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Statement upon the Appointment of His Excellency, The Most Reverend John Bonnici, as the Tenth Bishop of the Diocese of Rochester

It is with great joy that I announce today that Bishop Bonnici, until now an Auxiliary Bishop of the Archdiocese of New York, has been nominated to the See of Rochester by His Holiness Pope Leo XIV, and Bishop Bonnici's Solemn Mass of Installation will take place on March 19, 2026, the Solemnity of Saint Joseph. Until that time, I will serve as Apostolic Administrator of the Diocese of Rochester.

I begin by thanking our Holy Father of beloved memory, Pope Francis, and our Holy Father, Pope Leo, for allowing me to continue as Bishop of the Diocese, although I had reached the age 75 in September of 2021, when bishops ordinarily become emeritus; for this consideration, I am deeply grateful. I am also deeply grateful to the priests, deacons, religious and laity who have prayed for me, worked with me and supported me throughout these years and who have faithfully crossed over the threshold into our churches during some very difficult times, always seeing beyond the darkness the light Who is Jesus Christ, dwelling on our tabernacles, where He is ever present and never abandons us.

As I complete my tenure as the Diocesan Bishop of Rochester, I wish to renew my sincere and heartfelt apology to the survivors, victims, who have suffered sexual abuse and so very sadly scarred their innocent lives. Wherever I go, I take you with me in prayer, especially at the altar, asking our Heavenly Father to grant you peace and to restore your faith in Jesus.

I pray that now we are embarking upon a new chapter in our Diocese, filled with those virtues of faith, hope and charity. I do not have the words to express how overjoyed I am upon the appointment of Bishop Bonnici! I have come to know him through our Provincial Meetings of the Metropolitan Province of the Archdiocese of New York and on other occasions, and without hesitation I can say you have received a great gift, an outstanding Bishop and Shepherd. Thank God that, like Our Mother Mary, he gave his own "Fiat", "Thy will be done," and gladly has accepted to become the Tenth Bishop of Rochester. Receive him with joy, listen to his words, and allow yourself to be captured by his pastoral outreach and love for Jesus and His Holy Church.

A child of immigrant parents, Bishop Bonnici grew to embrace lovingly our Catholic faith. A person with a keen intellect, Bishop Bonnici was a scholarship student at Saint John's University, with a double major in biology (pre-med) and philosophy, while continuing his discernment for the priesthood at Saint John Neumann Seminary Residence in the Bronx. Father Bonnici finished his undergraduate education in three years and was awarded the degree of Bachelor of Science (B.S.) in 1987. He then taught biology and philosophy at Cathedral Preparatory School and Seminary in New York City.

Bishop Bonnici then was assigned to Rome to continue the program for priestly formation at the Pontifical North American College in Rome. He pursued the tracts in theology at the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome, where he was awarded the degree of Bachelor of Sacred Theology (S.T.B.) in 1990. He then continued his studies at The Pontifical John Paul II Institute, Rome, where he was awarded the degree of Licentiate in Sacred Theology (S.T.L.) in 1992, later being awarded the degree of Doctor of Sacred Theology (S.T.D.) in 1995 from The Pontifical John Paul II Institute, Washington, D.C.

Bishop Bonnici was ordained to the Sacred Priesthood by His Eminence, John Cardinal O'Connor, on June 22, 1991, providentially the Feast Day of our Diocesan Patron, Saint John Fisher. He was ordained a Bishop on March 1, 2022, by His Eminence, Timothy Michael Cardinal Dolan.

Following his doctoral studies, among his many and varied assignments, Bishop Bonnici served as Professor of Theology, the Director of the Family Life/Respect Life Office of the Archdiocese of New York, pastor and presently serves as the pastor of two large parishes, Saints John and Paul Parish and Saint Augustine Parish, both in Larchmont, New York, in addition to being a Territorial Episcopal Vicar and fulfilling other roles as an Auxiliary Bishop. His abilities have been recognized by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, where he has served and serves on several committees, among them as a member of the Bishops' Committee on the Protection of Children and Young People, as the representative of our Region II.

Bishop Bonnici certainly possesses the leadership qualities and gifts to serve as the Bishop of Rochester. He not only has the ability to grasp the contemporary challenges of the Church, but he has worked to address these challenges. The Diocese of Rochester needs the fresh, dynamic leadership of Bishop Bonnici, a Bishop unafraid of challenge, articulate in the faith and a bearer of hope.

Once Bishop Bonnici is installed as Bishop and I complete my duties as Apostolic Administrator, I will remain in the Diocese; but while there will be two Bishops in the Diocese, only one is the Diocesan Bishop, Bishop Bonnici! I pledge to you, Bishop Bonnici, my fidelity, my unwavering support, full cooperation and constant prayers. Ad multos annos, gloriosque annos, vivas!

I give you now our Bishop-Designate, the Tenth Bishop of Rochester, His Excellency, Bishop John Bonnici!