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Notes from Bishop Dunn's Letter to Priests and Deacons February 18, 2016

On Tuesday of this week, we had the opportunity to have a Day of Recollection within this Season of Lent and we were treated to wonderful addresses on the Mercy of God. Fr. Gary MacPherson spoke on the gift of God's Mercy, how we experience this Mercy and how we are called to be signs of Mercy to the World. Special thanks to Fr. Gary for all the work that was necessary to prepare these talks and for sharing this message with us. Thanks also to all the priests and deacons who attended this Day of Prayer. Thanks as well to Fr. Conrad and parishioners for the use of the parish facilities.

Close of Year of Consecrated Life

On January 31, 2016, during the Mass for Shut-ins, we officially closed the Year of Consecrated Life and I acknowledged the contributions made by members of consecrated life to the growth of this diocese. We realize their enormous contribution in the area of education, health care, the care of the elderly and orphaned children and in social work, long before any assistance was provided by Government. These women religious have been extremely courageous in undertaking their ministries and have had and continue to have a great effect on the people of the Diocese of Antigonish. Please ensure that you continue to give them support and gratitude within your parishes.

Lent 2016

Last week, Development and Peace launched its Share Lent campaign called Create a Climate of Change. To mark the occasion, Canadians are invited to make a gesture of solidarity to help global justice flourish. The campaign is inspired by Pope Francis' encyclical *Laudato Si'*, which calls for better protection of our common home, especially for our sisters and brothers in the Global South. Inspired by the Holy Year of Mercy, Development and Peace invites us to join on a pilgrimage through their Share Lent Mini-magazine that will take people to Haiti, Indonesia, Paraguay and the Palestinian Territories to meet children, women and men facing poverty and injustice on a daily basis. The pilgrimage will bear witness to the things these individuals have done to transform their lives, thanks to the support of Development and Peace.

The Development & Peace website (<https://www.devp.org/en/sharelent2016/materials>) provides materials to learn about how we can help Create a Climate of Change. There are terrific materials for both home and parish based activities and reflections, including the popular Solidarity Calendar, which provides a practical idea for each day of Lent! Liturgical resources include sample parish bulletin announcements, prayers of the faithful, and a Solidarity Way of the Cross. All of these materials can help us make our Lenten journey more meaningful. Thank you and please remember to give generously to the annual Share Lent collection on Solidarity Sunday: March 13, 2016.

Conference on Fr. James Mallon's book: *Divine Divine Renovation*

There will be a conference on Fr. James Mallon's book: *Divine Divine Renovation*, bringing your parish from maintenance to mission. The conference will take place on June 13-14, 2016 in Halifax. See the website (www.divinerenovation.net) for more information and learn about the workshops and speakers. This conference might assist us to become catalysts for renewal in our local church.

Annual Report and Financial Report

I am asking all priests to ensure that these reports are sent to the Chancery Office in the next week or so. We need these statistics to complete the Report to Rome. As well, this year I have to complete a report for my *Ad Limina* Visit which will take place in March of 2017 and I would like to have complete statistics on EVERY parish. Thanks for your assistance in this matter.

Historical Issues on Financial Report

In the past, an extra sheet was attached to the Annual Report. I will circulate a sheet to each parish so that we can have a record of the historical events that have happened in every parish during the year. Please include every event that is important to remember.

Pastoral Visit to Parishes

During the past few years I have mentioned that I would like to make a Pastoral Visit to all parishes of the diocese. I have been able to visit many parishes, but still have not had a Pastoral Visit with many others. I am still open to do that visit over the next few months.

Pastoral Zones

The three pilot Pastoral Zones (Inverness North, Inverness South and the Pictou Deanery) are continuing their formation for Pastoral Zones by doing a book study on *Principled Ministry*. Thanks to all who have taken the time to participate in these sessions.

Lay Formation Program: September 2016

The Office of Lay Formation is announcing a Lay Formation Program beginning in September 2016. Participants in the three-year program will be joining the candidates in the Permanent Diaconate Formation Program and will be taking courses that will renew their faith and assist them to see their call in the world. Each year will consist of ten weekends including one retreat weekend, and each weekend will have human, intellectual, spiritual and pastoral elements. Courses over the three years will cover topics relating to theological foundations, Christology, ecclesiology and pastoral considerations. There will also be another course on one additional Saturday per month. The program is open to anyone who actively participates in parish life and is interested in a journey of authentic and deeper discovery of faith. The deadline for applications is June 15, 2016. A brochure with more detailed information will be available shortly.

Atlantic Marian Gathering

The Theme of the Atlantic Marian Gathering in 2016 is "Mary, Mother of Mercy" which will be held in Halifax, Nova Scotia May 27- 29, 2016. The keynote speakers are Archbishop Anthony Mancini of Halifax; Father Mark Barron a Marian priest with the Marian Fathers of the Immaculate Conception (at present, at the Marian Seminary as Prefect of students); and Father Patrick O'Neill (pastor at St. Joseph in North Sydney).

Year of Mercy

1. Our Holy Father identifies the Season of Lent as a privileged moment to celebrate God's Mercy. We might consider how "mercy" is a decision to show forgiveness or compassion to someone in need. This form of mercy expresses itself through acts of kindness, generosity and love. Our tradition has identified fourteen "works of mercy" that illustrate this kind of compassion and solidarity, namely, the corporal and spiritual works of mercy. I hope that the Year of Mercy will serve to reveal the Church's deeply maternal and merciful side, a Church that goes forth toward those who are wounded, who are in need of an attentive ear, understanding, forgiveness and love. May our ministry be inspired by the Lord's Mercy.

2. During this Extraordinary Holy Year, the *Jubilee of Mercy*, there will be a Jubilee for Priests which will be held in Rome from Wednesday, June 1 to Friday, June 3, 2016. During this international gathering, one day will be dedicated to a spiritual retreat, during which time Pope Francis will offer three meditations on the theme of the priest as a minister of mercy. The Jubilee for Priests will conclude with a concelebrated Mass presided by the Holy Father on the 160th Anniversary of the institution of the Feast of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus. The program for this gathering, along with all of the information pertaining to registration, may be found on the official website of the *jubilee of Mercy* which is www.im.va.

Developments in Communications

We are continuing to work on our new website. It should be ready in the next week or so. When it is finalized, each parish is asked to ensure that the information regarding your parish is up to date. This will ensure that our website will be useful for parishioners. Thanks to Jennifer Hatt and Deacon Art Riley for the work on the updating of the website.

24 Hours for the Lord

Archbishop Fisichella indicated that the Holy Father is again encouraging every diocese to keep at least one church open for 24 hours as we approach the Fourth Sunday of Lent. It is suggested that this take place on Friday, March 4 and Saturday, March 5, 2016, as set by the Holy Father. During these days, according to the possibilities and the needs of individual local Churches, parishes are asked to provide the opening of churches, with the possibility for Confessions and Eucharistic Adoration.

Dates to Remember

All are asked to keep these dates available so that we can nourish our spiritual lives:

1. March 21: The Mass of Chrism will take place on Monday, March 21 at 4 pm at St. Joseph Parish, North Sydney. As usual, all clergy are invited to attend a dinner prior to this celebration; this will be held at the Parish Hall at Holy Family Parish, Sydney Mines, beginning at 12 noon. This will be followed by a time of prayer together. Please plan to attend and encourage parishioners to attend this diocesan celebration. PLEASE let Darlene know if you plan to attend the meal, since we have to be prepared for those who attend.

2. May 22-27: The Priests' Retreat will be held at the Renewal Centre in Mabou. Bishop Gary Gordon will be the speaker. Please take this time during the Year of Mercy to be available for this diocesan retreat.

3. June 6-8: The General Assembly will take place at Port Hawkesbury.

Generous Priests

Over the past few years, the Diocese has received a significant number of donations from priests'

wills for various intentions, including St. Joseph Society, Shepherd's Trust, or Youth Ministry: Bishop Colin Campbell (\$120,940.68), Fr. Jim Attwood (\$93,293.85), Fr. John MacDougall (\$14,027.48), Fr. William Roach (\$79,856.58), Fr. Edward MacIsaac (\$115,815.31), Fr. Hector MacDonald (\$76,496.95), Fr. Bernie O'Connor (\$500), Fr. Frank Morley (\$40,000). Thanks to this generosity and the generosity of other priests of the diocese, we are able to provide a variety of pastoral programs as we rebuild our diocese.

Holy Land Collection

The Pontifical Collection for the Holy Places is scheduled for Good Friday. This collection is a sign of our desire to be in solidarity with the Christians in the Middle East, especially as Christians continue to suffer for their faith.

Update on Youth Events

1. The Net Canada Retreat has been scheduled at Sydney Mines Parish for March 28th. The theme for the retreat is "Jesus who?" Cost: \$20 per person, with discounts available for Groups and sibling/family rates. Contact Nolan Conrad for more information.
2. Our diocese has two new pages! Our Facebook and Instagram pages "Diocese of Antigonish Youth" have reached many in the first few days and garnered many followers and likes. Youth articles, quotes and advertising for our future events are posted to these pages.

Closing

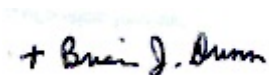
Later in March (7-14) I shall be taking a little time for a holiday and will be away for a week. I look forward to this time for relaxation, reflection and renewal.

As we enter this Season of Lent, may we be ready to hear the Lord's call to conversion. I was struck with the Holy Father's call to the clergy of Mexico as he spoke to them about their temptations. "What temptation might we suffer over and over again ... what temptation might we endure in the face of all this, in the face of this reality which seems to have become a permanent system?"

I think that we could sum it up in a single word: 'resignation'. And faced with this reality, the devil can overcome us with one of his favourite weapons: resignation. 'And what are you going to do about it? Life is like that'. A resignation which paralyzes us and prevents us not only from walking, but also from making the journey; a resignation which not only terrifies us, but which also entrenches us in our 'sacristies' and false securities; a resignation which not only prevents us from proclaiming, but also inhibits our giving praise and takes away the joy, the joy of giving praise. A resignation which not only hinders our looking to the future, but also stifles our desire to take risks and to change. And so, 'Our Father, lead us not into temptation'"(Pope Francis, address to the clergy in Morelia, Mexico, February 16, 2016).

May the Lord continue to bless us as we minister in this diocese.

Sincerely in Christ,



† Brian Joseph Dunn
Bishop of Antigonish