



Archdiocese of Philadelphia
Office of the Archbishop
222 North 17th Street
Philadelphia, PA 19103-1299

September 8, 2012

A letter to the people of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia

Dear friends in Christ,

Exactly one year ago, on September 8, I began my service as your Archbishop. Over the past 12 months, many of you have written to me with your encouragement and support. Your kindness in the face of so many difficulties for our Church has reminded me again and again of the goodness of the people of this Archdiocese. There is no place I would rather be serving than here, now, among you. I'm very grateful for your generosity to me personally; but far more importantly, I thank you for your fidelity to Jesus Christ and his Church.

I've also heard very clearly the confusion and anger of many of our people. I accept those feelings gratefully as well, because they're honest, *and they're warranted*. Events of the past decade have wounded the whole Church. They've placed an undeserved burden on all of you as believers. I cannot undo mistakes and evil actions in the past, but I do apologize for them with all my heart. And I regret that the weight of those failures has been carried by you. In the time God gives me as your Archbishop, I will do everything I can to ensure that the life of this Archdiocese in the future is worthy of the love and trust of our people.

I've spent much of the past year learning the life of the Archdiocese and getting to know our parishes and people. In a diocese of this size, with such a great history, there's still so much to learn and so many good people I do not yet know. I look forward to being with you more and more frequently in the months and years ahead because the life of the Church is in her parishes, and the real joy of a bishop is in the time he spends there with his people.

Unfortunately the problems facing our local Church remain grave. At the archdiocesan level, along with continuing legal challenges, we have serious budget deficit and liquidity issues. Many of our parishes continue to struggle financially. Many of those parishes simply can't be sustained.

We can and will remedy these problems. In the long run, we do have the resources to rebuild the pastoral and financial health of this Church. We have excellent new financial leadership at the senior levels of the Archdiocese. Many of our people and major donors have expressed new confidence in the Church, and this year's Catholic Charities Appeal is doing well.

I'm determined to steward the resources entrusted to the Church by our people as prudently and transparently as possible. We've greatly strengthened our procedures to prevent the sexual abuse of minors. We remain strongly committed to helping victims of abuse to heal. And I've been deeply gratified by the thousands of Catholic school families and business community leaders who have fought hard and creatively this year to revitalize our Catholic education apostolate.

We have every reason to hope, and every reason to celebrate the Year of Faith, which begins next month, with energy, enthusiasm and confidence in the future. The Year of Faith offers all of us a chance to deepen our relationship with God's Son, with his Church and with one another.

The task of renewal will require deep changes in the thinking, behaviors, structures, procedures and organizational life of the diocese. We can no longer allow ourselves the complacency of the past. "The way things have always been" needs to become "the way things need to be" if we have any hope of preaching Jesus Christ to the world around us. This is the only reason the Church exists.

In the years ahead, we need to speak the truth to each other with charity and respect – but also candidly, and without fear. This is the spirit that should animate every level of our Church life, including every pastoral council and finance council in every one of our parishes. No one "owns" the Church: not the bishops; not the clergy; and not our people. She belongs to Jesus Christ and to him alone. But all of us in different ways, no matter what our vocation, have responsibility for the Church and her mission. We need to hold ourselves and each other accountable for living the faith with clean hearts and genuine zeal. The mark of mature Christian discipleship is honesty tempered with love.

Please know that I love you as my family in faith, and pray for you daily and thank God for you. I ask you to remember me in your prayers as well, because I need them. May God bless you and all those you love. And may God guide the Church with his wisdom, mercy and justice in the year ahead.

Sincerely yours in Jesus Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "+ Charles J. Chaput, O.F.M. Cap." The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Most Reverend Charles J. Chaput, O.F.M. Cap.
Archbishop of Philadelphia