



1 June 2020

Dear Fathers, Pastoral Assistants and Parishioners,

You all know by now, we in Alberta are returning as of this date to having public Masses. This is being done very cautiously, with a whole series of procedures in place to minimize the spread of the coronavirus. The pandemic is not over yet. We must all keep that in mind, even as some of the restrictions we have lived with in the past few months are being lifted.

I don't need to repeat here any of the details concerning the celebration of Masses. You can access these on our website at <https://archgm.ca/>. Bear in mind that the present directives are for this phase only. If all goes well, we hope that we can make our liturgies even more accessible. A lot will depend on our overall experience of the present practices.

### **Youth Ministry and the Office of Evangelization and Catechesis**

You will recall that in 2015, the Archdiocesan Pastoral Council (APC) drew up a 5-year pastoral plan for 2015-2020. Over the past months, the APC has been working on the next 5-year plan, for 2020-2025. As you might imagine, two areas of high interest and energy in any diocese are youth ministry and evangelization and catechesis. Needless to say, this is also the case with our Archdiocese.

With these concerns in mind and having considered the voices of many people, I have decided to assign one of our young priests as the director of both offices: Youth Ministry and the Office of Evangelization & Catechesis. These will remain two distinct offices, while acknowledging that there are some ties between the two. Each office will take shape around its respective Committee; these committees will include parishioners and clergy from across the Archdiocese.

This change in direction is going to call for the energy, creativity and cooperation of all of us in the Archdiocese. I call upon everyone to step forward and make this happen, for the sake of the vitality of the whole Body of Christ in our midst. To borrow a phrase from President John F. Kennedy, "don't ask what your diocese can do for you, but what you can do for your diocese."

### **Father Emmanuel Ekanem**

As of 1 June 2020, Father Emmanuel Ekanem is assigned as the director of the Office of Evangelization & Catechesis, as well as the Youth Ministry Coordinator of the Archdiocese. This is a full-time ministry for Father Emmanuel. He will continue to reside at Our Lady of Peace Rectory in Peace River, but he is no longer the associate pastor of Our Lady of Peace Parish. As Father Emmanuel was reflecting on his assignment, he said to me, "So, I will not be responsible for a limited number of people in a specific parish; my territory will be as vast as Your Grace's territory." Indeed.

## **Father Cyril Joseph**

Father Cyril Joseph is assigned as the priest responsible for Sacred Heart Church in Cadotte Lake and Holy Family in Little Buffalo. He will continue to reside at the rectory in St-Isidore. Sister Mary Jeanne Davidson will assist Father in reaching out to these communities. While the shutdown due to COVID19 is strictly applied in First Nations, Father Cyril will only be able to fully take up duties in these communities as the restrictions are lifted.

## **Seminarians**

Because of COVID19, the seminarians at St. Joseph Seminary in Edmonton have been back at their homes since March 24<sup>th</sup>. They continued their courses on line (which all universities and colleges did), and their evaluations by the seminary faculty took place via videoconference. Jozef Reichel of Spirit River will not be returning to the seminary program in the fall; he spoke to me of his deep gratitude for the support from the archdiocese over the past couple of years. Thomas Wollis of Peace River should be back at the seminary, along with two other candidates from abroad. I will speak of these young men in my September letter.

## **What Lies Ahead?**

We are still in pandemic mode. Open travel has not yet returned. To leave the Province of Alberta still has some consequences. I've tried to book flights recently to attend meetings and seminars; the flights that airlines are offering are not the greatest – they suggest I fly to Calgary and then Vancouver in order to reach Edmonton. I doubt that I will get to visit my family in Nova Scotia this summer. But compared to what I know some people are suffering at this time, my troubles are mere inconveniences.

So, in my reflective moments, I ask myself what the Lord wants to do to my heart and spirit. What virtues does He want to increase in me? How might I live gracefully (i.e. full of grace) at this time? Some things come to me.

The Serenity Prayer. God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, courage to change the things I can, and wisdom to know the difference. Well put. Serenity. Courage. Wisdom.

Patience. All things come to those who wait. Speed has become an expected quality. In today's world, we want something and we want it now. Yet many things done quickly are not done well. The scientists know how long it takes to develop a vaccine.

Trust. How difficult it is to rely on God, or others in the world. I met someone recently who felt that she herself was her higher power. She was a short lady, so her higher power didn't go very high.

Rediscovering people who matter to me. I have taken part in a couple of re-unions lately. Zoom has put me in touch with a parish youth group of 50-some years ago. Not to mention students from minor seminary days, when I was 16. I reflect gratefully on how people over the years have touched my life for the good; they assure me that this is mutual.

What lies ahead? It is well nigh impossible now to look ahead. The future is unknown. So I look for the Spirit of God in today, the here and now.

Sincerely yours in Christ the Redeemer,



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