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**Statement of Bishop Daniel E. Thomas Regarding
The Apostolic Exhortation *Dilexi Te* of
Pope Leo XIV on Love for the Poor**

Pope Leo XIV released today his first Apostolic Exhortation *Dilexi Te* (“I have loved you” [Rev 3:9]), emphasizing the critical need to serve the poor and assist them in drawing nearer to Christ. The Holy Father reminds us that for Christians, helping the poor is not optional—it is essential—because they are the very Body of Christ. While wealth and social success often create the illusion of happiness, they can lead to exclusion and discrimination against the oppressed. Christians also can let themselves be influenced by worldly ideologies, demonstrated by the fact that the exercise of charity is often scorned and ridiculed. This mindset must be transformed into one of solidarity: walking alongside those in need and meeting all as equals.

Pope Leo emphasizes that the care of the poor is part of the Great Tradition of the Church, like a beacon of light that, from the Gospel onward, has illuminated the hearts and steps of Christians of all time. This tradition of accompaniment is deeply rooted in the Church and is central to our faith.

In reading this document, we are exhorted that mercy cannot wait. People of Christ are all called to give, to serve, and to touch the suffering flesh of the poor, building a Church that knows how to love and accompany the most fragile—something urgently needed in our world today.

I invite all Catholics—and all people of goodwill—to prayerfully read this text, reflect on Pope Leo’s words, and find concrete ways of identifying and addressing the multiple forms of poverty: material, spiritual, social and moral. We cannot place limits on love. Our Holy Father invites us to internalize the teaching of St. Augustine by “a readiness to live radically his call to conversion, which necessarily includes the service of charity” (47). May all of us, in our poverty, hear the words of the Lord: “*I have loved you*” (Rev 3:9).

The Diocese of Toledo, established April 15, 1910, encompasses 8,222 square miles in a mixture of urban and rural areas and spans 19 counties across Northwest Ohio, serving approximately 320,000 Catholics in 122 parishes. The Diocese includes Allen, Crawford, Defiance, Erie, Fulton, Hancock, Henry, Huron, Lucas, Ottawa, Paulding, Putnam, Richland, Sandusky, Seneca, Van Wert, Williams, Wood and Wyandot counties.