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October 30, 2015

To my Brother Priests and Deacons,

These past few weeks have been deeply inspiring for me. I attended the World Meeting of Families and the Papal Visit in Philadelphia and was amazed at the thousands of people at the Family Gathering, who had such commitment for family life. Some of the speakers at the event were quite inspirational speakers, e.g., Bishop Robert Barron and Cardinal Tagle. As well, last week I attended the meeting of ICEL (International Commission for English in the Liturgy) and had the experience of reviewing texts as they are being prepared for new rituals, e.g., Liturgy of the Hours and RCIA. Reviewing some of these liturgical texts was quite inspiring as there is a real effort to appreciate some of the images and meaning found in the original Latin texts. We'll see what the end result will bring.

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. Evo's mother, Gina, had a slight heart attack in early October. She spent four days in hospital and is back home recovering. Please remember her in your prayers.

Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops: October 4 to 25, Vatican City

For the past few weeks, Church leadership from all over the world gathered with Pope Francis for the Synod on the Family. They focused on, discussed and prayed about the pastoral challenges of family life. While the media has presented a certain perspective of the Synod, it seems that from Synod participants there has been some serious discussion as the participants sought the will of God with an openness to the Holy Spirit. The Final Document expresses signs of a newness and renewal for our family of faith. This document was presented to our Holy Father, who usually prepares a document regarding the teaching associated with the Synod. Let's continue to pray for him as he considers the results of this Synod.

History of our Diocese

As you know, a history of our diocese (1880-1960) is currently being researched and written by Dr. Peter Ludlow. As traditional repositories are further mined, we are interested in connecting with the parishes to see if there are any documents/ephemera/photographs on parish property that might be useful for the book. If you think that materials exist, or are interested in contacting Ludlow, he can be reached at pludlow03@qub.ac.uk. Interested parishioners are also encouraged to make contact.

Diocesan Workshop for Catechists, Coordinators and All Involved in Catechesis

Thanks to all who attended this workshop on October 17, 2015. The presenters provided teaching on how the practice of meditation can be incorporated into our new resource, *Finding God*. May this workshop continue to help us use our new resource for the ongoing formation of children and young people.

Saint Francis Xavier Chancellor and Vicar of the Founder

The announcement of the new chancellor, Ms. Susan Crocker, for Saint Francis Xavier University was made on September 2, 2015. She will be installed as Chancellor on November 19. Meanwhile, the Board continues to discuss the By-Laws for the new position for the bishop, namely, Vicar of the Founder. This position has been set up to highlight the relationship between the diocese and the university and to ensure that the Catholic history and character of the university are respected. I have been helping the Board to appreciate that some of the by-laws associated with the chancellor were there because the bishop was the chancellor and therefore, the content of the by-law needs to be connected with the Vicar of the Founder.

New Bursary at St FX to honor Priests

This is to inform you that the St. FX Class of 1956 created a bursary to honor **the priests**, Sisters of St. Martha and Sisters of the Congregation of Notre Dame who served St. FX University so faithfully. The class wants to ensure that the priests who were involved with St. FX are informed of this honor. The St. FX chaplaincy will use the revenue funds to hire a student to assist in chaplaincy or to participate in Chapel programs. The use of these funds will be focused on facilitating participation in Chaplaincy Programs and will be used at the discretion of the Chaplaincy.

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

The Social Justice Committee of the Diocese will continue its series of workshops on the new encyclical of Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*, the Care for our Common Home. The workshops will take place on Nov. 7 and Nov. 28 from 10–11:30 a.m. in Antigonish. Please encourage parishioners to attend these workshops.

Communications Update

Communications officer, Jennifer Hatt, has been with us since June 1. In that time we have launched a new e-newsletter, and working with our webmaster Deacon Art Riley, we have refreshed and updated our website. In September we contracted Advocate Communications Group of Pictou, NS to assist us with development of a new visual identity and communication tools, including a logo and new website. We hope to have those tools in place by the end of November. We are also converting the Facebook page into a diocesan page, and Jennifer continues her work on developing a diocesan-wide communication strategy, with plans and resources for all levels of communication in the diocese. This document is expected to be completed in June 2016.

Pope Francis' New Tribunal Procedures

In August, Pope Francis issued a new Motu proprio regarding tribunal procedures, especially concerning two types of processes: the ordinary process and the abbreviated process. In the abbreviated process, it is the bishop who personally judges whether or not there is enough evidence to declare nullity and if both spouses are involved in the process. After hearing suggestions from various Canon Law Societies, we will adjust our procedures accordingly. Further information will follow on this.

Create a Climate of Change!

Development & Peace encourages us to put our faith into action in response to Pope Francis' recent encyclical on the environment. This year, D & P is asking Catholics across the country to Create a Climate of Change by committing to reduce our own respective carbon footprints, and by calling on our Prime Minister to commit to action on climate change on behalf of all Canadians. For more information and resources – and for a link directly to the action card - please go to www.devp.org/en/education/fall2015.

Please be aware that the presidents of groupings of national episcopal conferences representing all regions of the world issued a compelling appeal to the negotiating parties and heads of state that will be in attendance at the United Nations COP21 climate conference in Paris to work for the approval of a fair, legally binding and truly transformational climate agreement. The statement is a powerful call to put the common good ahead of national interests and to protect our common home and all its inhabitants. The appeal seeks to “join the Holy Father in pleading for a major breakthrough in Paris, for a comprehensive and transformational agreement supported by all.” The agreement, according to the signatories, should limit global temperature increases to avoid catastrophic climatic impacts, especially on the most vulnerable communities. Based on scientific evidence, faith leaders recognize that excessive reliance on fossil fuels is primarily responsible for accelerated climate change, and they call not only for a “drastic reduction in the emission of carbon dioxide and other toxic gases,” but also for ending the fossil fuel era.

Issues of Finances Within Parishes

In my last letter, I mentioned some of the issues associated with finances within parishes. 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. I am grateful for the many parishes who responded to this information and who have made concerted efforts to deal with or at least discuss these debts.

Developments Associated with Our Lady of Lourdes Parish

As you are aware, a parishioner of Our Lady of Lourdes Parish has sought an injunction that temporarily prevents the closure of Our Lady of Lourdes Church. To better understand the concerns that have been expressed in this lawsuit, I have decided to delay the closure of Our Lady of Lourdes Church for about a month. I will be meeting with the parishioner on Friday afternoon. These next few weeks will provide an opportunity for dialogue and conflict resolution more appropriate to our community of faith. Please pray for the guidance of the Holy Spirit as we move forward to address this situation. Meanwhile, the pastoral appointments for Fr. Tom MacNeil (Pastor of St. John the Baptist, New Glasgow and Our Lady of Perpetual Help, Pictou Landing) and for Fr. Peter MacDonald (Pastor of Holy Name, Westville and Stella Maris, Pictou) will continue for the coming week.

Action on Behalf of Syrian Refugees

In my last letter, I encouraged all parishes 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. In order to get a sense of how our diocese is responding to this refugee crisis, I would like to know how each parish has responded. **Please inform Darlene by return mail, any efforts that your parish are in the process of doing.**

Ongoing Formation for Priests: November 24-26

The Committee for the Ongoing Formation of Priests has invited Fr. Paul Turner, a world renowned 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 also give a presentation to lay people on Wednesday. He will give a public talk entitled "The Body of Christ at Prayer" on Wednesday, November 25 at 7 p.m. at St. Ninian Place, Antigonish. Please encourage your parishioners to attend.

Pastoral Zones

We have completed two of the five sessions of the education for Team Ministry, as we move toward 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. Thanks to all who have taken the time to participate in these sessions.

"Come and See" Vocation Day, October 25

Thanks to the Priests Vocations Committee for sponsoring an afternoon of prayer for vocations. Several young men as well as our own seminarians took part in this day and found the day to be uplifting for them.

Ordination of John Scott

Please be advised that the diaconate ordination ceremony for John Scott will take place at Holy Redeemer Parish in Whitney Pier on Wednesday, November 18 at 4 pm. Please ensure that parishioners are aware of this ordination and that they are encouraged to attend to offer support for John. All priests are invited to concelebrate and deacons are encouraged to participate.

Pastoral Centre Relocation

The Committee to consider the relocation of the Pastoral Centre has completed its view of the various options as they considered the relocation of the Pastoral Centre back to Sydney. Further information will be circulated in the next week or so.

Year of Mercy

We begin the Year of Mercy on December 8 and we are all invited to take this opportunity to experience the mercy of God in a new and deeper way. Priests are reminded of the Day of Recollection on February 16, 2016 at St. Joseph's Church, Port Hawkesbury where the theme will focus on the gift of the Lord's mercy. Priests are asked to give consideration as to how your parish might celebrate this Year so that people will experience the Lord's mercy. Further information will be circulated in the next few weeks.

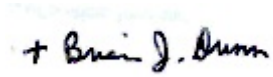
Priests' Annual Retreat will take place in Mabou, May 22-27, 2016. Bishop Gary Gordon will be our retreat director and he is quite excited to come. I am encouraging all priests to consider being available for this retreat next year. This can be a significant way to support one another in our ministry.

Closing

One of the talks that inspired me in Philadelphia was on the wounds of the family. While the family can be the place where family members learn to experience love and respect, it can also be the place where healing can occur. To review the talks from the World Meeting of Families, you can go online: <http://www.worldmeeting2015.org/the-latest/livestreamwmof/>

May the Lord continue to bless you as you minister to parishioners.

Sincerely in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "† Brian J. Dunn". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned below the typed name.

† Brian Joseph Dunn
Bishop of Antigonish