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NEWS RELEASE

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BISHOP LAUNCHES PROGRAM TO ENCOURAGE RECEPTION OF SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION

For the second straight year, the Most Reverend John O. Barres, Bishop of Allentown has launched a program entitled “Encountering the Merciful Savior” in an effort to increase the number of Catholics who receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation, known popularly as Confession or the Sacrament of Penance.

In the Catholic Church, Penance or Reconciliation is a sacrament in which forgiveness of sins committed after Baptism, is granted through the absolution of the priest acting in the name of Christ, to those who are truly sorry and confess those sins.

The Bishop has directed that all 104 parishes in the five-county Diocese add two hours each week to its Confession schedule during the upcoming penitential season of Lent, which begins on Ash Wednesday, March 9.

In his remarks to the people gathered at his Ordination and Installation Mass in July 2009, Bishop Barres said, “The Holy Father stresses that ‘priests ought never to be resigned to empty confessionals or the apparent indifference of the faithful to the sacrament.’ The Diocese of Allentown is not and will not be resigned to empty confessionals.”

Not only is the goal of “Encountering the Merciful Savior” to encourage those who have been away from the Sacrament of Reconciliation to return to the practice of the sacrament but also to more easily welcome back those who have fallen away from the church.

The expanded schedule of Confession opportunities at parishes around the Diocese will be posted on the Diocesan Web site www.allentowndiocese.org and published in the Diocesan newspaper, The AD Times.

Radio commercials will also air on stations around the Diocese promoting the “Encountering the Merciful Savior” program.