



1 February 2019

Dear Pastors, Pastoral Assistants and Parishioners,

I write these lines from St. John's, Newfoundland. This is my "winter break", if you will ... no Arizona or Mexico for me, but what Newfoundlanders themselves call "the Rock". Strangely enough, the weather here is not bad, so far. I also arrived here in time to attend the installation of Bishop Peter Hundt as the new archbishop of St. John's, and the retirement of the incumbent, Archbishop Martin Currie. It was a beautiful ceremony.

GrACE

I have spoken already about GrACE in my November 2018 letter. There was an introductory meeting of GrACE held on Monday 14 January 2019 at the board offices of the Grande Prairie and region Catholic School board. This included representatives of the archdiocese and the four school boards that operate in our diocese: Holy Family, Conseil Scolaire Nord-Ouest, Grande Prairie Catholic, and Living Waters. There is a second meeting being planned now for mid-March.

GrACE stands for Grateful Advocates for Catholic Education. The stakeholders in this movement are the bishops of Alberta, the Alberta Catholic Schools Trustee Association (ACSTA), the Council of Catholic School Superintendents of Alberta (CCSSA), and Catholic communities across the province – parishes and school districts. The mission of this movement is "to inspire, invigorate and embolden the spirit of Catholic education in order to unite, engage, educate and communicate with one voice on its behalf."

Fully-funded Catholic education in Alberta is both a constitutional right and a singular blessing. There are other provinces in Canada that once cherished Catholic education, but because they didn't treasure it enough or defend it against its detractors, they lost their Catholic schools. Only three Canadian provinces still have such a system: Ontario, Saskatchewan and Alberta. We often hear in the media of challenges to this blessing – many Albertans think one homogenous system will be better and cheaper. We beg to differ. A Catholic educational system is a unique bonus in Alberta. But it takes all of us, working together, to hold on to this system. GrACE is still in its infancy. I ask one and all to pray for the success of this movement, and to be ready to add your voice and your presence as the elements of GrACE become better developed and spread through the Catholic community.

Churches not in Communion with Rome

The term "Communion" refers not only to the reception of the Body and Blood of Jesus at the Eucharist. It also refers to the unity that is shared among Churches that hold a common "Catholic" faith.

10301-102nd Street, Grande Prairie AB T8V 2W2

Phone 780.532.9766

Fax 780.532.9706

Email archbishop.agm@live.ca

The sign of such union is the recognition of the Pope (the Bishop of Rome) as the visible head – the Vicar of Christ – of the Catholic Church. There are many Christian Churches: Orthodox, Protestant, Reformed, National Churches and countless varieties of each of these. Some of them look very Catholic and indeed may have sacraments that we consider to be valid, but they are not in Communion with us. Because they do not share in this sense of “Communion with the Catholic Church”, we do not invite them to receive Holy Communion in our churches, and neither should we take Communion at their church services.

One such example of this is the Society of St. Pius X (SSPX). At the time of the Second Vatican Council, the French Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre was in outright disagreement with the teaching documents and changes emanating from the Pope and the Council Fathers. His actions of disobedience culminated in him and his followers being excommunicated. There have been many attempts to heal this division. The excommunication has been lifted from some of their members, and limited faculties have been granted by the Holy See. Nonetheless, this group is still not in full communion with the Catholic Church. Some former members are now in Communion with the Holy Father, such as the Priestly Fraternity of St. Peter (FSSP). The latter community is now back in Communion with the Catholic Church, while they still celebrate the liturgy according to the rituals in existence before Vatican Council II.

There was a situation recently in our diocese, where a pastor inadvertently welcomed a priest from the SSPX to celebrate a funeral in his parish church. This should not have happened. While we do allow funerals of some Christian communities to take place in our churches for good reason, this is only allowed with permission from me or the Vicar General, Msgr. Lavoie. At a recent clergy meeting, I spoke of this so that it not happen again. I address this now to the whole archdiocese, so that you also may be aware of this situation, and avoid mingling liturgically with such breakaway groups.

If you are ever in doubt, please contact us at the Chancery Office.

Prayer for Those in the Consecrated Life

February 2nd each year, the Feast of the Presentation of Jesus in the Temple, is also a day of prayer for those persons who are consecrated to the Lord by vows of poverty, chastity and obedience. These are men and women, lay and ordained, who belong to religious congregations. In our Archdiocese, this includes the School Sisters of Notre Dame, the Sisters of Holy Cross, the Redemptorists, the Sons of Mary Mother of Mercy, the Vocationists and the Franciscan Missionaries of Hope. In our midst are also members of missionary societies, the Heralds of the Good News and Missionaries of St. Thomas. I am grateful for their ministry and presence among us.

Sincerely yours in Christ the Redeemer,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "+ Gerard Pettipas, C.Ss.R." with a small flourish at the end.

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