



OFFICE OF THE BISHOP
December 26, 2021

Prot. No. B 147/21

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

On this Feast of the Holy Family, I am pleased to announce the formation of a new Diocese of Charlotte Office of Family Life to strengthen and magnify our ministry and outreach to families.

The family is the fundamental building block of society, and building up and supporting the family is at the heart of the Church's mission. The family – what the Fathers of the Second Vatican Council called the *Ecclesia domestica* or domestic Church (*Lumen Gentium*, 11) – is also “a community of grace and prayer, a school of human virtues and of Christian charity” (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1666).

With the challenges so many people face today, it is more important than ever that the Church “leans in” to sustain and encourage families, especially those who are just starting out or are struggling. The new diocesan Office of Family Life will enable us to provide focused resources to enrich the spiritual lives of families, and to uphold and celebrate the value of families in contemporary culture. It will help our diocese serve the Church's mission of “proclaiming to all people the plan of God for marriage and the family...thus contributing to the renewal of society and of the People of God.” (*Familiaris Consortio*, 3)

It is especially fitting that we underscore the importance of family life in our local Church as we prepare for the 50th anniversary of the founding of the Diocese of Charlotte in 2022. Families have driven our growth and enabled us to flourish as a diocese. They chose to build up our Catholic community, establish homes, support our parishes and schools, and raise their sons and daughters to embrace Catholic marriage or vocations to the priesthood or religious life in service to our diocese.

Father Peter Ascik will direct the new office. Raised in the Asheville area, Father Ascik grew up in a family of nine children and has a special devotion to family and pro-life ministry work. Ordained in 2017, he pursued advanced studies in moral theology and completed his thesis on marriage before serving in parish ministry at St. Thomas Aquinas and St. Matthew parishes in Charlotte. Last summer, he was assigned as pastor of St. Mary, Help of Christians Parish in Shelby and Christ the King Mission in Kings Mountain.

Father Ascik will manage the work of setting up the new office and shifting the work of marriage preparation, pro-life ministry, natural family planning (NFP), and some aspects of elder ministry from Catholic Charities Diocese of Charlotte's array of family enrichment services. Staff will include:

- Marriage Preparation – Alecia C. Acquaviva, coordinator
- Respect Life Office (including Rachel's Vineyard Ministry) – Jessica R. Grabowski, program director
- Natural Family Planning – Batrice N. Adcock, MSN, RN, program director

Faith-based and pastoral activities of Catholic Charities' Elder Ministry program will also fall under the scope of the Family Life Office. The new office will also assume planning for the annual diocesan Wedding Anniversary Mass. However, informational and recreational programming such as health fairs and safety webinars will remain under the purview of Catholic Charities. Catholic Charities will also continue to oversee family-related programs requiring technical expertise in social work, such as adoption services and teen parenting support.

Please join me in praying for the success of this initiative, for the men and women who will be instrumental in forging this exciting new path, and for the health and well-being of every family in our diocese and beyond. May we all be inspired by the unity, peace and mutual love exemplified by the Most Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph.

Sincerely yours in Christ Jesus,

+ *Peter J. Jugis*

Most Reverend Peter J. Jugis
Bishop of Charlotte

