

Tribute to Bishop Arthur Serratelli

The coming week is an important one for our diocese – Bishop-elect Kevin Sweeney will be ordained to the episcopate and installed as the next Bishop of Paterson. We have been praying for him over these past weeks asking God to bless his ministry to us as our shepherd. As we get ready to cross this threshold into a new chapter in the Diocese of Paterson it is important, in fact essential, that we thank God for Bishop Serratelli and his devoted service to the Church of Paterson.

Bishop Serratelli has had a profound impact on the life of our diocese and has been a true blessing to the people he has shepherded. He has also been an inspiration to me in my priesthood. I thank Bishop Serratelli for grounding our diocese in the call to evangelize. His challenge to spread the Gospel has brought forth a blossoming of the work of evangelization in parishes throughout the diocese. In our own parish this was manifest in our Envision process that shaped and formed our vision and mission of sharing the love of Jesus Christ. He has helped us to see that this is the work of all the people of God. I thank Bishop Serratelli for his boldness in speaking the truth and challenging those cultural structures that are contrary to the Gospel. Although I have not always agreed with him on certain points I respect his passion and straight forwardness. He has not shied away from being a prophetic voice where and when that is needed. That is something I would like to do in my own preaching and teaching.

I thank Bishop Serratelli for modeling a simple way of life for us priests, free of attachments to worldly possessions. He appreciates the basic things such as a good Italian meal and working in the garden. He never seems to be one to be caught up in the trappings of office. Rather I believe he sees himself as the dutiful servant who has done what has been asked of him, expecting no praise or reward.

Last of all I thank Bishop for the good priests that he has brought into our diocese, ordained and assigned to our parish of Saint Vincent Martyr – Fr. Antonio, Fr. José, Fr. Darwin, Fr. Przemek, Fr. Chris, Fr. Jader, Fr. Londono, Fr. Matthew, Fr. Martin and Fr. Jhon Madrid – We saved Carlos for Bishop Sweeney! In particular I thank Bishop Arthur for the trust he has placed in me and our parish to form these men in their beginning years of ministry.

On behalf of our parish and staff I wish Bishop Serratelli abundant blessings in his retirement from shepherding our diocese and his beginning of whatever the Lord has planned for his ministry. We welcome him as our neighbor as he takes up residence at Holy Family in Florham Park. We look forward to seeing him in the CVS and other places around town. Most of all we thank you Bishop Serratelli for being our bishop. Ad multos annos – to many more years!

Fr. George