



1 December 2021

Dear Fathers, Pastoral Assistants and Parishioners,

**Advent**, and a new Church year, have arrived. This is Year C in the Sunday Lectionary; the majority of Gospel passages throughout the year are taken from the Gospel of St. Luke.

### **The Year of St. Joseph**

While the International Year of St. Joseph inaugurated by Pope Francis will end on December 8<sup>th</sup>, 2021, our archdiocesan Year of St. Joseph lasts until the feast day of St. Joseph, March 19<sup>th</sup> 2022. I want to remind everyone about the pilgrimage that is ongoing until March 19<sup>th</sup>, 2022. Just to review with you how this operates:

We have three churches in our archdiocese dedicated to St. Joseph: in Spirit River, Grande Prairie and John D'Or Prairie (in the Little Red River Cree Nation). I encourage all families or individuals to make a pilgrimage to these churches. Because churches are usually locked, you'll need to register the date and approximate time of your visit to any of these churches on our website. At any of these churches, you can pick up a "pilgrimage passport". Take only one passport, and travel to the three churches. In your passport is found a series of reflections and prayers focused on the sorrows and joys of St. Joseph. You are asked over the year to visit each of the three churches, pray the prayers found in your passport, and get your passport stamped at that church.

When you have visited all three churches, come to the Chancery Office and present your passport to receive an olive-wood crucifix made by Christians in the Holy Land, as a memento of your pilgrimage

### **Indigenous Delegation to meet with Pope Francis**

There are three bodies of national Indigenous leaders in Canada: the Assembly of First Nations (AFN), the Inuit Tapirit Kanatami (ITK) and the Métis Nation of Canada (MNOC). Over the past few years, even before the discovery of unmarked graves in Kamloops and elsewhere, the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops (CCCCB) had been planning with these three bodies for an encounter between Pope Francis and representatives of their peoples at the Vatican. This is going to take place up in December. The Holy Father will meet with each group in turn over three days, and then will meet with them all on the fourth day. One of the chosen delegates is a Métis elder, Angie Crerar, who lives in our diocese, in Grande Prairie. This is only one action among the many that are needed for a healing and reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Canadians. I also look forward to the future visit of Pope

Francis to Canada with that same goal in mind. Please join me in prayer and in engagement in building relationships of trust and respect.

### **When should we decorate the church for Christmas?**

I am asked this question almost every year. The Archdiocesan Liturgy Committee answered this question a few years ago in this way:

The GIRM separates Advent into two parts. The first part looks forward to the Lord's glorious return at the end of time and reflects on his presence among us today. The second part from December 17<sup>th</sup> to December 24<sup>th</sup>, which is a more immediate preparation for Christmas, is the yearly commemoration of Jesus' birth in Bethlehem. The last week before Christmas, as close to December 24<sup>th</sup> as possible, is the most appropriate time to decorate the church for Christmas. However, some preparations may begin as early as December 17<sup>th</sup>. The celebration of Christmas begins for the Church on December 25<sup>th</sup>.

### **Calendar of Events**

How come there seem to be so many time conflicts in the Archdiocese. Groups within the diocese will plan an event, only to find out that some other parish or organization has already planned an event for the same date and time, targeted at the same people? There have been some painful experiences of this recently. So, I ask every parish and organization in the Archdiocese to add their planned events on the Calendar of Events found on our website at <https://archgm.ca/events/>. Simply contact our Communications Officer Kyle Greenham [[comdirector.agm@outlook.com](mailto:comdirector.agm@outlook.com), or by phone at (780) 532-9766] to add your event to the calendar. This will hopefully reduce such conflicts.

### **Christmas and New Years**

Over the holiday season, the Chancery Offices will be closed on certain days to observe statutory holidays. Due to COVID restrictions, I will not be holding my New Years Levee on January 1st.

This is a beautiful and enchanting time of the year, which focuses on a central event in the salvation of the world. It is fundamentally a Christian feast. I pray that all of you will enjoy the deep meaning of this solemn feast with family members and loved ones. May you all find deep joy and peace even as we deal with challenges to that peace.



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