



1 October 2011

Dear Pastors, Lay Pastoral Animators and Parishioners,

It has been a long time since I've written a monthly letter. A great deal has been happening in the past few months, both for the diocese and for me personally. While I cannot cover all the bases in this letter, let me share with you some of the news.

Youth Ministry and World Youth Day Madrid 2011

Our new youth ministry coordinator, Marie Cailliau, has been diligent in taking up the tasks in her new position as youth ministry coordinator for our archdiocese. She is calling together a youth committee, speaking in the deaneries, and making contact with those in our parishes and our Catholic schools who are doing front-line youth ministry.

A major event during the summer was the WYD in Spain in August. Our diocesan group was made up of 21 young people and adults. Our first few days there, called Days in the Diocese, were spent in the Diocese of Palma on the island of Mallorca. We were hosted there by the Little Sisters of the Poor, at their convent which is also a home for seniors. These first days acclimatized us to the Spanish culture and gave us a taste of the Church in Spain. We then went on to Madrid, the site of the major events. There were an estimated 1.5 million participants in the events of these days, the highlights being the gatherings with the Holy Father. The challenge of heat and crowds was countered by the abundant blessings of meeting so many young people with a strong faith and commitment to Jesus Christ and to the Church.

The next WYD was announced for Rio de Janeiro in Brazil in the summer of 2013. Taking account of the things we learned from this summer's experience, we are already working on our plans for Rio.

Office of Evangelization and Catechesis

With Sr. Georgette Payeur's retirement from the Lay Ministry Formation Program, we have made what are some very natural developments in that office in Peace River. What we are now calling the Office of Evangelization and Catechesis will work to promote programs of evangelization and catechesis throughout the diocese, and help to train those who will deliver these programs locally in the parishes. Sr. Louise Vanderploeg has agreed to take on the role of the first director. We are now in search of a part-time assistant to share the workload. You will notice an advertisement for this position in your bulletin and on our website.

The Faith Formation Committee, made up of representatives from across the archdiocese, continues to provide broad support for the faith formation programs in our communities.

Clergy Retreat

The clergy of the archdiocese benefitted once again from their annual retreat in September, at Providence Centre in Edmonton. The retreat director this year was Father Paul Paproski, OSB, a Benedictine monk from St. Peter's Abbey in Munster SK. During one of the evenings while we were there, we were treated to a visit from our six seminarians at St. Joseph's Seminary. It was inspiring and refreshing to meet these young men who are discerning a call to serve in our archdiocese in the future. This also gave them a chance to meet the clergy among whom they may one day exercise ministry.

Father Julien Benedict Mary

Father Julien Benedict Mary has requested to be incardinated into the Archdiocese of Grouard-McLennan. Incardination is the process by which a priest who has been ordained for a different diocese or religious congregation becomes a permanent member of another diocese. Originally from the Archdiocese of Pondicherry & Cuddalore in India, Father Julien has served our diocese since 2008 in the parishes of Sexsmith, Valleyview and Grimshaw, and the other parish communities attached to these.

If anyone in the diocese, knowing of Father Julien and his ministry, wishes to share with me their thoughts about his proposed permanent ministry in this archdiocese, I ask you do so in writing before December 1st, 2011.

Move to Grande Prairie

Many people I speak with assume that I have already moved to Grande Prairie, or ask when this is taking place. As I've said in previous letters, there are several elements to such a move which need attention before it will take place. I have put in place a steering committee that continues to look at several options for suitable office space and a residence, work these into a business plan, and mount a fundraising campaign for this project. It is expected that the fundraising will begin within the next few weeks. As more details are available, I will share these with you.

As I watch the farmers around the diocese harvest their crops, I am reminded how blessed we are in Canada and in Alberta. Despite the difficulties that we may face in life, and I know some of you face real trials, we are truly blessed to be here and to face those struggles where we live. During this Thanksgiving Weekend, let us truly be grateful to God for all that we've been given, and express our gratitude in our openness to others.

In Christ the Redeemer,

+ Gerard Pettipas, C.Ss.R.
Archbishop of Grouard-McLennan