

Dear friends,

We are blessed to come together and share this time on the Feast of the Chair of St. Peter. Not only does the Church celebrate the special role of St. Peter today, but also our reality as Church. Peter is the rock, the Prince of the Apostles upon whom is built the strong foundation of our faith, and the Church, herself, serves as a kind of rock of faith in the midst of our society and world.

Returning recently from our *ad limina* visit with Pope Francis, Bishop Mike and I were both struck by the sense that we truly were with Peter as spent time with the Holy Father. Truly he is Peter in our day, and we need to pray for him as he guides the world-wide flock of the faithful.

We hear in our first reading today from the First Letter of Peter that we must tend the flock in our midst – that is, to guide it well. We are admonished not to “lord it over” others, but to treat them with tenderness and care. Our gathering today as an Archdiocesan Pastoral Council is a reflection of that commission from Peter to the Church. You assist Bishop Mike and me to see the real needs of our flock, of those entrusted to us for pastoral guidance and care. But even more, you are participants in this great act of pastoral care.

The Holy Father, Pope Francis, has been emphasizing to the Church the need to move forward by way of discernment. In order to discern we need to listen deeply and respectfully to one another. We need to hear what the Holy Spirit is saying to us through the people and events we encounter each day. We do this first with prayer, asking

for the Holy Spirit to fill us with his grace, and to help us empty our minds of our own agendas or prejudices. Next, we respectfully hear one another through the process of encounter, and then by accompanying one another.

I think, my brothers and sisters, that we honor the Chair of Peter and the memory of St. Peter best when we stand upon the rock of faith, and then listen deeply to the Holy Spirit speaking through each one of us. May Our Lord guide us today just as he guided his apostles. May we look upon him with the eyes of love and say together with Peter, “you are the Christ, the Son of the living God!”