



1 June 2017

I write these lines, having just concluded my pastoral visitation for 2017 in Deanery 4 (Slave Lake Deanery). It has been a profitable few weeks, as I have had the opportunity to meet many of our parishioner and share in the successes and challenges of their communities.

Sesquicentennial Celebration of Canada at Dunvegan

One of the first settlements in our archdiocese was at Dunvegan, established in 1867. This was a notable community at a time in history when travel by water was the only feasible transportation available. Several government, Native and civic groups have arranged for a special weekend of activities to take place in Dunvegan on July 1st and 2nd. One of the activities is an open-air Mass in Dunvegan on Sunday July 2nd at 11:00 am. I will preside at the Mass, and lead in the consecration of Canada to the Blessed Mother (see below).

Consecration of Canada to the Blessed Virgin Mary

As we are all well aware, this year Canada celebrates our 150th year since Confederation. Many of us who are “a certain age” will recall 1967 and the centennial celebrations that were held that year. Notable among these was the world fair in Montreal. It was also to commemorate that in 1967 the Holy See formed all the vicariates (such as ours, the Vicariate of Grouard) into dioceses and archdioceses. Ours then became known as the Archdiocese of Grouard-McLennan.

This year, all the bishops of Canada have decided to consecrate our country Canada to the Blessed Virgin Mary. While being a concrete way to honour the Blessed Mother, this act also calls on her protection and intercession for our nation as we move forward in time. While ours is a very rich and fortunate country, whose many benefits most of us enjoy, we also come face to face with some dangers and troubling developments in our society.

The act of consecration can take place at any time, and more than once in the coming months. The most logical time to do so will be on the Canada Day weekend. I am calling on all of our parish communities to make this act of consecration on the weekend of July 1st and 2nd, at all of our Masses. By then I will have an abridged formula for this consecration. Meanwhile, details about this event can be found on-line at <http://www.cccb.ca/site/eng/media-room/4725-catholic-bishops-of-canada-invited-to-consecrate-canada-to-the-blessed-virgin-mary>

Further Studies

This fall, Father Michael Uso-Ereyi will begin a two-year program in Canon Law at St. Paul University in Ottawa. Father Michael has been shepherding the parish of Our Lady of Peace in Peace River since Father Cyril Joseph started receiving treatment for his foot. Father Michael will earn a License in Canon Law, which

will be of great benefit to our diocese. I am grateful to the Archdiocese of Toronto and its bishop, Cardinal Collins, for helping us make this program of studies possible.

I have every confidence that Father Cyril Joseph will be ready to resume his leadership as pastor at Our Lady of Peace Parish before Father Michael leaves for Ottawa.

Did You Know ...

... that there are several cemeteries in our archdiocese that are owned and maintained by the Catholic Church? Most of these date back to pioneer days, while cemeteries in more recent years are civic and operated by the local municipality. In some cases, then, our cemeteries are either full, or closed because there is no longer a community in place. The Catholic cemeteries are located in Grouard, Joussard, High Prairie, Donnelly, McLennan, Falher, Faust, Wabasca, Guy, Spirit River, Friedenstahl (Fairview), Fort Vermilion, Fox Creek (Eaglesham), Girouxville, Tangent, Webster (Sexsmith), Marie Reine, Whitelaw, Hines Creek, Crooked Creek, Desmarais, St-Isidore, Jean-Côté, Notikewin, North Star, Big Prairie and Atikameg.

In most cases, our cemeteries are well maintained, because there is a strong community in place that manages and maintains the property. In a few cases where there is no longer an active and engaged community of parishioners, this is a great challenge. In 2009, the archdiocese drew up an umbrella policy on cemeteries, which then called on all of our parishes that operate cemeteries to draw up similar policies to govern the sale of plots and the maintenance of the grounds. This archdiocesan policy can be viewed on our website, at www.archgm.ca, Policy 7.5.

In present-day society, the practices surrounding death and funerals are changing quickly. The number of individuals and families that are choosing cremation over burial of the body is increasing. The Catholic Church no longer prohibits cremation, as we once did. What is still a concern for the Church, however, is how the cremated remains are handled. The Holy See recently published a directive emphasizing once again that cremated remains are to be buried in a cemetery plot, either immediately following the Funeral Mass or shortly thereafter.

Upcoming Events in the Archdiocese and Beyond

I want to bring to your attention a number of spiritual events taking place in the coming months that may be of interest to you. In most cases, these will also be advertised in our parishes through *ArchGM News*.

Eleskie Pilgrimage: Child Lake First Nation. 7-9 July 2017. This year's preacher: Father Bill Bernard, C.Ss.R.

Christian Family Life Weekend: Lac Ste-Anne. 30 June to 3 July 2017. See www.catholicfamilyministries.com

Native Pilgrimage: Lac Ste-Anne. 22-27 July 2017.

One Rock Festival of Faith. Tsuu T'ina Rodeo Grounds. 11-13 August 2017. See www.theyellowtree.ca

Our Lady of Lourdes Pilgrimage: Girouxville. Tuesday 15 August 2017.



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