



Office of the Bishop
Diocese of Camden

September 5, 2015

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

This past week Pope Francis wrote a letter preparing the Church for the upcoming Jubilee of Mercy in which he expressed his desire that this Jubilee be a time when all Catholics experience God's great gift of mercy. He even spoke about those unable to enter through one of the designated Holy Doors, such as prisoners, and how they should look upon their cell as a Holy Door of Mercy. They too must know God's tenderness.

Another area of mercy that was quickly picked up by the media was granting authority to priests to absolve the sin of abortion. While this is certainly wonderful news, it has also caused some confusion which I wish to address in this letter.

A misunderstanding on the part of some was that local priests had not been given this permission until now. Thus, some Catholics may wonder whether they were properly absolved in the past. They were indeed. There is no need at all to worry about the past. Sins that have been confessed and absolved are absolved. In the Diocese of Camden, permission to absolve from the sin of abortion was granted by Bishop McHugh to our priests in 1990. Pope Francis is now universally extending that permission to priests in other parts of the world who previously did not have it. This is just one more way that the Holy Father is emphasizing the Lord's abundant mercy which he has done since the first days of his pontificate.

This news from the Holy Father, as we joyfully await his arrival in our country is an opportunity for you and me to continue preparing our hearts not only for the words he will speak, but also for the many opportunities we will have during this upcoming Jubilee of Mercy to experience anew the Lord's love for us and His desire to spread His mercy on us. In the months ahead I look forward to sharing with you the ways we will celebrate in our diocese the Jubilee of Mercy which begins on the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception, December 8, 2015.

Please, know of my prayers for each of you. I ask that you remember me and my intentions in your prayers. I wish you a happy Labor Day weekend!

Sincerely in Christ,

Most Reverend Dennis J. Sullivan, D.D.
Bishop of Camden