



1 December 2018

Dear Pastors, Pastoral Assistants and Parishioners,

We are entering one of the busiest and most beautiful months of the year. From a Catholic point of view, Advent calls us to prepare spiritually and morally for the celebration of Jesus Christ's birth – an incredible expression of God's unity with us who are his noblest creatures. Let us do our best to focus on the Season of Advent as a time of prayer and preparation, so that we can celebrate the birth of the Messiah with hearts and minds renewed.

Development & Peace

You will recall that last March, the bishops of western Canada were alarmed to learn that despite prior assurances, Development & Peace was indeed funding agencies in the field whose moral stance on life issues, especially abortion, were contrary to Catholic Church teaching. As a result, most bishops have withheld the Share Lent 2018 collection from D&P until we saw significant change. I am pleased to share with you that we have begun to see such change taking place. Notably, the 52 agencies whose policies were either objectionable or suspect have been dropped as agents of D&P. A closer collaboration with the Bishops' Conference is in the works. With this news, I am now prepared to forward all of the donations from our parishioners to the CCODP offices in Montreal. We will also continue to support and participate in D&P activities.

I want to thank our local archdiocesan Development & Peace committee. They are a small but determined group, who share a commitment to the Catholic Church's moral teachings, as well as peace and development in countries far from us and our reality. I met with this group recently to share with them this happy news.

Larry Onokpite

Many of you have met a seminarian of ours from Nigeria, Larry Onokpite. Last year (2017-2018) Larry was in his propaedeutic year at St. Joseph Seminary in Edmonton. This summer he returned to his native Nigeria to apply for a student visa. Just last week, we were informed that Larry's application was refused by Immigration Canada – for the third time! Larry has withdrawn from the seminary, at least for the time being. Let us keep him in our prayers as he continues to discern God's direction for his life.

Allan Forsberg, Communications Coordinator

We have finally found a communications coordinator for our Archdiocese. Allan Forsberg is well known as a recently retired teacher with the Grande Prairie & District Catholic School Board. He is also involved with Peace Retreats, an ecumenical body of spiritual directors and retreat animators who offer their services throughout our archdiocese. In speaking to Allan about his position, I shared what a professional communicator told me: that the first task of a communicator is to listen carefully. We call Allan a “coordinator”, because we are all called to listen and to share; Allan’s job will be to direct the traffic. This is a part-time position, which will find him at the job about two days a week.

Office of Evangelization and Catechesis

In September’s letter, I spoke of Father Cyril Joseph’s appointment to the Office of Evangelization & Catechesis. Father Cyril has begun his labour with great zeal. He has moved into the rectory in St-Isidore, but maintains the office at the Catholic Pastoral Centre in Peace River. He recently attended the Western Conference of Catholic Religious Educators (WCCRE), which has inspired him with some original ideas. As Father Cyril reaches out to us for our collaboration, I encourage us, one and all, to respond to his initiatives. His Office deals with the very essence of the Church’s mission: to make disciples of all peoples, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, and teaching them all that Jesus commands. The lifesaver in all this: know that I am with you always, until the end of time. (Matt 28:16-20)

New Year’s Levee

The New Year’s Levee is a uniquely Canadian tradition, not found in every city but certainly honoured in my native Halifax, Nova Scotia. There (as in many others), the Commander of the Fleet, the Lieutenant Governor, the Mayor, the Premier, the Commanding Officers of the Army and Air Force – even the Archbishop, greets visitors at his residence or offices where New Year’s greetings are exchanged. This is not an elaborate ceremony, but a simple visit and greeting to start the New Year.

I propose to hold a New Year’s Levee this year, at the Chancery Office (10301-102 Street, Grande Prairie) on Tuesday 1 January 2019, from 11:30 am to 2:00 pm. You are all invited to drop by and share a wee drink and a piece of cake.

I wish each and every one of you and your family a very merry and blessed Christmas. This is one of the high seasons in the Church’s calendar. Our festivities, which really only begin on Christmas Eve, continue until the feast of the Baptism of Our Lord (January 13th). May this time be joyful and filled with spiritual delights!

Sincerely yours in Christ the Redeemer,



Most Rev. Gerard Pettipas, C.Ss.R.
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