



1 February 2018

Dear Pastors, Pastoral Assistants and Parishioners,

### **Catholic Health Care**

Over the long history of our archdiocese, there have been several hospitals and nursing homes begun and operated by religious congregations of Sisters. A listing of these health care facilities includes:

- St. Theresa Hospital, Fort Vermilion
- Hotel-Dieu Hospital, Whitelaw
- Holy Cross Hospital, Spirit River
- Sacred Heart Hospital, McLennan
- Notre-Dame du Lac Nursing Home, McLennan
- St. Joseph Hospital, Grouard
- Providence Hospital, High Prairie
- Gamelin Nursing Home, High Prairie
- St. Martin's Hospital, Wabasca/Desmarais

None of these facilities are currently operated by Catholic entities. Most have been transformed into public institutions; some have retained their Catholic name even though they are not Catholic-operated. One (in Grouard) has closed altogether.

In 2008, the Alberta bishops, anxious to retain all remaining Catholic health institutions under one administration, established Covenant Health and invited all such institutions in Alberta to join. There are now some 20 hospitals and seniors' care facilities spread throughout Alberta under the Covenant Health umbrella in every diocese – except the Archdiocese of Grouard-McLennan. As a partner in Covenant Health, Dennis Grant (our member on the Board of Governors) and I have been attending meetings, but we had no facility within our boundaries.

In 2015, I called together a group of interested persons to form a “Community Board” for our diocese, even though we did not yet have a facility. This Community Board has continued to meet, discuss the possibility of establishing a facility in our midst, and encounter other persons and groups in the region who are engaged in health care. These meetings were to verify the needs and discern our best options to meet those needs.

Our Community Board has remained in close contact with Covenant Health and its CEO, Patrick Dumelie. In the meantime, Covenant Health has solidified its reputation as a first-class consortium of health-care institutions across the Province. Covenant Health continues to

establish new facilities across Alberta, and in some cases, even non-denominational facilities have been welcomed under Covenant Health's administration.

I am happy to say that our goal of establishing a first Covenant Health facility in our diocese is beginning to take shape. Our Community Board met recently with Patrick Dumelie at the Chancery Office in Grande Prairie, along with Gordon Self (in charge of mission and ethics), and we learned of the real possibility in the next couple of years of building and operating a facility in Grande Prairie. We spoke of the benefit that this would be to our diocese as a whole, and something that we can all proudly own.

I hope to keep you all informed of further details as they develop. This is a new beginning for Catholic health care in the Archdiocese of Grouard-McLennan.

### **Father Henry Kiggundu, FMH**

Some of you will have already met Father Henry Kiggundu, a Franciscan Missionary of Hope. He has been in the Archdiocese for the past few months while awaiting his visa. He has now received the proper visa for engaging in ministry in Canada, and recently obtained his driver's licence. I have assigned Father as the parish priest of Our Lady of Good Counsel Parish in High Level, as well as Virgin of the Poor in Meander River and Christ the King in Paddle Prairie.

A native of Uganda, Father Henry is a member of the Franciscan Missionaries of Hope, a congregation established in Kenya. This community is an offshoot of the Order of Friars Minor (OFM), which is the original community founded by St. Francis of Assisi. The Franciscan Missionaries of Hope have agreed to establish themselves in our archdiocese, so I look forward to receiving others of Father Henry's confreres in the future.

### **The season of Lent, and the Rite of Election Mass**

As we all know, the holy season of Lent begins on Ash Wednesday, which is February 14<sup>th</sup> this year. This is also "Valentine's Day" in society, but I am delighted that in all of our Catholic schools, the latter will be moved or altered in order to give Ash Wednesday its due prominence. Let us all use these Lenten forty days as a time to intensify our conversion of heart and actions according to the virtues of the Christian life.

I also point out that as usual, the Rite of Election Mass will take place at St. John the Baptist Cathedral in McLennan, at 1:00 pm on Sunday 18 February. At this Mass, those who will be baptized at the Easter Vigil in their respective parishes will inscribe their name in the Book of Elect. We will also honour those who are already baptized in another Christian denomination, but are also being fully initiated into the Roman Catholic Church. This is an archdiocesan celebration. One and all, you are most welcome to join us on that day.



Most Rev. Gerard Pettipas, C.Ss.R.  
Archbishop of Grouard-McLennan