



1 November 2020

Dear Fathers, Pastoral Associates and Parishioners,

It's November again, the month of Holy Souls. November 2nd is the feast of All Souls, when we pray in a very special way for the faithful departed. November 11th is also a special day in Canada, as we remember all those who have risked and lost life and limb in war.

Speaking personally, I am finding that as I age, more and more of my good friends are dying. This does not surprise me. Death is an inevitable part of life. In a strange sort of way, perhaps, I am grateful for this month of all souls – it calls on me to remember in prayer those dear to me who are gone, those for whom I still feel a fondness. May they rest in peace.

Catholic Education Sunday: November 8th. Please join in praying for our Catholic Schools on Sunday November 8th. We value the students, parents and teachers in our Catholic schools. The Bishops' Message is available at https://archgm.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/2020_10_16_Alberta-Bishops-Catholic-Education-Sunday-Letter-2020.docx.pdf

St. Martin of Tours, our patron saint. November 11th is the feast day of the patron saint of the Archdiocese, St. Martin of Tours. A soldier in the Roman army near the end of the empire, Martin is known for his kindness toward a poor and ill-clad man as he entered the city of Amiens on a cold day. He lived as a monk after he left the army, and eventually became the bishop of Tours, France. I like the coincidence of his feast with Remembrance Day, when we recall gratefully all those who have defended our country in the armed forces.

On the Sunday nearest his feast (so this year on November 8th), I call on us to pray for the home missions supported by Catholic Missions in Canada (CMIC). CMIC has been very generous to our diocese over the years.

Development and Peace. Like many charitable organizations, the Canadian Catholic Organization for Development and Peace (or simply, D&P) has suffered a large loss in revenue this year because its usual collection in Canadian Catholic churches on the 5th Sunday of Lent could not be taken up due to the closure of all churches at the time. We can easily imagine that those who have suffered the greatest because of the pandemic have been the poor, refugees, those in war-torn countries or experiencing natural disasters. These are the very people that are customarily assisted by D&P; the pandemic has only increased their plight.

It has been left to individual bishops to choose a date in the fall of 2020 when we would have a collection to make up for this loss of revenue. I have chosen November 22. I acknowledge that this past year has been a painful time of loss for many of you. I do not expect anyone to give more than they feel they can, given these unusual circumstances. To the extent that you can, however, I encourage you to donate to this worthy cause.

I invite you to review the present D&P campaign online. This campaign, called *COVID19: Recovering Together*, targets precisely the needs of those in other countries, as they try to stabilize in the present environment. You can read more about it on the D&P web page at <https://www.dev.p.org/en/campaign/recoveringtogether>.

Some Thoughts about COVID. This has been a most unusual year. The COVID pandemic has changed everyday life in so many ways. If we consider this carefully, we will see that there has been some silver lining in these dark clouds. Overall, however, this has brought on much suffering and loss. Some opportunities are gone forever, and for those most deeply affected, their sadness is real.

In a similar light, I have recently received appeals to ease up on liturgical restrictions. We want to be able to celebrate the Church's sacraments the way they should be celebrated, with all the joy and solemnity that the rubrics call for, especially as we see Christmas approach.

Unfortunately, we are seeing another wave of cases and deaths by COVID. The question directed at me recently was: How long? How long will we have to put up with this? I think of Psalm 89: *How long, O LORD? Will you hide yourself forever? How long will your wrath burn like fire?* To be honest, I don't know how long. In March, we hoped it would be over by Easter. In June we hoped it would be over by school opening. Today we may want it to be over with by Easter 2021. But I cannot even say this with any confidence.

So, what are we to do to increase our patience? Let me offer three actions:

Pray. You can say your favourite prayers, like the Rosary or the Divine Mercy Chaplet or the Liturgy of the Hours. Or you can simply place yourself quietly in God's presence, in a church or in a quiet corner of your own home, where there are no distractions. Let the Lord speak to you in the silence. Repeat a Christian mantra: "Lord, have mercy." "Spirit of God, fill my heart." "Jesus, you are the light of my life."

Study the Gospel of the day. You may also find a commentary somewhere, either a book of reflections or even on the Internet. Try to apply that gospel passage to your life. Hear Jesus speaking to you, in your everyday life. In the Cursillo Movement, we say that study is one of the pillars of the disciple's life.

Be attentive to the needs of others. Listen carefully to those who speak to you. Ask your family members or neighbours how they are. As St. Mother Teresa would say, "Do small things for others with great love".

Archbishop's Dinner. You may have already heard that due to COVID19, the annual Archbishop's Dinner is being held differently this year. We cannot gather for a meal, so this year it is I who will "prepare a meal" which unfortunately I cannot serve to you. A team of employees in the archdiocese will live-stream a program that includes my preparing one of my favourite meals, a talk (similar to what I customarily present at these dinners), a silent auction, and a tour of my residence. This will be on Friday 6 November at 6 pm. To learn more and make sure you're tuned in, contact Lauri at exec.agm@live.ca, or by phone at (780) 532-9766.



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