



January 24, 2014

Dear Brothers in Christ:

I find so very meaningful God's promise to his people as voiced by the prophet, Jeremiah: "I will appoint over you shepherds after my own heart, who will shepherd you wisely and prudently" (Jeremiah 3:15). Jeremiah's words find their fulfillment in Christ who takes to himself the image of the shepherd: "I am the good shepherd," he proclaims, "I know my sheep . . . and for these sheep I will give my life." (John 10:14-15)

The Bishops at the Second Vatican Council called upon the image of the shepherd in speaking of the nature of the priesthood. "Their ministry makes a claim on priests," they wrote, "not to conform themselves to this world . . . but to live . . . in this world . . . as good shepherds who know their sheep and seek to lead back those who do not belong to the fold." (*Presbyterorum Ordinis*, 3)

The voices of the great prophet and those of the Council Fathers offer the appropriate framework in which to officially promulgate this document. With that in mind, I would urge you to consider the document as more than a listing of rules and regulations. Its purpose and my prayerful hope is that it will serve to help us in our ministry to people and to continue the spirit of unity and fraternity that has been the hallmark of priestly ministry in this Diocese.

We are 'doers of the Word' and companions with the faithful of our diocese in sowing and giving growth to the seeds of the gospel at this time and in this place. May we give a shepherd's care to the good people we are privileged to serve. May we keep at the center of our ministry the model of the Good Shepherd. Unsure what lies before us, of this much we can be certain: "that he who has begun this good work in us will carry it through to completion right up to the day of Christ Jesus." (Philippians 1:6)

Sincerely yours in Christ,

+ *Lawrence T. Persico*

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