



1 September 2018

Dear Pastors, Pastoral Administrators and Parishioners,

Summer is definitely over, and we are beginning to feel the first faint chills of autumn. I hope you have all been refreshed by the summer days, although many of us have had to deal with the smoke from BC forest fires.

In this inaugural letter, you will see that most of what I have to share with you concerns personnel and changes that have been taking place since summer began.

Father Cyril Joseph

After a year's absence on medical leave, Father Cyril Joseph happily returned to the archdiocese the other day. He is feeling much better, as his foot is almost totally healed. He is offering pastoral help in Beaverlodge, Rio Grande and Hythe for the next few weeks, until a more permanent pastor can be assigned to these communities. Father Cyril's permanent assignment is as the Director of the Office of Evangelization and Catechesis.

Office of Evangelization and Catechesis

Looking ahead to Sister Louise Vanderploeg's retirement as Director of the Office of Evangelization and Catechesis, we initially tried to find a priest to fill this post for a variety of reasons. I have returned to this idea, and Father Cyril Joseph has accepted this assignment. I will be settling the details of this position in the near future.

Father Cyril looks forward to moving gently but confidently into this new role. He counts on the cooperation of the clergy and faithful of the Archdiocese as he begins this ministry. Given the vital importance of evangelization and catechesis in the Church, I also ask for the active engagement of one and all.

Emmanuel Ekanem's Ordination

I remind you once again of the priestly ordination of Deacon Emmanuel Ekanem. This will take place at St. Joseph Church, Grande Prairie at 7:00 p.m. on Friday 5 October. Every ordination is a celebration not only of the candidate, but of the whole Church. Please know that you are most welcome to attend this; don't stay away for fear that the church will be full.

Seminarians

We have five seminarians again this year at St. Joseph Seminary in Edmonton.

Travis Chabot, having completed his second year of theology studies, is on his pastoral internship year at Our Lady of Good Counsel Parish in High Level, under the direction of Father Henry Kiggundu, FMH.

Larry Onokpite is entering his first year of theology studies. Larry has had some difficulty in getting his student visa to return to Canada, so at the time of this writing, he is still awaiting this visa. I am assured that he should have this in another week or so.

Ryan Beaupré is entering his third year of philosophy studies at the University of Alberta.

Thomas Wollis is beginning his philosophy studies at Concordia University.

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Jozef Reichel, of Spirit River, is entering the seminary for the first time. This will be his propaedeutic year -- an initial orientation to the spiritual life and seminary formation.

Office of Life and the Family

As I have announced previously in my letters, Deacon Gerald Logan will be initiating our Archdiocesan Office for Life and the Family. I had hoped for and announced some workshops in our archdiocese by his counterpart in the Archdiocese of Edmonton, Stephen Defer. However, I came to realize that we need Deacon Gerald to be better oriented to this Office before taking part in this particular exercise.

Clergy Assignments

Father Sylvanus Omali, SMMM. On August 1st, Father Sylvanus Omali was reassigned by his superior in Nigeria to the Archdiocese of St. Boniface. He is now the pastor of Garson, Cooks Creek and Oakbank, MB. I am grateful for the service that Father Sylvanus offered in our archdiocese in Fort Vermilion (with Eleske and Tall Cree), Red Earth Creek (with Cadotte Lake, Little Buffalo and Trout Lake) and Beaverlodge (including Rio Grande and Hythe).

Father Maurice Marion. Father Maurice asked during the summer if he could take early retirement, due to issues of health. You will recall that Father Maurice had been married with children in Winnipeg before his wife died and he entered the seminary. After ordination in 2008, Father Maurice served in Girouxville (covering also Tangent and Eaglesham) and Fairview (with Hines Creek). He has taken up retirement in Winnipeg so he can be close to his children and grandchildren.

Father Feroz Fernandes, SFX. Father Feroz has already been in our archdiocese for several months; I had asked him to cover in Grimshaw, Whitelaw and Duncan's First Nation after Father Deepak left. In an agreement with his superior in India, I am now assigning him as the parish priest for these three communities.

Father Isidore Onyeka, SMMM. The Sons of Mary Mother of Mercy have offered us Father Isidore as a replacement to Father Sylvanus. We expect him to arrive within the next week.

Father Michael Dias. At the time of writing this, Father Michael Dias has just received his visa to come to Canada. He should be here in the next week or so. Father Michael is from the Diocese of Asansol in the West Bengal State of India.

Once both Fathers Isidore and Michael arrive and become acclimatized to our region and diocese, they will receive their initial assignments.

School Sisters of Notre Dame

In my April 2018 letter, I spoke of the School Sisters of Notre Dame in our archdiocese. At that time, it was still unclear what would happen after the retirement of Sisters Louise Vanderploeg and Mary Jeanne Davidson. During the summer, Sister Louise moved to the SSND's central house in Waterdown, Ontario. I understand that she is finding herself at home there. Sister Mary Jeanne asked to stay in our diocese, and this request was granted. Sister Connie Harkin, SSND is assigned to their community in Peace River as well. Sister Connie comes to us from Dawson Creek BC, where she had won the hearts of the people over many years. I am grateful to have Sister Connie among us; her presence will be a strength to Sister Mary Jeanne and a witness in Our Lady of Peace Parish.



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