



1 April 2018

Dear Fathers, Pastoral Assistants and Parishioners,

Alleluia! Christ is risen! He has indeed risen!

This is our Easter proclamation. This fact has been the basis of the Christian message since the resurrection of Jesus to new life, and the coming of the Holy Spirit on the first disciples at Pentecost. The next month and a half is taken up with the Season of Easter. Jesus' dying and rising have ushered in a new era of human history. This urges us on to proclaim the good news of life eternal in Jesus Christ. May each and every one of us be a credible messenger of the good news, and a sign of its effects in our life.

School Sisters of Notre Dame

The School Sisters of Notre Dame came to Peace River in 2002 to answer Archbishop Arthé Guimond's request for Sisters to help respond to the three greatest needs in the Archdiocese - adult faith formation, youth and Native ministry. Sisters Mary Jeanne Davidson and Louise Vanderploeg have faithfully and generously lived out God's call for the past 16 years and have now reached retirement age. Not that a religious Sister ever retires from being a Sister. Their dedication is like that of Holy Orders – once a priest, always a priest; once a Sister, always a Sister. While a Sister's position and responsibilities in ministry may pass on to others, she does not lose her identity as a woman who has consecrated her life to Jesus and his People.

Sister Louise Vanderploeg has ministered with great dedication in the Lay Formation Office (now called the Office of Evangelization and Catechesis). When Sister Georgette Payeur, CSC retired in 2011, Sister Louise became director of this Office. Her leadership has brought innumerable benefits to this Archdiocese, in adult faith formation, Peace Retreats, RCIA, the Church Alive! Congress and its aftermath – the list goes on. Her devotion has been constant.

Sister Mary Jeanne Davidson first came to work in Our Lady of Peace Parish, but she soon found God's deeper call in her heart drawing her to ministry specifically with Indigenous people in the region, especially in the First Nations communities of Duncan's FN, Cadotte Lake, Little Buffalo and Peace River. She has been the presence of Church, spreading Christ's deep compassion, love, healing and joy. Her gentle manner and quiet affirming presence have been appreciated by all who have had the pleasure of meeting her.

At the time of my writing this letter, the future plans for these Sisters have not been finalized. Although their present positions in the Archdiocese will cease on June 29th, 2018, I cherish their presence and witness, and hope that this can somehow continue. I wish to have a fitting celebration to thank Sisters Louise and Mary Jeanne for their years of service. I will announce this as details become clearer.

The Office of Evangelization and Catechesis (OEC) and Sylvia Noel

I am taking the occasion of this retirement to restructure the Office of Evangelisation and Catechesis. In this light, the position of Assistant to the Director of the OEC that Sylvia Noel held as a part-time position will cease. I am grateful to Sylvia for her valuable contributions to the OEC, especially in the area of children's catechesis, and office publications.

In the near future, the Archdiocese will post the position of a full-time Director of the Office of Evangelization and Catechesis.

Carolyn Jacobson, R.I.P.

I'm sure that many of you remember Father Joseph and Carolyn Jacobson. Father Joseph had been the bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Alberta and the NWT. In 2000 he and his wife were received into the Catholic Church, and about one week after my ordination as the archbishop of our diocese, Joseph Jacobson became the first person that I would ordain as a Catholic priest, having been granted an indult by Cardinal Josef Ratzinger (later Pope Benedict XVI) to do so. During the years that I was resident in McLennan, Father Joseph was the pastoral vicar of St. John the Baptist Cathedral Parish in McLennan and chancellor of the Archdiocese, while his wife Carolyn was both a "discreet priest's wife" as well as the parish organist. Upon retirement in 2014, they returned to their home in Bashaw, AB. Over the past years, Carolyn fought several battles with cancer; she lost the last battle on Thursday 22 March.

I will be presiding at Carolyn's funeral Mass on Tuesday 3 April in their home parish of Bashaw AB. I ask you all to join with me in prayer for the repose of her soul, as well as for Father Joseph and all of their family.

Indigenous Languages at Masses in Aboriginal Communities

The point is often made that one of the ill effects of Indian Residential Schools is that the youth (who then became adults) lost their Indigenous language. This resulted in their inability to communicate with their family and community when they returned from the school. We see now more clearly than before how language is integral to culture and personal identity. For many years, Oblate missionaries learned the Native languages of the people, conversed in those languages, and celebrated sacraments in the tongue of the people.

Unfortunately, we no longer have these Oblate missionaries with us. However, I believe that there is a way that we can restore some of the Mass parts to the people as they celebrate Mass on the reserve. I've asked Father Bill Bernard to gather the Mass parts in Cree – Holy, holy, Lamb of God, Our Father, Gloria, the Creed, etc. – and we the clergy will learn these parts, so that at least this much of the Mass is in their language. I have chosen Cree to begin with because it is the Indigenous language most spoken in our diocese. I hope to expand this project to other languages spoken here as well.

This initiative is not listed among the 94 Calls to Action by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, but in speaking to some of the elders and councillors in the First Nations of this Archdiocese, I see that the idea is warmly received.



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