

Catholics Come Home Welcome Message
from Most Rev. Donald Trautman, Bishop of Erie

Greetings! I am Bishop Donald Trautman and I welcome you to the Catholic Diocese of Erie. I am delighted that you have taken a moment to visit our website. Perhaps you have seen the recent commercials on television for Catholics Come Home.

You may be an active member of a parish and the Catholic faith. If so I invite you to go deeper into that faith by exercising your Baptismal call and allowing Lent to purify your heart even more.

You may also have come to our website out of curiosity, knowing very little about the Catholic Church; and so I invite you to experience and learn more about our faith. Please explore our website and that of Catholics Come Home.org.

Perhaps you are a baptized member of our Catholic family and, for whatever reason, have been away from the practice of the faith. If that describes who you are, then in the Lord's Name I welcome you home.

Permit me to tell you a quick story:

Ernest Hemingway wrote a short story entitled "The Capital of the World," in which he tells the story of a Spanish father and his teenage son, Paco. The relationship between this father and son became strained and eventually shattered. Paco --- whose name is a common Spanish name --- rebelled against his father and ran away from home. His father began a long and difficult search to find his prodigal son. He searched and searched to no avail. As a last resort, the exhausted father placed an ad in a Madrid newspaper. His hope was that his son would see the ad and respond to it. The ad read:

*Dear Paco,
Please meet me in front of the newspaper office at noon.
All is forgiven.
Love, Father*

As Hemingway tells the story, the next day at noon in front of the newspaper office there were 800 Pacos, all seeking forgiveness from their fathers. We are all modern day Pacos --- prodigal sons and daughters in need of our Father's mercy.

The deepest desire of our human heart is to love and be loved --- by God and by each other. Through the Catholic Church, our Lord Jesus helps us to experience that love. That is why he gave us the Church.

In our Catholic faith we meet Christ in the Scriptures and in the Sacraments. Christ comes to us in the Eucharist, in the bread and wine transformed into his body and blood. He comes to us in Baptism and Confirmation and the Sacrament of the Sick through the elements of water and oil, blessed by the prayers of the Holy Spirit. In the sacrament of penance or reconciliation, we need the Father of mercy. We need Jesus, who forgives our sins.

The Lord invites us to live fuller lives and join in a deeper relationship with God and with each other. Through the community gathered every Sunday for the celebration of the Eucharist, our bonds of friendship with God and with our family, neighbors and the whole human race are strengthened. We can't make it to heaven on our own. We need one another, and we need the Bread come down from Heaven, the Holy Eucharist. This is our Catholic family.

This is our Catholic family. This is the Body of Christ. This is the Church. And we welcome you to share in this gift of God in our midst. The Lord Jesus knows our strengths and weaknesses. Whether we are near or far from the heart of his Church, he invites us to take the next step.

And so I extend the invitation to you. Through our Catholics Come Home initiative this year, the Diocese of Erie is inviting you to a fuller and more joyful life.

Through the resources available on this website, and especially through the prayer and service of our parishes, we invite you to come home. Let us know what we can do for you. Let us know how we can help you. The Lord is waiting for your response. Have courage, and take the next step.

I pray for you each day. Please pray for me. May the Lord bless you and all your loved ones abundantly. Welcome home.