



OFFICE OF THE BISHOP  
DIOCESE OF MANCHESTER

Sunday, July 17, 2016

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I write this letter after having celebrated the Sunday Liturgy. Having brought many intentions to that Liturgy, not least among them the current civil unrest in our country, the recent mass shooting in Orlando, the deaths of law enforcement officers in Dallas, the sufferings of so many on Bastille Day in Nice, the attack on the airport and subsequent attempted coup in Turkey, the many who cry out in grief and mourning in our country and throughout the world, and certainly those in the Middle East who have been relegated to the back pages of the news while their suffering nonetheless escalates daily, I came out of that Liturgy to be confronted with another atrocity, this time in Baton Rouge's streets, attacking our law enforcement community.

Calamity in our streets and the rampant seething of perverse evil in our world, always seeking more to devour, causes me to wonder how each of these horrors can be met with the same tired phrases of shock and outrage and now-routine expressions of sympathy. One would think that by now there would be a clear sense that an ongoing expression of evil is present in our time, and that individual and collective sin not only allows this but fosters its spread—and that our reflexive responses ignore this reality. We as individual Catholics and the entire Church must do more.

Therefore I am calling on every Catholic in the Diocese of Manchester to engage in an act of solidarity in faith. We will not stand, but bow before God, in prayers and acts of atonement. I direct, in accordance with the teaching, governing and sanctifying office of the diocesan bishop, that:

**1) Friday, August 12, 2016 is to be a day of fast and partial abstinence (meat may be eaten only at one meal), for all Catholics** in solidarity of faith for reparation for the sins that have brought us to this deteriorating condition of war and civil unrest. These sins are many and personal and I ask everyone to join this communal penance to make amends and especially to pray for the conversion of hardened hearts.

*For all persons between the ages of 18 and 59 and not otherwise unable to fast, one full meal and two smaller meals that together are not equal to a full meal may be taken. Meat is to be consumed only once that day, at the main meal.*

**2) On Sunday, August 14, 2016, the Twentieth Sunday of Ordinary Time** Catholic Mass Prayers on this day are to be taken from *Masses For Various Needs and Occasions: In Time of War or Civil Disturbance*. Readings, however, are to be of the Sunday.

**3) Monday, August 15, 2016, the Solemnity of the Assumption of the Most Blessed Virgin Mary (a Holy Day in the Catholic Calendar)**

a) **Mass** will be celebrated with highest solemnity. Because the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary falls on a Monday this year, the obligation to attend Mass is abrogated. However, I urge all Catholics to make every attempt to attend Mass that day regardless.

b) Churches throughout the state will have **Exposition** of the Blessed Sacrament, accompanied by recitation of the **Rosary** (Luminous Mysteries) and the **Litany of Loreto** (Litany of the Most Blessed Virgin Mary). Historically, the Rosary is prayed during times of war and unrest as a special appeal to the Virgin Mary for peace. Some parishes will also have a **procession** with a picture, statue, banner or icon of the Most Blessed Virgin Mary. Please see your parish bulletin or contact your parish office for details.

I also ask religious leaders of all persuasions, and all people of good will, to join with their respective communities or, in the interior recesses of their hearts, to unite with us in observing these days as special opportunities for introspection and commitment to healing by putting our “best selves” forward and leaving all darkness of thought, word, and deed behind. I make this request in the sincere hope that through such gestures we may come to a fuller understanding that despite differences in culture, background, and experience, we are all made in the image and likeness of God and worthy of respect. Therefore let us encourage one another in faith and let us gather together in this moment as a visible sign of hope in our world.

I entrust this action of solidarity with our Holy Father Pope Francis, with the bishops of Orlando, Dallas, and Baton Rouge, and with people of faith throughout the United States and the world for atonement, reparation and healing peace to us all in the sure and certain hope that God does not disappoint and will count this as a moment of blessing and deepest Mercy.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Peter A. Libasci".

+ Most Reverend Peter A. Libasci, D.D.  
Bishop of Manchester