



May 24, 2017

PASTORAL LETTER ON THE OCCASION OF PENTECOST (June 4)

Since the very first day of Pentecost, the people of God have prayed for a New Pentecost, for a renewal of the gift that empowered the Apostles to undertake the mission of Christ with zeal and enthusiasm. Believers and missionaries have quickly understood that without the Holy Spirit, the Church weakens and loses its focus. As we end the joy-filled season of Easter with the feast of Pentecost, we never tire of proclaiming the Risen Lord and his promise of sending forth the Holy Spirit. I therefore call upon all the faithful of the Diocese of Sault Ste. Marie to pray ardently for the coming of the Holy Spirit so that our hearts may be set on fire for the renewal of our spiritual lives and an awakening to our baptismal responsibilities in our efforts of new evangelization.

I personally had a unique occasion to renew my apostolic mission exactly a month ago at the tomb of St. Peter in the context of the Ontario Bishops' *Ad Limina Apostolorum* visit in Rome. The following day, we had the joy of meeting with His Holiness Pope Francis and engaging in a two hour conversation with him. It was such a delight to be in the company of the Vicar of Christ and to share our communion with him along with the joys and challenges of our ministry. As a Good Shepherd, Pope Francis encouraged us in our work of prayer and proclamation of the gospel, bringing people, young and old, to encounter Jesus Christ and experience the power of his redemption.



(Please visit the diocesan website for more photos of my visit to Rome.

<http://www.diocesedesaultstemarie.org/>)


Throughout that week in Rome, I often offered up to God the people of my diocese and all of your prayer intentions. It was also an important time to visit the different Congregations and Dicasteries of the Roman Curia in order to discuss and exchange information about the many different facets and realities of our Church life. This first experience of such a visit gave me a deeper appreciation for the work accomplished at the Vatican, dealing with the complexity of many Church matters such as Catholic education, liturgy and sacraments, clergy and consecrated life, ecumenism and interfaith dialogue, family and life, social justice, new evangelization and many more. We indeed need to pray to the Holy Spirit to remain faithful to Christ's mission amidst the many challenges our Church and our society face today.

Before leaving Rome and coming back to Canada, the bishops were blessed to spend a few days in Assisi for a spiritual retreat. It was so easy to connect with the spirit of thanksgiving that Saint Francis and Saint Clare often expressed in this beautiful and peaceful country landscape of Italy. It allowed me to reflect on the many blessings I have received since my arrival as Bishop of Sault Ste. Marie Diocese. I am surrounded by a wonderful clergy and faith-filled parish communities who, despite the struggles and pains of life, manage to be bearers of hope and brothers and sisters in charity.

I strongly believe the Catholic Church has a purpose and a reason to exist and strive within the many communities of our northern region. Configured to the Crucified and Risen Lord, empowered by the Holy Spirit and guided by the Word of God the Father, we are called to be beacons of light, hope and wisdom in a world of darkness, despair and confusion. Our families, our schools, our health care institutions all need guidance and healing. Our society hungers for truth and justice and mercy in a way only God can provide. I pray that we, as the Body of Christ, may be that voice, that healing hand that can bring back our people to God and his eternal Kingdom.

I conclude by invoking the maternal protection of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of the Church to whom I will have the pleasure of consecrating our country and our diocese on June 30 at the Grotto in Sudbury. I would invite all priests to do likewise in their parishes on the weekend of Canada Day as we celebrate its 150th anniversary.

United in prayer,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Marcel Damphousse". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

+Marcel Damphousse