



Office of the Bishop
Diocese of Antigonish

September 25, 2016, Catechetical Sunday

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

I want to write you at the beginning of the “school year” to share with you a deep concern that I have and it has to do with passing on our faith to our young people. As I visit various parishes and as I speak with the priests and deacons of the diocese, I believe that we as a diocese are not doing our best to ensure that our faith is passed on to our children. While I realize that many are already making wonderful efforts for the children and young people who are connected to our parishes, there are so many children and young people who have no contact whatsoever with the riches of our faith.

This Catechetical Sunday has special significance, for Pope Francis has declared this weekend to be a Jubilee for Catechists, a celebration reminding us of the role we all have to play in passing on the faith to the next generation. Parents, grandparents and the entire parish all have a significant role to play in catechesis (passing on the faith) in our Diocese and our resource, *Finding God*, is an effective way for children to grow in faith. I would like to encourage parishioners to consider carefully an invitation to be a catechist.

Providing the gift of faith to our children prepares them to weather life’s difficulties, giving them Someone to hold on to when all seems lost. As Pope Francis says, “Children need the spiritual gift of knowing with certainty that they are loved.” They need to be assisted and encouraged to enter into relationship with God and know and experience God’s unconditional and ever faithful love.

There is an expression “faith is caught not taught.” It is caught when our children and young people see the joy and strength God brings to the lives of those who seek God. By the witness of love, forgiveness, caring and compassion of their parents, grandparents, catechists and their faith community, they grow to see God’s presence in their lives.

Passing on the faith has two very important roles: to assist the young in discovering and desiring a deep relationship with God and to help them to learn and explore the tenants of their Catholic faith as they worship as a faith community.

Parents have a deep desire to have their children know God and learn about their faith. These parents are encouraged and supported by their own parents. Parishes are aware of busy family lives with their juggling of schedules and parental fatigue. By working together, parents, grandparents and parishes can overcome the obstacles preventing families from being more active in the faith formation of their children and in parish life. Let’s pray fervently for the grace to pass on our faith in an effective way. “No family drops down from heaven perfectly formed; families need constantly to grow and mature in the ability to love. Let us make this journey as families, let us keep walking together. What we have been promised is greater than we can image. May we never lose heart because of our limitations, or ever stop seeking that fullness of love and communication which God holds out before us” (Pope Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*, no. 325).

I call on the generosity of parishes, families, parents, grandparents, catechists and all who minister in the diocese to do what we can, so that our catechesis this year will assist children as they grow in their relationship with God.

Sincerely in Christ,

† Brian Joseph Dunn
Bishop of Antigonish