



OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

1150 Buffalo Road
Rochester, New York 14624
(585) 328-3210

Lent 2015

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ:

God's love for us is infinite and His capacity for forgiveness and mercy is limitless. We are His noblest creation conceived by His perfect love for us. In this love by which He binds Himself to every person, He lifts us up again and again when we sin.

In the Sacrament of Reconciliation, Confession, we most perfectly experience this endless love and mercy. Sadly, many Catholics do not participate in this profound experience of God's boundless care for us, and others do so only occasionally. Yet our Holy Father, Pope Francis, has repeatedly reminded us that we are a Church of sinners and that each of us benefits from God's mercy.

It is with these thoughts in mind that I invite you and encourage you to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation on the Diocese of Rochester's **Day of Penance and Mercy, March 24, 2015**. In addition to regularly scheduled times for Confession, this is a special day set aside for our diocesan community of faith that spans 12 counties. All of our parishes will be "Open for Forgiveness" from 12:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. with priests available to hear our confessions. This is a wonderful opportunity during the Lenten season to experience the healing power of the Sacrament and to truly understand the old adage, "Confession is good for the soul."

Even as our Savior, mortally wounded, drew His last breaths before His death for us upon the Cross at Calvary, He extended mercy and forgiveness to the penitent thief, later acknowledged as Saint Dismus, who hung on a cross of his own next to our Lord. Saint Luke's Gospel tells us, "Now one of the criminals hanging there reviled Jesus, saying, 'Are you not the Messiah? Save yourself and us.' The other, however, rebuking him, said in reply, 'Have you no fear of God, for you are subject to the same condemnation? We have been condemned justly, for the sentence we received corresponds to our crimes, but this man has done nothing criminal. Then he said, 'Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.' Jesus replied to him, 'Amen, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise.'" (Luke 23:39-43).

Like Saint Dismus, we all pray to be with Jesus one day in Paradise. The Sacrament of Reconciliation is a beautiful gift from God to right our path to eternity with the Lord. I pray that you will take part in the Day of Penance and Mercy on March 24, and, as often as you are able, to regularly go to Confession throughout the year. Our God of Mercy, our God of endless love, our God who conquered sin and death, is waiting to hear us and to forgive us.

Asking the Lord's blessing upon you during this holy season of Lent as we prepare for the joy of Easter, I remain,

Devotedly yours in Christ,

+ Salvatore R. Matano

The Most Reverend Salvatore R. Matano
Bishop of Rochester