



DIOCESE OF SAN BERNARDINO

OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

March 22, 2023

Dear Sisters and Brothers of St. Mary Parish Community,

Peace and well-being to you and your families. Please know of my prayers for you as we prepare to celebrate New Life at the celebrations of the Resurrection of Jesus this Easter. May we all experience new life closer to God and become more compassionate.

As you may know, Father Utzig, has supported the beginning of a new ministry in your parish, "Gifted and Called." This is meant to extend respect and compassion of our Catholic faith to those sisters and brothers who identify as LGBTQ+ as well as their families and friends. We have learned during our Synodal journey that many people in these groups in our Catholic communities have felt marginalized and not welcomed in our churches. When we look at our Lord Jesus, who so often sought first a loving encounter with those who were ostracized and scorned, we know that no one should be denied a place at the table of the Lord's family simply because they might be different.

At the same time, we understand that welcoming someone into our faith community as a brother or sister in Christ is not an endorsement of any sinful actions that they may have committed. We all carry the shadow of sin with us as we come to our communities of faith to seek reconciliation with God and support in one another. Please know also that this ministry does not mean that we have in any way abandoned what we believe about the Sacramental holiness of marriage between a man and a woman, and the procreative blessings that come from it.

It is with this in mind that I offer my support for the establishment of the Gifted and Called Ministry at St. Mary's and hope that many parents who may have children suffering for being homosexuals will benefit from this opportunity. At the same time, I hope that your parish community will become more compassionate and welcoming of these sisters and brothers in our Catholic Church. I know that Jesus will always welcome them! I encourage you to bring it to God in prayer. Take this as a moment to open yourselves in the spirit of Synodal dialogue and listen to the experiences of others who suffer greatly because they do not share your background or opinion. This will help us to truly walk together as a local parish community, and as a family of God where every child is loved and welcomed.

Thank you for your attention to this message and may God continue to bless and keep you in his loving care this coming Easter and always.

Yours in Christ's Love

Most Reverend Alberto Rojas
Diocese of San Bernardino