

Invocation:

Dear friends,

Pope Francis has said that, *“To persevere is to remain constant in goodness, especially when the reality around us urges us to do otherwise.”* We welcome you as friends in thanksgiving for the gift that you are for us. We are grateful for our perseverance through adversity, made possible thanks to the gifts we have received.

Perseverance, the Pope says, *“is the reflection in the world of God’s love, because God’s love is faithful, it is persevering, it never changes.”*

Along with Fr. Carlos, I am so happy to welcome you to the historic San Fernando Cathedral. We have gathered to offer thanks, though for so many this past three years have been a time of trial and sorrow. Yet, through the difficulties and darkness, the light of kindness, generosity, and self-sacrificing love has shown among many!

In such times of trial as we have experienced, and which we still experience, having a gracious and grateful heart may be the key to our ability not only to survive, but to create a better post-pandemic world. A grateful heart is a hopeful heart, and hope is the virtue which our whole society and culture needs in this time. May we be sources of hope for our people.

Let us pray,

Oh God, you are the giver of all good gifts! We praise you and bless you for your goodness to us. As we join together in our prayers and

**benedictions tonight – who are from many different faiths and traditions – we do so asking for the infusion of the hope we so much need to make our world a better world, a safer world, a more just world, a world which reflects the beauty of your face! Hear and receive us as we come before you this night. Amen.**

**Benediction:**

**Friends, my heart is filled with gratitude, having shared with you in these inspiring moments we have spent together in prayer and blessing. May your Thanksgiving Day be a day of joy – celebrated safely, of course! -- as you gather with your families and loved ones. Thank you for coming to San Fernando Cathedral at the heart of our City tonight. And from my own Catholic tradition I offer you this benediction:**

**May the Lord bless you and keep you,**

**May the Lord smile upon you with kindness,**

**May the Lord keep you in His peace,**

**And may the blessing of Almighty God descend upon you,**

**And remain with you always,**

**Amen.**