



11 November 2018

Dear Pastors, Pastoral Assistants and Parishioners,

I am a little late in getting this letter out. Other commitments have taken me out of province and away from my desk, and as sometimes happens, I just find myself pressed to accomplish tasks on time. I work at not being stressed in the process.

Priest Assignments

Two priests arrived in our archdiocese a few weeks ago and began the process of acquiring all that they need to exercise ministry among us. The following appointments are effective on 10 November 2018:

Father Michael Dias is a priest from the Diocese of Asansol in West Bengal, India. He is the first priest from his diocese to be assigned elsewhere in the world to exercise ministry in a different milieu. I have assigned Father Michael to St. Mary's Parish in Beaverlodge, covering as well St. Patrick's in Rio Grande and St. Edmund's in Hythe.

Father Isidore Onyeka, SMMM, from Nigeria, is a member of the Sons of Mary Mother of Mercy, the same Congregation as Fathers George Okoye and Sylvanus Omali. I have assigned Father Isidore to St. Thomas More Parish in Fairview, with responsibility as well for Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish in Hines Creek.

Catholic Education Sunday, November 4th

The first Sunday of November each year provides an occasion for us to celebrate and promote Catholic education in the Province of Alberta. While recognized throughout Canada in the very beginnings of our nation, it is now only Ontario, Saskatchewan and Alberta that have fully funded Catholic schools. We are fully aware of the voices in our province and country that call for the elimination of Catholic schools, in the belief that a single educational system will better serve the education of our children. We Catholics disagree. There are others who stand with us in this conviction.

In the interests of promoting and preserving Catholic education in Alberta, a new organization has been established called GrACE – the acronym stands for Grateful Advocates for Catholic Education. This body encourages each and every one of us to appreciate and speak up for Catholic education in our various environments: home, parish, workplace, school. You will be hearing more about this initiative in the coming months and years.

November 11th: the Feast of St. Martin of Tours, Archdiocesan Patron

This year, the feast of St. Martin of Tours falls on a Sunday, which also happens to be Remembrance Day. We have had many calls at the chancery office asking how we should deal with this. In many parishes, they have re-scheduled their Mass times for this Sunday only to be able to accommodate both the Sunday Mass and Remembrance Day services, which always begin at 11:00 am or slightly before.

St. Martin of Tours was born in either 316 or 336 in what is now Hungary. His father was a soldier in the Roman army, and while Martin was still very young, the family moved to northern Italy. Martin himself enlisted in the Roman army, and shortly thereafter became a catechumen. During his time as a soldier, he had the experience for which he is most noted: encountering a beggar. It seems that while on his horse about to enter the gates of the city of Amiens, he met a poorly clad beggar. He quickly drew his sword and cut his cloak in two, giving one piece to the beggar and wrapping the other half around himself before proceeding into the city. That night, Jesus appeared to him in a dream, wearing the half cloak that he had given the beggar. This convinced him to seek baptism immediately, and at age 18 he became a Christian.

Leaving the military shortly after that, Martin went on to become a hermit and a monk, as well as to found a monastery in the region. In 371, he was made the Bishop of Tours. He died in 397, a holy man and leader who influenced much of Europe in his day. Martin is the patron of our archdiocese, and is an inspiration for our annual summer camps, Camp St. Martin, at Camp Artaban north of Grimshaw. Having been a soldier, St. Martin is also a patron of military personnel – how fitting that his feast day happens to fall on Armistice Day.

In our diocese, we take up a special collection on this Sunday in support of Catholic Missions in Canada.

Protecting Minors from Sexual Abuse

By now, all of your parishes and schools should have received a copy of the latest document from the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, entitled *Protecting Minors from Sexual Abuse: A Call to the Catholic Faithful in Canada for Healing, Reconciliation, and Transformation*. As the title suggests, while there are responsibilities to be borne by Church institutions, each one of us as individuals has a role to play in dealing with this grave sin and injustice.

If you have trouble getting your hands on the hard copy in your parish, this document is also found on line at http://www.cccb.ca/site/images/stories/pdf/Protecting_Minors_2018.pdf.

Red Wednesday

I have sent to all parishes a call to awareness about the plight of Christians around the world who are being actively persecuted because of their faith. These are our brothers and sisters in faith; they call out for our assistance and prayer. The date for our parishes to mark this day and pray for them is Wednesday 21 November. I am grateful to the organization Aid to the Church in Need for bringing this to our attention.



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