



1 May 2019

Dear Pastors, Pastoral Assistants and Parishioners,

I hope that your celebration of the Easter Triduum has renewed your faith and joy, as we celebrated the dying and rising of Jesus Christ. He is indeed alive, and continues to touch our lives by the abiding presence and activity of the Holy Spirit. As our Eastern Christian brethren (such as Ukrainian Catholics) say in greeting during this season, “Christ is risen.” to which we respond, “Indeed, He is truly risen.”

Munus Docendi: The Holy Spirit

Pentecost is considered to be the “birthday of the Church”. Having risen from the dead on Easter Sunday and ascended to the Father at the Ascension, Jesus sent the Holy Spirit, the Paraclete and Advocate, upon the disciples at the feast of Pentecost. Many Jews were assembled in Jerusalem for the feast of Pentecost, which was obviously already a feast for the Jewish nation. At its origins, Pentecost is a harvest festival, but it was also found to be the festival that marked the giving of the Law (the Torah) and thus the birth of the Israelite nation. On this Pentecost day, God gave the disciples of Jesus not a set of laws, but the Holy Spirit as the guide for life as the new Kingdom of God was inaugurated. This Holy Spirit is the very spirit of God, the third person of the Trinity. The Holy Spirit is the abiding presence of God with his people, the Church. It is this Spirit which guides and protects the community of faith, by means of its seven-fold gifts: wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety, and fear of the Lord. These gifts are spoken of in Isaiah 11:2-3. St. Paul also reflects on the distribution and recognition of spiritual gifts in 1 Corinthians 12:7-11.

It is in relation to the Holy Spirit that we can speak of the action of grace. The definition of grace that I used on the last Cursillo weekend where I was a spiritual director is: *Grace is a supernatural gift, inner and permanent, that God grants us that sanctifies us, makes us partakers of his nature, and makes us his sons and daughters in the family of God.* This is a mouthful, I know, and it deserves quiet and deliberate reflection.

It is by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and the work of grace that we do whatever good we do, whatever charity we exercise, whatever truth we utter. It is by grace that we give of ourselves to any worthy endeavor, that we commit ourselves to another in a lasting relationship, that we make sacrifices for the common good. It is by grace that we answer the call of the Lord in our life, that we work for the spread of the Gospel, that we encourage virtue in one another. Much of this happens without our awareness of the Holy Spirit’s action. As Jesus said to Nicodemus, “The wind blows where it wills, and you can hear the sound it makes, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes; so it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.” (John 3:8)

Tragedy in Sri Lanka

One nation where Easter was not a day of celebration was Sri Lanka, especially its Catholics and other Christians who saw their churches and other buildings bombed and many killed and wounded on Easter Sunday. Tension continues to affect this island nation, as the police and military discover more bombs and other

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weapons which reveal the widespread threat to life and peace. By all indicators, radical Islamists are responsible, and they continue to threaten the country and its citizens.

I want to share with you the message that I received from the imam of the Islamic community in Grande Prairie. I should preface this by saying that on September 20th 2018, Father Remi and Father Leo, Msgr. Charles and I paid a visit to Imam Mohamud Issa at the Islamic Association of Grande Prairie. Imam Issa received us very cordially, showed us around their mosque, introduced us to some of his people, and answered the many questions we had about the Islamic religion and about the Muslim community in Grande Prairie and the Peace Region. This was on my initiative, as I felt that given inter-religious tensions globally, it would be beneficial to be acquainted with the Muslim leader in our archdiocese.

In regard to the bombings in Sri Lanka, I recently received from the Islamic Association of Grande Prairie the following email:

Dear Archbishop Gerard,

Message from Imam, Committee and Muslim community of Grande Prairie to our brothers in humanity

We Muslims in Grande Prairie wish to express our heartfelt horror at the despicable indiscriminate terrorist attacks committed against the innocent people in Sri Lanka on Easter Sunday. We sympathize with the victims of these horrific attacks, and offer our deepest condolences to the families who have lost their loved ones. Our thoughts and prayers are with them at this extremely difficult time. /.../

Islam's position is clear and unequivocal: '...Whoever kills a human being... then it is as though he has killed all mankind; and whoever saves a human life, it is as though he had saved all mankind.' (Quran, Surah al-Maidah (5), verse 32).

Islamic Association of Grande Prairie stands united with all Canadians denouncing this dastardly act. We urge our members and every citizens of this great City to reach out to neighbors who are of Sri Lankan origin during this period of grief.

Ryan Beaupré

I recently received news that our seminarian, Ryan Beaupre, was asked to take a leave from the seminary program at St. Joseph Seminary this coming year, while he finishes his undergraduate degree in philosophy. Ryan assures me that he is not abandoning what he feels is a call to the priesthood, but will continue his discernment on his own, while still receiving spiritual direction from the seminary. Please join me in praying for Ryan and his vocation.

March for Life

I remind you all of the annual March for Life being held in Edmonton on Thursday 9 May. There is a Mass at St. Joseph Basilica at 10:00 am; the March begins at the Legislature at 12:30 and concludes shortly after 2:00 pm. More information is available on the March for Life website at https://albertamarchforlife.com/images/downloads/2019_Alberta_March_for_Life_Brochure.pdf

Sincerely yours in Christ the Redeemer,



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