

**SOLEMN EPISCOPAL CONSECRATION OF
THE MOST REVEREND PATRICK NEARY, C.S.C.
AS TENTH BISHOP OF SAINT CLOUD
CATHEDRAL OF ST. MARY
ST. CLOUD, MINNESOTA
FEBRUARY 14, 2023**

Your Excellency Archbishop Hebda, Metropolitan Archbishop of Saint Paul and Minneapolis; Your Excellency Archbishop Sample; Bishop Kettler; my brother Bishops of the Congregation of the Holy Cross, including Bishop Izaguirre, the Prelate of Chuquibamba, Peru; all my brother Bishops; dear Priests, Deacons, Consecrated Religious, and Members of the Faithful; Dear Friends:

As we come together today in this Cathedral of St. Mary to celebrate the Ordination and Installation of Bishop-elect Patrick Neary, we thank Almighty God and His Blessed Mother for the grace and joy that has been given to the Diocese of St. Cloud through this appointment. We also thank Bishop Donald Kettler for the wisdom, love, and zeal with which he has shepherded this local Church for the past nine years. We congratulate him on his retirement; and we pray for his good health, that he may enjoy this new season of his life.

Bishop-elect Neary: in your news conference in December, the day your appointment was announced, you explained to the people that a person from Washington, D.C. had called you several times, from a number that you did not recognize. And so, thinking it was “spam”, you blocked that number, not knowing that it was the Apostolic Nuncio! Well, Bishop-elect Neary, allow me to say: *I forgive you* (...especially since you said “yes” to being a bishop...). Pope Francis calls us to show mercy, so I must heed his call!

In all seriousness, *mercy* is a great gift. The Holy Father has taught us, “Mercy is the very heart of God.” You told the people that you were moved when you learned the motto of the Diocese of St. Cloud: “*Heart of Mercy, Voice of Hope, Hands of Justice.*” As you explained, this motto resonates with the spirituality of your Congregation of the Holy Cross, which is dedicated to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. In fact, this motto also describes your own ministry.

You have shown mercy and justice in your many assignments as a priest: as a campus minister, seminary rector, missionary, religious superior, and pastor. But perhaps the first impression that someone has when encountering you is that you are a “voice of hope”. You are a man who recognizes—as the late Pope Benedict XVI wrote, and as Pope Francis never tires of repeating—that “Being Christian is not the result of an ethical choice or a lofty idea, but the encounter with an event, a person, which gives life a new horizon and a decisive direction” (*DEUS CARITAS EST*, 1). It is obvious that you have met Christ—that you encounter Him each day in your prayer. For that reason, I am eager for you to share Christ with the good people of this Diocese.

I also want to recognize and thank your parents, who were the first to bring you and your sisters into communion with Christ. May they be especially blessed by the Lord for giving a priest, and now a bishop, to Him and to His Church.

And so, with much joy, I will now read the Papal Decree appointing you as Bishop of St. Cloud.