



2 March 2022

Dear Parishioners and Fathers,

War in Ukraine

We are all horrified to realize that the long-standing tensions between Ukraine and Russia have recently turned into an attack of the Ukrainian nation and people by Russian aggressors. As people of justice and good will, we hear the plea from the Ukrainian people for our prayers and whatever other help we can provide in this moment of crisis and profound need.

I ask all of you first of all to keep the plight of the Ukrainian nation and people in your prayers in the days and weeks ahead. Some of you may have personal ties to the people of Ukraine, and may have your own channels for assistance.

If any of you wish to offer financial assistance to the Ukrainian people who are now facing difficult decisions and finding themselves in great need, the following aid agencies have partners on the ground who can get supplies to the needy:

- CNEWA (The Catholic Near East Welfare Association)
- Development & Peace (<https://www.devp.org/en/>)

You may wish to stay abreast of news and local initiatives through the website of The Ukrainian Catholic Eparchy of Edmonton, and in prayerful support for the Ukrainian people.

COVID

Needless to say, I am pleased that protocols have been lifted especially as regards limits on attendance and full participation at Mass and other Sacraments. Msgr. Charles sent out a memo to the archdiocese recently to reiterate the present situation. A certain degree of caution is still called for, which I believe we will have to recognize as we move forward. At a future meeting of Alberta and NWT bishops, we will be discussing the timing and conditions of a return to Sunday obligation.

Annual Meeting of Western Bishops

From February 22nd to 24th, the Catholic bishops of western Canada met for our annual assembly in Vancouver. It was good for us to meet in person again. Some of the items at these meetings reappear as updates: guidelines to prevent sexual abuse, our common property insurance plan, Corrections ministry in western prisons, St. Joseph Seminary and Newman Theological College. New to the agenda this year was the synod on synodality, the Canadian bishops' Indigenous Reconciliation Fund, and the new structure and relationship between the Bishops' Conference and Development and Peace.

Speaking of Development and Peace, I want to assure you that the new structure of D&P has brought to its operations a greater oversight and a strengthened relationship with the Canadian bishops' conference. The appointment of Mr. Carl Hétu has been met with great confidence. Carl was previously the director of the Catholic New East Welfare Association (CNEWA). Some of you may recall that a few years back, Carl visited our diocese and spoke in a number of parishes and schools.

Lent & Holy Week

I am writing this letter on Ash Wednesday, the first day of the Lenten Season. I call on all of us to enter into the spirit of this holy season, and to engage as much as you are able in the spiritual renewal that is characteristic of Lent.

On the belief that the lifting of COVID restrictions continues, I have begun to look ahead to Holy Week, and the open celebration of the Chrism Mass. Returning to our custom, we will hold the Chrism Mass at St. John the Baptist Cathedral in McLennan on Tuesday 12 April 2022, at 7:30 pm. Mark that on your calendar, and make every effort to attend. We had no Chrism Mass at all in 2020, and a small gathering of only the clergy at a Chrism Mass in 2021. This is always a joyous and meaningful celebration of our archdiocesan community.

Year of St. Joseph

The Year of St. Joseph in the archdiocese is coming to a close. To mark this, I will be celebrating a closing Mass at St. Joseph Church in Spirit River on Saturday 19 March at 11:00 a.m. All are welcome to attend this Mass.

The coming weeks are also the last opportunity to complete the pilgrimage to our three churches dedicated to St. Joseph, to pray the pilgrimage prayers, have your passport stamped, and receive as a memento an olive wood crucifix made and blessed in the Holy Land.

In closing, I want to recognize the visibility now of many activities and persons in our archdiocese, thanks to our Communications Office. Kyle Greenham is keeping significant events before us as they happen, all the while maintaining our website, printing our monthly magazine *Northern Light*, and producing a frequent "Ask the Archbishop" video series. Not only is much happening; we're also hearing about it.

Sincerely yours in Christ the Redeemer,



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