

# Leading the FLOCK

BY BISHOP DANIEL E. THOMAS



## “Preparing to Reconnect”

“I can’t wait ‘til this is over.” “This is all getting old.” “I sure hope this ends soon.” “We are afraid of a second wave.” “No one is really sure what the future holds.” “What will this do to the financial stability of our families and parishes?” No doubt you, like me, have heard these and similar phrases in these past days. People are anxious for the COVID19 pandemic to come to an end, anxious about their own health and the health of others, anxious to reconnect with their loved ones, anxious to return to a former familiar pattern of life, and most significantly anxious to reconnect with the Lord, with the Church and with one another and our parish families, in particular by our communion in the Holy Eucharist. You’ve all been anxious, and I’ve been anxious with you.

As we continue to celebrate the Resurrection of Jesus, our Savior, I thank each and every one of you for your goodness, generosity, patience, understanding and charity as we have sought as a diocese to respond together to all the challenges that the pandemic has presented to us thus far. Aware of the intense desire of our faithful to return to our parishes, participate in the liturgy, and receive the Most Holy Eucharist, it is my sincere hope that you might help one another to persevere in this holy desire as we gradually implement a plan that will provide reasonable, gradual and practical guidelines

that promote the spiritual and physical health of everyone. In order together to move through and beyond this health pandemic, patience, understanding, and charity will need to be hallmarks of our lives, understanding that things will not return to “normal” immediately, but whatever the “new normal” is, we commit ourselves to live it in faith, hope and love.

From those first days realizing the seriousness and potential impact of the pandemic, we have all been working hard to respond to the myriad of issues that would and have arisen as a result, and how we would move forward together. This includes but is not limited to my working together with the Bishops of Ohio and with our own priest Consultors who serve as close collaborators. It involves the efforts of our Senior Staff and Pastoral Center team, our parish pastors and staffs working with their finance and pastoral councils, our school administrators and teachers, directors of religious education and coordinators of charitable outreach. The members of the Diocese of Toledo have been doing our best in the most trying of circumstances to offer care and attention to our parishes, schools and services; and even in the midst of the pandemic to consider how we might move our local church forward to serve better the mission of Christ and His Gospel.

With all these efforts in progress, and in order to capitalize on the momentum to move as a Catholic community through and beyond this pandemic, I have formed a diocesan "Pastoral Reintegration Team" comprised of clergy, religious and laity from around the diocese to help provide guidance, to share what has been identified as best practices, and to assist in our recovery. To "reintegrate" means to make whole again. This is what the team is striving to promote: to make whole again our parish and diocesan life. Please pray for this work in progress. Our team has chosen the theme "*Reconnect*," with the motto/catchphrase "Navigating Catholic life through the pandemic." Our efforts to "reconnect" will focus on five areas: worship/sacraments, evangelization/catechesis, communications, schools, and human resources. In addition, the team's efforts will fit well with our diocesan strategic Pillar One initiatives, "Supporting the Health of Parishes & Clergy." Be on the lookout for periodic communications to help us all to "Reconnect" with the Lord, with the Church and with one another. In the near future, "Reconnect" will launch a webpage where all of the communications and resources can be accessed. In the meantime, our team has created a brief survey for your input and feedback. Please take a moment to complete it by Thursday, May 7, 2020 [www.dioceseoftledo.org/reconnect](http://www.dioceseoftledo.org/reconnect).



Dear friends, in the uncharted waters of the present moment, the tremendous work, efforts and dedication of our priests, deacons, pastoral leaders, consecrated religious, parish pastoral teams, school leaders and teachers, parish finance and parish councils and diocesan pastoral center staff, have been unmatched. Now our focus, with eyes fixed on the Risen Lord, is to move beyond being anxious about many things, to being anxious about rebuilding, restoring and reinvigorating Catholic life in our nineteen counties. Please join me in praying together that we may be of one mind and one heart, faithful disciples creatively confronting each of the challenges that present themselves, in the name of Christ Jesus, who is anxious for us to "*Reconnect*" with Him! Together, prayerfully and intentionally, let's all together be about the work of "Preparing to Reconnect."

+*Daniel E. Thomas*

Most Rev. Daniel E. Thomas  
Bishop of Toledo  
May 4, 2020