



**Office of the Bishop**  
Diocese of Antigonish  
168 Hawthorne Street, P.O. Box 1330  
Antigonish, NS B2G 2L7  
Chancery 902-863-3335 / Fax 902-863-0037  
Residence 902-863-1557  
E-mail: bishopdunn@dioceseofantigonish.ca

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Dear Father and Deacon,

I am writing to you to give you an update on the Diocesan Ministry on Family Life. After the Diocesan Renewal Congress in 2013, the Diocesan Implementation Committee established an ad hoc committee for Family Life. This committee has been meeting monthly since November 2014 and its purpose is to draw up guidelines and set a foundation for a rejuvenated Diocesan Ministry on Family Life Committee. This ministry will plan and promote programs which will support family life in our Diocese. The mission statement is: "Inspired by the example of the Holy Family, Jesus, Mary and Joseph: the Diocese of Antigonish Family Life Ministry strives to nurture all families to grow in faith, hope and love." "...Then he went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was obedient to them. His mother treasured all these things in her heart. And Jesus increased in wisdom and in years, and in divine and human Favor" (Luke 2:51-52).

Following the direction of the Implementation Committee Plan, the committee concentrated on how we could help all families grow in faith, hope and love in our diocese. The committee focused on many issues connected with family and recognized the following: the need for a strong Marriage Preparation Course; the need to support spouses separated by work; the need to support single parents; and the importance of welcoming back families. Recognizing that much more research and discussion are needed on many aspects of family life, the committee is suggesting the following ideas which might foster family relationships: to support prayer at meal and bedtime and encourage children to be with their parents during Mass; to find ways to provide childcare so more parents can participate in parish work and activities; to organize family functions such first Friday gatherings, pot luck meals for families, dinners for couples, e.g., Valentine's Dinner; to plan a family holy hour. Parishes are encouraged to discuss these and other ideas regarding family life, especially at the level of the parish pastoral council.

The Committee would also like to inform you that two couples (Peter and Jeanette Chafe, Michael and Cindy McKenna) and I will be attending the World Meeting of Families held in Philadelphia from Sept 22<sup>nd</sup> to 27<sup>th</sup>. In preparation for this Meeting, the Committee discussed the book *Love is Our Mission: The Family Fully Alive*. This will be an exciting global gathering to network with other delegates in the hope of bringing back to the diocese lots of fresh ideas. We ask you to keep us in your prayers and encourage you to watch for the daily blogs from the delegates on the Diocesan website, [www.antigonishdiocese.com](http://www.antigonishdiocese.com).

Sincerely in Christ,

† Brian Joseph Dunn  
Bishop of Antigonish