



March 8, 2016

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ Jesus,

Prayer is the one indispensable element in any undertaking or strategy. Whatever other elements may be needed, if prayer is not the absolute and essential action, the effort will ultimately be unsuccessful.

As we are so very much aware, a number of crucial decisions will be made by the U.S. Supreme Court in its current session that will conclude at the end of June.

Oral arguments have already been made regarding the issue of abortion— specifically, the constitutionality of health and safety standards enacted in Texas for abortion facilities. On March 23, oral arguments will be presented regarding the Little Sisters of the Poor and other religious groups and institutions that will be forced to provide insurance coverage for contraception and abortifacients to their employees, contrary to their conscience and to the principle of religious freedom.

I invite all the members of our diocesan family to join me in a novena of prayer and penance from March 14 to March 22, the day preceding the oral arguments in the Little Sisters of the Poor case. The elements of this novena should include some or all of the following: personal and/or communal prayer, participation in the Holy Mass (if not on all 9 days, at least on some of them), specific forms of penance (such as fasting), and the use of either a prayer to Saint Joseph (March is the month of his patronage of the Universal Church and of the family), or the diocesan prayer for the conversion of hearts to protect religious freedom, the sanctity of human life and the sanctity of marriage, or both. (The texts of the prayers are below.)

Moreover, I invite all the members of our diocesan family to join me in prayerful observance of each of the First Fridays of April, May, and June. Our participation should include: taking part in the Holy Mass, some form of penance, and invoking the intercessory prayer of the Lord Jesus Whose Sacred Heart continues to beat with love for the conversion of those still blind. A holy hour is likewise encouraged on each of these First Fridays.

Obviously, I leave to each person the concrete "how" of making this novena in March and of intentional prayer and penance on the First Fridays of April, May, and June. What is absolutely essential is that our diocesan family be united in prayer and penance from now until the end of June.

So much hope is to be found in our united prayer and penance! Let us then be joined together in these ways, clinging to the Lord Jesus, and imploring the intercession of Our Blessed Mother, and of our diocesan patrons Saint Thomas More and Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton.

Thanking you for joining me in this intentional prayer, I remain

Faithfully in the Heart of Christ,

*+ Paul S. Loverde*

Most Reverend Paul S. Loverde  
Bishop of Arlington