NORTHERN LIGHT

THE OFFICIAL MAGAZINE OF THE ARCHDIOCESE OF GROUARD-McLENNAN



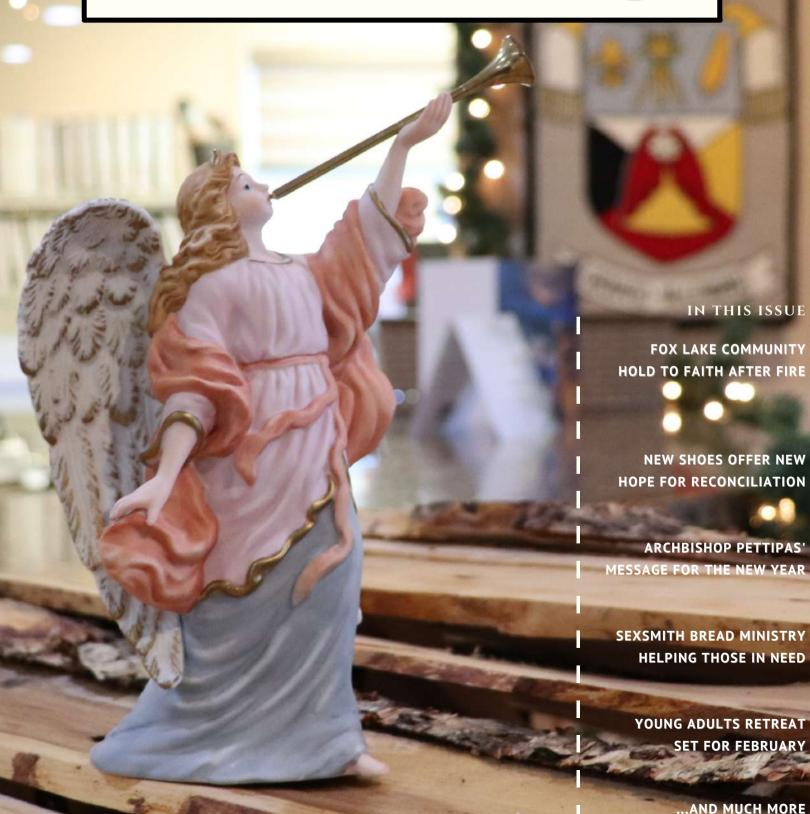


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Do you know of the many events, meetings, retreats and other things happening across our archdiocese each month?

Is there an event at your parish you would like to see shared with the wider archdiocesan community?



We're looking to grow our online calendar, making sure everyone in the archdiocese can stay inthe-know on the various archdiocesan, parish and church events in our region: www.archgm.ca/events/

If you want the events within your church community shared and promoted in this online calendar contact **Kyle** at **780-532-9766** or via e-mail: **comdirector.agm@outlook.com**

NEWS BULLETIN



New website for the Archdiocese underway

The Archdiocese is pleased to announce we are now in the beginning stages of building a new official website. We have developed a preliminary outline of what the new website will look like and some of its new features, including interactive timelines, blogs, a parish finder page and an interactive map of the whole archdiocese. We have signed on with a local design company and work will begin this January, with hopes to have the new website ready and online by the beginning of this summer.

If there are suggestions you have for how we can improve our website and what features you would like to see on it, please contact us at **comdirector.agm@outlook.com**.

The Catholic Archdiocese of Edmonton

Archbishop Richard Smith of Edmonton detailed the postponing of the Indigenous delegation to Rome at a press conference in late 2021.

Christmas message from His Grace

In his first-ever video Christmas address, Archbishop Pettipas reminds us that, no matter the struggles and trials of this past year, Christmas gives us the chance to remember the God of love who is the source of all our hope.

"This year has had its moments of struggle," Archbishop Pettipas said in the video address. "Among wildfires and floods, COVID and its restrictions, the legacy of Residential Schools and polarization in society in general, let us not loose sight of what brings us life. We were made for love, we were saved by love, we journey into 2022 with a hope that is born of love."

You can view his full message at our website - archgm.ca.



Rome delegation now expected in the spring

The planned delegation of Indigenous Canadians to Rome to meet with Pope Francis has been postponed. The group of First Nations, Metis and Inuit people were scheduled to meet with the Pope over the course of four days from Dec. 17-20. However, due to concerns around the spread of the Omicron COVID-19 variant and related restrictions, the delegation was postponed.

There are now hopes to reschedule the meetings for the early spring of 2022. Alongside the 27 official Indigenous delegates and the bishops, an unofficial delegation of about 150 Indigenous Catholics and others are also expected to be in Rome, according to CCCB president Bishop Raymond Poisson.

NEWS BULLETIN



Seminarians received as Candidates for Holy Orders

On the Feast of the Epiphany, Jan. 2, seminarians Thomas Wollis and Paul Edo-Aramunde were received as Candidates for Holy Orders by Archbishop Pettipas at St. John the Baptist Cathedral in McLennan. During the celebration, the seminarians made their professions of intent. A short video of their profession can be viewed online at

facebook.com/ArchGrouardMcLennan.

Please pray for our seminarians as they continue and persevere in their vocation!

Listening sessions for the Synod on Synodality

The Archdiocese is preparing a series of listening sessions for the upcoming Synod on Synodality in Rome. They will be held throughout the early months of 2022, and all people - active and non-active in our church communities and those on the peripheries - will be invited to take part. We ask you to join us in this process, to listen and share our experiences of the Church and the challenges we face.

The dates for these listening sessions will be announced in the near future, please routinely check with your pastor, or our website and Facebook, for those future dates and venues. If you would like to know more about the Synod on Synodality, visit our website **archgm.ca** and click "**Synod on Synodality**" from the menu.





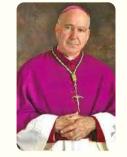
Camp St. Martin Retreat to be held in McLennan this February

The Camp St. Martin leadership team are holding a retreat of prayer and fellowship at St. John the Baptist Cathedral in McLennan, from Feb. 19-21. All current and past team members, alumni, and anyone interested in being part of the Camp St. Martin community are asked to register online and join.

This retreat weekend will be spent together in reflection and preparation for the upcoming camp season. Retreatents will be staying at the former archdiocese chancery building next door to the cathedral. Please check **facebook.com/Campstmartin** for the latest updates and find more info on **pg 24** of this magazine.



A NEW YEARS & EPIPHANY MESSAGE FROM THE ARCHBISHOP



Archbishop Gerard Pettipas, C.Ss.R

Dear Parishioners and Faithful of the Archdiocese...

Happy New Year! I wish you that, but more particularly, I wish you a Happy Epiphany! For it's really about Epiphany that I want to say a few things as we head into this new year of 2022.

You know, it's not only COVID and its effects -- it's other circumstances and realities as well that challenge us each day to be the positive and encouraging people that we know ourselves truly to be. These can seem like dark days, and lately very cold days as well! In the face of that, I want to share with you some Good News that the feast of the Epiphany holds for me, thanks especially to the writings of St. Leo the Great.

St. Leo the Great was pope from 440-461 – a long time ago. Reflecting on the event of the Epiphany – the visit of the wise men to the baby Jesus in the manger – Pope Leo had this to say: "... the star beckoned the three wise men out of their distant country and led them to recognize and adore the King of heaven and earth. The obedience of the star calls us to imitate its humble service: to be servants, as best we can, of the grace that invites everyone to find Christ. Dear friends, you must have the same zeal to be of help to one another; then, in the kingdom of God, to which faith and good works are the way, you will shine as children of the light ..."

The star of Bethlehem led the wise men to Jesus. The star helped them find their way in the dark. The star wasn't the magi's goal; their goal was to find Jesus! But the star lit the way through the darkness.



The nativity scene at our chancery office in Grande Prairie, showing the wise men who were led to the baby Jesus by the star of Bethlehem.

St. Leo is suggesting that we are like that star. Our goal in this time and place is to help others to find Jesus, the One who lifts us up and loves us. Strangely enough, except for our star, the sun, stars are only seen when the air around us is very dark. We can't see them at all when it is daylight. Only in the dark. When many seem lost and confused, we are called upon to lead them to the true Light, Jesus Christ. We carry that same light in our hearts, and by our words and actions we can lead others to Jesus. What an encouraging way to understand what we are to do – and be – in this time and place.

I wish all of you many blessings as we journey into 2022. May we find light for our own path, and light and joy for everyone we meet along the way. May you be blessed throughout 2022.

Yours sincerely in Christ the Redeemer,



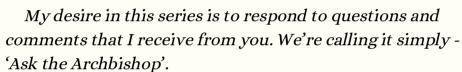




INTRODUCING A NEW VIDEO SERIES:

ASK THE ARCHBISHOP

Brothers and sisters of the Archdiocese, I want to share with you a resolution of mine for this new year. Many of you know that I customarily write a pastoral letter at the beginning of each month. Well, starting this year, I wish to propose instead a new video series for our archdiocese. We will produce a video, I hope each week, and distribute this throughout our archdiocese as well as anyone who wishes to receive it.





To take part in this series, send your questions to comdirector.agm@outlook.com or contact Kyle at 780-532-9766.





You can view the latest videos in this series, premiering in January, at **facebook.com/ArchGrouardMcLennan** or search "Archdiocese of Grouard-McLennan" on Youtube.

So if there's anything you've ever wanted to ask me, about my life as an archbishop, about our archdiocese, about our faith - this will be a great opportunity for you to do so. It is your questions, your concerns, your interests, that will really make these videos.

So I ask you to send to our communications officer Kyle Greenham any questions or comments that you would like me to address. He can be reached by phone at 780-532-9766 or via e-mail at comdirector.agm@outlook.com

We're not sure at this point how well this will work, and we won't know until we try it. So please, let us know if you are interested in this video series, and send us any topics that you want me to address. I will try my best to do so.

-Most Rev. Gerard Pettipas CSsR Archdiocese of Grouard-McLennan

Faith amid the flames

After their church was lost to a fire, Fox Lake's Catholic community hope to see a new church built this year

The Little Flower Mission Church was the heartbeat of the Fox Lake First Nations community.

Since a fire destroyed much of the interior of the church last summer, this source of faith, belonging and cherished memories has been sadly missing for this devout Catholic community. But this fire has not taken away the strong faith of Fox Lake's parishioners, and they now wait with strong hope for a new church in 2022.

When asked about the immediate reaction of the community, as the fire uncontrollably raged and consumed the Little Flower Mission Church last August, community elder Leslie Joe Laboucan summarized it in one word: "devastated."



Leslie Joe Laboucan



Little Flower Mission Church after it was severely damaged by a fire in August of 2020. The cause of the fire is still under investigation, but it is believed to be caused by an electrical issue.

"We were devastated. We felt lost, heartbroken," said Leslie Joe, who is a band councillor and former chief in Fox Lake. He was confirmed and married at the Little Flower Mission Church, and he often helps the parish priest Father Andrew Simiiyu, FMH with catechesis and preparations for services.

"I was silent. I was stunned. I didn't want to even look at it at first. I could just feel an emptiness," Leslie Joe recalled. "Even though its just a building, a house of worship – whatever you want to call it – it's a vital part of the community, no doubt. So many memories have come out of there. People were saying, 'We got baptized there, married there, it's where we seen our loved ones go.' So for a while we really felt lost."

That sense of loss was felt by the parish priest as well. It was only within hours of arriving in Narobi, Kenya that Fr. Andrew received word from Msgr. Charles Lavoie, PH, that there had been a severe fire at one of his churches. It was an immediate dampening on the relaxing summer vacation the priest was hoping to have back in his home country.

"I was shocked to hear it," recalled Simiiyu, who had left for his vacation in the first week of August 2021, arriving in Kenya on Aug. 9th. He heard the news of the church fire one day later.

"My vacation was not that enjoyable because this would often creep into my mind and I had to live with it through that month. Msgr. Charles told me to just be calm and they would sort this thing out, but it was tough not to think about it again and again."



Fr. Andrew Simiiyu, FMH

When Simiiyu finally got back to Canada at the end of the month, he was eager to go and see the state of his church in Fox Lake. It was not a reassuring sight when he got there. While the church exterior was still intact, black burn marks stained the doors, sides and roof of the church. The glass windows too had all been blown out by the flames.

Inside - the church had been reduced almost entirely to black rubble. Shelves, tables and pews were all badly burnt, broken and damaged. The altar was smoldered with flames to the point that one of its legs was reduced to ash and it had fully collapsed on one side. The ceiling was totally dilapidated, with insulation hanging from torched and broken boards. The bathroom and confessionals too had succumb to the blaze. Everything was covered in broken glass and black ash.



Confessionals were also burnt and damaged, with insulation fallen from the ceiling.

"When I got there, oh my, it was awful. It was not the church as I had left it," said Fr. Andrew. "I had so many mixed feelings. And people were coming to me saying, 'We are sorry Father, we know you loved your church. And we too are hurting."

The cause of the church fire is still under investigation, though it was likely due to an electrical problem and was not deliberately set. The fire burned through most of the interior of the building, burning to ashes Fr. Andrew's new vestments – his alb and chasuble. The missals, lectionary, and other important liturgical items were also lost in the blaze.

While so many valuable and priceless items and memories were lost in the fire, there was some signs of divine providence looking out for the Catholics of Fox Lake. Just a few days before the fire, the tabernacle and procession cross had been taken out of the church for the community's annual pilgrimage. So, this vital cross, the tabernacle, and the Eucharistic hosts contained within the tabernacle, were all preserved from the destructive blaze.

"That was a good thing. The tabernacle, the host – people were relieved that those didn't burn," said Leslie Joe.

Fox Lake has a long-standing reputation as one of the most devout Indigenous communities in the Archdiocese of Grouard-McLennan. It was only a month before the fire that first Holy Communions were celebrated in Fox Lake with more than 30 young people. Confirmations had been planned that summer with Archbishop Pettipas, with nearly 50 people in Fox Lake expected to be confirmed. However, a Covid-19 outbreak in the community had led to it being postponed.



Damaged books inside the Little Flower Mission Church.

There are hopes those confirmations can be done sometime in early 2022, possibly in one of the two school gyms in Fox Lake.

For a community with such strong devotion to the Church and to their Catholic faith, Fr. Andrew says, it was a deeply felt loss for the community.

"The people loved their Church. They are so religious, so Catholic in Fox Lake," he said. "I always say 100% of Fox Lake is Catholic. They don't entertain any other religion there. So the people are hurting. The first thing they asked me is 'Father, are we going to get another church?'

"By that time, the archdiocese was already in communication here with [Little Red River Cree Nation] and the Chief and council in Fox Lake, and already a plan was being put in place."



Fr. Andrew with a Fox Lake girl after receiving her first Holy Communion



More than 30 young people celebrated their first Holy Communion in Fox Lake just over a month before the fire condemned the church.

Leslie Joe has also been fielding that question, again and again, from people in the community – 'When will there be a new church?' He hopes to see a new church built this summer near its current location.

For now, Fr. Andrew still holds Sunday Mass from his rectory, though due to pandemic restrictions only a handful of people can attend each Mass – usually less than 10. He has been doing baptisms and catechetical lessons from his Fox Lake home as well. For funerals, where attendance is unavoidably large, they are held at one of the school gyms.

Fr. Andrew says the loss of the church has certainly not hampered the faith of the people of Fox Lake.

"They are very devoted. Even during the very strict lockdowns, they'd call me by phone to introduce and begin their rosary every Saturday," he said. "They are so devoted to the rosary, to Mother Mary, and very devoted to prayer. When I visit them, I see how much prayer is a part of their life in the home. And they are always coming to me to get holy water or to bless their homes.

"They love the Church. And they need to see their church again."

The devotion exemplified in Fox Lake is known to the other missionary priests of the archdiocese as well. One of Fr. Andrew's fellow Franciscan Missionaries of Hope priests, Fr. John Basiimwa, recalled going to Fox Lake to see the damage of the church last summer. This was several weeks since the fire had happened, and Fr. John found a group of people were still standing outside the church, praying and in tears.

During this difficult and tragic period, Fr. Andrew says he is determined to be there for his people. And they too long for his pastoral presence.

"I'm always trying to be close to them as a shepherd," he said.
"This is the time they need to hold to their faith the most. And whenever I need to be in Fox Lake, they are always very willing to get me a flight. They bring a plane to John D'or Prairie and I am there in ten minutes.

"They have shares with CanWest Air because often in the winter you can't get to Fox Lake any other way. They are very cooperative and are willing to fly me there and drop me off again. And I do not take this for granted – not at all. The airline has even told me they have never seen this treatment with any other priest.

"So I thank God that the Holy Spirit is leading."



Further damage to the interior of the Fox Lake Church, with parts of the ceiling collapsing.

Like his parishioners, Fr. Andrew hopes the new church will also be completed as soon as possible, as he deeply misses celebrating Mass inside one.

"And with Mass, baptisms, catechesis and so many things being done out of my home, my privacy as a priest is gone," he said with a laugh. "But I accept all of this with perfect joy. All these challenges - we take them with perfect joy. Amen."



How the Little Flower Mission Church looked last winter.

"For those that can't attend Mass at the rectory, Fr. Andrew ensures they can still come to him to receive the Eucharist and a blessing. Those moments are a reassuring sign for the priest, that the people have not let the loss of the church result in a loss of faith.

"More and more I see them coming, I see them being hopeful again," he said. "They are not just giving and up saying, 'Since we don't have our church then we can't pray'. They could easily lose that if they don't have a shepherd close to them, so I always try to be in touch with them."

While there is no definitive timeline yet for the rebuild of the church, initial plans, such as the architectural design, are well underway. The council in Fox Lake have requested to rebuild the church themselves, and Archbishop Pettipas has granted that request. This way, it will be a church built by the community for the community.



Andrew Similyu giving first Holy Communions outside the Fox Lake Church last summer. Locals hope to see a new church built by this summer.

AROUND OUR SCHOOLS

Saints & Sacraments



Kindergarten students at **Good Shepherd Catholic School** in **Peace River** made these St. Nicholas puppets as part of a class learning about St. Nicholas of Myra, the Catholic saint from which today's "Santa Claus" is based on.

We love showcasing works of faith and formation around our Catholic schools!

If you want to see your local Catholic schools, staff and students featured in *Northern Light*, contact **Kyle** at **780-532-9766** or at **comdirector.agm@outlook.com**





Students in **High Prairie** recently received their first Sacrament of Reconciliation with Fr. Lawrence Odoemena at **St. Paul Church**. After awaiting their turn in the confessional, everyone gathered for a celebratory group photo afterwards. We hope this important sacrament was a powerful moment for these students!

AROUND OUR SCHOOLS

Christmas Mass for students



Grade 4 student Chelsea receives a blessing.



Grade 4 students at St. Mary's provided the music for the Mass on their ukuleles.

The Grade 4 class at **St. Mary's Catholic School** in **Sexsmith** celebrated a Christmas Mass for the school with **Fr. Jeaypaul Packiasamy** on **Dec. 21**. The Grade 4 students hosted the Mass while other classes took part through a live broadcast.



Other classes at St. Mary's took part in the Mass via a livestream.



Students Lincoln and Jayden bring forward the gifts during the Mass.

AROUND OUR SCHOOLS

Prayer bulbs in Beaverlodge



Grade 6 students at **St. Mary's Catholic School** in **Beaverlodge** got into the Advent and Christmas spirit through making these ornaments. Prayers were written and placed inside the bulbs, and the Advent themes of hope, peace, joy and love were decorated outside of them.

Classes also decorated and crafted nativity scenes as well. More photos can be seen at

facebook.com/AchGrouardMcLennan.







ABOVE: St. Mary's student Danica holds up Hope and Love-themed Advent bulbs.

LEFT: Grade 6 student Sadie holds up a "Joy" Advent bulb she decorated.



New shoes for a new hope

Ontario pastor hopes donation to our archdiocese will be a step forward in

reconciliation

Towards the end of last summer, five boxes full of donated shoes showed up on the doorsteps of the Archdiocese of Grouard-McLennan's chancery office.

The donations came from a small parish in southern Ontario, with the hope it would be both a help to Indigenous children in our region and a symbol of reconciliation.

When the Dene Tha' Community School in Chatch received a box of these shoes this winter, principal Carlito Somera says this gift was a much-needed blessing for his students.



Students in Chateh show off their new sneakers.

"Here in Barrie and the Archdiocese of Toronto we had no residential schools. But as Catholics, as Canadians, as people who encounter Indigenous peoples in need in our own community - we wanted to find a way to reach out," said Father Larry Leger, pastor of St. Mary's Church in Barrie, Ontario.

The first Sunday after Kamloops had reignited conversations around the history of residential schools, Fr. Larry went to the Spirit Catcher – a prominent Indigenous artwork in Barrie – to pray.



Students at Dene Tha' Community School in Chateh (Assumption) look for a fitting pair within these donated shoes.

"We are thankful," said Somera, who has been the principal with the Chateh school for 14 years. "There's definitely a need for it."

The northern Dene reserve of Chateh was one of five Indigenous communities in our archdiocese who received a box of donated new shoes, all of various sizes and styles. The shoes were donated by St. Mary's Parish in Barrie, Ontario, and given to the communities of Chateh, Sturgeon Lake, Fort Vermillion, Horse Lake and Grouard.

It was in the aftermath of the news out of Kamloops last May, when suspected unmarked graves were located near the grounds of a former Indian Residential School, that this initiative was sparked. As the pains and difficulties of the residential school system were brought back to light and the forefront of public conversation, the St. Mary's community sought out a way to respond.



Fr. Larry Leger celebrating Mass at St. Mary's Parish in Barrie, Ontario.



He noticed that people had placed shoes underneath the art, representing children who went through the Indian Residential Schools system. It was a striking image for the priest.

Later that week, Ernestine Baldwin, a First Nations elder and parishioner at St. Mary's, sparked the idea of using this symbol of the shoe in a positive and charitable way.

"She called me and said, 'You know Father, as a way of going forward, wouldn't it be possible to do a 'shoe drive' that would go to Indigenous children," Fr. Leger recalled.

This idea was brought to parishioners the following Sunday – June 6th – to collect donations of shoes for Indigenous communities in northern Canada. Over the following weeks, parishioners began donating new shoes or making monetary donations for purchasing them, until they had gathered a total of 100 pairs.



Ernestine Baldwin, First Nations elder and parishioner at St. Mary's Church, sparked the "shoes drive" that has helped Indigneous students across the Archdiocese of Grouard-McLennan.



These photos were submitted by the Dene Tha' Community School in Chateh, along with a note of thanks.

"We wanted to make sure Indigenous communities had new shoes. And we wanted to show our solidarity, our accompaniment with them," said Father Leger. "Shoes became an important symbol. And it was a way for us to reach out as a community to show we wish to accompany them on this road to reconciliation."

The Archdiocese of Grouard-McLennan is one of the partnered dioceses with the Archdiocese of Toronto, which means they help sponsor and support our diocese. Fr. Leger was in contact with Archbishop Pettipas soon after this initiative began.

"Shortly after I agreed to participate, five large cartons of various children's footwear arrived at the chancery office," Archbishop Pettipas explained. "I selected five First Nations that I knew had a school on their reserve, and dropped off these cartons at the nearest rectory, asking the priest to bring these to the principal once school opened again in September."

It was in November that the Dene Tha' Community School in Chateh finally received their box of shoes from the local parish priest, Father John Bassimwa, FMH. It meant a great relief for the staff, students and community of Chateh.

"We often have to buy inside shoes for our students, have 'sneaker drives' and things like that," said principal Carlito Somera.



Chateh's parish priest Fr. John Basiimwa, FMH, delivered the shoes to the school in November.

"When we have a fire drill, many of our students have to go out without shoes. Or we have gym class and kids are just wearing socks, and that can be dangerous. Through our sports program we will get shoes for our students who don't have proper footwear for sports. It keeps them safe and helps to motivate their self-esteem.

"To distribute these shoes, I visited classrooms and seen several students who were just in their socks. So I asked the teachers to bring those students to the office," Somera recalled. "I brought them in to see the shoes, and told them to go through and find a pair that fits."



More students, alongside staff at Dene Tha' Community School, show off their new shoes - thanks to St. Mary's Church in Barrie, Ontario.



Carlito Somera has been prinicpal of Dene Tha' Community School for 14 years.

Somera sent a thank you to both St. Mary's Church in Barrie, Ont. and to the Archdiocese of Grouard-McLennan, with photos of students sorting through the shoes and posing in their new footwear.

Since this time, St. Mary's Parish have continued with a number of other reconciliation efforts, including hosting listening circles with residential school and federal day school survivors, and other discussions devoted to the calls to action from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Receiving the photos and words of gratitude from the Chateh school was an encouraging moment for both the Ontario parish and the Archdiocese of Grouard-McLennan.

"This note from the school principal and students at the Chateh Dene Tha' school was a heart-warming expression of gratitude for an act of reconciliation," said Archbishop Pettipas.

The Archbishop hopes the shoes will be a help to families and students in the Indigenous communities Somera says it has provided much help for students at the Dene Community School, but the need is still there.

"We still have some kids in the school without shoes, and there are many on our basketball team that could really use new sneakers," he said. "Our school is always open for donations. The need is still there."



Dene Tha' Community School always welcomes further donations to support their students and the families they serve.

Nativity preparations in Peace River







The **Our Lady of Peace Parish** in **Peace River** did an excellent job putting together their intricate Nativity scene.

We hope it filled parishioners with joy and anticipation for Christmas!





COMMUNITY



Some "blessed" salt for the cathedral steps

After a heavy overnight snowfall, **Fr. Eucharias Ndzefemiti** pours some ice melt on the steps of the **St. John the Baptist Cathedral** in **McLennan**. A common activity for many of our priests this time of year!

We're sure his parishioners will be thankful to not have icy, slippery stairs.



Christmas draw and fundraiser

St. Rita's Church in **Valleyview** held a successful fundraiser and Christmas basket draw in December. The prizes included donated food, gift cards and chocolates. All tickets sold out in just five days.

Congrats to all the winners!



Redemptorists renew their vows

On the **Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception**, **Dec. 8.**, members of **St. Joseph's Redemptorist community** in **Grande Prairie** publicly renewed their religious vows of poverty, chastity and obedience, as well as the vow of perseverance.

May God continue to bless the Redemptorists serving our archdiocese!

Helping those in need

Sexsmith bread ministry an important charitable work for parish and

community

Lucille Partington walks up to another household in Sexsmith, carrying a box filled with bread and buns. It's now Saturday evening and she's delivering her final bundle for the day.

It is all a part of the weekly "bread ministry" at Immaculate Conception Church in Sexsmith - just one of several charitable initiatives the parish community is involved with.



Immaculate Conception parishioner Lucille Partington prepares to deliver another box of bread as part of the parish's weekly "bread ministry".

For the past nine years, volunteers and parishioners have sponsored and organized this bread ministry, delivering bread each week to families, seniors and impoverished people in the community. While the Immaculate Conception Parish sponsors and organizes this ministry, many different people in the community help with it.

Partington says it's an effort immensely needed in her town.

"There's a lot of poverty in Sexsmith," she said. "We're a bedroom community of Grande Prairie in essence, so most of our people work in Grande Prairie. However, our taxes, rent and housing prices are lower, so we have a higher number of low-income people."

The bread is provided by the bakery company *Cobs Bread* – who first sparked this bread ministry initiative. Each week, Cobs Bread stores across Alberta and Canada produce roughly 10% more bread than what they typically sell, and they give this remainder to a variety of churches, schools and charitable organizations who then distribute the bread to those in need.



Every Friday, an average of 150 packages of bread and other bread products are donated to the Immaculate Conception Parish as part of their bread ministry.

Immaculate Conception Parish in Sexsmith is just one of the groups who work with Cobs Bread in this important charitable work. Every Friday evening, around 150 loafs and packages of bread and other bread products are brought to the church. On Saturday morning, a group of volunteers deliver the bread to low-income persons as well as seniors throughout the community. Sexsmith's pastor Fr. Jeyapaul Packiasamy stays at the church for those who prefer to come grab the bread themselves.

"We have about a dozen people we deliver to, as well as those who come to the church. Then there's about two dozen seniors who are in need that we also help," said Partington. "Including children, I'd say its approximately 60 people we help each week."

For Shannon Ferguson and her eight children, this weekly delivery is a godsend and great help to her family.

Ferguson lives with her partner and their eight children in Sexsmith, and they have a ninth child on the way. The bread ministry through Immaculate Conception Church helps Shannon save at least \$220 each month. The ministry has been helping her for the past four years.

"I really love it, it helps quite a lot," she said. "With eight kids, soon-to-be nine, we go through a lot of bread so it saves me a lot of money."

Partington has a reputation for charitable works across the community of Sexsmith, and not only through her work with the parish. She says what inspires her most of all is the Gospel.

"The Gospel message has always been very clear to me – Christ sends us to bring the Good News to the poor," said Partington. "So I've always had a heart for the poor and have been involved with many different charitable endeavours. I've always believed the Scriptures when it says we have to have both faith and good works.

"Times are tough, and because poverty is especially an issue here in Sexsmith, it's important we do what we can for others."

Partington's love of Catholic social teaching is also a place she draws great inspiration from in all her charitable works. Catholic social teaching is a body of teachings the Church has developed over the centuries, which applies lessons from the Gospel in the realms of economics, labour, governance, and civil society.

"Catholic social teaching is probably the strongest teaching of any church on earth, and I can say that without reservation," said Partington.



Immaculate Conception Church in Sexsmith



Lucille Partington

"People familiar with the Church's social teaching really have an advantage because they know well that fundamental to being a Christian is serving those in need."

As a convert who is deeply proud of her Catholic faith, Partington also hopes charitable efforts like Sexsmith's bread ministry will help share the positive work of the Church to everyday people.

"I can say as someone who wasn't raised in the Catholic Church, any traditional church like ours - people have their suspicions," she said. "But when you come to recognize what a fantastic gift the Catholic Church is, there's nowhere else to go. This is *thee* Church. But so many of the important things our Church and our priests do are unknown in society, and I hope in one small way this ministry helps give the Church a better image in our community."

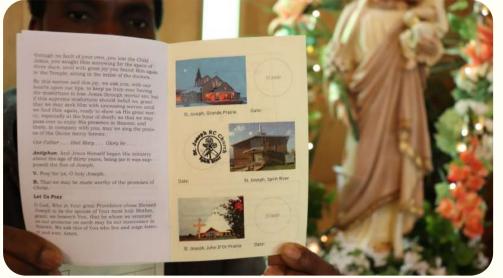
HAVE YOU PLANNED YOUR ST JOSEPH PILGRIMAGE YET?

During the **Year of St. Joseph** (March 19, 2021-March 19, 2022) you are invited to take a pilgrimage in the Archdiocese of Grouard-McLennan to our three churches dedicated to St. Joseph. The churches are:

St. Joseph Church, 10404 102 Street, Grande Prairie St. Joseph Church, 5019 43 Avenue, Spirit River St. Joseph Church, John D'Or Prairie, Little Red River Cree Nation



Congratulations to Walter Chledowski and Thérèse Chauvin of Grande Prairie - the first people to complete the St. Joseph Pilgrimage!



Families and individuals are encouraged to visit the churches, and at each church pray **the Seven Sorrows and Joys of St.**Joseph (by Ven Januarius Sarnelli, C.Ss.R.)

The prayer can be found in the Pilgrim's Passport, copies of which are available at the three churches.

After visiting all of our St. Joseph churches and having your Pilgrim's Passport stamped at each, pilgrims can receive a **blessed olive-wood cross** at our chancery office in Grande Prairie. The crosses are made by Catholics in Palestine.

Archbishop Gerard Pettipas reminds us that the essence of this pilgrimage is to grow in our spiritual lives, and nurture our devotion to St. Joseph.

"The real focus here is the spiritual life – to reflect on St. Joseph and his life as a father and protector of the family," he said.

Please make sure when scheduling your pilgrimage to **contact** each church (or the band office in John D'or Prairie) ahead of your visit.

Learn more at: www.archgm.ca/pilgrimage-for-st-joseph



ARCHDIOCESE OF GROUARD-MCLENNAN

ST JOSEPH'S PILGRIMAGE



Celebrate the Year of St. Joseph with this once-in-a-lifetime pilgrimage!



St. Joseph's Church in Spirit River

St. Joseph's Church in John D'or Prairie

St. Joseph's Church in Grande Prairie

More details at www.archgm.ca



Join us for a weekend of prayer and fellowship, a guided retreat on this year's camp theme, "Take Heart."

This retreat weekend will be spent together as a Camp St. Martin community in reflection and preparation for the upcoming camp season. The retreat will be led by Peter van Kampen reflecting on Hope and this year's camp theme, "Take Heart."

The retreat takes place at St. John the Baptist Cathedral, and retreatants will be staying overnight at the former Archdiocesan office.

All current and past CSM Team, CSM Alumni, and anyone interested in being part of the Camp St. Martin community is welcome to join us (18+).

Registration deadline is February 16th, 2022 at 9PM. Scan QR for link.





VOCATIONS

Called to serve

Our Archdiocese...

Archbishop:

Most Rev. Gerard Pettipas, CSsR

Vicar General:

Msgr. Charles Lavoie, PH

Priests:

30 priests in 23 parishes, churches and missions

Religious sisters:

Sr. Mary Jeanne Davidson, SSND Sr. Connie Harkin, SSND

Permanent Deacons:

Dcn. Gerald Logan Dcn. Reg Bouchard

Seminarians:

Paul Edo-Aramunde Thomas Wollis Ryan Beaupre



Our vocations committee consists of the Archbishop. Vicar General, Vocations Director, priests, sisters and lay people of the Archdiocese.

JESUS CALLS YOU

Do you want to follow?



"My vocation is not simply a response to the promptings of God's call – it is a continual recognition of my place in God's plan of salvation and an acceptance of the mission He has entrusted to me.

It is on this journey of faith that I have been continually amazed by the fellowship between my fellow seminarians – past and present. Wherever their discernment takes them, they are always willing to gather with, support and celebrate the journey and success of a brother."

-Thomas Wollis, Peace River Seminarian with the Archdiocese of Grouard-McLennan

How you can help

- By praying
- Getting involved
- Joining our vocations committee
- Encouraging vocations in your church community and among your family
- Organizing and joining parish youth groups
- Support Catholic Missions in Canada: www.cmic.info



For more information:

Contact **Fr. Michael Uso-Ereyi** Archdiocesan Vocation Director **780-532-9766**

e-mail: archgmvocations@gmail.com

GOSPEL REFLECTION

Make the New Year meaningful by loving life as it is

A reflection on the Gospel by Fr. Michael Dias

So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told.

On the eighth day, when it was time to circumcise the child, he was named Jesus, the name the angel had given him before he was

conceived. Luke 2: 16-21

A monk was delivering a long sermon on how to be happy in life. After his talk all his congregation left the auditorium except one young man who was standing there staring at the monk. The monk asked him what he wanted. The man said, 'would you please tell me, 'what should I do to be happy for life?' The monk in a calm tone replied, 'Just love your life as it is.'

This may seem simple advice, but it is not so simple to follow. Many people today have made their careers and work the most important aspect of their lives. This distorts the natural order of things and leads us to a life of disorder. They are left feeling imbalanced, unfulfilled, and unhappy, with a life very hard to love as it is.

Like anything worth achieving, a life of balance and order comes only through effort. Some people try to juggle randomly all the elements of their lives without assigning a priority to each of them, and then they constantly wonder if they will ever achieve the better life – the happy life, the balanced and ordered life - they sense deep down they are capable of. To achieve this

with any consistency requires a systematic approach. It requires a plan, a pattern, a schedule.



Love my life as it is? When we think of this kind of advice many of us can't help but feel hurt, especially when we reflect on our past and our future, as we bid goodbye to 2021 and welcome the New Year 2022. True, we may be happy if in this last year we were spared from accidents, illness, death, and rejoice that we will live to see and experience another year. We are happy that, despite all our blunders, unhealthy habits and misbehavior, so much has been forgiven and not punished. We are overwhelmed with joy that, despite all prophecies and predictions of doom and terror, the place in which we live has so far been kept in balance between war and peace, disaster and prosperity, crime and sanctity, violence and kindness, and terrorism and charity. We indeed at this time of the year feel very grateful to all the good things of the past year. We are thankful to our loved ones, parents, friends, leaders, teachers, preachers and even our enemies. Above all, we feel truly grateful to the Lord Most High for His wonderful providence over us at the beginning of New Year.



Fr. Michael Dias says within the Scriptures are "great resources of blessings" to know what it means to 'love life as it is.'

However, others feelings too subdue us, about the demise or separation of our loved ones, the loss of possessions, and other difficult trials of the past year. We feel sad that we missed good opportunities to improve, to gain, to do good; we are sorry that we hurt our friends and relatives, for making wrong decisions; we feel unhappy for the dreams and plans that were not realized or ended up in failure. Undoubtedly, we are anxious and fearful about the future of this coming year. We ask certain questions with anxiety: Will my dreams and plans be accomplished? Will my fate, my trials, great upheavals like the pandemic, continue in the New Year? What about my family issues - the irritable habits of my husband, the stubborn temperament of my wife, the unpredictable behaviour of my children and so on. Now we ask the monk, in the midst of the chaotic experiences of life how can we ever love it as it is?

GOSPEL REFLECTION

On this earth we will always have many concerns. Some we should pay attention to, others we ought to renounce. The world in which we live often reflects the splendor or the Divine, yet it does not take much for us to become blinded to the wonder of God displayed in the everyday. Despite the setbacks this life can bring, despite the problems that fill our world, it is a wonderful place and it is to be loved and cherished by us all. Life was made by God, and therefore it is good.

How do we see the Divine, the goodness of life, despite the trials, difficulties and sins of the world around us and of those within our own lives? The Lord directs us through His powerful Word to great resources of blessings. In the Book of Numbers, God gives Moses and Aaron the formula they should use while conferring the Divine blessing upon the Israelites: "The Lord bless you and keep you, the Lord make His face shine upon you, and be gracious to you; the Lord lift up His countenance upon you and give you peace". Psalm 67, begs for the blessing of God, saying, "May God have pity on us and bless us; may He let His face shine upon us."

If we want to be blessed by God, we must turn to our elders, our moms, our dads, our teachers, and our religious leaders, for God has entrusted such wonderful authority and responsibility to us weak and vulnerable humans. In the Bible we see how Isaac received God's blessings from his father Abraham; Jacob's from Isaac, while Esau wept for missing those blessings; Moses and Aaron were the great patriarchs through whom God blessed His people in the desert. Later, Aaron's clan members were vested with such power of blessings.

With faith, we become a blessing to each other, and God blesses each of us through one another. Jesus, our friend, is an eternal gift of blessing. Mary, the Mother of God, stands near us always to shower blessings upon us. That's why on New Year's Day we celebrate the feast of Mary as the Mother of God and of the Church. The Word made flesh is the greatest source of God's blessings, and Mary was the first human person filled with all the blessings of God. Through her son, through her status as our Mother, she is deeply concerned about us. We see this in her apparitions, appearing often to small children and the most humble of servants, sharing her concern for us and warning us of coming trials and the end of time. Both the Son and the Mother are very anxious about our welfare.



Fr. Michael recently celebrating Mass at St. Patrick's Church in Rio Grande

To bring all these thoughts together, I conclude with several ways that come to my mind for how we can make this new year meaningful. We must first have something to dream of – a noble plan of action, that we set out with each day of this year, remembering the proverb "Cherish your yesterdays, dream your tomorrows, but live your today." But more than something to dream, we must have something to do. Our time is a gift, it is most valuable and most limited. It is to be used in fruitful endeavours, or else it is wasted. We must not be a barren fig tree, nor barren branches in God's vineyard, but fruitful. Each day we have a marvelous opportunity to achieve something new, something meaningful. I remember whenever I met Saint Mother Teresa of Kolkata in her homes for the destitute and dying, she would always tell me, 'Do something beautiful to God each day'. That's how she lived her simple, ordinary humble life, serving the poorest of the poor, desiring to do good for others and loving everyone.

But even more than dreaming and doing, we must find someone to love and care for. This becomes easy when we make God the center of our life and realize His presence in all the people around us. Saint Mother Teresa also said, 'Let us light a candle instead of blaming the darkness around us'. Just as the moon borrows the sun's light to illuminate the earth, we too must radiate the Light of God shining within us. Do you see that every person you encounter in your day-to-day life is a 'Sacrament'? This is so, if we see the face of God in others. With this attitude in mind and heart, it becomes easy to love everyone, to appreciate and acknowledge goodness in everything. This is what it means to truly love life as it is.

Let us pray this prayer of Dag Hammarskjod: "Lord, for all that has been, Thanks! For all that will be, Yes!" and this as well: "Give me a pure heart that I may see Thee, A humble heart that I may hear thee, A heart of love that I may serve Thee, A heart of Faith that I may abide in Thee."

God bless.

LITURGICAL NOTES

LITURGICAL NOTES FOR THE MONTHS

OF FEBRUARY AND MARCH



Written by Archbishop Gerard Pettipas, C.Ss.R



Feb. 2: Presentation of the Lord & the World Day of Consecrated Life:

This feast marks the presentation of the Lord in the temple of Jerusalem, a practice that arose in early Jewish history that every first-born male child or animal belongs to God (see Exodus 13:2 and 13:11). Parents were to "redeem" their sons by giving instead two turtledoves or pigeons. Joseph and Mary did this, making the point that the child Jesus indeed was "consecrated to God." This feast is also called "Candlemas", at which time candles are blessed, a sign again that Jesus is the light of the world.

Men and women through the centuries have consecrated themselves to God by joining religious Orders and taking vows of poverty, chastity and obedience. This feast calls on all Catholics to pray for those who have thus consecrated themselves to God, and ask God to call others to make this dedication of their lives.

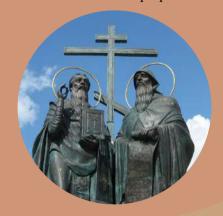


Feb. 11: Our Lady of Lourdes & World Day of the Sick: $\operatorname{Beginning}$ on $\operatorname{11}$

February 1858, a young 14-year old girl, Bernadette Soubirous encountered the Blessed Virgin Mary several times in an area not far from her home. At first, Bernadette was not sure who this mysterious woman could e; in one apparition, Mary identified herself as "I am the Immaculate Conception." A spring of water near the site produced water that had healing qualities, and as more individuals and Church authorities investigated and endorsed these events, devotion to the Blessed Mother developed, and Lourdes has since become the most renowned shrine offering healing to countless numbers of pilgrims from around the world.

In 1992, recognizing the feast day of Our Lady of Lourdes as a tie when the sick are remembered, Pope John Paul II declared the World Day of the Sick as a day of awareness, of "prayer and sharing, of offering one's suffering for the good of the Church and of reminding everyone to see in his sick brother or sister the face of Christ".

Feb. 10: St. Scholastica (480-543 AD): Scholastica was the sister of St. Benedict of Nursia, the founder of western monasticism. Scholastica established a community of religious women near Monte Cassino, the site of one of the earliest Benedictine monasteries. According to a well-known legend, Benedict and Scholastica would meet once a year and spend a full day together in prayer and reflection on sacred writings. One year, as Benedict was about to leave her and return to his cell, she begged him to remain, but he insisted that he must go. Scholastica prayed for rain, and a storm immediately blew in. Benedict had to delay his departure. Three days later, Benedict saw her soul return to God in the form of a white dove. He had her buried in a tomb that he had prepared for himself.



Feb. 14: St. Cyril and St. Methodius: Sts. Cyril and Methodius were brothers, Cyril being the youngest of seven brothers. At a time in Church history when there were great quarrels and disputes between the Latin Church of the west and the Greek Church in the East, both brothers worked together to protect and promote the Eastern Church and develop its liturgy while maintaining fidelity to the Pope of Rome. They are most

maintaining fidelity to the Pope of Rome. They are most recognized for their having the devised the Glagolitic alphabet, with which they translated the scriptures and liturgical texts into Old Church Slavonic. From the Glagolitic alphabet, their students developed the Cyrillic alphabet which is in use to this day in all Slavic languages. Because of their great missionary efforts among the Khazars, in Great Moravia and among all Slavic peoples, they are called "Missionaries to the Slavs", and are revered as little less than the twelve apostles.

ILITURGICAL NOTES

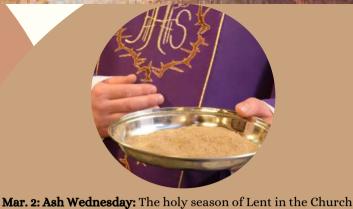


Feb. 22: The Chair of St. Peter: The "chair of St. Peter" is a reputed relic in St. Peter's Basilica in the Vatican City State. Examination of this relic raises doubts about it's actually being the "cathedra" that St. Peter used. More to the point, this feast refers to the leadership exercised by the current Pope as the direct descendant of St. Peter, to whom Jesus entrusted the "keys to the kingdom" (see Mathew 16:19). Because of Jesus' unique choice of St. Peter to be the first among the apostles, the bishop of Rome is recognized by the Catholic Church around the world as the "supreme pontiff". The word "pontiff" comes from the Latin roots, pons (bridge) and facere (to do, or to build). He holds in unity the many local Churches (dioceses) around the world. The "cathedra" or chair in a cathedral is the symbolic place from which any bishop guides his people and governs his diocese. The Pope's "diocese" is not only Rome, but the Catholic Church everywhere.



March. 19: St. Joseph, Husband of Mary: While St. Joseph is not seen as the biological father of Jesus, he was the spouse of Mary and exercised his rightful place in the holy family in Nazareth. He is spoken of in the nativity ac counts found in both Matthew and Luke's gospels, and his actions prompted by angels guided Jesus' birth and his childhood years. Beyond the infancy narratives, we know little more about Joseph. The Church's devotion to St. Joseph honors his place in the family home, and exhorts all husbands and fathers to develop virtues attributed to St. Joseph: provide for the family's needs, protect all in the home, and engage in honest labor. The Church calendar honors St. Joseph the Worker on May 1st each year.

In our Archdiocese, the Year of St. Joseph ends on March 19th, 2022.



call Christians to a spiritual and moral renewal, including repentance for sins and any failure in our following God's laws. To express the desire to repent and renew, Christian use ashes on our forehead; many are the scriptural references to the Jewish people "sitting in sackcloth and ashes" as a sign of their deep sorrow for transgressions of God's law.

The custom has grown of using ashes in this ritual from the burned palms that were blessed and kept in homes from the previous year's celebration of Palm Sunday. While Ash Wednesday is not a holy day of obligation, Christians are strongly encouraged to attend Mass and receive ashes, as well as engage in acts of penance and contrition throughout the 40 days

of Lent, which ends on Holy Thursday.

calendar (Ordo) begins on Ash Wednesday. The 40 days of Lent



Mar. 25: The Annunciation of Our Lord: Nine months prior to the feast of the Nativity of Jesus (Christmas), the Church celebrates the feast of the Annunciation (see Luke 1:26-38). This is the event in which the angel Gabriel announced to Mary that she would give birth to the Messiah, the Son of God. Shirly after this, Mary went to visit her relative Elizabeth, who was already six months pregnant with John the Baptist. This event (the Annunciation) has been one of the most popular scenes to be rendered in art through the centuries.

BIRTHDAYS AND ANNIVERSARIES

Birthdays

Father Arockiam Savarimatha turns 69 January 14th.

Seminarian **Thomas Wollis** will celebrate his 23rd birthday **January 27th**.

Father Gerald Mendoza will celebrate his 42nd birthday on January 30th.

Anniversaries

Father Ephrem Njallaniyil, MST the 26th anniversary of his priestly ordination **Jan. 1st.**

Archbishop Gerard Pettipas C.Ss.R. celebrates the 15th anniversary of his episcopal ordination **January 25th**, the feast of St. Paul the Apostle.

Congratulations to all of you. Have yourselves a joyful birthday party and a Merry Christmas too!





Archbishop Gerard Pettipas during his episcopal ordination, Jan. 25th, 2007 - the feast of

Canadian saints

Jan. 7th - Saint André Bessette, C.S.C., doorman at Oratoire St. Joseph, Montréal.

Jan. 12th – Ste. Marguerite Bourgeoys, CND, Foundress of 'La Congrégation de Notre Dame de Montréal. Canonized in 1982, first female saint of Canada.



Ste. Marguerite Bourgeoys, CND, painting by Pierre Le Ber (public domain)

Special & Historical Dates

The week of January 18-25 – Week of Prayer for Christian Unity.

January 23rd, Sunday of the Word of God, instituted by Pope Francis in his Apostolic Letter Aperuit illis (September 2019).



Birthdays and anniversaries content prepared by Msgr. Charles Lavoie, Vicar General of the Archdiocese of Grouard-McLennan

Website: www.archgm.ca **Facebook:** @ArchGrouardMcLennan **Chancery Office:** 1-780-532-9766 **Contact editor:** comdirector.agm@outlook.com

We want your contributions to this magazine!

To contact the editor for story ideas or to let us know what's happening in your parish and faith community e-mail **Kyle Greenham** at **comdirector.agm@outlook.com** or reach us by phone at **780-532-9766**.

We also encourage submitted writings, letters to the editor and photos! All submissions for the next issue, whether of photos or written pieces, must be given by the **5th of each month**. Your input will be a great help in growing this magazine!

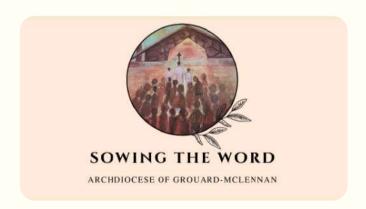
There are also many other features we are working towards to make this magazine an essential resource in your faith life. Stay tuned!



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St. Martin of Tours, patron of our archdiocese,

We ask your intercession for our local Church, that we may be brave as you were brave in reaching out to others.

Give us the spiritual insight to see that the many gifts that are given to us are not for us alone, but for the good of all.

St. Martin of Tours, pray for us.