



14 February 2025
Feast of Saints Cyril and Methodius

Dear Parishioners and Clergy,

All or most of you may have already heard by now the news that our Holy Father Pope Francis has named Father Charles Duval, C.Ss.R. as the coadjutor archbishop of Grouard-McLennan. I am personally grateful for this announcement; several months ago, due to my precarious health and my approaching the canonical retirement age of 75, I requested the appointment of a coadjutor through the services of the apostolic nuncio to Canada, Archbishop Ivan Jurković.

Coadjutor Archbishop. Many of you may be wondering what is a coadjutor archbishop. The term coadjutor means assistant. Bishop-elect Charles Duval will be my assistant during the coming months. This will give him the occasion to learn about the duties and responsibilities of a bishop as I share my ministry with him. I will remain the archbishop of this archdiocese until such time as I step down, either because I have reached the age of 75 on September 6th, 2025, or because of health concerns. In either event, the day that I step down and retire, Bishop Charles Duval will automatically become the Archbishop of Grouard-McLennan.

Many questions are still unanswered. The announcement of this assignment is still very fresh. I have not had the opportunity to discuss and decide the many issues related to this assignment. Who will be the new pastor of St. Joseph's Parish in Grande Prairie? When and where will Bishop-elect Duval be ordained a bishop? (It is expected that a bishop will be ordained within three months after the announcement of his assignment.) Which bishops will be his consecrators? Where will he live? Over the coming weeks, I will be having conversations with the Bishop-elect and other affected parties, and I will communicate these decisions once they are made.

What do we call Father Charles now? Father Charles Duval will now be referred to as a “bishop-elect”. Once he is ordained a bishop, the proper address for a bishop is “Your Excellency” (in French, “Monseigneur”) though I suspect those who already know him as “Father Charles” may find old habits hard to break. The term of address “Your Grace” is only used with archbishops.

The vocation of bishop is a very lofty one in the Catholic Church. We understand the bishops to be direct successors of the apostles. What we call “apostolic succession” is the unbroken line of each bishop being ordained by other bishops, in a line of succession that goes back to the apostles and the very beginnings of the Church. So lofty is this calling that most priests are very hesitant to accept such a vocation in the Church. “Who, me?” This was my own reaction, as also bishop-elect Charles Duval tells me it was his. We only accept such a position in the Church in a spirit of obedience to the Holy Spirit and to the Bishop of Rome.

Please join me in praying for our bishop-elect. May God give him the many spiritual gifts and human qualities that will make him a faith-filled shepherd in our archdiocese. I ask all of our priests, as of today, to include in the Eucharistic Prayer of each Mass, for example: ... Be pleased to confirm in faith and charity your pilgrim Church on earth, with your servant Francis our Pope, Gerard our bishop and Charles his coadjutor, the Order of Bishops, all the clergy ...(from Eucharistic Prayer 3).

On this feast of Saints Cyril and Methodius, apostles to the many Slavic peoples of eastern Europe, let us pray for the growth and dedication of the Christian and Catholic communities everywhere, especially in our own Archdiocese of Grouard-McLennan.

Faithfully yours in Christ the Redeemer,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "+ Gerard Pettipas, C.Ss.R.". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial 'G'.

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