



1 June 2018

Dear Fathers, Pastoral Assistants and Parishioners,

As I write this letter, I am in the High Level Deanery 5 for my annual deanery visitation. This deanery takes in the communities of High Level, Rainbow Lake, Chateh (Assumption), Meander River, John D'Or Prairie, Fox Lake, Garden River, Paddle Prairie, Fort Vermilion, Eleske and Tall Cree. As you know, each spring I dedicate about three weeks to such a visitation, staying with our priests in the area, celebrating Sacraments, visiting the schools, and meeting with any of the committees and Catholic organizations that make up the presence and activities of the Church in that deanery. This has been a very fruitful visit so far; I am grateful for the warm welcome I have received by everyone. I will return home on Sunday 3 June.

Retirement Celebration

We celebrate as an archdiocese the retirement of a few people this summer. I have already spoken in my April 2018 monthly letter of Sisters Louise Vanderploeg and Mary Jeanne Davidson, and Sylvia Noel. Another person who turns 75 this year is Deacon Reg Bouchard, who has given devoted service to many parishes in the archdiocese, most particularly in the McLennan Deanery and in our Indigenous communities. To honour all four of these persons, we will have a special Mass at Our Lady of Peace Parish in Peace River on Friday 8 June at 7:30 pm, followed by a reception in the parish hall. You are all invited to join us as we honour these persons for their dedication over many years.

Memorial Mass for Carolyn Jacobson

The funeral for Father Joseph Jacobson's wife Carolyn took place in Bashaw, Alberta on Tuesday 3 April 2018. There were many people from our archdiocese in attendance at this ceremony. However, there were many more who for a variety of reasons could not attend and have asked for a Mass in McLennan to remember her and lift up her family in prayer. I will preside at this Mass in St. John the Baptist Cathedral in McLennan on Saturday 16 June at 1:00 pm. You are all welcome to join us for this Mass.

March for Life

On Thursday 10 May, I took part in the annual March for Life in Edmonton, which I believe I have attended every year since becoming the bishop of our archdiocese. I was one of the speakers at this event, at which I spoke of the role of lies and half-truths in the public debate about abortion. I was pleased to see some of our parishioners present for this march; given the travel distance between Edmonton and our communities, this is a great sacrifice for those who choose to attend. I encourage all of us to do our part, whatever that may be, to protect life from conception to natural death.

Catholic Women's Leadership Training

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Six years ago, the Sisters of Service (who used to teach in our archdiocese) and the Catholic Women's League agreed to work together on building a training program for Catholic women across Canada. In order to launch this, they each put together a sizeable amount of money, and then asked dioceses across Canada to pledge a matching amount. They invited Catholic universities and colleges to apply to run the program, which would have both an on-line and a live-in component. St. Paul University in Ottawa was chosen as the teaching institution. The first year of this program begins this fall.

Fifty-eight women applied for the first year; 14 were chosen, aged from 21 and 60, from the different regions of Canada, and with a variety of educational and life experiences. One thing these women have in common is "a desire to build a just, merciful and compassionate world nurtured by the genius of women."

Our archdiocese pledged \$50,000 to this program, over five years. One parishioner, upon hearing of this initiative, came forward to cover all of this pledge.

Did You Know ...

... that there are 73 dioceses that make up the Catholic Church in Canada. All are members of the Canadian Catholic Conference of Bishops (CCCCB). Given the linguistic and regional differences, the CCCC is made up of two sectors (English and French), and besides meeting nationally once a year in Cornwall, Ontario, the bishops also meet according to Regional Assemblies (Atlantic, Quebec, Ontario and Western).

Among the 73 dioceses, 16 are archdioceses, 5 are of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church, and 6 are of other Eastern Churches that share Communion with the Holy See.

According to the statistics available to us, in 2016 there were 13,828,024 Catholics in Canada, out of a total population of 36,290,000 (38.1%). In the same year, there were 4,266 diocesan priests, 2,446 religious priests, 1,199 permanent deacons, 11,637 religious sisters and 992 religious brothers.

Summer Plans

This is my last monthly letter until the end of the summer. July and August are unique months for most of us; we enter into a different kind of activity, with children out of school and the long summer days offering a variety of things to do. As you can see by my calendar, this is true of me as well.

I pray that the coming weeks and months are refreshing and inspiring for you all. May there be many moments to slow down and enjoy the beauty of creation, the wonder of the persons that God has put into our life, and the many ways that God shows us care and love.

For those who graduate from high school or other institutions this spring, and who move on to other pursuits in your life, I ask the Holy Spirit to guide you with gifts of truth and integrity in your pursuits.



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