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Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

On Thanksgiving Monday our region was struck by the remnants of Hurricane Matthew. We were spared the full strength of this massive storm, but parts of Nova Scotia and Newfoundland still received damaging rainfall and winds throughout the day. Among the hardest hit areas of the Diocese were Eskasoni and Membertou First Nations, Larry's River and Charlos Cove as well as parts of Sydney and Glace Bay, which received more than 200 mm of rain in some areas and winds of up to 110 km/hour. Communities throughout our diocese experienced power outages, flooding, and wind damage to homes and property. By overnight Monday the storm had moved on, but the cleanup and recovery continues. In addition to the time and cost of repairs to property and the loss of personal effects is the sense of grief and of vulnerability that comes from being in the grip of such a storm.

I want to express my sorrow and my solidarity to everyone affected by this storm especially those who experience the grief and vulnerability of being shaken by this trauma. I want to assure all those affected by the storm of the prayers and solidarity of the whole diocese, praying that the Lord Jesus, who is always moved by human suffering, will console the brokenhearted and give them peace. It is at this time that we as Christians are called to live out our faith through prayer and support of our neighbours.

In our diocese, St. Marguerite Bourgeoys Church in Sydney was badly flooded, and will require extensive repairs to the interior as well as some work to the outside of the building. In the meantime, Sunday liturgy will be held at St. Theresa parish and funerals will be held at Our Lady of Fatima parish. We pray for the parish of St. Marguerite Bourgeoys and offer our gratitude to the other parishes who are supporting their worship at this difficult time. Keep also in your prayers all communities and individuals who are dealing with storm damage.

I call on individuals and parishes to make donations to help offset the expensive recovery effort. In Cape Breton, the Red Cross and the United Way are coordinating assistance funds for distribution to individuals impacted by the storm. I would encourage you to send your donations directly to these agencies or to the Diocese and we will forward the money to the assistance fund.

May we experience the Lord's presence and care in these trying times and may the Lord's Spirit guide all who are making decisions for relief efforts. May all of our parish communities be united in prayer and action for all affected by this storm.

Sincerely in Christ,

† Brian Joseph Dunn
Bishop of Antigonish