



# DIOCESE OF METUCHEN

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OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

January 7, 2019

Rev. Abraham Orapankal  
St. Matthias Parish  
168 John F. Kennedy Boulevard  
Somerset, NJ 08873-2230

Dear Father Orapankal:

As we embark upon this new year, I realize that although various employees in the diocese have been working with you and the staff of St. Matthias during these challenging past two months, it has been awhile since I was last in touch with the parish about the troubling financial situation that we had discovered this Fall. I want to reassure you of my spiritual closeness to the parish and to share a bit more information.

I want to begin by thanking you again for serving as administrator of St. Matthias as the parish grieves from the difficulties of these past months. As I have shared with you before, I have certainly been keeping them in prayer since my visit with them. I know this has been a difficult time for you as well, and I thank you for all your efforts; I have been very comforted indeed by the excellent comments about your ministry there that I have received.

After a visit with my family for Christmas dinner, I marked off a day to go and visit with Fr. Doug. He continues with his evaluation and treatment, even as the prosecutors continue their investigation. I was glad to see him, and he tells me that he is benefiting from his time away.

You had asked me during our day of recollection during Advent if the diocese was able to provide an update regarding the investigation and findings. While I am ultimately committed to sharing as many details with you and the parish community as possible, there is not much more which I can share with you at this time while the prosecutor's office continues with its active investigation. I am grateful for your own ongoing efforts to garner certain historical documentation in cooperation with them. We have been doing the same. I am told this will take several months, and I have been counseled that we should have a coordinated announcement of final findings in which we would like to include a report from our insurance carrier as well; *the diocese maintains \$1 million of insurance coverage for situations such as this.* Like you I would like to know all the answers right now, but we will have to be patient for a bit longer. I do look forward to learning all the details of this matter myself and to sharing them with the St. Matthias community as I have done since this matter came to my attention.

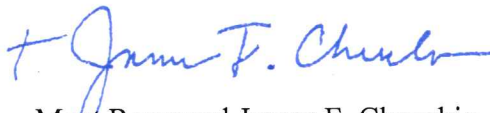
I am grateful for your commitment to greater financial transparency in the parish, especially through the parish's Finance Council; I would ask you to collaborate with the diocesan Vicariate for Administration in the selection and training of these important stewards of your parishioners' generosity. A well-functioning, active Finance Council which works in cooperation with the Pastor in developing and monitoring budgets, overseeing parish spending, and making regular reports to the parish community is really the best internal control resource we have for our parishes and schools.

On the diocesan level, we continue to redesign and strengthen the internal audit process. Since my arrival in the diocese, I have striven to increase our financial transparency and accountability. While the Diocese has limits on its resources, this situation has proven the importance of these efforts and has given us additional important insights towards our ongoing restructuring of our internal audit programs which will include more frequent studies of our parishes.

I assure you of my continued prayers for the good people of St. Matthias and for you and your service at the parish, as well as prayers for your safe return home from your travels to India. As you have come to know in your short time at St. Matthias, they are very good, welcoming and motivated people, enthusiastic for the Gospel and the spread of its message; I am certainly grateful for them and I know you are now too. I ask God to bring them even closer to Himself in these days.

With renewed best wishes, I remain

Yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "James F. Checchio". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "J".

Most Reverend James F. Checchio, JCD, MBA  
Bishop of Metuchen