



1 January 2017

Dear Fathers, Pastoral Assistants and Parishioners,

Happy New Year!

A couple of weeks ago, all bishops received a letter from the Vatican recalling that January 1st, aside from being the Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God, is also the World Day of Prayer for Peace. And how deep is the need in our day for peace! One of the reflections they provided has to do with the sign, or “kiss” of peace that we exchange at Mass. While the kiss of peace became a regular feature of the Mass after the liturgical renewal following the Second Vatican Council, its roots actually go back to the very first liturgies in the earliest Church. This is not intended to be a simple greeting of the family members we are sitting next to – it expresses a deeper reconciliation and unity of the Christian community as we prepare to receive Jesus Christ in the Eucharist. As St. John says in his first letter, if you do not love the brother and sister that you can see, you cannot claim to love the God that you have never seen. (1 John 4:19-21).

Bishop Jose Kalluvellil, bishop- of Canadian Syro-Malabar Catholics

Just prior to Christmas, I had the pleasure of hosting Bishop Jose Kalluvellil, whose Syro-Malabar Catholic Church is one of the oldest eastern rites of the Catholic Church, having been founded by St. Thomas (famous for his doubt and the faith in the resurrection of Jesus). The Syro-Malabar Church has its home in the state of Kerala in south-western India, but over the past several years, their members have become so numerous in Canada that the Holy See has created an exarchy in Canada, and named Bishop Jose Kalluvellil its first bishop. Bishop Jose is still getting around the country and meeting his flock. Along with Father Abraham Azhakathu Joseph in Valleyview (who is also a Syro-Malabar priest), he celebrated Mass in their Rite for the Syro-Malabars in Grande Prairie, Grimshaw, McLennan and Dawson Creek BC. Beginning soon with baby steps, he will be establishing a more permanent ministry among his people in the Peace Country.

Father David Reilander

I am presently hosting Father David Reilander in our archdiocese. Father Reilander is the president of Catholic Missions in Canada (CMIC). As you already know, we receive a great deal of needed funding from CMIC, which assists ministry in our Indigenous communities, youth ministry, adult faith formation programming, and support for seminarians. I am delighted that Father David is getting a first-hand view of our diocese, its resources and its challenges.

Youth Ministry Coordinator

We have finally hired a full-time youth ministry coordinator for the Archdiocese. Jocelyne Garant, originally from McLennan, has provided support for youth projects in the diocese over the past couple of years, while following her other life-pursuits. She has now agreed to take this on full-time. I welcome her to our staff, and I'm grateful for her vision of her ministry, which is essentially to help develop youth ministry in the parishes

and deaneries. No one person can be the “youth minister” for the whole archdiocese, but she can assist our individual communities to develop your youth ministry. Jocelyne begins on 2 January.

Director of Stewardship & Second-Mile Giving Campaign

We have also hired part-time a Director of Stewardship. This also is a position that we have tried to fill in the past, with little success. Lisa Kroeger works with Canadian Mental Health Association, but has expressed a desire to assist the archdiocese in the realm of Stewardship, and taking on responsibility for the Second-Mile Giving campaign. Her first several weeks will be spent developing the ministry of Stewardship, before she launches out to the parishes of the archdiocese.

Seeking a Receptionist/Filing Clerk

Over the past year or more, as bookkeeping tasks have become more complex in many parishes, they have reached the point of asking the chancery finance office to handle their bookkeeping needs. As we have taken on this service, both the parishes and our office have seen the benefits. This has meant, however, a shift in Kim Vetter’s responsibilities and tasks. The result is that the chancery office is seeking a receptionist/filing clerk. This is conceived as a part-time position, which hopefully will be easily filled.

Trip to India

Part of my vacation time this year will include two weeks in India, accompanied by Father Remi Hebert. I will be away from the archdiocese from 17 January until 2 February. I look forward to this not only as a pleasant vacation, but also as an opportunity to meet some of the bishops and religious superiors of priests who minister in our archdiocese.

Parish Pastoral Council Discussion / Ecumenical Relationships

Each year in the month of January, Catholics around the world mark the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, with other Christian Churches and Communities in our midst. Leaders of the various Churches involved put together a theme and program for each year; this year’s can be found on the Internet at http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/chrstuni/weeks-prayer-doc/rc_pc_chrstuni_doc_20160531_week-prayer-2017_en.html.

Whether or not your parish and your community take part in such a program of prayer and reflection, I suggest the following discussion in the Parish Pastoral Councils:

- What other Christian Churches are there in your community? Can you name them all, their minister(s), and at least one member of each of these?
- Are you able to name at least one program operated by each of these Church communities, which benefits the town as a whole?
- Are there activities or prayer services each year that are organized by members of all the Churches in your town? Do some Catholics of your parish engage in these?
- Is there a ministerial association in your town, which includes all the Christian priests and ministers? Is your parish priest an active member of this? If not, is there a reason why not?
- What are the challenges that make it difficult for different Churches in your town to collaborate together?
- Can you identify a need in your community that is not being met, but which could be met by members of several Christian Church groups working together?

Sincerely in Christ the Redeemer,

Most Rev. Gerard Pettipas, C.Ss.R.

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