

Invocation:

Dear friends,

Pope Francis has said that *“To live is above all to have received life. All of us are born because someone wanted us to have life. And this is only the first of a long series of debts that we incur by living. Debts of gratitude. During our lives, more than one person has gazed on us with pure eyes, gratuitously. ... persons who carried out their roles above and beyond what was required of them. And they stirred gratitude within us. Even friendship is a gift for which we should always be grateful.”* We welcome you as friends in thanksgiving for the gift that you are for us.

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 couple of 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.