
Pastoral Letter from Bishop Wayne Kirkpatrick

For July 31: Feast of St. Ignatius of Loyola

My Dear People,

It has been a troubling eighteen months in dealing with COVID-19. We hope that September will bring greater freedom as we enter Phase 5. Once mandatory restrictions have ended, we will likely be encouraged to continue wearing masks indoors throughout the fall and winter months.



We are dealing with COVID grief, depression and broken-hearted people who have lost loved ones but were not able to gather with family and friends to grieve. The Assumption of Mary is an anticipation of our hope of glory. In light of this, I have suggested that our parishes offer a cemetery Mass praying for all who have died during this pandemic at either the Vigil or Feast Day of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary on Sunday August 15, 2021. We ask Mary the Mother of God, the special Patron of Acadians and Mother of all to intercede for us from her place in heaven, close to her Son, Jesus Christ.

As we reflect upon the Bread of Life discourses from the gospel of John this summer, we hear how Jesus accuses the crowds of forgetting their faith history. Maybe this is why Pope Francis established the World Day for Grandparents and the Elderly, on the Sunday closest to the feast of St. Anne and St. Joachim. This year's theme was "I am with you always". Pope Francis saw this feast day of grandparents of Jesus as a teachable moment as he speaks directly to them by saying, "You are keepers of the faith, steadfast and persevering." You have the vocation "to preserve our roots, to pass on the faith to the young, and to care for the little ones" irrespective of their age. Saint John Paul II wrote that the elderly are "guardians of our collective memory which support and guide life in society."

Despite these uncertain and turbulent times, the Lord and the Church are close to you, dear grandmothers, grandfathers and elderly persons. The Holy Father wishes to remind the whole world that the voice of the elderly is precious because it sings the praises of God and preserves the roots of the peoples. We are in need of this message.

Across Canada this year we have also witnessed an increase in waves of racism with an increase in hate crimes. Clearly, we need more education to better understand and accept one another.

The ongoing tragic news of unmarked graves on the sites of former Indian Residential Schools is deeply troubling. Our newly installed Governor General, Her Excellency, The Right Honourable Mary Simon, who was born in Nunavik, said we need to learn the real history of Canada, embracing this truth makes us stronger as a nation. Clearly, this is a “teachable moment” for us. We need ongoing education and with your help, I hope that we can initiate this in our parishes this year.

On a more positive note for our diocese, five new priests have arrived to serve here. We welcome two priests from Congregation of Sons of Mary Mother of Mercy SMMM. Father Chinonso Francis Alaribe and Father Godwin Emeka Obike who will be serving in Bras d’Or. A third priest, Father Christian Emeka Ugwu will arrive later from Nigeria, once he obtains his travel documentations. These three priest join their confreres, Father Callistus Abazie serving in Guysborough and Father Jonathan Nnajofofor serving in Canso.

We also welcome three priests from Congregation of the Sons of the Immaculate Conception CFIC. Fr. Joby Augustin, Fr. Silvichan Dominic and Father Daniel Tshimbalanga who will be serving in Margaree and Inverness.

We thank these priests for coming to serve in our diocese. They have left behind their family and friends to be with us, to share the faith. Let us welcome them with open hearts.

I am pleased to make you aware that we have two seminarians David Rankin and Joseph MacMaster. It is a hopeful sign for our diocese. I also grateful for the co-operation of our priests who have graciously accepted new pastoral appointments that will take effect on Wednesday, August 4, 2021, the feast of St. John Vianney, patron saint of parish priests.

We express our gratitude to all who will be assuming new pastoral responsibilities. It is never easy to pack up and move on but they have responded to the needs of our diocese with generous spirits. May our prayers provide support and encouragement for them. We pray that the people in parishes where changes are taking place will warmly welcome their new priests.

We also extend profound gratitude to the priests who are leaving the diocese, Father Michel Exalant CSC and Father Cosmas Epifano OSB. We are grateful for their generosity in serving here and we wish them well in their future ministries.

Please continue to pray for those who are sick and for those who care for them. We pray that St. Joseph, the patron saint and protector of the universal Church and the principal patron saint of Canada will guide us in the path of life. Stay safe and keep well.

Faternally yours,

+ Wayne Kirkpatrick

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