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## **Notes from Bishop Dunn's Letter to Priests and Deacons May 2, 2016**

We have finally moved into the new Pastoral Center, Suite 103, 200 Churchill Drive in Membertou. The Office is quite nice and I want to thank all the diocesan staff who worked so hard to make the new building a welcoming space. Feel free to drop in and see the new space.

As a result of this move, items that were not needed in the new facility are still housed at the former Pastoral Center, 47 Convent Street, Sydney Mines. On Friday, May 6 from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., this building at 47 Convent Street will be open for priests and/or their designate to see what is available and obtain for their parish free of charge. Items will be given away on a first come basis. Some of the items available include bed frames, mattresses, desks, tables, chairs, dishes, 2 washer and dryer pairs, two tread mills and various other household items. Please come prepared to take away the material, since everything in the building must be moved out in preparation for its sale in the next few weeks.

### **Diocesan Liturgical Commission is Sponsoring a Liturgy Video-conference**

The Liturgy Video-conference will take place on Saturday, May 14, 2016 from 10am - 1pm. The theme is "If You Only Knew: The Meaning Of Eucharist for Today" and the Presenter will be Fr. Bill Burke. Please encourage your parishioners to attend; it is designed for anyone who is involved in any liturgical ministry or anyone who wants to know more about the Eucharist. It will take place at NSCC Campuses in Stellarton, Port Hawkesbury and Sydney. Registration is required: Call 902-539-6188 ext 237 or 1-800-656-5311 ext 237 (Toll Free). Cost is \$20.00 per person. Tea, Coffee will be provided and participants are encouraged to bring their own "brown bag" lunch.

### **Priests' Annual Retreat**

The priests' annual retreat will be held at the Renewal Center, Mabou, starting with supper at 5pm on Sunday, May 22 and will continue until lunch on Friday, May 27. The director will be Bishop Gary Gordon, Bishop of Victoria. All priests are asked to consider attending this retreat. I would ask that, in light of our call to be renewed in our priestly commitment, all priests make an extra effort to attend this retreat. This can be a significant way to support one another in our ministry.

### **General Assembly of Priests**

The 2016 General Assembly of Priests will take place on June 6-8 at the Maritime Inn, 717 Reeves St, Port Hawkesbury. Please reserve your room as quickly as possible to ensure that you will be able to stay at the Maritime Inn. Registration for the Assembly will take place at 11am on Monday, June 6<sup>th</sup> and the first session will begin at 1:30 pm. The topic will be "Funerals in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century" with Fr. Bill Burke as the Presenter. On Monday, a general presentation of the problem will be given and

on Tuesday, we will look at and discuss issues of diocesan protocols and formation. Fr. Bill has provided this summary of his input:

Much has changed in the manner of celebrating funerals in our society over the last 50 years. In the last 10 years the rate of this change has accelerated and many recent developments raise serious pastoral questions, questions which go beyond the issue of what is or is not permitted at a Catholic funeral. Increasingly today, many people are opting not to have a funeral at all, or if they do have one, the rites are often truncated, adapted or “re-created” in ways that are often contradictory to the Christian message.

In this complex pastoral situation we must work together with palliative care workers and funeral directors in order to become more aware of and sensitive to the needs we face today. Together we must develop appropriate and compassionate guidelines to help people in the preparation of funerals, and we must take great care to carefully explain the rationale for these guidelines. We must find ways to bring the death of an individual into touch with the Christ’s Paschal Mystery as it is lived and celebrated within the local community of the Church. The shape of funerals in the 21<sup>st</sup> century will be hammered out in the context of dialogue between magisterium, scholars, pastors, health care workers, funeral directors and the liturgical assembly. We must take the strong images of the past and en flesh them in new ways to communicate the Paschal Mystery in a way in which it can be received today and tomorrow. If the faith is not received, it cannot be transmitted; if it is not transmitted it cannot be preserved. To accomplish this task, we need to discern what is negotiable in our funeral rites and what is not negotiable. Above all, we need the wisdom to know the difference.

### **Focus on Service: “Some Body Cares”**

Parishes are invited to be involved in the Annual Servant Day – Diocese of Antigonish “Some Body Cares” (a project designed as part of the implementation of the Five-year Diocesan Plan)

WHO: Every parishioner who wishes to be of service to others on this day

WHAT: A day of service

WHEN: June 4, 2016

WHERE: Every parish in the Diocese

WHY: This event is meant to engage us all in service to one another, appreciating that service and works of justice are a constitutive part of what it means to be Catholic. Here are some simple ideas that persons of any age might do: cemetery clean-up, spring yard-cleanup for an elderly person/couple, making biscuits for a shut-in. The most important part of this is that parishioners offer themselves in service. Information was recently circulated to all parishes.

### **Foundations in Parish Nursing Program**

Parish Nursing has developed in many dioceses. Perhaps you might like to bring this to your parish. Here is an ad for this: “Are you a registered nurse who would like to integrate your spirituality with your nursing practice and also learn more about the exciting field of parish nursing? Join us from July 8 – 14 at Holy Family Retreat House, Oxley, Ontario (121 Victoria St., Harrow). For more information visit [www.stpetersseminary.ca](http://www.stpetersseminary.ca) or contact Catherine Leach at 519-432-1824 x281.”

### **Indigenous Pastoral Leadership Formation Program**

The Indigenous Pastoral Leadership Formation Program is being offered this year from June 13 to

17, 2016. This program is a collaborative effort between Kateri Native Ministry of Ottawa and Saint Paul University through the School of Transformative Leadership and Spirituality and the Center for Religious Education and Catechesis.

**For whom?** This program is for Indigenous people who are interested in training and education in pastoral ministry. Its goal is to equip Indigenous people to exercise pastoral leadership and ministry in their home communities. Non-Indigenous ministers are also welcome to join us. Those who have taken the program in the past have benefitted from this experience.

**Program:** Throughout the week, participants will explore connections between Native spiritualities and Christian faith through a number of topics in liturgy, religious education and pastoral ministry. In addition to regular programming, this year Archbishop Emeritus James Weisgerber will be present for a conversation about his experience of healing and reconciliation with Indigenous people. This strengthening of the connections between Indigenous teachings and Christian teachings will continue to promote healing and reconciliation for all who are involved in this program. Consult the website of Kateri Native Ministry for presenters and topics.

### **National Week for Life and the Family will be May 8-15, 2016**

May 8 -15 is the National Week for Life and the Family! This is the fourth year that Canadian bishops are encouraging families across Canada to celebrate the vocation of the family. This year the week begins on Ascension Sunday and ends on Pentecost Sunday. The Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops (CCCCB) is again offering dioceses and parishes possible resources and options for planning and organizing local activities. This year's theme is "My family: A school of mercy". The Catholic Organization for Life and Family (COLF) has taken up the responsibility for producing the annual resources, working in collaboration and consultation with the Conference. See their website.

This year the Week for Life and Family is an opportunity for all of us to focus on the role of the family, as a school of mercy. In his recent apostolic exhortation on marriage and the family, Pope Francis reminds us of the importance of family life and its mission to be an environment of life and love, where every member of the family is taught, cared for, and supported. All parishes are invited to participate in the National Week for Life and Family as an opportunity to promote the ministry of care and compassion for the vulnerable and those facing end of life struggles. All pastors are invited to highlight the joy of love on Mother's Day, May 8<sup>th</sup>, the first day of this national week.

### **Refugee Money**

Over the past few months, various parishes had collections to support Refugee Families. Some of this money was sent to the Diocesan Office to be distributed to parishes who will use it for their refugees. If your parish is interested in receiving a portion of these funds for your refugees, please let me know over the next week or so. **All requests that are made to me by May 13** will receive an equal portion of this collection.

### **Workshop Sponsored by the Senior Priests Committee**

The Senior Priests Committee is sponsoring an "Information Session" for all priests on Wednesday, May 18 from 10 am to 2 pm at Our Lady of Fatima Church, Sydney. This workshop will consider a number of themes, especially related to retirement. Sessions will be presented by professional resource people; topics will cover the following: Financial Planning, Legal Documents to have on file, Nursing Home admission process and care, Regional Housing options for apartments/senior citizen housing units, Nutrition information for healthy eating. While the focus will be on retirement, the sessions will provide information that could be helpful for all priests. No registration fee. Turkey dinner will be served; **please register with Darlene at the Pastoral Center to know how**

**many Turkey Dinners to prepare!** 902-539-6188 ext. 222 or 1-800-656-5311 ext. 222; e-mail: darlene@dioceseofantigonish.ca

### **Responding to the federal government legislation on ‘medical aid in dying’ (Bill C-14)**

The Government of Canada recently introduced Bill C-14, *An Act to amend the Criminal Code and to make related amendments to other Acts (medical assistance in dying)*. This proposed legislation will make euthanasia and assisted suicide legal and more accessible in our entire country. The teaching of the Catholic Church affirms the sacredness and dignity of human life. Suicide and euthanasia are contrary to the most profound natural inclination of each human being to live and preserve life. Furthermore, they contradict the fundamental responsibility that human beings have to protect one another and to enhance the quality of health and social care which every human life deserves, from conception to natural death.

Bill C-14, no matter how it may be amended, is an affront to human dignity, an erosion of human solidarity, and a danger to all vulnerable persons -- particularly the aged, disabled, infirm and sick who so often find themselves isolated and marginalized. Moreover, it is a violation of the sacrosanct duty of healthcare providers to heal, and the responsibility of legislators and citizens to assure and provide protection for all, especially those persons most at risk. We need to renew our call to all legislators to consistently defend and protect the lives of all, to renew efforts to guarantee accessible home care and palliative care, and to protect the conscience rights of healthcare providers and agencies refusing to be part of euthanasia and assisted suicide.

All dioceses and parishes throughout Canada are invited to consolidate efforts in protecting vulnerable persons and the conscience rights of health-care practitioners and institutions by collaborating with the Coalition for HealthCARE and Conscience / Coalition pour les soins de santé et la conscience. To assist in this consolidation of efforts, the Coalition has made its resources available in both English and French.

In view of the draft federal legislation, all parishioners are urged to inform federal legislators of the above concerns, and to articulate an approach that respects both the sanctity of life and the conscience rights of healthcare workers and institutions when they are faced with a patient’s choice for assisted suicide. The following website enables individuals to indicate their support for the proposal, as well as to write to appropriate officials in the federal government regarding the plans to protect conscience rights:

- English, <http://www.canadiansforconscience.ca/>

- French, <http://www.coalitionsanteconscience.ca/>

Perhaps parishes could print copies of the letters from these websites and ask parishioners to sign them in the next few weeks.

### **Public talk on “Assisted Death: Challenges for Christians Today.”**

Sister Nuala Kenny, an internationally-known bioethicist and physician, will visit Antigonish on May 18<sup>th</sup> to give a public talk on “Assisted Death: Challenges for Christians Today.” Sponsored by the provincial health authority’s Ethics Committee for the Guysborough Antigonish Strait areas, Dr Kenny’s talk will take place at 7 pm on May 18<sup>th</sup> at St Ninian’s Place. Recent federal government legislation on ‘medical aid in dying’ (Bill C-14) has raised a number of questions about the value of human life, the role of doctors and nurses in end-of-life care, and whether the ‘right to die’ overrides physician conscience. Dr Kenny will discuss how Christians might respond to these and

related issues. **Parishes in the Antigonish area are asked to advertize this in your parish bulletin.**

Dr. Kenny is Professor Emerita at Dalhousie University, a member of the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops Ad Hoc Committee for the Protection of Minors, and the author of three books and over one hundred and eighty articles in medical ethics. She has served on the recent Provincial Territorial Expert Advisory Group on Assisted Death and on the Board of the Canadian Networks of Centres of Excellence project, Improving care for the frail elderly at end of life (2012-2015).

### **Deacon John Scott**

John Scott has decided that he will not pursue ordination to the priesthood. I want to thank John for his ministry at Holy Redeemer Parish. Thanks also to Fr. Paul Murphy and Holy Redeemer Parish for their support for John during the past year.

### **Retreat for the Year of Mercy**

Coinciding with the Year of Mercy with a focus on bringing healing to our people and the whole Diocese, a 3-day Divine Healing Retreat will be held at St. Ninian Place and St. FX Chapel, Antigonish on May 27-29, 2016. Guest retreat master will be Father Joby Kachappilly of the Divine Retreat Center in Toronto ON ([www.divinetoronto.org](http://www.divinetoronto.org)). Father Joby focuses on spreading the Gospel, God's mercy, forgiveness, the Sacraments and healings. Bible is needed. Registration \$60. Early registration (before May 1st) \$45. For more information contact (after 6pm only) Cathy at 902-863-1560, 902-863-3983, 902-968-1574, Rev Charles Cameron 902-863-4373, Sr Agnes Beaton 902-863-6020 or email [mcmacdougall@hotmail.com](mailto:mcmacdougall@hotmail.com).

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

There will be a conference on Fr. James Mallon's book: *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](http://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.

### **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.

## **Dates to Remember**

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

1. May 22-27: The Priests' Retreat at the Renewal Center in Mabou with Bishop Gary Gordon.
2. June 6-8: The General Assembly will take place at Port Hawkesbury. The theme for this year will be "Death to New Life", especially considering issues connected with funerals.

## **Update on Youth Events**

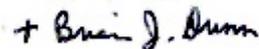
Here is a short update on what has been happening over the past few months in Youth Ministry. The NET retreat team provided 4 retreats during the month of March in Margaree, Cheticamp, Port Hood, and Sydney Mines. Many young people heard the Gospel message in a fun and interactive way. Many have responded about how much these retreats have effected their lives. In the last 2 months, Nolan has been working on outreach and communications. The "Diocese of Antigonish Youth" social media pages have been effective in sending out information on events and keeping people connected. Clare Bekkers (22) designed a new youth Logo. Outreach to the young adult community has been the most fruitful endeavour in the last 2 months, e.g., offering floor hockey for high school and young adults, playing weekly trivia, getting together for meals such as wing night, brunch after mass, all contributing to the formation of a little faith community. Many young people who have a desire to come back to church have joined them and have had a positive experience within Christian community.

Nolan is working on a summer baseball event, and a trip to Steubenville Atlantic. Steubenville will be a wonderful opportunity for young people to experience the larger church. He continues to be involved with Challenge weekends, weekly events, spending time and growing in relationship, youth group activities and events, answering messages, hearing the struggles of youth in school, family life and faith. Nolan continues to be a man of faith, grateful for the little victories of each day, nurturing the seeds of goodness and seeds of new life and enthusiastic about what the Lord has in store for the next month.

## **Closing**

As I mentioned in an earlier letter, my sister Ann is suffering from cancer and is in the process of receiving chemo. She has had chemo and radiation before for different cancers and has done well. I ask that you remember her and her family as we deal with this cross. As we continue to celebrate Easter, let's remember that the message and the experience of Christ is the force that softens hearts, dispels evil, and transforms people's lives.

Sincerely in Christ,



† Brian Joseph Dunn  
Bishop of Antigonish