



Diocesan Dialogue

Online Newsletter
Volume 8



President's Message

My dear Sisters:

Well, here we are, one year after the onslaught of COVID-19 and how have our lives changed?

We are praying more, appreciating each other more, being more sympathetic, we are more generous with those less fortunate, learning technology to keep connected, appreciating nature more, exercising more, reading and listening to music more and in general, helping ourselves and others practice patience, kindness



and understanding. "The question isn't if we will weather this unknown, but how we will weather this unknown together." Amanda Gorman Many members continued to stay connected and reach out to each other via emails, phone calls, online visits, driveway visits and texting. We can work together to overcome the challenges COVID-19 has put before us. No one knows what the future holds, but we can accept whatever comes with open arms and hearts as we work For God and Canada. As we enter Lent this year, our thoughts of those who have sacrificed and given so much during this pandemic are all too real. Continue to pray for these unsung heroes. Lent is a period of reflection, prayer and personal sacrifice as we look forward to celebrating Easter and Jesus's Glorious Resurrection. May your Lenten journey bring you even closer to our Lord.

Blessings, Maria

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In this issue we are being treated to a variety of articles submitted for our enjoyment. A special note of thanks to Mary Jane who shared her personal reflections.

Web Wednesday is real! So....grab your morning coffee and start surfing.

Websites to visit

- www.cwlthunderbay.org
- www.cwl.on.ca
- www.cwl.ca

Plan to submit an article for our March newsletter. Members are anxious to hear from you!

The Fast Life

Fast from judging others; Feast on Christ dwelling in them.
Fast from fear of illness; Feast on the healing power of God.
Fast from words that pollute; Feast on speech that purifies.
Fast from discontent; Feast on gratitude.
Fast from anger; Feast on patience.
Fast from pessimism; Feast on hope.
Fast from negatives; Feast on encouragement.
Fast from bitterness; Feast on forgiveness.
Fast from self-concern; Feast on compassion.
Fast from suspicion; Feast on truth.
Fast from gossip; Feast on purposeful silence.
Fast from problems that overwhelm; Feast on prayer that sustains.
Fast from anxiety; Feast on faith.
Author Unknown

The World of Zoom

In 2020 some councils ventured into the world of Zoom! We shared prayer gatherings and Rosary nights. Some may have joined in a variety of webinars such as retreats, speakers' series, masses and chats with each other.

In January, after the parish presidents met with our diocesan present to review the instructed vote package an idea to hold a zoom gathering to discuss the instructed vote was discussed. The goal was to help members get a complete picture of the what the motions will mean to our parish councils should each of them pass. Life Member Colleen Martin had a licensed Zoom program and was willing to be the host for the gatherings. This initial idea has brought us to where we are now planning monthly retreats for the Year of St. Joseph. We are also planning regular prayer and social gatherings. How awesome is that!

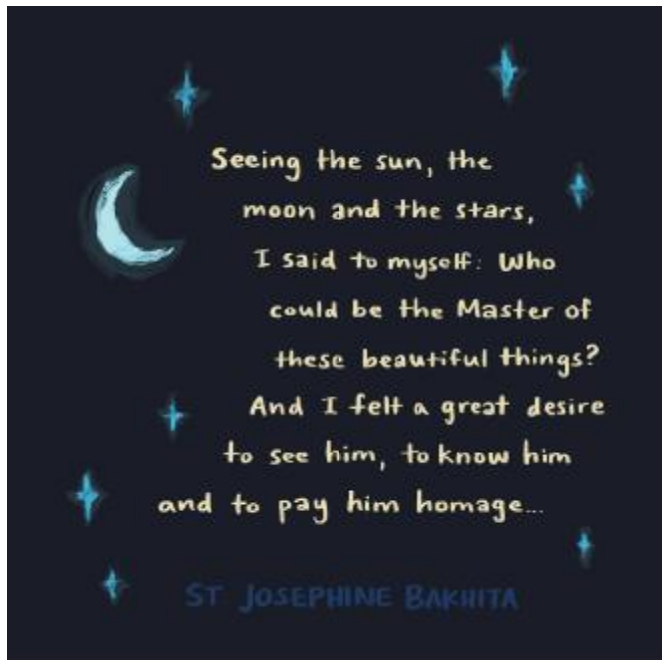
Realizing that we are overwhelmed by the plethora of emails received each day, the decision was made to keep current the Events Calendar on the diocesan website. When a new event is planned, the key information with the link to the zoom gathering will be posted in the calendar. It is up to each of us to look at the Events Calendar regularly for planned gatherings and from time to time "pop up" gatherings.

This one program is becoming our best communications tool for the diocese. As Colleen has said meeting with our sisters makes your heart sing.

Hope to see you in Zoom!

February Reflection

By Father Mike Mahoney, Diocesan Spiritual Advisor



“A profound bond links sacred Scripture and the faith of believers” *Pope Francis*

Thankfully, we are encouraged to spend more of our available time with scripture and prayer during Lent – a time to draw closer to God through prayer, fasting and alms-giving.

Some might say ‘Lent? Now? after these past months...’. Yet, here it is, the season of Lent which translated means ‘Spring’- there is something new under the sun.

I remember a homily by Cardinal Ambrozic some years ago where he talked about being surprised by a psalm that he’d read a thousand times but suddenly it seemed brand new. ‘Where did that come from?’ he wondered as if reading it for the first time. This is a way scripture speaks to us, surprisingly, as something brand new, the living Word of God.

In her writing for [Not by Bread Alone 2021](#), Mary Deturris Poust describes her experience:

“It’s easy to think, as we begin yet another Lenten journey, that we know the drill. We’ve been here before; we know what’s coming. But the truth is that Scripture is a living thing, always new. I know this firsthand because every time I sit down to write a Lenten reflection about a Scripture passage I’ve heard or read too many times to count, something jumps out at me and makes me say, “How did I not notice that before?” We hear every Scripture reading differently depending on where we are on our life journey, our spiritual journey or maybe just what side of the bed we woke up on that day. God meets us where we are, and if we’re paying attention, we can hear God, see God, recognize God in unlikely places, in stories we think we know. When we take time to listen for the still small voice, a scene, a sentence, a word calls out to us as if surrounded by blinking neon lights along a dark highway, and we are found, even if only for a few minutes...

"...To be honest, there were many days when I sat down with a set of Scripture readings and could not imagine what I might have to say that could be helpful to you. But, after sitting with the Scriptures, reading and rereading, taking them for a walk, sharing a cup of coffee with them as the sun rose outside my window, something always found its way off the page and into my heart, like a delicate shoot pushing through the cold, hard earth of winter into the warmth and light of spring."

Just last week the memorial of St. Josephine Bakhita is a story of encounter where the Word changes her life. Pope Benedict XVI shares this powerful story in his Encyclical *Spe Salvi* :

"The example of a saint of our time can to some degree help us understand what it means to have a real encounter with this God for the first time. I am thinking of the African Josephine Bakhita, canonized by Pope John Paul II. She was born around 1869—she herself did not know the precise date—in Darfur in Sudan. At the age of nine, she was kidnapped by slave-traders, beaten till she bled, and sold five times in the slave-markets of Sudan. Eventually she found herself working as a slave for the mother and the wife of a general, and there she was flogged every day till she bled; as a result of this she bore 144 scars throughout her life. Finally, in 1882, she was bought by an Italian merchant for the Italian consul Callisto Legnani, who returned to Italy as the Mahdists advanced. Here, after the terrifying "masters" who had owned her up to that point, Bakhita came to know a totally different kind of "master"—in Venetian dialect, which she was now learning, she used the name "*paron*" for the living God, the God of Jesus Christ. Up to that time she had known only masters who despised and maltreated her, or at best considered her a useful slave. Now, however, she heard that there is a "*paron*" above all masters, the Lord of all lords, and that this Lord is good, goodness in person. She came to know that this Lord even knew her, that he had created her—that he actually loved her. She too was loved, and by none other than the supreme "*Paron*", before whom all other masters are themselves no more than lowly servants. She was known and loved, and she was awaited. What is more, this master had himself accepted the destiny of being flogged and now he was waiting for her "at the Father's right hand". Now she had "hope" —no longer simply the modest hope of finding masters who would be less cruel, but the great hope: "I am definitively loved and whatever happens to me—I am awaited by this Love. And so, my life is good." Through the knowledge of this hope she was "redeemed", no longer a slave, but a free child of God. She understood what Paul meant when he reminded the Ephesians that previously they were without hope and without God in the world—without hope *because* without God. Hence, when she was about to be taken back to Sudan, Bakhita refused; she did not wish to be separated again from her "*Paron*". On 9 January 1890, she was baptized and confirmed and received her first Holy Communion from the hands of the Patriarch of Venice. On 8 December 1896, in Verona, she took her vows in the Congregation of the Canossian Sisters and from that time onwards, besides her work in the sacristy and in the porter's lodge at the convent, she made several journeys round Italy in order to promote the missions: the liberation that she had received through her encounter with the God of Jesus Christ, she felt she had to extend, it had to be handed on to others, to the greatest possible number of people. The hope

born in her which had "redeemed" her she could not keep to herself; this hope had to reach many, to reach everybody." (Spe Salvi paragraph 3)

Pope Francis on Word of God Sunday recently repeated his frequent invitation for everyone to carry a small book of the Gospels in our pocket or purse. He urged us to read at least three or four verses of the Bible every day.

What better time to increase this habit than this Lent, to receive something new in our spiritual life.

Development and Peace Share Lent 2021

This year's Share Lent theme is ***Share Love, Share Lent!*** All materials required can be downloaded from the D&P website (devp.org). One poster for this year's campaign has been mailed to every parish. (available online February 17)



Weekly videos will be presented during Lent. The first one will be aired on Saturday, February 20 from 1 - 2 (EST). Click on ***On-Line Activities*** to view.



Share Lent donations can be made through your parish on Solidarity Sunday or directly to Development and Peace. (see website for details)

This is an important part of our Lenten journey so please participate and give.

Just what we needed to lighten the mood on these coldest of days....thanks Liz.

The following test was developed as a mental age assesment by the School of Psychiatry at Harvard University
 Take your time and see if you can read each line aloud without a mistake. The average person over 50 years of age cannot do it.

1. This is this cat.
2. This is is cat.
3. This is how cat.
4. This is to cat.
5. This is keep cat.
6. This is an cat.
7. This is old cat.
8. This is person cat.
9. This is busy Cat.
10. This is for cat.
11. This is fourty cat.
12. This is seconds cat.

Now go back and read the third word in each line from the top down. I bet you can't resist passing this on.

Ten ways to love

- Listen without interrupting. (Proverbs 18)*
- Speak without accusing. (James 1:19)*
- Give without sparing. (Proverbs 21:26)*
- Pray without ceasing. (Colossians 1:9)*
- Answer without arguing. (Proverbs 17:1)*
- Share without pretending. (Ephesians 4:15)*
- Enjoy without complaint. (Philippians 2:14)*
- Trust without wavering. (1 Corinthians 13:7)*
- Forgive without punishing. (Colossians 3:13)*
- Promise without forgetting. (Proverbs 13:12)*



The Little Pine Tree

It was a beautiful winter day. Having snowed the night before, there was about eight inches of freshly fallen snow on the ground. The day was sunny and bright. Everything was white, as snow clung to the trees. I went for my daily exercise of snowshoeing, spending the time communicating with God, thanking Him for the beauty of nature, the freshness of the winter air, and the privilege of exercise outdoors. I talked to my Mother Mary, asking her what else I can do to honour her son Jesus. Barely had I asked her this, when I came across a little pine tree that gave me the answer. The form of the little tree was covered with snow. The main part of the tree and the branches were covered, with only the needles peeking out. The shape formed a cross. The needles looked like thorns, jutting out from this little cross created by God the Father. Many words were contained in this image. I was reminded of The Trinity, ever in our midst, The Cross of Christ before me. I can picture Him saying, "This, I did for you; for all of humanity; the Cross, the thorns, everything. But look; I make all things new. This little tree is alive. The fresh white snow is a sign of my purity. Trust in me. Tell others of My Mercy. Pray for others. Now is the time for mercy. I treasure each prayer; each act of kindness; each act of mercy. I desire the world to come to me; to trust in me. "

The Lord uses many ways to communicate to us. He simply asks us to be attentive; to follow up with prayers of gratitude for His presence; then follow through with what He has placed on our heart. MJS

Protect Life

Since 1922, over a billion babies around the world have been aborted. Because of the vast number in this statistic, it remains the greatest travesty of human life.

Even supporters of abortion would have to wonder why this number is so high. Is it used as birth control? It seems to me to be a drastic measure. Is society such that we give in to our desires despite the consequences? It seems to give little dignity for individuals to say they have no control over their passions. As humans, we are equipped with reason and intellect. Are people pressured or coerced into making a decision that is against their conscience? I think this is so, in many cases. Are people in denial, that every action is seen as having a viable solution, to serve the needs and desires of the person? It seems unreasonable that someone would deny that a fetus is a baby until it is born, given the fact that abortions are legal right up until birth. Or has Satan deceived us so much that we are no longer aware of right and wrong? I think this is the most accurate reason why this statistic is so high.

It makes me wonder how long God will allow humans to destroy the laws of nature He has put in place. St Teresa of Calcutta said that if abortions are not wrong, then what is? We may say that abortions are here to stay and there is nothing we can do; but there is. During election time, we can vote with our conscience, to ensure our vote is not in contradiction to the natural laws of God. We can make use of opportunities to stand for life, from conception until natural death. We can give financial support to organizations that support life. We can offer a mass for the dignity of persons. We can pray; in our homes; in groups; in many different ways, including devotions and novenas.

We must keep this human tragedy forefront on our minds, if for no other reason than to serve God. We want to be on the right side of the fence when on judgement day God says "Whatever you did to the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did it to me." -Matthew 25:40.

Thanks Mary Jane for sharing

Waiting for Word...

In our January edition we announced an update for the Convention this year. At present we are awaiting news from national concerning how we will conduct the annual convention. The national board is meeting the first weekend of March so all councils across Canada are waiting for news on what the plan will be for gathering.

We do know that annual gatherings will be kept to the bare minimum. In Thunder Bay Diocese, Our Lady of Loretto / St. Mark is the host council.

We ask that you pray for direction very soon after the March meetings. Be assured news will be posted on the diocesan website once we receive this year's procedures.

God Is That Good by Jonathan Pitts

I'm one of those people who was raised in a family where there was no question about whether God existed or whether Jesus Christ was the Saviour. I don't really remember a time when I didn't believe. Just as surely as my parents fed me plenty of vegetables to maintain my physical health, they fed me on the message of grace: that God loved me and sent Jesus to die for my sins. They wisely helped me to see that following Him was in my best interest and that submitting my life to His Lordship would be the thing that would give my life meaning and fulfillment. But they were never heavy-handed. They never tried to force anything on me. Just as they gently parented me into enjoying a little broccoli or a ripe tomato, so they parented me into taking my place in the Kingdom of God. I'll be forever grateful for that.

I always knew that Garry and Miriam Pitts were looking out for my good, even if I wasn't always happy about every directive I received. And that lent itself to my understanding that God was also always looking out for my good as well.

I learned the truth of Romans 8:28 (NKJV): "All things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose." Our world is filled with tragedies, disappointments, evil, and unmet expectations that can make it difficult to arrive at a trust in this truth, but somehow, I did. And through the dark days after losing Wynter, I managed to hold on to this belief. I had seen it in operation throughout my life.

Sometime during high school, I received a leather-bound, maroon New King James Bible as a gift, and that Bible has been my companion through thick and thin. It was there when I felt close to the Lord in seasons of spiritual commitment, and it was there when I struggled against shame and disappointment, especially in my college years.

It's all too easy to begin to question God in the middle of whatever the current struggle might be in our life, but we need the bigger perspective that comes from the pages of the Bible. Every time I read God's Word; I am reminded again that God is good. When I first read this verse, it changed my life. I soon started a habit that I follow to this day. Whenever I was reminded again that this truth lined up with what I was experiencing, I would put a small x in the margin of my Bible and record the date. If you were to open up my Bible to this passage today, you'd find dozens and dozens of xs and dates recorded there of the significant times in my life when I recognized again that its words were true.

You'd see my wedding date, where it simply reads "JRP to WDE 6/27/2003." A reminder of the day God gave me a gift that was beyond anything I could have dreamed.

You'd find the birthdates of each of my four daughters. With Wynter's health issues, every pregnancy was a step of faith, but each of our girls made their way into the world healthy and whole.

You'd also see the name of my high school mentor, teacher, and coach: Mr. French. He

was never afraid to call me out when he needed to. He saw my tendency toward selfishness and gave me the nickname "One Way." (Which, of course, was *my* way!) I didn't appreciate it at the time, but it did me so much good to spend time with him. From him I learned the importance of dying to self, even though I don't ever remember talking to him about God or Jesus in those teenage years.

A few weeks after Wynter died, I received an envelope in the mail, and when I checked the address, I saw it had come from Mr. French. I hadn't seen him in at least ten years. The only thing I had heard is that he had built himself a cabin in the woods of Nebraska, which had been the dream he always talked about. Inside the envelope was a photocopy of a page from the devotional book *Jesus Calling*. It was a devotion for the twenty-ninth of July, which was the date we had buried Wynter. It was a stirring message on endurance, and it included this Scripture passage: "Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything" (James 1:2-4).

These words were a gift to me on that day, and they had come from a man who had been willing to say the hard things to me as a young man and was now offering words of comfort that were richer than any he could have fashioned himself.

The phrase that had stuck out to me in that devotional was "make every effort." It went on to talk about working to see things from God's perspective—that He is renewing all things and redeeming our deepest pains. It was as if God was spurring me on toward the purposes He had for me, which sadly included this road I would never have chosen to walk. He was encouraging me to welcome it and to walk it with joy—joy beyond my understanding and faith beyond my sight.

Those Xs in my Bible don't just represent the things that were an immediate blessing to my life; they also include remembrances of how God worked for my good even when it didn't feel like it. X marks the spot as a reminder that God is good in every circumstance and always has my best in mind. X also marks some of the tragedies in my life, like my high school football coach who died very young of Lou Gehrig's disease and my daughter's mentor who never made it to age 30 but died in a car accident. And yes, you'd find an X for the day that Wynter passed away. Her death was a horrible thing, but it was also her graduation into eternity. God's goodness could be seen in her life, and also in her death.

Yes, God is *that* good. He redeems our tragedy and failure, and His promises are beyond our imagination. Sometimes, I temporarily lose sight of that goodness, but ultimately, I always return to my rock-solid belief that, whatever happens, God is good. Yes, His is *that* good. Never forget to mark the spot.

World Day of Prayer Vanuatu March 5, 2021

The complete prayer service for this year's virtual gathering for WDP can be downloaded from the WICC website for personal and small group use (wicc.org) Click on One Hour Service button. Donations can be sent online or by cheque to W.I.C.C 47 Queens Park Crescent East Toronto, On M5S 2C3

January St. Joseph Retreat Day!

Screen shots of participants at the Zoom Retreat held on January 27. We had over 30 gathered together in prayer, reflection and discussion.

Participants came from as far away as Ottawa, Lindsay and Quebec.

Monthly retreats are planned for the Year of St. Joseph. Check the diocesan website under Events Calendar for dates, times and themes.

