



Ecclesia

The Newsletter of the Catholic Diocese of Pembroke

May 2021

The call to spiritual renewal

*“Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the **renewal** of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.”*
—(Romans 12:2)

In May 2020, at a vigil organized by the Catholic Charismatic Renewal International Service (CHARIS), Pope Francis shared a message about where the Church needs to be in light of the global pandemic. He spoke of the need to build “a more just, more equitable, more Christian society” that will bring the “pandemic of poverty” to an end.

“All the suffering will have been useless if we do not build together a more just, more equitable, more Christian society, not in name, but in reality, a reality that leads us to a Christian behavior.”

In this spirit, we embark as a Diocese to rediscover and renew our common mission of proclaiming the Gospel through the spiritual and pastoral renewal of our clergy, the religious and lay faithful, and our parishes, including families and youth, young adults, seniors and the elderly.

Baptism in the Holy Spirit; Christian Unity; service of the poor

Bishop Guy Desrochers

These three dimensions, as you can now imagine, will affect all Church movements, all religious communities, ecclesial associations or organizations. They are all called to work in this direction, according to the Holy Father’s desire. In stages, of course! The first stage is a lucid look at our contemporary reality in order to better discern and then plan our pastoral and evangelizing interventions (See, Judge, Act)!

And given that we are now embarking on a great evangelization project in our Diocese of Pembroke, why not initiate it by integrating these three realities from the very beginning? Are we all going to have to conform and become “charismatics” according to the right or wrong interpretations we make of the term, in order to fulfill the Holy Father’s desires? My answer to this question is yes and no.

“Yes”, because we need to be better trained in the ways of welcoming the coming of the Holy Spirit in our daily lives. We do this by cultivating charity, fidelity, purity, prayer and humility. These virtues must form a whole, otherwise the Spirit will be absent from our most beautiful apostolates or projects. These ways of inviting the coming of the Spirit into our hearts will allow us to welcome the various gifts that the Spirit will want to communicate to us in order to build his Church; to evangelize better; to enter more into communion with our Christian brothers and sisters of various Christian denominations; and finally, to reach the most needy of our brothers and sisters (on the material and/or spiritual levels) and to assist the most needy in a concrete way.

But I also say “no,” because it is not a question of desiring only to “receive or possess” so-called “charismatic” gifts, or of seeking to conform by servile obedience to the Holy Father’s desire, for example, by learning to repeat prayer formulas mechanically or intellectually, or by reciting acts of faith learned by heart, or by performing actions without true interiority. The important thing is not to say: “I am charismatic because I have this or that gift,” but rather to say: “I am baptized in the Holy Spirit, because I maintain a daily loving relationship with Jesus through my moments of prayer and solitude, and because I try to live the virtues of charity, fidelity, purity and humility. All of these dispositions allow me to welcome the gifts that the Spirit will communicate to me in order to fulfill my mission as a Christian; that is why I also desire to establish ecumenical relationships with my Christian brothers and

sisters, without forgetting to commit myself to serve the poorest in my community.”

I conclude my reflection by inviting us all to contemplate Mary, Mother of Jesus and our Mother, as a model of a woman baptized in the Holy Spirit. In her, the spirit of recollection was intense; very intense. She knew how to recollect herself in God even in her ordinary activities. And her great joy was undoubtedly to be able to spend her solitary moments in silent contemplation, but never to the detriment of charity, which I imagine often led her (as it happens to all of us) to leave her solitude in order to show kindness or patience to anyone who approached her. Let us not doubt that “she who is full of grace” always held love of neighbor as the highest priority of her spiritual life, to the point of leaving her most beautiful meditations without hesitation when an opportunity for charity presented itself. “Leaving God for God”, said a great spiritual woman, following the example of Mother Teresa of Calcutta, who always saw God in her neighbor. May Mary become our model when it comes to listening to and welcoming the Holy Spirit in our daily lives. May she grant us, through her powerful intercession, to persevere and remain faithful to the end. Those are the signs that dwell in the heart, mind and soul of the person who is truly “baptized in the Holy Spirit.”



Image of stained-glass window portraying the Holy Spirit.
<http://stpetersbasilica.info/Altars/Cathedral/Cathedral.htm>

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Pope Francis creates a new ecclesial entity called CHARIS

ICCRS, FCCCA, CHARIS, does that mean anything to you? Probably not! And yet, it is worth being well informed about it, because a new entity created by Pope Francis has seen the light of day a few years ago and proposes to vivify and stimulate in depth the spiritual and evangelizing dimension of the whole Catholic Church. Have I succeeded in capturing your attention?

On June 8, 2019, Pope Francis delivered a speech to many representatives of the Charismatic Renewal gathered in Rome from June 6 to 8. Referring to the idea that Pope Saint Paul VI had shared with the participants of the III International Congress of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal in 1975, he told them that the Charismatic Renewal is “an opportunity for the Church.”

Indeed, Saint Paul VI had affirmed in 1975 that “the Church and the world need more than ever before that the wonder of Pentecost be continued in history (...) Nothing is more necessary in such an increasingly secularized world than the witness of that ‘spiritual renewal’ which we see the Holy Spirit stirring up today in the most diverse regions and environments.” (Address of Pope Paul VI to the participants in the Third International Congress of Catholic Charismatic Renewal, Friday, May 19, 1975).

At the meeting held in Rome on June 8, 2019, Pope Francis also thanked ICCRS (International Catholic Charismatic Renewal Services) and the Catholic Fraternity for having “paved the way” and for having “allowed CHARIS (...) to be a reality today.” But what is the purpose of this new entity called CHARIS, and why does the Holy Father Francis consider it essential for the vitality of the Catholic Church? The following are excerpts from an interview conducted by Vatican News with Fr. Awi and Mr. Jean-Luc Moens in 2018, which allow us to understand the purpose and role of the new entity:

VN – On December 8, 2018, the Dicastery for the Laity, Family and Life erected a new service for the current of grace that is the Catholic Charismatic Renewal. This service is called CHARIS, an acronym for Catholic Charismatic Renewal International Service. (VN = Vatican News)

Fr. Awi – CHARIS is called to serve all the expressions of the current of grace that is the Charismatic Renewal. Its statutes will come into force on June 9, 2019, the Solemnity of Pentecost. On the same day, the Catholic Fraternity of the Charismatic Communities of the Covenant (still called Catholic Fraternity) and ICCRS (International Catholic Charismatic Renewal Services) will definitively cease their activities. It is important to note that CHARIS is not the result of the merger of these two organizations, but a brand-new service that inaugurates a new stage in the life of the International Catholic Charismatic Renewal. I believe that after Pentecost, the newness will manifest itself more and more clearly. It should also be noted that CHARIS is not an organization of government but a service of communion, according to the express will of the Holy Father.

VN – How is this new service structured?

Fr. Awi – CHARIS is placed under the responsibility of a Moderator, assisted by a Council called International Service of Communion, composed of 18 persons from all over the world. Some of them are the expression of the different continents while others represent the different realities of the Charismatic Renewal. For this first mandate, all the members were appointed by the Dicastery for the Laity, Family and Life.

The first moderator is Jean-Luc Moens, a married layman, father of a family, who has been involved in the Charismatic Renewal for more than 45 years. Father [now Cardinal]

Raniero Cantalamessa, OFM Cap, Preacher of the Pontifical Household, is the first Ecclesiastical Assistant according to the Holy Father’s desire.

The Pope strongly desired that the Holy See create CHARIS so that the Charismatic Renewal and the whole Church may know that the Charismatic Renewal fully belongs to the universal Church.

One of the essential aspects that the Holy Father wanted to highlight is undoubtedly the importance of communion, that is, unity in diversity. CHARIS is at the service of all the charismatic realities of the world, and none of them has priority over the others. In no country can any community, group, organization or movement claim to lead the Catholic Charismatic Renewal.

VN – CHARIS is a new service. Can you explain what is new about it?

Jean-Luc Moens – (...) The Statutes of CHARIS emphasize three dimensions: the diffusion of the Baptism in the Holy Spirit, Christian unity, and service of the poor. These dimensions are at the service of evangelization, in which the Holy Father calls the Renewal to participate and to which he is committed.

The diffusion of baptism in the Spirit may not seem like a new fact. This is what the Charismatic Renewal has been doing since its birth. What is really new today is that the Pope himself asks that the baptism in the Holy Spirit be known throughout the Church. He has done so on several occasions in a very clear manner. It is a new step for the Charismatic Renewal, a challenge that must be taken up in the service of the universal Church.

Pope Francis also exhorts the Charismatic Renewal to return to its ecumenical roots, that is, to work dynamically for Christian unity. This is something that was very present at the birth of the Charismatic Renewal and which in many places has been gradually set aside. The Pope asks us to bring it back to the forefront.

Service of the poor is not new, either. What is new, however, is to encourage explicitly the “charismatics” to serve the poor and needy. This should not surprise us: the Holy Spirit is love. It is normal, therefore, that those who want to depend totally on Him should be witnesses of love. That is why service of the poor is at the heart of the Renewal.

The three dimensions I have just emphasized are naturally included in the call to evangelization that is addressed to the entire Charismatic Renewal. Baptism in the Spirit is the experience of Pentecost that puts the apostles on mission. Compassion and charity give new strength to evangelization because “by this all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another” (Jn 13:35). Christian unity is also part of the challenge of mission because Jesus calls us to it: “That they may be one so that the world may believe” (Jn 17:21).

For the first time also, we have a young woman under 30 years of age on the team of the International Communion Service of CHARIS. She represents young people from all over the world because young people are also protagonists of the International Charismatic Renewal. And they are a priority for CHARIS.

From Bishop Guy’s Chronicle



Message from the Bishop

Dear brother priests, deacons, religious and faithful,

In consideration of the ending of my first pastoral year, I'd like to outline some of the important works and initiatives we have undertaken for the good of our diocese since my official installation on Saturday, July 3, 2020. These works and initiatives were all founded on a long-term missionary dream for the greater spiritual good of all people who are part of our diocese. Over time, once the spiritual and financial renewal plan has been designed and approved by each deanery, our evangelization project could ultimately lead us to redesign the actual geographical configuration of our parishes and contribute to adjusting them to the present needs and reality of our Church. The future of our local churches depends on the success of this missionary project already underway. That is why all of you are urgently needed to become part of this evangelization endeavour, in whatever way you wish or can contribute to its deployment, each in your own special way.

As many of you already know, an evangelization team was created a few months ago. Ten people are actively part of it, including clergy and lay faithful. Although we all have the same goal and will follow the same objectives, each one has a distinct talent and capacity and will work on various aspects of the evangelization and spiritual renewal project, which is meant not only for those who practice their faith, but also for those who are absent from our Christian communities. With your collaboration, we will all need to think outside the box and become creative and proactive in these times of pandemic. Evangelization is not necessarily all about accomplishing complicated and difficult tasks or activities that require much reflection and strategy, but it can also become most effective when we carry out very simple spiritual or corporal works of mercy, which can actually touch people's hearts and sometimes even change people's lives. If you have any suggestions as to how you would like to contribute personally to this evangelization project, please let us know by contacting the Diocesan Centre.

Here are a few initiatives that we have recently planned and initiated to support our long-term project:

- A Project Manager was hired under contract a few months ago and is now working with an inspection and assessment firm (under contract) to inspect and assess all of our churches and other buildings and properties. This work is very important because it will help a given

pastoral region or deanery to reflect and plan for its future throughout the whole evangelization process. The Project Manager will also help pastors and parishes to present and follow up on major renovation projects, which in turn will relieve the pastors of some of the administrative work, and in doing so, will free them to accomplish more pastoral and missionary work.

- Pastoral zones are now called "deaneries". The head of the deanery is chaired by the dean, who has been elected as such by his brother priests who are part of the deanery. New statutes describing his role and tasks, and working in relation with the Evangelization Team, have been approved and sent to all. This new structure will contribute to more effective communication and pastoral initiatives between the Team and the clergy and faithful. This is an important structure that will help the missionary project to begin and to reach out to all faithful and to those who are absent from our communities.
- A cemetery director has been hired under contract to help all the various staff and volunteers of our diocese who work for our different cemeteries (in Quebec and in Ontario) to form and unite them as a team, while establishing a new consolidated financial program that will facilitate the work for all. This, too, will reduce unnecessary duplication of complicated administrative work done by the many different administrators of our cemeteries. This initiative will improve and simplify the planning and decision-making during the evangelization project.
- A Pastoral Coordinator has been hired to lead and form our Evangelization Team and to coordinate all the different pastoral and catechetical activities undertaken by the diocese. He is also an expert in forming and helping out pastors and parishioners to become a true missionary and spiritually renewed parish. Let us welcome him as a God-sent gift!
- Lastly, you are now invited to recite the daily and official prayer composed by the Evangelization Team for the success of the evangelization project of the diocese. Some of our members will also be working actively to start prayer groups and various spiritual activities in each deanery.

To conclude, I wish to thank all of you for your generous and zealous collaboration in this stimulating project that can unite us all, especially in these difficult times where many are feeling the wounds of isolation and depression. As I keep repeating to many lately: COVID is not a time to become passive and to wait and simply pray for it to

pass. In reality, it's an opportunity! It's a time to become even more missionary through our prayers and actions; a time to become more creative and proactive in order to continue the important evangelization mission Jesus has confided to all his disciples, whether we are members of clergy, religious orders or lay faithful.

Throughout this exceptional year that our Holy Father, Pope Francis, has dedicated to our great Saint Joseph, may God bless all of you through his powerful intercession, dear people of God.

+ Guy Desrochers, C.M.

**Yours truly in Christ our Redeemer,
Guy Desrochers, C.Ss.R., Bishop of Pembroke**

Almighty God and Father,

We give you thanks for the gift of your Son, given to us in Word and Sacrament, and for the many blessings and graces that you have poured out upon the Diocese of Pembroke.

Increase in us a longing for you, form us into your holy image and unite us into one Body.

Lord Jesus, support our communities in search of renewal so that we may rediscover the Gospel in all its freshness.

Bless and strengthen our marriages and families, and renew our clergy and religious.

Enlighten us with your Holy Spirit, to illuminate any darkness that is around us.

Give us your Heart of Mercy, a heart that seeks the lost, ministers to the suffering, touches the lonely, and calls disciples into deeper relationship with you.

Show us today who along our path needs you, and bestow upon us the courage of faithful witness in our words and actions.

All praise and glory be to You, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, God forever and ever. Amen.

Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us.

St. Joseph, pray for us.

St. Columbkille, pray for us.



Ecclesia

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Parish Profile

St. Michael, Douglas

Parishioners at St. Michael in Douglas continue to embrace their faith with passion, just as their descendents did when they first arrived to the region so many years ago.

As early as 1828, Scottish settlers established themselves in the Douglas area, formerly known as Third Chute. By 1842, Catholic immigrants had settled in the area.

Father John McNulty of Mount St. Patrick began to make regular visits to the faithful in 1843. He oversaw the construction of a log chapel on government land. By 1850, Douglas was part of the Diocese of Bytown. A year later, Bishop Joseph-Bruno Guigues made his visit first to the community that now included some 50 Catholic families.

Father McNulty would continue his duties until 1852 when he was re-assigned to another diocese. Father James Strain of Ireland would become the first resident pastor in 1853, in addition to being assigned to missions in Cormac (Lake Clear), Eganville and Osceola. Father Strain upheld his responsibilities to all communities until his retirement to the United States in 1859. His successor was Father Michael Byrne who chose to reside in Eganville, which resulted in Douglas becoming a mission for the next 19 years.

A stone church was built, dedicated to St. Michael the Archangel on February 14, 1864. Again, Bishop Guigues was on hand for the occasion. Further interior work followed in the years to come, including the addition of pews, belfry and gallery by 1869.

Bishop Guigues' successor, Bishop Joseph-Thomas Duhamel, visited Douglas in 1878. Now with some 70 Catholic families, the local populace pleaded for their own resident priest. Shortly afterwards, Father E.J. Stenson was assigned as the new pastor. In turn, parishioners saw to the construction of a presbytery for Father Stenson. He served there for two years.

With further population growth, construction of a larger church began in 1886, later consecrated by Bishop Narcisse Zephirin Lorraine on June 27, 1889. Father Marion was the architect and general supervisor of the project. It was also around this time that the first separate school was built, again, under the guidance of Father Marion.

Father Marion briefly departed the parish in 1900 due to ill health, but returned the year after to resume his priestly duties. Upon his return, members of the parish presented him with a set of vestments in recognition of his 50th year of service in the priesthood. Due to declining health, he retired in 1905, but continued to reside in Douglas until his death in 1920.

Father J.J. Quilty became parish priest on October 1, 1905. He would see to the construction of a new presbytery that was completed in 1907. As a result of this, the old presbytery was rebuilt and became a convent.

By 1921, further modifications to the church were made. The building was enlarged and lengthened, and a shrine dedicated to St. Theres of Lisieux was built in the sacristy.

A 150-acre tract of land at Mink Lake was acquired by the parish in 1923. This was done primarily to ensure a future supply of wood for the church, but was also used for summer recreation.

Also, the parishioners donated a cottage on the land to Father Quilty in honour of his silver jubilee.

By 1942, Father Quilty's health began to deteriorate. He passed away on October 13, 1944 at the Pembroke General Hospital. His funeral at St. Michael's was one of the largest funerals ever attended, which was no surprise given his 39 years of service to the parish. He was interned at the parish cemetery.

In 1978, a centennial celebration was held at the parish since the first permanent resident pastor. In January of that year, both Bishop William J. Smith and Bishop Joseph Raymond



Windle and a dozen priests participated in a special Mass of Thanksgiving, followed by a social gathering at the parish hall. A second celebration was in July of that same year.

In the following decades, parishioners have continued to oversee to the needs of their beloved church. In doing so, their actions are a testament to their devotion to God and faith community.

Currently, Father Michael Lund serves as parish priest.

"I haven't been at this parish long, and much of that time has been marked by the lockdown and COVID-19 regulations, but I have nonetheless enjoyed my time here," said Father Lund, who was assigned to St. Michael's in October of 2019.

"This is my first solo assignment, making it a source of both joys and challenges. There is a deep faith here among the parishioners, a desire for God, and I feel blessed to be able to serve these people. One of my favourite moments of the last year and a half was the Rorate Mass we celebrated in Advent. Mass was said before dawn, lit only by candlelight. It was a beautiful way to prepare for Christ's birth, and I was impressed with how many people came out for the celebration."



65th Anniversary: Father Joseph Legree

This year marks the 65th anniversary of the ordination of Father Joseph C. Legree to the priesthood—years dedicated to his faith and a love of history.

Born in 1930, he grew up in Douglas and attended St. Michael's Catholic School there, followed by St. Patrick's College in Ottawa and the Grand Seminary in Montreal where he studied Theology from 1952–1956. He was ordained by Bishop William J. Smith at St. Michael's parish in his native Douglas on the June 3, 1956.

From the summer of 1956 until the spring of 1969, Father Legree served as a parochial vicar/assistant, administrator and parish priest at various parishes across the diocese.

From 1972 to 1990, Father Legree was parish priest in Combermere, where he is fondly remembered by many to this day. During that time he travelled with busloads of pilgrims from Combermere to Le sanctuaire Notre-Dame-du-Cap in Trois-Rivières eight times.

In the 1970s his path took a twist when Bishop J.R. Windle invited Father Legree to update the history of the Diocese of Pembroke. It was a huge task, but Father Legree was up to the challenge. For six years, he travelled to the parishes throughout the diocese pouring through records and compiling the content for *Lift Up Your Hearts*, which was published in 1988 and became both his living legacy and a gift to future generations.

The foreword, written by Bishop Windle, was completely accurate in stating, "It will be invaluable for those students of history and all who are interested in the story of our past. It will be unrivalled in precise detail. For years to come it will be a source of unequalled opportunity for many to appreciate the hopes, the tears, the trials, as well as the triumphs of our past."

To this day, the book remains an unique source of historical information about our diocese.

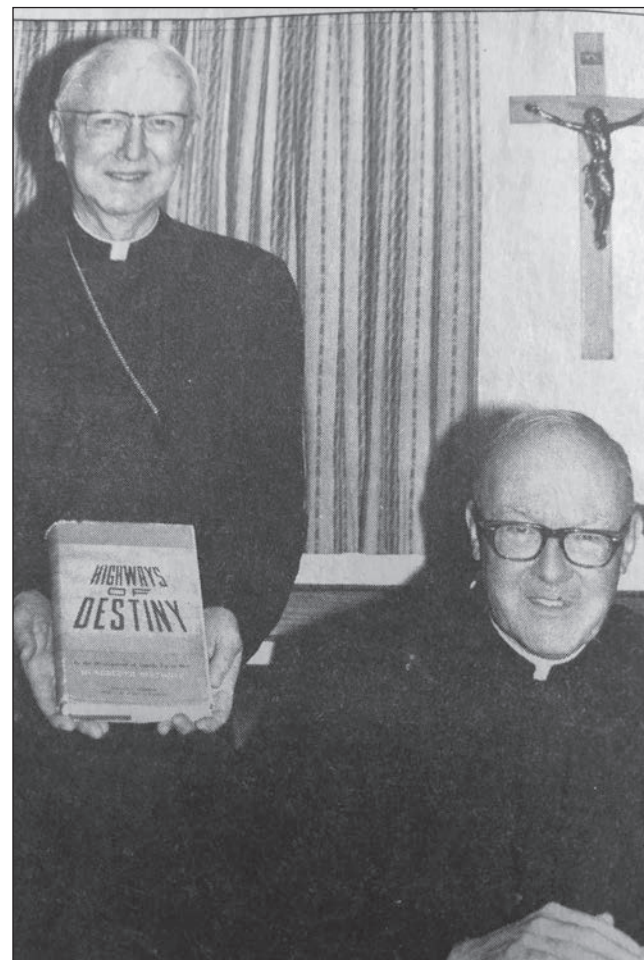
Father Legree was also involved with and fondly remembers his time with the Catholic Youth Organization. "We wanted to provide opportunities for our youth to meet and interact with other Catholic youth... It was an achievement for us, getting all the youth together," he once stated.

Despite retiring in 2007, Father Legree continued to celebrate Mass, and officiate funerals and weddings until May 2013.

His advice to others over the years has always been that maintaining a deep faith in God is essential. "Keep your faith, even though there will be some days that seem dark and upsetting."

"The Lord is with you, he is never far from you in times of doubt. He's the one that can help, provide strength and consolation in such times."

Father Legree now resides at Marianhill in Pembroke.



Bishop Joseph R. Windle and Father Legree.



Father Legree's ordination.



Father Legree in 1995.



40th Anniversary: Father David May

This May will mark the 40th anniversary of the ordination of Father David May to the priesthood, serving with Madonna House Apostolate.

“I was born in Salisbury, Maryland, USA, where my mother’s family was from,” shared Father May. “My father was from Detroit, Michigan, and his parents were both Canadian, from the Windsor area and from between Ottawa and Montreal. Except for three years or so in Detroit, I grew up in Maryland.”

Active with the church throughout his youth, it was the foundation from which would grow a desire to explore a deeper relationship with God.

“I was a student in the parish school from grades 3 to 8,” said Father May.

“I was always active in the parish, as an altar boy, and later as head of a youth group. Because I was seeking something deeper, I attended daily Mass when I was 19 and older, very unusual for a student during that time period (1970-72).”

Accompanying him throughout most of those years was the thought of serving God in the priesthood.

“I first had the idea as a small child of 8 years old, and it stayed with me off and on for a long time,” said Father May.

“When I dropped out of university in 1972 in my fourth year, one reason for doing so was to discern if I was called to serve as a priest. Lots of people had encouraged me in that direction through the years.”

His search would lead him to Madonna House Apostolate in Combermere where he would acknowledge that God was calling him to serve.

“I first spent time there as a working guest from November 1972 to April 1973,” said Father May.

“During that time I met Catherine Doherty, who deeply impressed me with her faith in God and long years of dedicated, suffering service for the poor. I also found a good spiritual director there, Father Bob Pelton, who was of immense help to me in working through the questions I had.”

“By the time that visit was coming to an end, I was clear about being called to the priesthood, and the only question left was where I was called to serve: either in my home diocese, or at Madonna House. There followed a summer of intense prayer as I discerned this question, finished off my university degree, and went around my home diocese talking to various priests.”

“However, at one point I had a very powerful dream about serving the poor, and since that moment I have known I had a call to the Madonna House community. So, I returned in September 1973, became an applicant

a few months later, and made first promises on August 15, 1974.”

He pursued his studies in Theology at St. Paul’s Seminary in Ottawa and was ordained on May 16, 1981, in Holy Canadian Martyrs Parish in Combermere.

“After serving for about nine months in a parish in our diocese—St. Anne’s in Mattawa, I returned to Madonna House and have spent most of my life as a priest serving with the community in Combermere.”

“Apart from brief visits to our missions here and there, I was assigned to our training centre in Combermere, where I served as editor of our newspaper, Restoration, for 12 years, and a director of formation for 10. That brings us to 1996, when, after 15 years of being a priest, I was assigned to our house in Robin Hood’s Bay, North Yorkshire, England for 2½ years. Since then, I’ve been back in Combermere, where I served as Director-General of priests for 12 years, and throughout all that time, was also involved in a lot of spiritual direction. Since 2016, I’ve been living in a poustinia (a Russian word meaning ‘desert’) on our island, where I pray and fast for the community and the world for three days a week, and rejoin the community the other four days.”

Accompanying those in search of God’s love and his overseas ventures have been particular highlights for Father May.

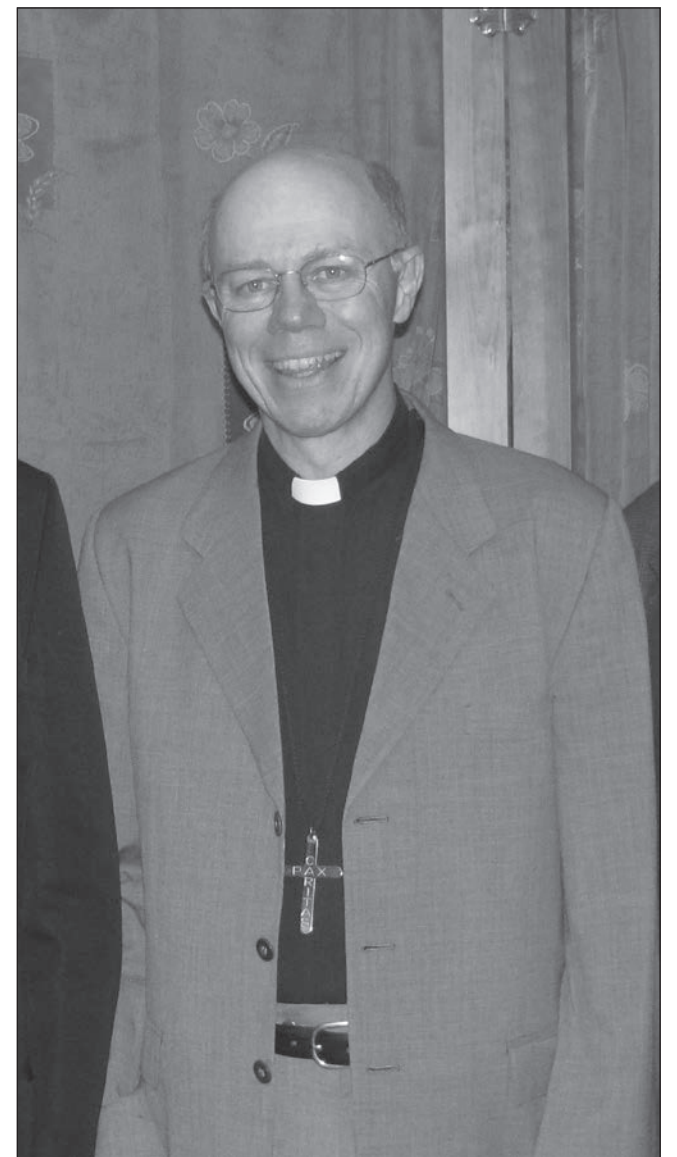
“Whenever I’ve seen someone come to know the Lord and His love for us, that is the greatest of joys,” said Father May.

“Spiritual direction is a privileged window opening unto this, and I am grateful to the Lord for being able to journey with people on their pilgrimage to and with God. I also greatly enjoyed living in Robin Hood’s Bay in England; my ancestors on my mother’s side came from that part of the world to America, and it is an area of great and dramatic beauty that spoke deeply to my soul.”

“Finally, traveling to Russia a couple of times to meet our friends there and to share our spirit from Catherine has been a way of touching our spiritual roots in the community and of bringing, as a gift back to people there, the treasures of the spiritual life we learned from our foundress.”

When asked to put into words the spiritual fulfillment he receives from serving God throughout the past years, Father May was kind enough to share a very intimate story that describes the serenity that fills his heart.

“My burning question when I first came to Madonna House at the age of 21 concerned the suffering of innocent people and how our God of love could permit such a thing,” said Father May.



“After 2 or 3 years with the community, I was serving as a layman making cheese at our farm. As I got up one morning to make cheese, I suddenly realized in the depths of my heart that Jesus, too, had been innocent and had shared our suffering to the full.”

“That day, as I worked alone making the cheese, I seemed to see him looking at me from the Cross. His eyes - in my imagination - were filled with compassion, suffering, and a sense of deep peace and royal victory, as he looked at me. He seemed to be saying: ‘David, give me your anger, your bitterness, your pain and sorrow, and I will give you what you see in my eyes.’”

“I have never forgotten that day or that grace from the Lord, and have basically had a deep peace in my heart, not without hard days and difficult struggles now and again. Having met Christ in this way, I’ve spent my life trying to bear witness to this love. Nothing could be more fulfilling than receiving such a gift and having the opportunity to share it with others. This is what serving God as a priest has meant for me.”



Anxiety is not a Choice How You Live Your Life Is

Psychological and Spiritual Reflections on Coping with the Pandemic and Other Big Stressors

Dr Len Gignac, Psychologist

March 19, 2021

The idea that anxiety and even fear is not a choice may be, at first, startling. The fear of contracting COVID-19 certainly triggered a lot of this discomfort, and people have had to make some difficult choices about how to deal with it all. Like it or not, the truth is that pain and suffering are part of life. Mental suffering like fear/anxiety are also experienced in varying degrees at different times. It is important to distinguish between normal fear/anxiety and that which threaten our threshold of tolerance and begins to run our lives.

Fear and anxiety are normal emotions and actually serve important roles of keeping us safe and alive. They are natural and not signs of weakness. Everything that goes on in the mind and body has the prime directive of keeping us safe. This primary purpose is automatic and hard-wired, so we do not have to learn for example, to duck from a hazardous object that flies over head. Normal fear and anxiety can also help us to plan for the future, like prompting us to make sure we have enough food and heat in our home.

All emotions are important, psychologically speaking, because they inform us about what is going on with us. There are no good or bad emotions, they just are. Naturally, we prefer to have the more pleasant ones. But they are a package deal. Research suggests that when we try to mute or resist the uncomfortable ones, we risk muting the pleasant ones as well. That is serious because we may be robbing ourselves of a richer life and causing more personal suffering.

When we are experiencing difficult times, we are likely to experience unpleasant emotions. These show up without our invitation, often with accompanying troublesome thoughts, that are not invited either. What we do to manage or regulate these disturbing emotions and thoughts will frequently determine the degree of mental suffering.

There is an extraordinarily strong human drive (and instinct) in us to control these very troubling emotions and thoughts by fighting and resisting, avoiding and escaping and/or passively resigning ourselves to them. You may know these by the neurobiological systems of fight, flight and freeze. Unfortunately, many self-help books provide strategies that encourage fighting and avoiding, with the unfortunate result that uncomfortable symptoms persist and often gain strength. There needs to be a healthier way. A way that supports both psychological maturity and spiritual growth.

COVID-19 is a serious matter. However, the over-attention to the almost unending news about it has resulted in some serious psychological effects. The normal fear/anxiety to help us be safe has often gone beyond our threshold of tolerance resulting in exaggerated and harmful symptoms. We have witnessed social unrest, people feeling isolation, blaming and withdrawing from one another. Most of these disturbing actions are efforts to exercise control over fear. The result is psychological, social and spiritual suffering. Without awareness of what is happening and what is driving it allows these outcomes to continue to the detriment of all.

Why is it so important to develop better approaches to coping with troublesome thoughts and emotions that threaten to cross our threshold of tolerance?

Trying to control strong troublesome symptoms by fighting/resisting or avoiding them often result in chronic psychological difficulties which in turn threaten physical and even spiritual health. Studies in psychoimmunology suggest that the immune system's

ability to overcome the attack of viruses and any disease threat is severely weakened by excessive stress/anxiety/fear/depression. The attempts to control strong emotional symptoms may also result in avoidance as evidenced in addictions of all sorts. Suicidal thoughts and breakdown of relationships are also observed. Our spiritual health may also suffer. It is very difficult to feel close to God and to experience his love when we are putting most of our efforts in containing our over anxiousness and depression.

It is healthy to remember:

Life is challenging because pain and suffering are inevitable.

There are benefits that may come from suffering.

Thoughts and emotions come and go and escape control.

We have choices NO MATTER WHAT.

"Everything can be taken from a man but one thing; the last of the human freedoms—to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one's own way".
– (Victor Frankl – Man's search for Meaning)

There is lots about life we cannot control and that can be frightening. That is why we keep trying. Great comfort comes from knowing that no matter the situation we still have the freedom to choose. Of course, we may be limited by our life circumstance. For instance, we cannot personally choose to stop the pandemic or wipe it away like it is not happening. Victor Frankl recognized the importance of the personal freedom of choice when he was a prisoner at Auschwitz during WWII. What he learned saved him from the death of despair. While he could not change his outward fate, he could choose to adopt the attitude that no one, no matter how evil, could snatch away his self-hood, his soul, his spirit. This gave him inner strength to persevere. His acceptance of his unchosen suffering led him to the realization that he had a choice not to be run by the evil around him. He placed life into his daily suffering and had hope.

Holy Scripture reminds us of God's love and desire for us:

"For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare, not for evil, to you are future and a hope".
– (Jeremiah 29:11)

Frankl credits his suffering with this life-giving perspective:

"Man's inner strength may raise him above his outward fate".
–(Man's search for Meaning)

Frankl's choice to accept his situation was not passive resignation but rather an active choice to abandon the urge to control and to compassionately accept himself. He made an active decision to stop fighting and resisting his suffering in order to follow what is valued most—true freedom. Like the serenity prayer—true freedom comes not from trying to control things we cannot, by flight (avoidance), fight (resistance) or freezing (shut down).

"Between stimulus and response there is a space. In that space is our power to choose our response. In our response is our growth and our freedom".
– (Man's search for Meaning)

continued...



A Question asked of us all:

“What would my life be like if I did not spend all my energy fighting and resisting my suffering, my stress, my troublesome thoughts, and feelings?”

That place of Freedom of Choice

Fear that threatens our window of tolerance also threatens to inhibit our peace and freedom, and that is very frightening. Winning back freedom comes not from trying to change things or people to gain more control, but rather focusing on the values cherished and the person one wants to be. For a Christian, it means being a person completely in line with God’s will. Faith and practice are critical.

The insights contained in “Patris Corde” an Apostolic letter on St. Joseph by Pope Francis (2020) shed light on the space of true freedom and how best to deal with fear that threatens our window of tolerance.

It is suggested that St. Joseph’s acceptance and experience of true freedom are neither based on a clear understanding of what is happening nor on being led by his racing thoughts, and feelings. For St. Joseph in the high stress situation involving whether to take Mary as his wife, an internal recognition followed by acceptance reconciled what he knew and what he did not know. He was a just man and knew where he stood in the sight of God. His openness of not “perfectly knowing” and controlling allowed the Holy Spirit to impart the gift of fortitude in the reality of the moment of decision. In

other words, St. Joseph accepts the discomfort of unknowing, relinquishes the need to control, and is reassured that he is doing God’s will. What is important here is that his acceptance did not do away with the discomfort of fear and anxiety, but it did make it more tolerable. It could be said that his acceptance allowed him to be “more comfortable” with discomfort. He chose life! He did not choose avoidance even when it may have been the more comfortable path.

What to Do:

Consider a philosophy of life—an attitude—that works for embracing life, not just reacting to it, no matter the situation you find yourself. This is most often not the wide path—but the narrow road. Allow the emotion like fear to inform your life and not run it. Be willing to be in that space and it will not take you over – beyond your threshold of tolerance. Acceptance, openness and abandonment of the need to control allows the Holy Spirit to give that all important gift of fortitude which provides sufficient spiritual resources to face and even grow in the face of any stressor.

With this in mind we can earnestly and sincerely pray:

“Lord, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can and the wisdom to know the difference”.

(Serenity Prayer)

New catechesis resource addresses 21st Century issues

The new Directory for Catechesis, by the Pontifical Council for the Promotion of the New Evangelization, was released in June 2020 and has been available for order in both official languages in Canada since last year.

Common to the General Catechetical Directory (1971) and the General Directory for Catechesis (1997) that preceded it, the Directory for Catechesis (2020) focuses on the goals and tasks of catechesis (religious formation and education). However, the new document places particular emphasis on the important relationship between evangelization and catechesis as a response to the realities of the 21st Century addressing contemporary issues such as sex, gender and medical advancements. It also focuses on advancements in digital communications and the need for evangelization at all stages of an individual’s ongoing catechetical formation. This is known as “kerygmatic catechesis”.

“Catechesis is an essential part of the broader process of renewal that the Church is called to bring about in order to be faithful to the command of Jesus Christ to proclaim always and everywhere his Gospel (cf Mt 28:19). Catechesis participates according to its own nature in the effort of evangelization, in order that the faith may be supported by an ongoing maturation and express itself in a way of life that must characterize the very being of the disciple of Christ. Because of this, catechesis is related to the liturgy and to charity in making evident the essential unity of the new life which springs forth from Baptism” (cf. Directory for Catechesis, p. 10).

Archbishop Fisichella is president of the Pontifical Council for the Promotion of the New Evangelization, which is responsible for the new edition. “The new Directory for Catechesis offers the fundamental theological-pastoral principles and some general orientations which are relevant for the practice of catechesis in our time,” Archbishop Rino Fisichella wrote in the introduction to the directory. According to the Archbishop, the guiding criterion for the writing of the new edition was deepening the Church’s understanding of the role of catechesis in the area of evangelization.

The Directory (2020) will be particularly useful for Bishops, priests, deacons, consecrated persons and lay people who are directly involved in the work of evangelization and catechesis at the diocesan level, and may also be of interest to Eastern Catholic eparchies. It will be an indispensable aid for pastoral planning with key descriptions of evangelization, kerygmatic catechesis and pastoral conversion to missionary discipleship.

Several parishes throughout the diocese have the new directory on hand for their catechists who are involved in passing on the faith at the parish. Copies can be ordered through the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops Publications by calling 1-800-769-1147 or e-mail publi@ccc.ca

DIRECTORY FOR CATECHESIS



Pontifical Council for the
Promotion of the New Evangelization



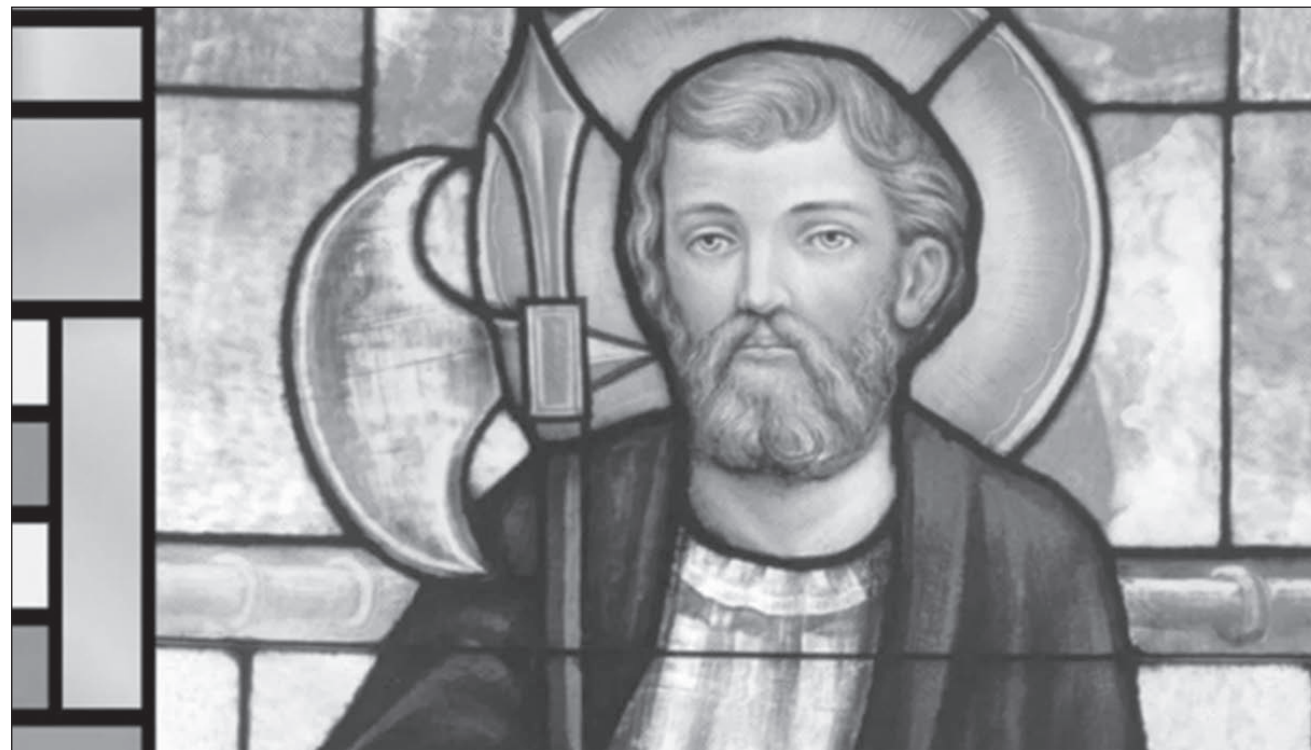
Saint profile

Saint Matthias

This great Saint was the disciple chosen to replace Judas Iscariot as one of the Twelve Apostles, but sadly he is sometimes overlooked among the Saints. In the Book of Acts 1; 15-26, we read in the days after the Ascension, ‘In those days Peter stood up among the believers (together the crowd numbered about 120 people) and said, “Friends, the scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit through David foretold concerning Judas, who became a guide for those who arrested Jesus—for he was numbered among us and was allotted his share in this ministry. For it is written in the book of Psalms ‘Let his homestead become desolate and let there be no one to live in it; and Let another take his position of overseer. So, one of the men who have accompanied us throughout the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John until the day he was taken up from us, one of these must become a witness with us to his resurrection.” So they proposed two, Joseph called Barsabbas, who was also known as Justus, and Matthias. Then they prayed and said, “Lord you know everyone’s heart. Show us which one of these two you have chosen to take the place in this ministry and apostleship from which Judas turned aside to go to his own place.” And they cast lots, and the lot fell on Matthias; and he was added to the eleven apostles.’ This great calling of this Apostle is unique in that his appointment was not made personally by Jesus who had already ascended to heaven, and it was made before the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the early church.

In searching the scriptures, Saint Matthias is not mentioned by name anywhere else in the New Testament. We know that Apostle Saint Matthias was born in Bethlehem of the Tribe of Judah and his name means Gift of God. From his early childhood he studied the Law of God under the guidance of Saint Simeon the God receiver. When the Lord Jesus Christ revealed himself to the world, Saint Matthias believed in Him as the Messiah, and followed constantly after Him and was numbered among the Seventy, whom the Lord sent two by two to go before him.

After the descent of the Holy Spirit, the Apostle Saint Matthias preached the Gospel at Jerusalem and in Judea



together with the other Apostles (Acts 6:2,8:14). From Jerusalem he went with the Apostles Peter and Andrew to Syrian Antioch, and was in the Cappadocian City of Tium and Sinope. It was there that the Apostle Matthias was locked into prison, from which he was miraculously freed by St. Andrew, the first called by Jesus.

The Apostle Matthias journeyed after this to Amasea, a city on the shore of the sea. During a three-year journey with the Apostle Andrew, St. Matthias was with him at Edessa and Sebaste. According to Church tradition, he was preaching at Pontine Ethiopia (at present, Western Georgia) and Macedonia. In his preaching he would emphasize the importance of self-control in order to experience the peace that God intends. Saint Matthias said, “people must subordinate their physical desires to their spiritual desires.” In his honest preaching he was frequently subjected to deadly threats and was stoned to death at Colchis in 80 A.D.

It is claimed that the remains of Saint Matthias the Apostle are interred in the Abbey of Saint Matthias, Trier, Germany, brought there through Empress Helena of Constantinople, mother of Emperor Constantine I (the Great). Also some relics are said to be in Saint Mary Major in Rome.

Saint Matthias’ feast day was included in the Roman calendar in the 11th century and celebrated on the sixth day to the Calends of March (February 24 usually, but February 25 in leap years). It was transferred to May 14 with the Reform of the Roman Catholic calendar of Saints in 1969, so as not to celebrate his feast day in Lent but, instead, in Eastertide close to the Solemnity of the Ascension, to mark the event after which the Acts of the Apostles recount that Matthias was selected to be ranked with the Twelve Apostles.

It has been said that Saint Matthias’ Day is the luckiest day of the year, because Matthias was chosen by lots to replace Judas Iscariot. This great Saint is the Patron Saint for reformed alcoholics, carpenters, tailors, against alcoholism and smallpox. Now knowing more about this great Saint let us ask him to intercede for us as we pray:

O God, who assigned Saint Matthias a place in the College of Apostles, grant through his intercession, that rejoicing at how your love has been allotted to us, we may merit to be numbered among the elect. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen



Catechists' Day: November 7, 2020

By Sister Sheila Whelan

Once again, Holy Name of Jesus Parish welcomed a couple dozen catechists from the English sector of the Diocese to a very practical study session. The presenter for the day was Cathy Black, a retired primary teacher from Our Lady of Fatima school and parish in Renfrew.

In the midst of the COVID-19 restrictions, we gathered in the parish hall for morning prayer in the form of Liturgy of the Hours. Our recently installed Bishop, Most Rev. Guy Desrochers, CSsR, addressed the gathering and to everyone's delight, was able to spend the entire day with us. For most of us, this was our first opportunity to meet with him.

Cathy based her presentation on the present practice in her parish and her experience in working with young children, their parents and the local catechists in preparing for the reception of the Sacraments for the first time. This may vary from one parish to another.

She began by briefly outlining her own journey as a catechist and the importance of supporting faith development. Parents are the first teachers of the faith to their children and for many it is a daunting task. Catechists must accept people on their faith journey *where they are* and then ignite in them

the desire to build a closer relationship with God by fully participating in the sacramental preparation. Their mission is to nurture the faith connection for all participants with love and compassion.

The process of registration and outlining expectations for both parents and children was covered and then we were treated to some very important basics in holding the attention of all the children, a reminder that time needs to be incorporated into the sessions for regular body movement.

At the end of the day, some points which were reinforced for me were:

- It is a challenge to find parishioners willing to become catechists.
- Catechists do not need to hold special credentials.
- Catechists and parents often express a deeper understanding/awareness of their own relationship with God.
- We are not training mini-theologians, but are trying to excite them about God and their relationship with God as they grow in faith through the Sacraments.

Appreciation was expressed to Cathy for her very concrete presentation about catechising young people including children with special needs. We all benefited from her wisdom and caring way.

New members in our faith

By Deacon Adrien Chaput

On the Most Holy of Nights, the celebration of the Easter Vigil at St. Columbkille's Cathedral, on Saturday April 3, 2021, was a most joyful occasion. Two new members were welcomed into our Catholic family with Bishop Guy Desrochers presiding.

John Forrest was fully initiated into the Catholic faith through the Sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation and Holy Communion, and Marguerite Baker made her Profession of faith and received the Sacrament of Confirmation and Holy Eucharist.

Their reception into the Church followed a period of study, prayer and discernment that began in October 2020, through the process called the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults, commonly called the RCIA.

The RCIA team, along with participants, meets on a weekly basis with other Catholics to study, pray and discern as they explore the Catholic faith. This journey of prayer, study and preparation is key to building a solid foundation for our faith lives and to understanding more about the Catholic faith, so we know what we are saying 'yes' to and what Catholics truly believe.

We congratulate and welcome these new members into our Catholic family of faith and assure them of our continued prayers and support.

Anyone who may be interested in RCIA can contact Deacon Adrien Chaput at 613-732-7933 ext. 206 or dcadrienchaput@pembrokedioocese.com if you are in the Pembroke Deanery. RCIA also exists in other parishes throughout Pembroke Diocese through which others have chosen to enter into full Communion with the Catholic Church. For



On April 3, John Forrest (front row, second from left) and Marguerite Baker (far right) were welcomed into the Catholic Faith at St. Columbkille's Cathedral with Bishop Guy Desrochers presiding.

all other Deaneries in the Diocese, please contact the pastor of the church in your area to help you find the RCIA program nearest to you. Or please contact Deacon Adrien who is always there to assist in any way.



Sisters of St. Joseph celebrate 100 years in the Diocese of Pembroke

Words will never be able to translate the lasting impact that the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Joseph (CSJ) of Pembroke have made in our community. Their dedication to providing education, health care and pastoral services to others is a testament to their passion to serve others where needed.

This August, the CSJ of Pembroke will celebrate the 100th anniversary of the establishment of their branch in our diocese, which was formed on August 25, 1921 at the request of Bishop Patrick Thomas Ryan. With the current pandemic, no formal celebrations have been scheduled to date.

“Bishop Ryan who presided over the destiny of the Pembroke Diocese from 1916-1937 had a dream that every child in the Diocese would have access to a Catholic education, no matter how small and remote the area might be,” said Sister Mary McGuire.

“Consequently, many Sisters were dispatched to Catholic schools in the area. We, as a community, embraced his vision.”

Approximately 27 Sisters were dispatched from their convent in Peterborough. A farm house in the west end of the city was purchased to accommodate the Sisters.

“Bishop Ryan purchased the property and coordinated all of the needed renovations and expenses to house the Sisters of St. Joseph at this location. He renamed the property ‘St. Joseph’s-on-the-Lake’,” said Sister McGuire. The Motherhouse was eventually constructed in 1953 and would become their home base from then on.

For those entering the congregation, a rigid schedule was adhered to.

“I entered the Congregation on September 8, 1955 with three other women,” said Sister McGuire. “We were called postulants for six months. At that time the rules were very strict. At the beginning it was like a culture shock.”

The daily routine began at 5:30 a.m. –

- Rise at 5:30 a.m.
- 6:15 a.m. - In Chapel for morning prayer
- 7:00 a.m. - Mass
- After Mass - Silent breakfast followed by teachers going out to various schools and the Postulants and novices were assigned to different chores within the Motherhouse.
- 9:30 a.m. - We gathered for Teachings by the Novice Mistress. These included our history, Charism, Community Life, church Teachings, Scripture, and Vows, to name a few.
- 12:00 noon - Silent lunch was followed by an hour of recreation. During this time we were allowed to talk, swim, walk in the woods, in winter we built a rink in the back yard, it was fun skating, playing hockey, shoveling the rink off, etc.

- The afternoon consisted of silent reflection, spiritual reading and communal prayer.
- 5:30 p.m. - Dinner was in silence, followed by an hour of recreation. By this time we had bonded as a Community and enjoyed these times of fun and laughter.
- 9:00 p.m. was called “The Grand Silence” – until morning – no one spoke during this time.

Although it was the need to provide education that brought the Sisters to our diocese, they would also make a positive impact in area health care services.

On October 25, 1960, St. Francis Memorial Hospital in Barry’s Bay was opened under the administration of the CSJ of Pembroke. Sister Mary Emma and six other Sisters were placed in charge of Administration and Nursing and Technical operations.

In 1968, the Sisters were asked to staff St. Joseph’s Manor in Campbell’s Bay, Quebec.

Valley Manor, a nine-bed long-term care facility, was opened in May 1978. Sister Rosenda Brady was named Administrator of the facility at that time.

Outside our diocese, the CSJ were called upon by the Oblate Fathers in Peru to provide medical assistance to the poor in the Chincha Alta region.

“These courageous Sisters sailed toward the unknown from New York on April 17, 1964,” said Sister McGuire. “Their baggage consisted of 4 trunks and 24 wooden crates packed with medical and surgical supplies for the proposed clinic. They arrived in Peru on May 4 and were welcomed by the Oblate Fathers.”

“The home of the Sisters was a simple yet adequate flat of rooms over the parish clinic. The first months were spent on studying Spanish, unpacking supplies, becoming acquainted with the people and setting up the clinic. There were many challenges, as they struggled with the obstacles presented as they tried to become established in a strange land. The Sisters showed great resilience and trust in the abundance of God’s love as they witnessed the poverty, the elderly, the needy and the sick. Truly these were pioneer women.”

Varied were the roles they served throughout the years. In education, they were teachers and principals. In the medical field, they were administrators, nurses, lab and x-ray technicians, and provided instruction to nursing students. They oversaw an orphanage for parentless children. They’re social work included delivering home-care, providing food and resources to food banks and advocating for the poor. Within our spiritual community they were choir directors, delivered pastoral care, sacristans, spiritual direction, parish visits, and working with Parish Councils and the Catholic Women’s League (CWL). They also established the Stillpoint House of



In 2011, the Sisters of St. Joseph and their associates joined together to celebrate the order’s co-foundress, Mother St. John Fontbonne.

Prayer in Burnstown that provides a sanctuary for quiet spiritual reflection to this day.

“For being such a small number, by the grace of God, we were able to do extraordinary things and display an incredible resilience,” said Sister McGuire. “Our preferential option for the education, health care and spiritual needs of rural communities as well as for the needs of the poor, the orphans, the youth at risk, the frail and the elderly led us to take on ministries in 45 localities in Canada and abroad.”

But make no mistake, as busy as the Sisters were, time was provided to take a break from their duties.

“The Sisters usually took two weeks of vacation time annually. Sometimes they visited family, at other times they travelled,” said Sister McGuire.

Like many of their fellow religious orders, the CSJ are confronting the fact that new members are not as plentiful as they once were. But for women who are contemplating a life in service to God, Sister McGuire provided some guidance on how to proceed.

“The phrase ‘Come and See’ would be a first step,” she said. “The Director of Vocations would invite the person to visit, have a meal together, take part in prayer and community times. Depending whether the person had free time, she would be invited to live with the Sisters for a time, or even on weekends to get to know their spirit and spirituality. She would be encouraged to get involved with a spiritual director. The Novice Director would keep in close touch with her.”

End of an era

In 2020, the Motherhouse was sold and the Sisters relocated—some within and some beyond our diocese. However, on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of their presence in our diocese, it’s certain that a life focused on prayer and the work of God will continue no matter where they are.



Memoriam: Father Robert Pelton

This past October 16th, members of Madonna House Apostolate and the greater Diocese of Pembroke mourned the passing of Father Robert Pelton at the age of 85. He was the first layman of Madonna House to be ordained into the priesthood.

“Father Pelton’s going home is the end of a real era in the life of Madonna House,” said Father Bob Wild during his homily at the wake service for Father Pelton.

“After Catherine’s (Doherty) death and Father Cal’s (John Callahan) death, Our Lady gave us some really extraordinary people to continue guiding Madonna House in the absence of our founders: Jean Fox, Jim Guinan, Albert Osterberger and Fr. Bob.”

Father Pelton was born in Cleveland, Ohio on October 1, 1935, where he attended both elementary and secondary schools in the area. He joined the Methodist Church when he was 12 years old, but discontinued practising his faith around the age of 16. He would go on to attend Yale University in New Haven, Connecticut. He graduated from there in 1957, magna cum laude.

Prior to his graduation, he visited Madonna House in 1956 where an acquaintance had become a member. So profound was the experience that he was baptized into the Roman Catholic Faith during the Easter season that very same year.

With his university studies completed, Father Pelton returned to Madonna House and entered St. Jerome’s College Seminary in Kitchener, Ontario, in 1958. He then moved on to St. Mary’s Seminary and University School of Theology in Baltimore, Maryland.

He was ordained into the priesthood on May 31, 1963, by Bishop William Joseph Smith at Canadian Martyrs Church in Combermere. After serving in parishes in our diocese, Father Pelton would begin several more years of study. He first studied moral theology in Rome, then Islamic studies at McGill University in Montreal. In 1971, he studied and acquired a Master’s Degree in the History of Religions at the University of Chicago Divinity School, and a Ph.D. in 1974.

From 1975 to 1984, Father Pelton upheld commitments to courses, lectures and spiritual direction while embracing poustinia, a Russian style of hermitage involving both fasting and prayer.

After the passing, Father John Callahan in April of 1984, the priests of Madonna House chose Father Pelton as the new Director General of Priests. He held this title for the next 20 years.

“I can testify to the many burdens that he carried during those 20 years,” said Father Wild.

“I saw him in hundreds of hours of spiritual direction with people inside the community and outside. Some of you here had him for a spiritual director; I did myself for a number of years. I’m sure some of the people who came to the wake last night, to pay their final respects to him, were people he directed.”

Father Wild also made note of many enlightening homilies Father Pelton delivered.

“My sisters and brothers, one of the very great treasures we have from him are his



homilies. I’m sure we have hundreds of his homilies already transcribed and hundreds still more un-transcribed. In his homilies we have, in my estimation, some of the greatest insights about the Christian life and Madonna House after Catherine herself. It’s a tremendous treasure. But unfortunately, this treasure at the present time is hidden and largely forgotten. I have found in his homilies tremendous wisdom. I said to him after Mass one day, ‘You’re going to be remembered for a lot of things, but one of these things will be your homilies.’”

His final years were spent at Our Lady of Visitation in Madonna House, Combermere.

As Father David May of Madonna House recalled in the Madonna House publication, *Restoration*, Father Pelton was able to provide reassurance to those who place their faith in God’s love.

“As his life came nearer its end, I mentioned to him one day about some ongoing problems in the greater Church, in Madonna House, and in our society today, and he replied something like this: ‘God is in charge and he will take care of everything.’ I knew then, that whatever his suffering from illness would entail, at some deep place in his being he had come to a profound trust in God’s sure and loving hand guiding all things to good for those who love him.”

The Madonna House community would like to express their gratitude to Dr. Ray Dawes of Barry’s Bay for his attentive care for Father Pelton, particularly in the last years of his life, and to the Bayshore nurses and to all those who helped care for him in Our Lady of the Visitation.



Memoriam: Father Brady McNamara

This past March, Father Patrick Brady McNamara passed away in his 80th year, and his 52nd year of the priesthood. He will be remembered as someone who touched the hearts and changed the lives of many.

“Just as Jesus chose Peter, James, John and his other disciples, his invitation to priesthood echoed in the heart of Brady,” said Father Ryan Holly during his homily at the funeral for Father McNamara.

“This call came in a devout and caring family, strongly bonded to the faith and witness of the people, priests and religious of St. James Parish in Eganville. Family and parochial life in Eganville not only formed Brady as a person, disciple and priest, but it was there where he saw the importance of how a priest should care for his parish. It was in the Parish of St. James where we can say with certainty that Patrick Brady McNamara experienced the transfiguring experiences of encountering Christ sacramentally: in baptism, confession, holy communion and confirmation, and then in an irrevocable way on April 19, 1969 when he was forever configured to Jesus Christ the High Priest in sacred ordination.”

Father Grant Neville, a close friend to Father McNamara, told of when they first met.

“We met on a bus,” said Father Neville. “The bus would travel through all the little towns and pick people up, and that’s what it did with the seminarians. We had seminarians from Renfrew, Eganville, Killaloe, Barry’s Bay. We were teenagers on a journey together.”

Seminarian life was challenging. But having a fellow Ottawa Valley resident made these times much easier to navigate.

“Having good friends like Brady, and some of the other guys you met at the seminary, was essential,” said Father Neville.

“We were from the valley. There’s something really good about being Valley Boys. We had a lot in common; we loved sports. He never bragged about how good he was, but he was a really good athlete. He played first base in baseball and softball. You could throw a ball at him as hard as you could and Brady would stab that up without any problem at all. Whatever sport he took up, whether it was handball or tennis, Brady played it well.”

Father McNamara served in numerous parishes throughout the diocese. With each assignment, he devoted himself not only to the administration of the parish, but to getting to know those he served beyond the church walls.

“Fr. Mac’ embodied life as a parish priest,” said Father Holly.

“He pastored some of the smallest and largest parishes in our diocese, and loved them equally. A wise and prudent steward of the matters entrusted to his care, it was

the care of souls which occupied him the most. Being parochial in the best sense of the word also meant being a missionary in the confines of the parish. Father Mac could be found making his weekly visit to the school, shooting the breeze at the back of the flower shop in Renfrew, dropping by someone’s kitchen for a chat, or playing a game of cards. For him, mission territory was very close to home. Being so present among his people was how he came to know their needs, both materially and spiritually. It’s how he reconciled people to the Church after many years. He instinctively knew that evangelization required a stable, visible and regular priestly presence where it was needed most.”

It was in such interactions that Father McNamara grew to know parishioners, becoming acquainted with various aspects of their lives. Likewise, those who knew him well saw the depth of his personality, which could be amusing at times.

“For Father Brady, being set apart did not mean being better than, for his naturalness allowed him to minister and mix among all,” said Father Holly.

“He got to know the people of his parishes thoroughly, being able to rhyme off with great ease family connections and relatives. He knew who to talk to in the parish to get things done. He often had witty and affectionate nicknames for people, and would seek to disarm people with a remark. Ask him ‘*How are you doing Brady?*’ – ‘*Terrible!*’ he would quickly reply and wait to see your reaction. He could be mischievous when he wanted to. He could imitate people’s voices. Before call display on our phones, more than one of the brother priests fell victim to receiving a very serious and stern call from whom they thought was the bishop, but what was then followed by a deep-belly laugh.”

Father Holly also told of Father McNamara’s devotion to those who were of ill health or home bound.

“When following as Brady’s successor at Our Lady of Fatima, he invited me to do the customary walk-through of the church and rectory,” said Father Holly.

“He handed over keys and files, all the normal routine business of becoming a pastor. But to him the most important matter to be conveyed was the list of the sick and shut-in. He told me to hop into his vehicle and off we went so he could actually show me where they lived. Not only did Father Brady want me to know about the parish, he wanted me to know the parishioners. For several hours we combed the confines of the parish in Renfrew and Horton Township. Twenty-one years of his priestly life had been lived there. For every street there was a story, for every household there was helpful background, and for every name on the list there was a soul that needed solace. He paced hospital hallways at every hour of day and night to comfort the sick and



administer the sacraments, even when his own health was not the best. As towering and imposing as he could be, he won the hearts of children, as only a father could.”

Away from his duties, Father McNamara aspired to spend time with his fellow priests when possible.

“Priestly fraternity was not an option for Brady, but an imperative,” said Father Holly.

“There’s a reason why Jesus called his disciples to be together on the mountain top and in mission. Left to our own devices, the temptation to being lone-rangers not only weakens our response to the Lord’s call, but the effectiveness of how we carry out his will. To brother priests of all ages, Brady’s rectory – especially his porch in summer – was a refuge for a chat, a confession, a laugh, or just a place to watch the world go by. Brady knew when one of us needed a little bit of encouragement, a meal out together, or a reminder not to take ourselves too seriously.”

Father Neville echoed this, telling of the guidelines that were provided from elder members of the clergy.

“Every Wednesday you take your day off, unless you got a funeral, or there’s something going on that you can’t leave,” said Father Neville.

“Priests need priests. They drilled that into Brady and I. Those friendships were really important. When you were a young priest in a parish dealing with things, you didn’t know whether you were dealing with them right. It would really help you to look at it in a different light and maybe approach it differently. It was a tremendous support system, and Brady was a part of that. Brady was a guy you could sit and talk to. He would give you some good direction, or just listen.”

As much as our diocesan family will miss having Father McNamara with us, his devotion to his faith and those he served will not only endure for many years to come, but inspire us to better the lives of others as he did.

“Brady had a tremendous love for God, a tremendous love for the people, and a great love for the church” said Father Neville. “Brady was faithful to all three in a very strong way. He was just a good priest.”



Two charismatic prayer groups in the Diocese of Pembroke

By Greg and Mary Doyle

"You, Charismatic Renewal, have received a great gift from the Lord. You were born of the will of the Spirit as a current of grace in the Church and for the Church. This is your identity."

-Pope Francis, addressing the International CCR Conference, Rome, 2014.

When asked to write an article about two of the Charismatic prayer groups committed to meeting in Pembroke Diocese, we happily accepted. These two groups are the St. Casimir's Peace Prayer Group and the Spirit of the Living God Prayer Group.

You may already know of the St. Casimir's Peace Prayer Group, Round Lake Centre and area, because they've been meeting for nearly 45 years. That's since February of 1976! The only interruption has been this past year on account of COVID restrictions. The prayer groups do intend to start up again on Tuesday evenings as soon as possible.

Their present leader, Doreen Rankin, has been part of the Peace Prayer Group from the very beginning. She explained to us that initially, a number of parishioners occasionally attended the Pembroke prayer group, which had started in 1968 under the leadership of Sister Mary Rice and Sister Teresa Rice, both Sisters of St. Joseph. In 1976, the parish priest at St. Casimir's, Monsignor Ambrose Pick, gave his permission, blessing, and support for the parishioners to meet at St. Casimir's. The group members prayed that Jesus would come into their hearts and take over their lives. They all wanted "more" and were blessed because of it.

With the help of the Sisters of St. Joseph, Dr. Robert and Margaret Ploc from Deep River, and a number of other helpers, put together the first Life in the Spirit Seminar in 1976 and have never looked back.

Since its formation, the Peace Prayer Group has continued to be blessed and supported by all of their parish priests.

Over those many years, the group continued to meet on Tuesday evenings to sing, give praise and thanksgiving to the Lord, read and discuss the Scriptures and witness to the ways the Lord has been working in their lives. They are open to everyone, feel a freedom to express their concerns for themselves and others and to ask prayers for their needs and the needs of others. They have become what many would call "prayer warriors". They have witnessed answers to their prayers, as well as miracles (physical and emotional). The fellowship that has been taking place has allowed them to trust and

share their inmost needs, hurts and joys. Above all, they find peace and love.

All have experienced continual growth in the virtues of faith, hope and love. They have offered a number of Life in the Spirit Seminars over the years, and they hope to continue to do so well into the future. They are quick to volunteer to help in the parish and are eager to do so.

We have been privileged to experience their meetings from time to time and can vouch for their hospitality, their obvious surrendered openness to the Holy Spirit and their shared desire to serve God with great love.

The second group to mention here is the Spirit of the Living God Prayer Group, the one we belong to, which also began with "wanting more."

A question comes to mind as we write this article: Who is it that initiates a Charismatic Prayer Group or any other type of prayer group, for that matter? In reading this passage from Matthew 18: 19-20 we may have the answer to the question: *"Again I say to you, if two of you agree on earth about anything they ask, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them."*

It follows that if even just two or three people together express a desire to give God more praise, be more surrendered to His will, and show more gratitude to Him, a prayer group will be formed.

A prayer group could take on many formats, but like the members of the Peace Prayer Group, the Spirit of the Living God Prayer Group also wanted to worship through song and word, singing and praying aloud together, perhaps by praising in tongues and perhaps with raising of hands.

Each member of the group trusted they would be blessed through the Holy Spirit's action and that He would give whatever graces and charisms He chose to in order to nurture them and bless others through them.

In April 2017, seven of us from the Combermere area, with the permission and helpful guidance of Fr. John Lacey of Holy Canadian Martyrs, began meeting weekly.

"Mold us and fashion us, Lord, into Your image" became our constant prayer.

By September that year, others from the Barry's Bay, Wilno, and Killaloe area had joined. Together, we experienced a Life in the Spirit Seminar, using a DVD series available through Renewal Ministries. On the fifth night of the seminar, Fr. John Bosco Gali, OMI, and a small team from the Peace Prayer Group laid hands on each participant, asking the Holy Spirit to release graces and charisms upon those prayed for. This

is referred to as the baptism in the Holy Spirit, or, as it is more frequently called today, the release of the Holy Spirit. This was exactly what everyone needed, and all are forever grateful for the many graces and the varied charisms received that night.

As a group, we wanted to maintain our Catholic identity, and so we asked Fr. John Bosco Gali to act as our spiritual director. He joyfully accepted to do so. When he accepted a transfer to Poland in September 2018, the group asked Fr. Wilfried Lenius, a retired priest from the Toronto Archdiocese, to take over the position and he kindly accepted. A core group was formed to oversee the continuation of meetings and to communicate with Fr. Lenius. Further encouragement has been given to the group by our present parish priest, Fr. Justin Bertrand, a number of the Companions of the Cross, members of Madonna House, and many others.

It was decided that each prayer meeting would start with a decade of the Rosary, the Prayer to Our Lady of Combermere, the St. Michael's Prayer, the Litany to the Holy Spirit and a Prayer for Spiritual Gifts. These would be followed by songs of praise and worship, with moments of quiet reflection to hear and share a prophetic word, a Scripture passage, or an image. A number of members take turns at leading the weekly sessions and the music ministry. Thanks to the labour of love of a few group members, a songbook was also completed, licensed, and printed for use.

It was further agreed that there would be a weekly email update distributed, repeating the prophetic words, images and Scriptures received and shared during the meetings. This provides a source for contemplation, reflection, and discernment during the week.

On the Feast of the Assumption in 2019, the prayer group, joined by a number of the Peace Prayer Group members, formally consecrated themselves to Jesus through Mary, under the title of Our Lady of Combermere. Fr. David Linder of Madonna House, Fr. Wilf Lenius, and Fr. John Lacey witnessed this consecration.

Strengthened by the weekly prayer meetings, group members give thanks for the charisms given them by the Holy Spirit, as they joyfully participate in varied ministries within the Church and the community.

This year, with Pope Francis' recent proclamation of The Year of St. Joseph, many group members have also, individually, consecrated themselves to Jesus through St. Joseph. This is another great blessing.

continued...



A further help to the group has been to participate in conferences such as the Lift Jesus Higher Rally and annual conferences hosted by the Catholic Charismatic Renewal Services of Ontario (CCRSO.net).

During the COVID restrictions, the group has met online using Zoom and have confirmed that God can work through any means available, because He does! One advantage of the on-line meetings is that people in remote locations can easily participate as well.

Both prayer groups are currently being challenged by Pope Francis' words (June 2019), encouraging those in the Charismatic Renewal "to share baptism in the Holy Spirit with everyone in the Church."

Further, we appreciate and fully support the initiatives of Pope Francis and Bishop Desrochers as outlined in his chronicle on CHARIS (Jan. 26, 2021).

In closing, we pray with you for Pope Francis, Bishop Guy Desrochers, all priests, deacons, religious and laity of this diocese. May we wake each day to the challenges of the world around us with confidence in our Father's great love and mercy, in the saving power of Jesus and with complete surrender and openness to using the many gifts and charisms the Holy Spirit gives to each of us for the building up of His Church.

For more information, contact:

St Casimir's Peace Prayer Group, Round Lake - Doreen Rankin 613-757-2792

The Spirit of the Living God Prayer Group, via Zoom - Greg and Mary Doyle 613-756-6643

(Ecclesia invites other prayer groups in the diocese to send us your news.)

Reconciliation and Peace

By Father Ken O'Brien, Pastor of St. James the Less Parish, Eganville, Nativity of our Lady, Pikwakanagan

St. Ann's Parish, Cormac

It gives me great pleasure to have been asked to look at the topic of Reconciliation as celebrated in the Roman Catholic Church.

For those of us who were born as Roman Catholics, there was an order to the sacraments we celebrated in our lives. The order went as follows: Baptism, Confession, Holy Eucharist, Confirmation, Marriage, Holy Orders and Sacrament of the Sick (known before as Last Rites).

"On the evening of that first day of the week, when the Disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jews. Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!" After He said this He showed them His side.... Again Jesus said, "Peace be with You! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you." And with that He breathed on them and said. "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven: if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven."

John 20:19-23 (Youth Walk Bible)

This is the first time that we believers encounter Christ imparting to the Disciples as confessors, the right and privilege in His name, to forgive sins. That leads us to ask the question:

What is the part that the confessor (priest) has within the celebration of the sacrament?

He sits in place of Christ, becoming His ears, eyes and mouth, imparting Christ's forgiveness through the words of absolution.

The priest always remembers the examples that Christ used in the parables for forgiving: the women caught in adultery, the Prodigal Son, and many others. There

were no harsh words but rather gentleness, warmth and understanding. Likewise, within the Reconciliation Room or Confessional, the priest just offers a warm welcome, is a good listener, imparts sound advice and a helpful penance to help the person to grow more like Christ.

There are a few things we must do also, to prepare ourselves to celebrate Reconciliation and Peace.

Give yourself quiet time to prepare at home with a good examination of conscience, say a meaningful Act of Contrition to prepare to celebrate a good confession, and to do or pray the penance given you by the priest.

The Examination of conscience is time spent in quiet prayer each evening, looking over the day and then paying attention to the recurring injuries or spoken words of hurt that day, then trying to change for the better the next day.

Another way is to study the Ten Commandments. The first three commandments deal with my relationship with God (the Trinity). Do I spend time in prayer each day? Do I use the name of the Lord in praise? Do I keep Sunday (Saturday and/or Sunday) to celebrate Eucharist with the Christian Community? The last seven deal with my relationship with my family, the people at my place of work or the people on the street.

It is only after making a good examination of conscience that we are ready to celebrate our Reconciliation. Does this mean that if Mass is at 10:00 a.m., we try to go to Confession at 9:50 a.m.?

A much better way is to make an appointment with the priest and celebrate during the week with free, uninterrupted time in the same week, not making the sacrament look as being magical, but instead creating a careful, well-thought process of having a prayerful change of heart.

Any time that we have a discussion of the Sacrament of Reconciliation, there is always someone who wants to know the difference between Mortal and Venial sin.

Mortal sin is a very serious offense against God. It breaks our relationship with Him. We restore our love and friendship with God, by celebrating our honest confession of sin.

Venial sin is less serious sin against God and does not break our relationship with Him. It can be restored by praying an honest Act of Contrition.

For myself, on a personal note, the easiest way to handle the difference between these two kinds of sins is to be aware and conscious that any sin hurts, fractures or bruises my love relationship with God. It is sinful and serious. This way of thinking will drive the legalistic person crazy, but so be it! The reason being is that they live in a black-and-white world, with no time for being human.

For the rest of the world, we live in the grey, moving between black and white.

For a more developed explanation of these two sins you can refer to pages 390-393 in the Catechism of the Catholic Church.

Also in the Catechism, there is a very beautiful passage on the Sacred Scripture in celebrating this beautiful conversation and time with God. This could be a topic to discuss with your confessor if not already making it part of your celebration.

Each night as you reflect back on your day and realize that you sit in the presence of the Almighty, the best listener, the greatest talker, and above all the one who loves us, if we are willing to listen and act.



Priests, parishioners and parishes during pandemic time

by Fr. John N. Burchat, Episcopal Vicar

The full impact of the pandemic will be felt for years to come. For the past year, parish life has been affected in varying degrees because of ongoing governmental and regional decisions. The interruption, restriction and even temporary cancellation of church worship has brought about a great and unexpected time of trial for the Church. It has been a time of uncertainty, fear, illness, death and isolation. Many Catholics have been separated from sacramental life and the ongoing support of their parish communities. As the pandemic continues, it is not surprising that both clergy and laity are understandably feeling disheartened and worried. These were some of the feelings expressed by the priests of the diocese when they had a Zoom meeting with Bishop Desrochers at the beginning of the new year.

On the other hand, it was also noted that there was seldom resistance in most of the parishes of the diocese regarding the implementation of the protocols that enabled us to return to public gatherings for the liturgy and the sacraments. Fr. Pat Dobec, pastor St. Lawrence O'Toole parish in Barry's Bay, said he was "really impressed by the people who came together to form teams and take leadership so that parishioners would feel safe and welcomed" upon returning to church. Bishop Desrochers has also been appreciative of how well the priests have continued to do our pastoral work during the pandemic. He also recognizes that "we have been challenged in so many ways in not giving way to division in our parishes because of mask wearing and other conflicts that derive from the restrictions."

A number of priests have commented how the "simpler" liturgies have brought about a deeper spiritual awareness and appreciation of the gift of the Eucharist. In a new way, the pandemic has forced us to our knees with deeper prayer. It has also forced us to adapt and be creative in pastoral ministry and parish life with initiatives like: televised or recorded Masses, outdoor confessions and distribution of Holy Communion.

Fr. Kerry Brennan, pastor of St. Francis Xavier in Renfrew and Precious Blood in Calabogie, says well what

many priests have experienced: "The biggest challenge we experienced during the pandemic was keeping in contact with parishioners. We managed to do this through a Facebook page as well as online bulletins. We also made phone calls to many of our sick and shut-in parishioners. I think through this pandemic we have all discovered how social media plays such an important role in evangelization. I have found more people reaching out to help wherever they could, given the restrictions imposed by the pandemic if not physically, at least through social media."

There is one looming source of concern and stress for the priests: how many people will eventually never return to a regular practice of the faith and how will we be able to re-engage them in the days ahead? Are we seeing some of the "old ways" of doing pastoral ministry collapsing? What kind of renewal will be needed as we face new realities and pastoral challenges?

While some might still want to assess the prudence or even protest some of the decisions that have been made over the past year by civil authorities, we ought to have a perspective that appeals to another horizon: faith calls us to trust that God would not let us suffer this time of trial without divine strengthening and renewed spiritual purpose. The Holy Spirit can reveal to us the ever-present goodness of God and the nearness of our Risen Lord who repeatedly calls us to go out "into the deep" and proclaim the Good News, in good times and in bad, in sickness and health.

Fr. Brennan expresses his pastoral insight this way: "Perhaps through the pandemic we are seeing the mission of the church in a new way. As St. Paul wrote 'And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him' (Rm. 8:28). Paul is not saying that all things are good, just that God can work good through all things. Perhaps the good that God is working through this pandemic, is the awakening of the church we've all been praying for."

Prayer to St. Corona against the pandemic

Lord Jesus Christ, you came into this world for our salvation.

Look kindly on us now.

We pray that we and all those who serve you might be kept safe from this epidemic.

Heal those who are sick.

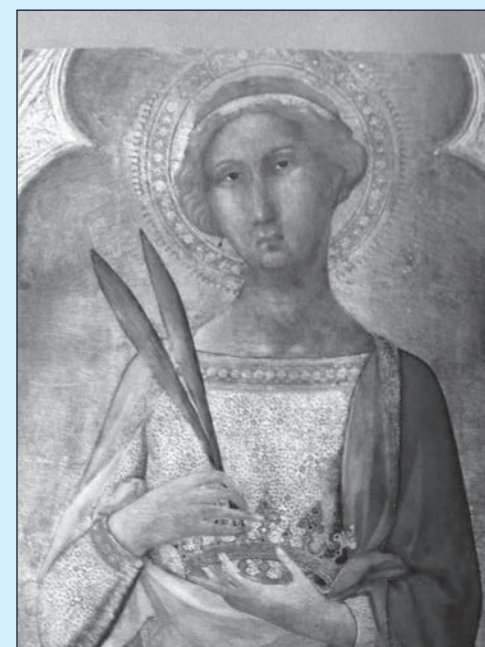
Comfort the suffering.

Bring back those who have gone astray, and above all, increase our faith, O Lord.

Give us the grace to follow you like the martyr St. Corona, who gave her life for the love of you, to take up our crosses daily without fear or hesitation.

Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the Living God, have mercy on us and on the whole world.

St. Corona, patroness of epidemic victims, pray for us.



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Getting to know the new RCCDSB Director of Education

Mark Searson took over the helm of the Renfrew County Catholic District School Board (RCCDSB) in January 2021, following the retirement of former Director of Education Jaimie Perry. Searson has deep family roots in Renfrew County and a life-long commitment to the Catholic faith.

Growing up in Ottawa, a young Searson already had a unique relationship with the church.

“My parents are both deaf, so American Sign Language is my first language. Being part of the Deaf community, we were very blessed to have a close relationship with Fr. Peter Monty who knew sign language. About once a month he would say Mass for the Catholic Deaf community in signed English. I had a chance to serve at that mass and that was a great experience growing up in that Deaf culture. When we didn’t have mass for the Deaf community, I would attend St. Augustine parish in Ottawa. At that time, the parish priest was Fr. Brendan O’Brien, so I got to altar serve for him, and later on he became the 6th Bishop of the Diocese of Pembroke.”

The opportunity to act as an educational interpreter for two Deaf students during his university days cemented his calling to teach.

Searson, along with wife Catherine, began his teaching career in Alberta at Christ the Redeemer School Division. They moved back in 2001 as they started a family, and he began working for the RCCDSB. He became a program leader at St. Joseph’s High School in Renfrew in 2002 and subsequently served as Principal at St. Joseph’s Catholic Elementary School in Calabogie, St. Joseph’s High School and Bishop Smith Catholic High School in Pembroke (2011) before becoming a Superintendent of Educational Services in 2013.

Searson shares that he loved teaching and loved being in the classroom, but early on in his career a few people “tapped him on the shoulder” to consider a role as program leader.

“I have been blessed in the sense that I have loved every role that I have had with the board and in education. I feel very blessed to have the journey I have had.”

Coming back to Renfrew County was a welcome return to his roots. In 1847 his family immigrated from Ireland and settled in the Township of Grattan, which is now in the Township of Bonnechere Valley. He built a home there on part of the original family homestead.

“My forefathers actually helped build St. James the Less parish in Eganville. So, we have a very deep connection to that parish. My family and I attend there, I am a eucharistic minister there, my wife is a lecturer there and all my children have altar served there. So there’s that strong connection.”

He and Catherine (who is a teacher in the RCCDSB) have four children who all attended elementary school at St. Michael’s Catholic School, Douglas and secondary school at St. Joseph’s High School in Renfrew.

Coming into his new role as Director, Searson set out three important themes to focus on:

- A sense of stability for the system (in the middle of a pandemic). “I feel lucky to have been part of the Board’s senior team as pandemic preparations were made and feel well placed to continue to steer the ship and ensure that we stay up to date.”
- To work in partnership with our Bishop’s call towards the new evangelization. “I really feel the Catholic school system can play a critical role.”
- Equity – ensuring that all students feel safe, secure and made in the likeness and image of Christ and are seen that way and feel welcomed and loved in our buildings.



Searson says the relationship between parish and school is fundamental to “who we are and what we do in Catholic education.”

“I truly believe the residents of Renfrew County are blessed because they’ve got some incredible school systems here, but what makes us different is Jesus Christ and the fact that we have a relationship with Christ and we try to ensure that all of our students and our staff can engage in a faith-based education and their faith journey can continue and be developed and formed while they’re at school. So to me, it’s absolutely critical – we realize the only way we can help in the formation a child’s faith is to ensure there is a strong, strong relationship with the parish, the family and parents, and the school. That trinity, as far as Catholic education is concerned, is very important.”

While he looks forward to a time in the future when the pandemic is hopefully in our rear-view mirror, Searson says, “Through the Grace of God and the Holy Spirit, there are some pretty powerful lessons that we’re learning and new learning we’re engaging in. I’m looking forward to leveraging all this new learning going forward. People say, ‘I can’t wait for old ways to return’ – and I can’t wait to be able to hug my father, be in social gatherings and pray in a packed church with a choir and organist and music and all those things – but having said that, all those pieces of technology we’ve been able to leverage and learn from – there’s a lot there that I want to ensure we continue to leverage – these new ways of teaching and learning can be very beneficial – we need to hang onto those pieces while returning to being socially close instead of physically distanced.”



100th anniversary of Most Holy Name of Jesus

The current pandemic may have dampened formal celebrations to mark the 100th anniversary of Most Holy Name of Jesus in Pembroke, but it can never extinguish the joy parish members have in their hearts at seeing their beloved church achieve such an incredible milestone.

“It is a celebration of joy and thanksgiving to God who made it possible that the first holy mass was celebrated on the Nativity of Our Lord Jesus Christ,” said Father Moses Nwosu.

“We are celebrating not only one hundred years of existence, but everything the parish has given to the Diocese of Pembroke and the people of God at large. We celebrate all the priests and religious originally from this parish; all those who were baptized, those who received the Sacrament of Matrimony and other Sacraments from this parish. Also, we celebrate all former pastors living and dead who together with their pastoral teams faithfully served this parish in good and bad times.”

Located in the west end of Pembroke on Trafalgar Road, the church was constructed in 1921. It was then known as St. John the Baptist and was a fully bilingual parish. In time, French services were transferred to the newly opened Paroisse St-Jean-Baptiste located on Isabella Street. In 1941, Most Holy Name of Jesus became the permanent name of the church.

Father Nwosu became parish priest on October 10th, 2019. Since then, he has received tremendous support from church members.

“Ever since then, parishioners have not ceased showing me their support at their various capacities: the choirs, readers, altar servers, extraordinary communion minister have been so amazing,” said Father Nwosu.

He made a special note of how parishioners not only rallied to provide assistance when needed during the Covid-19 outbreak, but to also ensure he never felt alone during these dark times.

“During the unprecedented pandemic outbreak, I was not left alone,” said Father Moses. “Many called me on weekly basis to know how I was doing. Both finance and liturgical committees were all behind me with various suggestions and advice on how we can navigate the parish activities while maintaining regulations from the government.”

Father Peter Proulx, who served as parish priest before Father Moses, was baptized at the church. His family has a deep connection to the parish.

“My mother’s family were part of the original founding of the church,” said Peter Proulx, whose uncle, Father Lorne Gauthier, also was ordained at the parish. “I grew up in a family that worshipped at that church. My grandfather literally worked on the construction of the building. That’s how intimate it is in our family.”

When he was assigned as parish priest, Father Proulx found himself serving parishioners he had known his entire life.

“Most of the people at Holy Name now are my peers,” said Father Proulx. “Some of the very active parishioners are people I grew up with. There was a real sense that I as clergy and they as lay people work together. My role in that unique position as pastor put me on an equal footing with my peers.”

“The other side of it is, a lot of the older people in the parish I was challenged to minister to, I would celebrate many funerals for these older people who were active members of the parish when I was growing up. I was connecting with families who would have known me as a much younger person. In their eyes I was always Little Peter, not Father Proulx. There was a sense of intimacy that was unique in all that.”

Father Proulx is not alone among members of the clergy in the diocese who call the parish home.

“I was baptized, made my first confession and first communion, confirmed and eventually ordained to the priesthood in Holy Name church,” said Father Patrick Blake. “As a student at Holy Name School I was taught by the Sisters of St Joseph. To the Sisters of St Joseph and the priests of the parish, I am deeply indebted for their prayers, encouragement and good example.”

Father Grant Neville was also a member of the parish in his youth.

“I was baptized at Holy Name, and I served as an altar boy,” said Father Neville, who told of the important impact attending church at Most Holy Name of Jesus had on his decision to join the priesthood.

“It was extremely important. The people there prayed for vocations, and we got a lot of vocations out of Holy Name. The priests that were there were guys that were very supportive and set good examples. One that stands out for me is Father Ken Bradley.”

“Father Bradley came in as a young priest when I was only in my early teens. When I was going up to serve mass he was sitting there and said ‘Hey, do you play ball?’ and he threw me a glove and we played ball. He coached hockey and softball. I got to see another side of the priesthood that I didn’t know about. I got to see his human side and his tremendous faith. The experiences really had an effect on me as a young person and thought maybe God is calling me to be a priest.”

A common challenge all parishes are facing in our diocese is raising funds required for renovations or upgrades. Parishioners at Most Holy Name of Jesus have aspired to ensure this is achieved.

“With recent renovation project under Father Proulx, we have succeeded in strengthening the building to be with us a long time,” said Larry Schruder, Chairperson of the Parish Finance and Property Committee.



Married at Most Holy Name of Jesus in 1973, Larry and his wife Helen have been active at the parish since their return to the community in 1988. This anniversary has provided focus in both what has been achieved in the past, and a resolve to preserve their church for the future.

“We look back to appreciate the amazing history of earlier parishioners because without the strong support, religious guidance and stewardship of these parishioners over the years, Helen and I would never had the experience of living in the strong faith community that this west-end church has provided to us and our family,” said Schruder.

“We reflect in somewhat disbelief that 100 years ago, it took only eight months for this magnificent building to go from a set of drawings to a completed structure in which families could celebrate Christmas Eve mass. As we look to the future, we feel a strong obligation to ensure the stewardship necessary to ensure that this building and the parish community that make it a church, will be here for a long time into the future.”

A prime example of the commitment of parishioners and their parish priest to their Christian faith was the sponsorship of Syrian refugees to our community, some whom have settled in the city of Pembroke. This endeavour was undertaken with the assistance of The Sisters of St. Joseph and The Visitation Sisters.

“The families have now branched out on their own, but the parishioners are very much involved with them,” said Father Proulx.

“It was the coming together of the three communities, which is a wonderful expression of church.”



Pope Francis proclaims Year of St. Joseph

To mark the occasion of the 150th anniversary of the declaration of St. Joseph as Patron of the Universal Church, Pope Francis has proclaimed a “Year of Saint Joseph” from December 8, 2020, to December 8, 2021.

Pope Francis highlighted that St. Joseph is a model for masculinity, courage, and humility. He describes St. Joseph, patron saint of workers, as a beloved father, a tender and loving father, an obedient father, an accepting father; a father who is creatively courageous, a working father, a father in the shadows. St. Joseph was, of course, the foster-father of Jesus, the Son of God.

During the worldwide COVID pandemic, Pope Francis noted that ordinary people, those who are not in the limelight, are “shaping the decisive events of our history,” and he said, “Each of us can discover in Joseph the man who goes unnoticed, a daily, discreet and hidden presence—an intercessor, a support and guide in times of trouble.”

Indulged acts during the Year of St. Joseph

- Meditate for at least 30 minutes on the Lord’s Prayer, or participate in a spiritual retreat of at least one day that includes a meditation on St. Joseph.
- Perform a spiritual or corporal work of mercy (i.e., selflessly serve someone in your family or community).

- Recite the Holy Rosary, or the Litany to St. Joseph, or the Akathist to St. Joseph, or any church-approved prayer or act of piety in honour of St. Joseph.
- Entrust your daily activity to the protection of St. Joseph and pray for the intercession of St. Joseph that those looking for work can find it, and that the dignity of everyone’s work be recognized.

Pope Francis encourages us all to pray this prayer to St. Joseph:

*Hail, Guardian of the Redeemer,
Spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary.
To you God entrusted his only Son;
in you Mary placed her trust;
with you Christ became man.*

*Blessed Joseph, to us too,
show yourself a father
and guide us in the path of life.
Obtain for us grace, mercy, and courage,
and defend us from every evil. Amen.*

For more information, go to Google and type, “patris corde english” or “patris corde français”.



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