

Office of the Bishop

Diocese of Antigonish

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September 19, 2015

To my Brother Priests and Deacons,

As we enter the Fall, many parishes are getting ready for the beginning of pastoral programs. Lots of pastoral opportunities are developing. In the midst of these, I want to share some of the things that are happening within the diocese.

Personnel Issues

Please include the following people in your prayers:

- Fr. John J. MacDonald (Port Hawkesbury) remains in the Richmond Hospital and continues to experience declining health.
- Fr. A.D. Campbell has moved to Parkland, Sydney.
- Fr. Syd Miffen has been diagnosed with cancer and is taking treatment.
- Fr. Reg Currie is recuperating from his surgery at the Regional Hospital in Sydney.
- Fr. Conrad Edwards will have surgery for kidney stones this Wednesday.

Saint Francis Xavier Chancellor and Vicar of the Founder

I shared with you earlier that Saint Francis Xavier University has appointed a new Chancellor, Ms. Susan Crocker. Susan has been connected with the University for many years, has overseen a financial campaign for the Coady several years ago and has received an honorary doctorate from the university. This appointment arises as a result of a decision of the Board of Governors to have an appointed chancellor and to create a new position for the bishop of the diocese. This new position for the bishop is the Vicar of the Founder with a mandate to highlight the relationship between the diocese and the university and to ensure that the Catholic character and history of the university is respected. I have been discussing with the Board how this position will function within the University.

Workshops On *Laudato Si'*, the Care for Our Common Home

The Social Justice Committee of the Diocese has organized a series of workshops on the new encyclical of Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*, the Care for our Common Home. The workshops will take place on four Saturdays from 10–11:30 a.m. on Oct. 3, Oct. 17, Nov. 7 and Nov. 28. This series of workshops will deepen our knowledge of Catholic social teaching and will be held at St. Ninian's Place, **Antigonish** and the KOC Building, **Sydney**. The first two workshops will deal with "Our Human Role in the Order of Creation" and "Taking Action on Climate Change". Parishes are asked to encourage parishioners to attend these workshops.

Issues of Finances Within Parishes

This is a topic of grave concern for all of us. The level of accounts receivable that the Diocese is carrying on the books is at a critical level, over one and a half million dollars. These receivables are made up of levy, salaries & benefits, and insurance. After much discussion, the Diocesan Finance Council has given direction to the Business Office to begin a process of collecting these receivables. To that end, a new accounts receivable policy has been established, providing authority to contact pastors and parishes in an effort to reduce these receivable amounts.

Levy: The levy, as you all know, is calculated at 13.5% of a three year rolling average based on income generated at the parish level. Levy accounts for approximately 85% of the total Diocesan budget. With the closure and amalgamation of parishes, levy revenue has been shrinking. As of September 3rd, parishes owe the Diocese **\$888,180.15** in overdue levy amounts. Of this amount \$156,287 is owing from the January 2015 billing; the balance is made up of balances as far back as 2007. This year the Diocese has billed the levy in two installments, with the hope that all balances for the January bill will be paid by June 30 and those for the final bill will be paid by December 31st. With the implementation of the accounts receivable policy, monthly statements will be issued and contact will be made with pastors to discuss overdue balances.

Salaries & Benefits: Parishes use the Business Office to process payroll for staff and parish priests, or in some cases parishes have to pay the cost for staff to join the lay pension and medical plans. If your payroll is processed by the Diocese, you receive semi-monthly invoices. If you are billed for lay pension and medical benefits you receive bills monthly. In any case these bills are due upon receipt. As of September 3rd, parishes owed the Diocese **\$502,363** for salaries and benefits of which \$274,882 is owed for 2015, \$38,478 for 2014 and \$189,005 for 2013 & prior. Please make every effort to reimburse the Diocese on a monthly basis for any payroll charges.

Insurance: Insurance is billed once a year in November and the Diocese renews the insurance on October 15th. Before then a renewal spreadsheet will be sent to all parishes to verify the properties in each parish and also verify what level of insurance you require for your parish assets. Ecclesiastical Insurance bills the Diocese in 10 equal installments. **If parishes are not able to pay the total insurance bills when invoiced, regular payments should be made over 10 months and all balances must be paid by September 30th.** Currently, parishes owe the Diocese **\$142,700** in overdue insurance premiums and of this amount \$92,924 is from 2014-15 billing and the balance of \$49,776 is from 2013-14 and prior.

The costs of levy, payroll and insurance are normal operating expenses of all parishes within the Diocese and the ability to pay these amounts on a timely basis is an indication that a parish is viable and sustainable. Please contact Imelda Terry or Cathy Farrow at the Business Office if you wish to discuss any of these amounts owing.

Book of Gospels

At the recent Plenary of the CCCB, the *Book of Gospels* for Canada was launched. This book is one of the ancient traditions of the Church and is used to highlight the Gospels because of our belief that Jesus Christ is the fulfillment of all of the Scriptures. With the publication of this new book, we can follow more closely the provisions of the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* (GIRM) which states that only the *Book of Gospels* is carried in the Entrance Procession of the Mass. **All parishes are asked to obtain a copy of this book for liturgical celebrations.** They may be ordered through the CCCB or through the Emmaus Centre. The presence of the *Book of Gospels*, carried in procession, will help to emphasize God's Word as present and visible to the assembled people.

Pastoral Appointments for Pictou Deanery

Please be advised that Our Lady of Lourdes will be closing with a liturgical celebration on November 1. At that time, the Parish of Our Lady of Lourdes will be divided in two parts: the northern part of the parish (north of Highway 104) will be joined to St. John the Baptist, New Glasgow, while the southern part (south of Highway 104) will be joined to Holy Name in Westville. At that time, Fr. Tom MacNeil will become the Pastor of St. John the Baptist, New Glasgow and Our Lady of Perpetual Help, Pictou Landing; Fr. Peter MacDonald will become Pastor of Holy Name, Westville and Stella Maris, Pictou.

Consultation Regarding Euthanasia

On July 17, 2015, the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Peter MacKay, and Minister of Health, Rona Ambrose, announced the establishment of an External Panel of experts who will consult with stakeholders and with all Canadians on options for dealing with the Supreme Court of Canada's lifting of the prohibition against physician-assisted suicide. The External Panel has created a website, in English and in French, by which it plans to coordinate its consultation efforts with Canadians. I believe that we need to respond as parishes to this consultation. The website can be viewed at the following web address: English site: <http://ep-ce.ca/en/home/>; French site: <http://ep-ce.ca/fr/accueil/>. This consultation will remain open until October 11, 2015.

When preparing submissions to the consultation, parishes may wish to consult the material developed for the "Life-Giving Love" Campaign, launched by the Catholic Organization for Life and Family (COLF). If you have not already done so, you may also wish to distribute information about the "Life-Giving Love" Campaign throughout your parish. The COLF website has lots of wonderful information for the education of parishes on this topic of euthanasia and assisted suicide. It can be ordered for minimal costs. **I would ask every parish to order some of this material so that parishioners can be informed about the serious issues connected with this topic.**

English: <http://www.lifegivinglove.com/english>; French: <http://www.lifegivinglove.com/francais>

Action on Behalf of Syrian Refugees

In light of the fact that our world is witnessing more and more refugees and displaced persons with no reasonable hope of returning to their homes, it seems that we need to consider our efforts in responding to this serious need. The CCCB letter to Catholics, posted on our website, gives numerous ways of responding. In light of Pope Francis' call to every parish to welcome refugee families, I believe this diocese needs to respond to this call. I would like every parish (or group of parishes) in the diocese to consider getting involved in this issue: by sponsoring a refugee family, or by financially supporting another parish to sponsor a family or by donating to agencies who are financially supporting working providing finances this need, especially through Development and Peace, CNEWA or Aid to the Church in Need. Fr. Paul MacGillivray has been working to renew our Diocesan Sponsoring Agreement. As well, all parishes are asked to be mindful of the refugees through their prayer. For donations to national organizations, you may send your donations to the Diocesan Office so that they can be sent to the appropriate agency.

Ongoing Formation for Priests: November 24-26

The Committee for the Ongoing Formation of Priests has invited Fr. Paul Turner, a world renown author on liturgy, to be our resource person for our next session of ongoing formation, November 24-26, 2015. Fr. Paul will consider the theology of the Eucharist and then present on the theme of presiding at the Eucharist and at other liturgical events. Since our ministry has its focus on the Eucharist, this workshop could be a wonderful opportunity for all of us to review our role in

celebrating with parishioners. Since deacons are also involved in some elements of presiding at the liturgy, they are invited as well. I would ask that all priests set aside this time so that we can take advantage of this opportunity to be renewed in our role of presiding at liturgy. Please note that Fr. Turner will give a presentation to lay people on Wednesday.

Pastoral Zones

This coming Saturday will be the first session for those involved in the education of Team Ministry, as we move in the direction of the creation of Pastoral Zones. The Inverness Deanery and the Pictou Deanery will be pilots for this new direction, but other areas have agreed to join in the formation. Debbie Aker from the Emmaus Centre will oversee the arrangements for these sessions.

“Come and See” Vocation Day, October 25 (Please note the new Date)

Please be aware that the Priests’ Vocation Committee has set aside a date for an afternoon of prayer for vocations and an invitation for young men who might be interested in this day of discernment. It will take place at St. FX on Sunday, October 25th from 1:30-6 pm. Please contact Fr. Dan MacDonald if you have anyone interested.

International Eucharistic Congress

The next International Eucharistic Congress will take place in Cebu, Philippines from January 24-31. Fr. Antolin Asor has been appointed to provide information for the whole diocese. The registration form for the Congress itself is available in English and French and can be accessed at <https://registration.iec2016.ph/>.

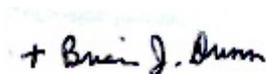
Priests’ Annual Retreat will take place in Mabou, May 22-27, 2016. Bishop Gary Gordon will be our retreat director and he is quite excited to come. I am encouraging all priests to consider being available for this retreat next year. This can be a significant way to support one another in our ministry.

Closing

The gathering with the Bishops of the country last week reminded me of the importance of working together so that we can better utilize the variety of gifts that we have. This holds true for all ordained ministry. The Ministry of Priests and the Ministry of Deacons both have a radical “communitarian form” and can only be carried out as “a collective work” (*Pastores Dabo Vobis*, n. 30), working with one another and with the bishop within a diocese.

As I attend the World Meeting of Families in Philadelphia, I will remember you and all the families of your parishes. I pray that your fall will be filled with the Joy of the Gospel as you continue to give of yourselves in your ministry.

Sincerely in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "† Brian J. Dunn". The signature is written in a cursive style.

† Brian Joseph Dunn
Bishop of Antigonish