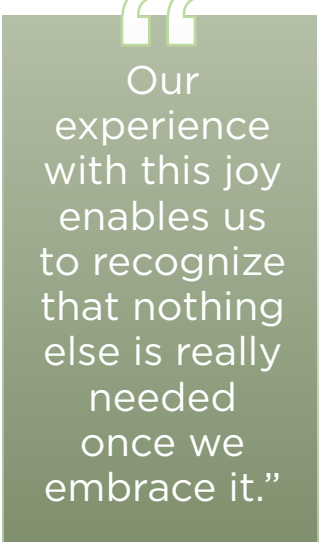
Pope Francis reiterated this in another homily message in 2023, “An encounter with Jesus always brings you joy.”

This is the complete joy of Christ. Desire it, search for it, accept it, let it take hold of you, and allow it to change your life forever. It will be the light that continually leads to the eternal glory of God, whom we approach not with fearful, saddened faces, but rather with glowing joyful excitement that allows us to greet God and welcome Him into our hearts.

In the famous song “Ode To Joy” from Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony, we celebrate this gleeful feeling of joy that has the power to make us beloved children of God each day and forever,

“Joyful, joyful, we adore You, God of glory, Lord of love; Hearts unfold like flowers before You, opening to the sun above. Melt the clouds of sin and sadness; drive the dark of doubt away; Giver of immortal gladness, fill us with the light of day!”

Amen! †



Our
experience
with this joy
enables us
to recognize
that nothing
else is really
needed
once we
embrace it.”

El Gozo del mes de Rosario:

Una experiencia transformadora para la comunidad hispana de la catedral.

POR PBRO. MARCEL GHAM (COORDINADOR)



EN LA VIBRANTE VIDA DE ST. THOMAS, LA COMUNIDAD HISPANA DE LA CATEDRAL DE SAN PEDRO Y SAN PABLO ENCONTRÓ CONSUELO Y RENOVACIÓN ESPIRITUAL A TRAVÉS DEL REZO DIARIO DEL ROSARIO. DESDE LA CATEDRAL, ESTA PODEROSA DEVOCIÓN MARIANA RECORRIÓ POR TODAS LAS PARROQUIAS DE ST. THOMAS, INCLUYENDO OLMC DE ST. JOHN, Y LLEGÓ INCLUSO A LOS HOGARES DE LOS MIEMBROS. CELEBRADA EN OCTUBRE DE 2024, ESTA PRÁCTICA TRAJÓ PROFUNDOS CAMBIOS A LAS VIDAS DE LOS PARTICIPANTES Y FORTALECIÓ LOS LAZOS ENTRE LOS MIEMBROS DE LA COMUNIDAD. EN ESTE ARTÍCULO EXPLORAREMOS EL IMPACTO TRANSFORMADOR QUE ESTA DEVOCIÓN HA TENIDO EN LA VIDA DE LA COMUNIDAD HISPANA DE LA CATEDRAL. TAMBIÉN NOS PARECE DE INTERÉS ESPECIAL SEÑALAR ALGUNAS EXPERIENCIAS PARTICULARES VIVIDAS, CON EL OBJETO DE DAR A CONOCER EL GOZO DEL MES DEL ROSARIO.

De entrada, es importante subrayar que el rosario, con su repetición meditativa de oraciones y la reflexión sobre los misterios de la vida de Cristo, ha sido una tradición apreciada entre los católicos durante mucho tiempo. Para la comunidad hispana de la Catedral, octubre, el mes del rosario, brindó una oportunidad especial para revivir esta hermosa tradición y para profundizar su fe y conectarse más íntimamente con Dios. Esta devoción no solo honró a la Santísima Virgen María, sino que también abrió los corazones de los miembros a los profundos misterios de nuestra salvación. Son de destacar estas experiencias concretas. En opinión de la Señora Claribel Sánchez: “fue una experiencia inolvidable, compartiendo con las personas en sus hogares. Sentimos la bendición y la protección de la Virgen María y una paz interior”. Para otra señora, Priscila López, “todo fue un evento maravilloso y bello; nos quedamos impactados por lo vivido y esperamos volver a repetirlo”.

Uno de los elementos más apreciados de las sesiones diarias del rosario fue la visita a los distintos hogares, a la que asistieron familias, amigos y vecinos. Según Jorge Peralta, un joven usher de la Catedral de trece años, ese gesto le brindó “la oportunidad de conocer a más gente, especialmente al papá de Carolina, que tocaba la guitarra”. Y para otra adolescente, Kamell Guillen de catorce años, “me gustó participar en el rezo del rosario porque es la oración que aprendí en Santo Domingo”. Esto quiere decir que las sesiones de rezo en los hogares se convirtieron en una fuente de gran alimento espiritual y en un espacio para revivir lo aprendido de nuestra tradición cristiana.

Hay un bien conocido refrán que dice, “la familia que reza unida permanece unida”. En virtud de este refrán, el rezo del rosario sirvió como una poderosa herramienta para unir a las familias

hispanas y para crear un espacio sagrado donde se fomentaba la conexión entre ellas. Obviamente, al rezar juntas tienden a desarrollar un sentido más profundo de unidad y de propósito compartido. Además, el acto de rezar en las casas propicia una forma tangible de vivir y compartir el evangelio. Al igual que Jesús visitaba las casas y compartía su enseñanza de manera accesible y personal, rezar el rosario en las familias es llevar también el mensaje evangélico a las puertas de las familias. De esta forma, esta práctica no se limita a la oración, sino que se convierte en una proclamación activa de la fe. Porque al contemplar los misterios del rosario e invocar el nombre de Jesús y la intercesión de la Virgen María, los miembros de la familia, de alguna manera, están evangelizando su entorno inmediato. Esta experiencia es la que vivió la señora Ramona Rivera, tras recorrer por casi todas las casas. Según ella: “La experiencia que yo pude escoger fue que haciendo el rosario en cada casa estábamos uniendo las familias y a la vez estábamos proclamando la buena nueva que el Señor nos dejó que fuéramos a proclamar casa por casa”. De este testimonio vivo podemos decir que la práctica de rezar el Rosario en las familias no solo representa una devoción profundamente arraigada en la tradición católica, sino que también se erige como un medio para unir a los miembros de la familia y, a su vez, para proclamar el evangelio tal como Jesús nos encomendó: “Vayan ustedes por todo el mundo y prediquen el evangelio a toda criatura” (Marcos 16:15). Esta dimensión de unidad familiar y de difusión de la fe es fundamental en el contexto actual, donde muchas familias enfrentan desafíos y divisiones.

Así, el tiempo compartido en octubre se transformó para la comunidad hispana en un momento de convivencia y conexión con la Virgen María, donde pudieron

presentar a Nuestra Madre Santísima sus intenciones, preocupaciones y esperanzas. Argentina Pérez, quien no faltó ni un solo día, testimonió: “fue una experiencia divina, llena de fe, porque al igual que los demás, me sentí fortalecida por el apoyo espiritual recibido”. Para Noel Rodríguez, “fue una experiencia inolvidable. Fuimos de casa en casa y se notaba la presencia de Dios junto a la de la Virgen María, especialmente durante la visita a nuestra casa”. Estos testimonios sugieren que la visita a los hogares estuvo íntimamente conectada con la bendición de cada uno. La presencia de Dios que experimentaron los miembros al invocar su nombre trajo una verdadera bendición sobre los hogares. Al igual que en el caso de Zaqueo en el Evangelio de Lucas 19:1-10, estas visitas se convirtieron en un momento de gozo en la presencia del Señor, no solo para los residentes, sino para toda la comunidad participante.

Aunque el rezo del rosario en los hogares fortaleció el núcleo familiar, su impacto se expandió a toda la comunidad. Las familias que participaron activamente en esta práctica a menudo se sintieron motivadas a compartir su fe y su alegría con otros a través de cantos a la Santísima Virgen María. Según Carolina Altagracia, encargada de los cantos, lo más bonito fue que “pudimos compartir como la familia que somos. Tuve la oportunidad de recibir a los hermanos hispanos en mi casa. Mi papá vino desde Santo Domingo y nos

acompañó con su guitarra en los cantos a la Virgen y las alabanzas”. Los cantos, acompañados de guitarra, permitieron a los participantes disfrutar de un ambiente que fomentaba la expresión de su alegría y de sus anhelos. Para muchos de ellos, esta experiencia no solo embelleció su encuentro espiritual, sino que también elevó su espíritu en el rezo del rosario.

Otro aspecto particularmente alentador de esta devoción fue la participación de los niños en el rezo del rosario. Su presencia aportó una perspectiva fresca e inocente a las oraciones, inspirando tanto a sus compañeros como a los adultos. Carolis Altagracia Núñez, una niña de ocho años que impresionó a todos con su reverente rezo, expresó gozosamente su experiencia: “Fue súper lindo el rezo del rosario. Fuimos casa por casa y conocí nueva gente. Yo rezaba el rosario completo, y la gente me felicitaba. También disfruté de los cantos a la Virgen María, especialmente María fue coronada”. Otra niña de ocho años, Jadelyn Tavaréz Guillen (más conocida como Kaira), que rezaba junto a Carolis, comentó: “A mí me gustó más compartir con toda la gente y rezar con ella el Padre Nuestro y el Ave María porque el rosario fue la primera oración que mi mamá me enseñó cuando iba al catecismo en Santo Domingo”. La presencia de estas voces jóvenes recitando las oraciones resalta la importancia de transmitir las tradiciones de fe a la próxima generación,

asegurando así la continuidad de las prácticas espirituales.

En conclusión, la comunidad hispana de la Catedral es un ejemplo emblemático de fe resiliente. Expresa su fe no solo a través de asistir los cumplimientos dominicales, sino también por el compromiso diario con las tradiciones cristianas. Por una parte, su entrega a la Virgen María, madre y guía, en el mes de octubre y en cada primer sábado del mes, refleja su profunda conexión espiritual. Y por otra, su devoción crea un espacio en donde se fortalecen los lazos familiares y comunitarios. Esta solidaridad es digna de admiración. Ya que, a través de ella, se demuestra un amor palpable por el prójimo y se fomenta una cultura de unidad y respeto. Gracias a ello que, a pesar de sus desafíos, luchas diarias y preocupaciones, la comunidad se mantiene firme en su fe. José Cardona, presidente y organizador del rezo de rosario, valora de modo concluyente, el gozo del mes de rosario así: “Todo fue excelente y muy acogedor. El rosario se realizó conforme a los textos bíblicos, lo que a mucha gente le gustó. Otros incluso llamaban para conseguir días disponibles para ir a rezar en sus casas cuando ya no había más plazas”. En suma, la comunidad católica hispana vivió el gozo del mes de rosario como una experiencia transformadora e inolvidable. †



Exploring the Jubilee Year of Hope and how to celebrate

BY FATHER DOMINIC UKAGBA



I imagine if, every 50 years, the United States declared a year of economic reset: debts forgiven, mortgages erased, non-essential work suspended and everyone put on a benefit, with mandatory charity in favor of the less privileged!

Surely, it would be a wonderful time to be alive, and everyone would look forward to that year. Communities would come together to celebrate and support one another, fostering a spirit of unity and renewal. While this may sound utopian, it captures the essence of the biblical Jubilee – a time of liberation, rest, and reconciliation; it gives a background to Christian Jubilee years.

What is a Jubilee?

In Catholic tradition, a Jubilee or Holy Year is a year of forgiveness of sins and the punishment due to sin. It is a time of spiritual renewal and grace, offering believers an opportunity to start anew.

The concept of Jubilee is deeply embedded in the Bible, particularly in Leviticus 25:8-55, where it is described as a year of joy, amnesty, and special favor.

Biblical Roots of the Jubilee Year

The Jubilee Year was traditionally understood as a 50-year period. However, it actually consisted of seven cycles of seven years each, totaling 49 years. On the Day of Atonement in the 50th year, a trumpet was sounded throughout the land, proclaiming liberty for all its inhabitants. (Lev 25:8-22)

During this year, people were not allowed to sow or reap; instead, they had to leave the produce for strangers and the less privileged. It was a time of economic, cultural, and environmental reset, allowing the land and people to rest, and divided communities to reconcile.

In the Bible, the Jubilee Year is presented as a year of joy, amnesty, and special favor, celebrated at the end of each 49-year period, in the course of which one's debt must be remitted and slaves set free. A Jubilee Year is a time of Sabbath rest, a time of homecoming, and a time of liberation.

The Christian Jubilee and the Jubilee Year of Hope

The tradition of the Jubilee Year was adopted by the Christian Church, with Pope Boniface VIII proclaiming the first Christian Jubilee in A.D. 1300. This Jubilee granted full remission of sins for those who confessed and made a pilgrimage to St. Peter's Basilica in Rome.

Initially, Jubilees were set to be celebrated every 100 years, but this interval was later shortened to every 50 years and eventually to every 25 years. This change allowed more frequent opportunities for spiritual renewal and reconciliation and gave more people the opportunity to have a Jubilee Year celebration in their lifetime. All these refer to the Ordinary Jubilees. However, there have also been Extraordinary Jubilee Years declared by the Holy Fathers, such as the Jubilee Year of Mercy celebrated from 2015 to 2016.

On May 9, 2024, Pope Francis declared the Ordinary Jubilee Year of Hope, which he inaugurated on Dec. 24, 2024, marking the 2025th anniversary of the Incarnation of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

Four holy doors have been opened in Rome. The doors represent the passage to salvation which Jesus opened to humanity. Christians are encouraged to go on Pilgrimage to Rome and pass through any of these doors. Passing through the doors signifies a profound spiritual journey, representing a passage from sin to grace, a new beginning, and a deeper connection with Christ, ultimately leading to a deeper encounter with God.

Celebrating the Year of Hope

Our Diocese has organized a pilgrimage to Rome although not many of us can make it there. However, we are still invited to mark this Year of Hope in a variety of ways right where we live.

Those of us who have not yet read the letter by which Pope Francis declared the Year of Hope are encouraged to do so. This letter is titled *Spes Non Confundit*, or Hope does not

disappoint, drawn from Romans 5:5. It is very useful material for reflection, and for deepening our faith in God, amidst the numerous challenges we face.

Based on its Jewish roots, a Jubilee Year emphasizes the Sacrament of Reconciliation and restoring relationships with God and with our brethren. They also provide an opportunity for a special jubilee indulgence, which can remove the residual effects of sin through the grace of Christ. This year we are encouraged to take our celebration of confession more seriously, and also give sufficient attention to reconciliation in our families.

We can also participate wholeheartedly in any activity organized within the Diocese or in our respective parish communities or Deaneries in the context of the Jubilee. This will be, in a sense, our own "pilgrimage." We would unite ourselves with the universal Church, and with the Pilgrims of Hope who make it to Rome, including those from our Diocese this April.

Pope Francis invited all Christians to be "signs of hope." Many people in our community suffer different kinds of challenges in their lives. Each of us needs to ask himself or herself: How can I be a sign of hope to my neighbor, brother, sister, or friend?

We can join and be an active part of a ministry in our church, especially the ones that would bring hope to the less privileged. We can contribute more to charity, for example, to our Catholic Charities of the Virgin Islands. There are several other ways we can participate.

Conclusion

The next Ordinary Jubilee will be in 2050. We cannot be sure that we shall have the opportunity to celebrate that one.

Now is the time to make the most of this opportunity. We should not let this year pass us by. This is a time of grace and God's favor, a time to be a sign of hope. †

CONGRATULATIONS TO ALL GRADUATES OF THE BIBLE STUDY PROGRAM

BY BERNADETTE PATRICK

AN INTERPRETATIVE READING ON THE BOOK OF REVELATION

THE BIBLE STUDY PROGRAM, AN INTERPRETATIVE READING ON THE BOOK OF REVELATION, SUCCESSFULLY CONCLUDED AT HOLY FAMILY CHURCH, LEAVING A LASTING IMPACT ON ALL WHO PARTICIPATED. THE COURSE, WHICH WAS OPEN TO ALL SEEKING A DEEPER UNDERSTANDING OF THE SCRIPTURES, WAS LED BY REV. FR. ISAAC AGBENOHEVI, SSD, SSL, STB, BA, A BIBLICAL SCHOLAR.

Throughout the program, participants engaged in a profound exploration of the Gospels, gaining both theological insight and spiritual enrichment. Fr. Agbenohevi guided the sessions, helping attendees uncover the richness of Scripture through careful study, reflection, and discussion. The course balanced academic learning with faith formation, ensuring that participants not only understood the historical and literary contexts of the Book of Revelation but also deepened their relationship with Christ.

The joy and fulfillment of completing this journey were evident as participants gathered to celebrate their achievements. We extend our heartfelt congratulations to all the graduates for their dedication and commitment to studying the Scriptures. Their perseverance in deepening their faith is truly commendable.

May the Word of God continue to inspire and guide all who have taken part in this study, and may their newfound knowledge bear fruit in their lives and our faith community. Congratulations once again to all our graduates! †



BIBLE STUDY No. 2: INTERPRETATIVE READING OF THE BOOK OF REVELATION

(At the Table of God's Word: Breaking and Living the Word)

Bible Study Graduation Ceremony

Sunday, December 1, 2024
Holy Family Catholic Church
10:00 AM




 <i>His Excellency Most Reverend Jerome Feudjo</i>		 <i>Fr. Modeste Digwou HFC Parish Administrator</i>		
 <i>Cornelia Adams</i>	 <i>Maria D.N. Blencowe</i>	 <i>Fr. Isaac Agbenohevi Facilitator and Director</i>	 <i>Myrtha Boudeau</i>	 <i>Yvonne Brutus</i>
 <i>Glendia B. Caines</i>	 <i>Allison Calkwood</i>	 <i>Agnes Canning</i>	 <i>Colleen Espirit-Victorin</i>	 <i>Cydenia Ferness</i>
 <i>Sabina Ferness</i>	 <i>Louise Fontaine</i>	 <i>Veronica Henry</i>	 <i>Gail Homer</i>	 <i>Sharnene Johnson</i>
 <i>Yowville Leatham</i>	 <i>Marilyn Louis</i>	 <i>Melicia Prince</i>	 <i>Michelle T. R. Stout</i>	 <i>Shanika T. Stout</i>
 <i>Lana Trotman</i>	 <i>Mildred Turbe</i>	 <i>Vincia St. Jean</i>	 <i>Alma Wells</i>	

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Bishop's Appeal 2025

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Strengthening our faith,
serving our community***