

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

Peace and All Good!



During the week of January 18 to 25, our archdiocese joins with Christians around the world to celebrate the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, asking the Holy Spirit to bring us together in ever-greater unity to give witness to the Gospel. On the night before he died, Jesus prayed that his followers "may all be one," as He and the Father are one, in order that the world might believe (John 17). Our witness to the world is especially powerful when Christians from many traditions join together in prayer, solidarity and action.

In observance of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, I will be officiating at a Prayer Service for Christian Unity at Holy Spirit Catholic Church, 4465 Northside Drive, NW, Atlanta, Georgia 30327 on Wednesday, January 24, 2024 at 7 p.m. I will be joined by clergy from several Christian denominations. I would be delighted for all clergy and consecrated religious to vest for the service and form part of the procession.

Each year Christian churches and communities from a different part of the world develop the theme and materials for the Week of Prayer. During this week-long celebration, Christians are invited to gather with their Christian neighbors to join in prayer for Christian unity.

The 2024 theme for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity is "You shall love the Lord your God ... and your neighbor as yourself." (Luke 10:27). This year's theme comes through the combined efforts of the Pontifical Dicastery for Promoting Christian Unity, the World Council of Churches and the Christian churches of Burkina Faso. Much of the coordination of this ecumenical project was done by the community of Chemin Neuf, a French Catholic and ecumenical community of vowed and lay people, particularly through their local community in Burkina Faso, a country in the Sahel region of West Africa.

"You shall love the Lord your God ... and your neighbor as yourself." (Luke 10:27). This scripture passage calls upon all Christians and people of good will to reflect on the relationships in our lives of striving to love our Lord and God with all our heart, soul, strength and mind - and how this is lived out in how we actually love one another. In these times of large-scale political and social anxiety, anger and mistrust and increasing polarization and conflict, Jesus directs us to reflect on

how the Greatest Commandments direct our allegiance to God in our commitment to live and act like Him. This is a call to bring to bear all charity, mercy and forgiveness, justice and commitment to unity. We need to seek the impossible path of Jesus Christ, who renders what seems to be impossible ... possible!

As we prepare to celebrate the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, we are asked to reflect on the following questions:

How can we live our unity as Christians so as to confront the evils and injustices of our time?

How does Jesus Christ -who is the greatest Love the world has known - inspire and call each of us in the coming New Year to be a channel of His peace, love and hope for the world?

How can we engage in dialogue - for the sake of increased awareness and insight about one another's experiences of the journey from brokenness to forgiveness and healing?

Please take time during this week to ask the Holy Spirit to enter into the hearts of all Christians so that we might draw ever closer to one another in Christ through our prayer, conversation and fellowship.

The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity not only reminds us that Jesus Christ is the one Savior of all peoples and nations, but also that there is great blessing and new life when those of many families of faith come together in wonder, praise and commitment to follow the One true Lord and Savior.

*Lord Jesus, who prayed that all might be one,
we pray to you for the unity of all Christians,
according to your will, according to your means.
May your Spirit enable us to experience the suffering caused by division,
to see our sin and to hope beyond all hope. Amen*

As we begin this New Year 2024, let us renew our commitment to the task of Christian Unity so that Christ's prayer "that all may be one" may be realized.

The Most Reverend Gregory J. Hartmayer, OFM Conv.