



1 January 2020

Dear Fathers, Pastoral Associates and Parishioners,

We begin a new year, 2020. The new Church year began on the First Sunday of Advent (December 1, 2019), but it is this date that is recognized by society as a new beginning. This time of year, we find ourselves looking over the past year, taking note of notable people who have died, and events that had a great impact on regions of the world or the whole world, affecting more than just 2019 by their impact. This is also a time of “resolution making”, when we might personally set some goals for our life. This is a fine commitment to make; may our resolutions be for the common good, and strengthened by God’s graces.

#### **Father Lawrence Odoemena**

Father Lawrence Odoemena, a Redemptorist from Nigeria, came to our diocese in November 2014 for a one-year experience of parish ministry in Canada. Father has now asked to be incardinated into our Archdiocese. Having completed the steps called for in such a transfer, I have accepted him as a diocesan priest in the Archdiocese of Grouard-McLennan. Father Lawrence is presently the pastor of St. Paul’s Parish in High Prairie and Good Shepherd Mission in East Prairie (having previously served in St. James the Major Parish in Manning). I warmly welcome Father Lawrence into our diocese as a permanent member of the clergy.

#### **Father Jean-Paul Vantroys, OMI (1925-2019)**

Father Jean-Paul Vantroys passed away just before Christmas; Mgr. Charles Lavoie are going to attend his funeral in St. Albert on Friday 3 January. A native of France, Father Vantroys came to Canada in 1951, and served in many of the parishes and out-missions of this Archdiocese. In his early days, there was a whole Province of Oblate Fathers and Brothers dedicated to our diocese alone. He became fluent in Cree – a personal memory of mine was the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Soeurs de Ste-Chrétienne in the Little Red River Nation. I presided at this Mass, and Father Jean-Paul preached – in Cree. I was impressed! He was also very involved in the Marriage Encounter Movement in our diocese. Father Jean-Paul retired to the Oblate residence and infirmary in St. Albert in 2007. May he receive the hundredfold promised to Christ’s good and faithful servants.

#### **Pastoral Plan 2020-2025**

Most of you will recall that in 2015, we followed an elaborate process leading up to a “congress” in Peace River where more than 70 parishioners and clergy from around the dioceses gathered to ratify a

Pastoral Plan 2015-2020. This pastoral plan set the priorities for ministry development in the diocese that covered 6 goals:

- Good liturgy (to foster more active participation in our liturgical celebrations)
- Good Teaching (to promote a deeper understanding of the Christian life, and encourage living gospel values according to the teachings of the Catholic Church)
- Ministry (to identify the needs and gifts present in the community, and to facilitate greater ministry involvement)
- Communications (to employ all media available in our society in order to lend greater connection between parishes and the Archdiocese)
- Accountability (to increase the level of trust and to grow in a spirit of unity as a diocesan family).

Over the past five years, the Archdiocesan Pastoral Council (APC) has monitored the activities in the archdiocese in accord with these six goals and the actions that were identified for each. In an honest evaluation of these, I would say that we made identifiable progress in these areas of Church life; in some matters, it was more challenging and we don't want to lose sight of the needs identified.

That was 2015 to 2020.

We now look ahead to 2020 to 2025. What we have put in place is a process that draws on the discussion and discernment of the many parish and diocesan organizations, asking each to discuss and provide feedback on a simple question: What do you see as the greatest pastoral needs in the archdiocese and in its many parts. While we are receiving feedback, we have also identified a "writing committee" that will gather all the stated needs, and propose a draft Pastoral Plan for the next five years, 2020 to 2025.

The APC welcomes feedback from all parish pastoral councils, deaneries and other organizations in the Archdiocese as we continue to build the new pastoral plan. We welcome as well the reflections and proposals of individuals or other gatherings of parishioners from across the archdiocese. Please submit your proposals to [exec.agm@live.ca](mailto:exec.agm@live.ca).

### **Annual Financial Appeal**

Over the past year and a half, our Archdiocesan Finance Committee (AFC) and I have become increasingly aware of the financial struggles we face both in most of our parishes and in the operations of the chancery offices. We have had to face some stark realities: our parishes are losing some of their very dedicated and supportive parishioners through death and departures (as the communities themselves diminish in size), and our archdiocese has never been self-sufficient (we have relied heavily on outside sources of funding).

Having put out a Request for Proposals from fundraising organizations, we received proposals from five and have selected DCG Philanthropic Services Inc. of Saskatoon SK to assist us in this endeavour. Don Gorsalitz (the owner of the company) and Cathie Rogers met some of us recently to discuss the parameters of our campaign. You will hear more about this program in the coming months.



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