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Notes from Bishop Dunn's Letter to Priests and Deacons April 5, 2016

I want to take this opportunity of bringing to your attention a few issues that we need to be aware of.

Letter on Assisted Suicide

As I think about the upcoming legislation connected with assisted suicide, I believe we need to make an urgent appeal to Catholics across the diocese to express our concerns, in view of the legislation that the federal government is preparing in the next couple of months to implement the Supreme Court's decision on assisted suicide.

I believe that we have a unique opportunity to influence this legislation, particularly with regard to conscience rights and protecting the vulnerable, **BUT THE TIME IS TIGHT.**

I am asking you, therefore, to print out the attached letter which I circulated last week and include it in next Sunday's bulletin. Some parishes may have already done this. As well, I ask you to speak to your parishioners about it. Encourage them to write or contact their local MP; it need not be long or complicated. A personal, handwritten letter is the most effective way of voicing their concerns. It seems that we have these opportunities only once in a while where we need to make our voices heard to ensure we obtain the best legislation for a particular issue.

Update on Pastoral Zones

As the Diocese works towards stabilizing and enhancing the pastoral care of parishioners, it is evident that new structures are needed to accomplish this task. There are 47 priests with appointments within the Diocese; 18 of these men are over 65 years of age and 5 under 50. Add to this the aging and declining parishioner population and it becomes clear the status quo cannot hold. In July 2015, Bishop Dunn acted on the Pastoral Planning Committee's recommendation and created three Pastoral Zone Pilot Projects within the Diocese. Two pilots operated in the Inverness Deanery and one pilot in the Pictou Deanery. The pilots were initiated to explore the viability of a Pastoral Zone structure as a model to assist the Diocese in the care of parishioners and pastors. The Pastoral Zone model is being used successfully in many dioceses throughout Canada, the United States and the United Kingdom.

Since September 2015, ten pastors and over fifty laypeople and religious have been meeting regularly to work with the Pastoral Zone model. This model would see several parishes be served by a

Pastoral Team consisting of two or three priests, a Deacon where available, and three or four laypeople. All members of this Pastoral Team will be appointed by Bishop Dunn. The Pastoral Team will work closely with a Pastoral Zone Council which will operate in the same manner as a Parish Pastoral Council and will eventually replace individual Parish Pastoral Councils. Individual Parish Committees will in time be replaced by Pastoral Zone Committees which will carry out similar functions.

Each Zone Area is fleshing out how the model can best be adapted and utilized within the area. Priests and parishioners have been receiving formation on the skills and application of collaborative ministry. Collaborative ministry recognizes the different vocations, gifts and offices to which we are called through our baptism. And it begins from a fundamental desire to work together and a willingness to face and work through conflict.

In each Zone, a dedicated and committed group of laypeople, religious and clergy have accepted to carry out several huge tasks:

1. To prepare and follow formation sessions in readiness for possible appointment to the Pastoral Team (this took place from September to December, 2015)
2. To envision how the Pastoral Zone model can best serve the Pilot area
3. To define the ministries most needed in the Pilot area
4. To give recommendations for laypeople who would be suitable to serve on the Pastoral Team, lead Pastoral Zone Committees and participate on the Pastoral Zone Council in the Pilot area
5. To help the parishioners in the Pilot areas to understand the Pastoral Zone Model and its implications
6. To welcome parishioner feedback on the Pastoral Zone Model

The Inverness North Pastoral Zone Pilot consists of parishes located in Inverness, Broad Cove, South West Margaree, East Margaree, North East Margaree, St. Joseph de Moine and Cheticamp. Special recognition is given to the Acadian language and culture which is found within this Pilot area. This group is beginning to formalize its vision of how a Pastoral Zone will function in the area and the Acadian members are planning an information session on the Pastoral Zone process for the Acadian parishes.

The Inverness South Pastoral Zone Pilot is made up of parishes located in Mabou, Brook Village, West Lake Anisle, Glencoe Mills, Port Hood, Judique and Creignish. This group has submitted an extensive draft proposal for the operation of a Pastoral Zone in the area and will soon be working on compiling names of laypeople to be considered for Pastoral Team members, Pastoral Zone Council members and Pastoral Zone Committee members.

The Pictou Pastoral Zone encompasses the parishes located in New Glasgow, Stellerton, Westville, Pictou and Pictou Landing. This group has completed a two session workshop on the structure and functioning of Parish Pastoral Councils facilitated by Fr. Tom MacNeil and is continuing its work with the Pastoral Zone Model.

To assist the members of the Pastoral Zone Pilots, the Diocese has offered five formation sessions which focused on team building, getting to know and use their talents and gifts and how to face and

work through conflict. These sessions were facilitated by Leisa Anslinger and were carried out via video conferencing. The Diocese also supplied copies of the book *Principled Ministry* by Bro. Loughlan Sofield and Sr. Carroll Juilano, which was used in a book study by members of each pilot area. As well, all the parishes in the area received a “Doing Something New Brochure” to be distributed to parishioners. The Diocese seeks to support and aid these dedicated people who are giving so much of their time and talent to the difficult and sometimes daunting tasks involved with this project.

I have met several times with the Pastoral Zone Pilot groups and they have shared their concerns over their mandate, their fears over church closures, the issues around language and the difficulties experienced in rural parishes. Yet in the midst of all their concerns is the desire to continue moving forward in this process, to ensure there will always be a place for the faith community to gather in worship, to grow in faith and to serve their neighbour. The Easter Season encourages us to look for the Risen Lord working in our lives and we need not look far to see the courage, perseverance and love these groups of clergy, religious and laypeople have for their faith.

Diocese of Antigonish Liturgy Video Conference

If You Only Knew: The Meaning of the Eucharist for Today

Presenter: *Fr. Bill Burke*

Date: *May 14, 2016 10am - 1pm*

Location: *NSCC Campuses in Stellarton, Port Hawkesbury and Sydney*

Cost: *\$20/per person*

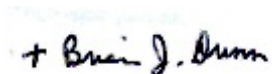
Registration: *Call Liturgy Office 1-800-656-5311 (toll free)*

Tea, Coffee and Light Snack provided but you are asked to bring your own lunch

Please encourage all interested in liturgy or any parishioner to attend this video conference.

Blessings on 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