

TRANSCRIPT: Greetings in Christ, everyone! This past Sunday, we began the holy season of Advent, which marks the beginning of a new liturgical year in the Church. So happy New Year to everyone! It's always a special time these days leading up to Christmas, it's a beautiful time—some of the most beautiful prayers and music that we have during the year. It's also a great time for hope. One of the things that we're experiencing now with the COVID crisis that we're still plodding through is almost a sense of darkness, and I was thinking about the image of Advent, the wise men already setting out in the darkness following the light. And that's maybe one of the things I would encourage us all to do, in this year especially, is to look for the light because God is in all of this and God is bringing light if we look for it, and certainly that light is the Light of the World, it's Jesus His Son, who's never far away. SO lets look for the Lord in a special way in our homes, our families, with our friends and our parishes. Let's use this season to really cling to our greatest hope, and that is the love of God, the presence of God in our lives. So I want to wish all of you a holy season of Advent.

One of the other beautiful things that's going to happen during this season of Advent—and I want you to look for it—is the first issue of the Catholic Key Magazine, which will be coming to press in just a few weeks and you should have it in your mailbox before Christmas. It will feature so many inspiring and personal stories of faith that touch on work, family, marriage, just different things that are inspiring. Stories from within our own diocese, a few stories maybe from the broader Catholic world, but a lot of local stories of people that you may know. One of the first stories in the Catholic Key Magazine that's coming will be on the developing work in our diocese to continue the work of healing of those who have been impacted by the trauma of clergy sexual abuse. That's one of the things I heard a couple of years ago during my listening sessions, especially from the laity, about how they wanted more involvement in helping the Church to address the wounds that still exist within our diocese. And so that's how Journey to Bethany, a new program arose. It was out of really the listening sessions and crafting our Diocesan Pastoral Vision for our diocese of healing our family. And so, you may remember, some of you received, many of you responded to a survey that we sent out to thousands of people—both lay people and our priests responded to that. So we're getting close to getting that started. So there will be more to come on Journey to Bethany, and it will be featured in the Catholic Key Magazine.

You know, Healing our Family is one of the most critical parts of our Mutually Shared Vision, the diocesan Pastoral Plan. Sort of a related topic to that is the release of the report from the Holy See on the scandal and the person of former Cardinal Theodore McCarrick. Many of you know that McCarrick rose through the ranks of the Catholic hierarchy, over the past couple of decades, all the while in his wake were instances of abuse on his part, not only of minors, but his own seminarians and some of his own priests. So many questions arose around that; the Church has been awaiting this report for a long time, I think over a year. It came out a few weeks ago, and it was rather long—over 450 pages or so, and it's taken a while to reflect upon all of that. But one of the things that it shows is a lot about how a culture can develop around those in power; how ambition can color and corrupt those that are seeking to climb; it really is a story of failure on the part of individuals that had responsibility, but also I think at some levels an institutional failure. So there will be a lot more in the months and years ahead to learn and lessons to draw on from this report, but it's wonderful that it came out, just the transparency and another step forward in shedding light on what's happened in the past. This coupled with some of the other recent developments that have come out just in this past year as a result of Pope Francis' desire to bring the Church together to strengthen and to improve processes and even add things that will hold, especially those in power, bishops and others, accountable for not fulfilling their duties to protect and

report. Along with this report on former Cardinal McCarrick, we just had in this past year the release of the apostolic letter from Pope Francis, in Latin it's titled 'Vos estis lux mundi', which does put in place processes to hold bishops accountable and some other things that have occurred. While it's painful to read another report on failure, it's also again a sign of hope that we're moving forward, we're bringing to light and out into the open, these failures so that we can draw important lessons from them. I have a few more things to share on the McCarrick Report, and too much to list now, but if you're interested in reading more about what I think about the report, I've put those thoughts on our diocesan website.

Finally, I just want to remind everyone that we still are facing serious struggles with the coronavirus and the uptick here in the Midwest from the COVID19 virus. I know many people that are in healthcare that are very concerned about the rising number of people, the strain it's putting on the hospitals, the physicians and nurses that really are put under great stress. It's important for us to do our part to help, especially when we come together in public places like at Mass. We'll be gathering with joy over these days of Advent and certainly over Christmas together to celebrate the Lord's birth. Pay special attention to following the safety protocols that we've been given and that I endorse for our diocese—wearing masks, being socially distant from each other, purifying our hands. And I encourage everyone to do their part and also cooperating with those things so that we can continue to worship, but we can also provide spaces where we can protect the most vulnerable.

So again as we begin this season of Advent, this holy season, know of my gratitude for you great faith, your hope and your love, the many ways you share that day to day in your families, and parishes and your work. Know of my prayers during this season for all of you, that the Lord will bless you with His light, as we look forward to the coming of the Light of the World at Christmas. Know of my gratitude and thank you for your support, your encouragement and your prayers for me. May God bless you during the weeks ahead.