



THE DIOCESE OF KALAMAZOO

Renew Faith • Build Communion • Inspire Hope

OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

January 1, 2019
Solemnity of Mary, the Mother of God

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

On this final day of the Christmas Octave, and the first day of this New Year, I send you my prayerful best wishes for a Happy New Year for you and all your loved ones.

As we all know, 2018 was a very difficult year in many ways, and in particular for us as Catholics. The scandals that rocked the Church last summer, and the subsequent emotional reactions of anger, confusion, and shock led many people to a real crisis of faith. While I hope and pray that our Faith in Jesus remains unwavering, our faith in the Church, and in particular, the Church's leaders, has been damaged, and in many cases, broken. As I have said on more than one occasion, I am deeply sorry for this great sadness in the Church and for the pain and suffering this has caused, first of all to any and all victims of clergy sexual abuse, as well as to all those who have been scandalized by these very sad and sinful revelations. I know that the vast majority of my brother Bishops are as determined as I am to restore that trust as quickly as possible, and to do whatever it takes to make sure nothing like this ever happens again.

As we begin this new year, our Holy Father has wisely encouraged all the Bishops of the United States to enter into a time of silent retreat beginning tomorrow at Mundelein Seminary in Chicago, and lasting until January 8, 2019. The Preacher of the Papal Household (that is, the Preacher for the Holy Father himself), Father Cantamalessa, will be our Retreat Director. I humbly ask you, the members of the Faithful of our Diocese, to keep me and all the Bishops in your prayers during this time, that we may truly hear what the Holy Spirit wants to communicate to us. It is the Holy Father's intention, and the hope of all the Bishops, that this Retreat will help us all to be more spiritually prepared to find the solutions that we need to restore trust and keep all people, especially our children and vulnerable members of the Church, safe and secure. Let us also pray for all survivors of clergy sexual abuse that their suffering may be eased, and that they may be assured that what they experienced will never be experienced again by anyone else.

May our dear Blessed Mother, the Mother of Jesus and the Mother of the Church, help us all to be healed by Jesus' grace of our sins, anger, doubts, confusion, and fears, so that we can live in loving communion with her Son, and find the support and encouragement Jesus wants us all to have through the sacramental and devotional life of the Church.

Asking for your prayers for me during this time of Retreat, and assuring you of my prayers for you and for our Diocese during this coming week and throughout the New Year, I remain

Faithfully yours in Christ,

Most Rev. Paul J. Bradley
Bishop of Kalamazoo