

Q & A: Bishop Joseph Galante

Michael Sean Winters | Aug. 5, 2010 | Distinctly Catholic

Continuing our focus on the episcopacy, today we hear from Bishop Joseph Galante of Camden, New Jersey.

The question: What is the best thing about being a bishop in 2010?

Bishop Galante: For me, my most ardent desire has been to help people come to know, love and live Jesus more completely at a time when secular influences sometimes make it difficult for people to hear and be receptive to the Gospel. That is why I have been especially grateful to serve as a diocesan bishop, because the needs of our people are so great, as are the opportunities to serve them more effectively.

Soon after I was installed as Bishop of Camden I had the great privilege of going out to visit parishes to hear directly from the people about their hopes for the future of the Church. I held more than 140 such sessions and they were instrumental in identifying the pastoral priorities for this diocese, including the need for lifelong faith formation, priestly vocations, lay ministry, well-celebrated liturgies, compassionate outreach and youth ministry. At these sessions, and throughout my time as bishop, I have been humbled by the faith of our people. I have been moved by their desire to grow more deeply in their relationship with Jesus and one another. I have been so encouraged by their willingness to accept changes in the way our parishes are configured in order to address today's pressing challenges, while planting the seeds that will lead to new growth.

As bishop, I also have served at a time of great challenge for the Church, including the horrific reality of abuse of minors by those serving the Church. Some years ago, my fellow bishops elected me to chair their Committee on Communications. I helped develop the Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People and did many media interviews where I was able to give a voice to victims and to explain to the public the steps that we were taking to help to keep our Church safe for children. While I no longer serve on this Committee, I was most grateful for the opportunity to contribute to the Church's response at that time. We see the positive impact that response subsequently has had on reducing the incidence of abuse in the Church, responding to the needs of victims and protecting young people, even as we acknowledge that we must never grow complacent, but must be ever vigilant.

Whether it is the matter of abuse in the Church, we know that in our ministry, as in life, there will be times of joy, but also great trials and challenges. The Second Vatican Council in *Gaudium et Spes* said, "The Church, sharing in mankind's joys and hopes, in its anxieties and sadness, stands with every man and woman of every place and time, to bring them the Good News of the Kingdom of God, which in Jesus Christ has come and continues to be among them." It goes on to say, "In the midst of mankind and in the world she is the sacrament of God's love and, therefore, the most splendid hope..." As bishop, I think of this quote often because it brings home the reality that each of us, in a way proper to our vocation, is called to be a living sacrament of God's love, a signpost of hope, as we give daily witness to our faith.

Tomorrow's Interviewee: Archbishop Roberto Gonzalez, OFM, of San Juan, Puerto Rico

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