



MESSAGE TO THE CATHOLIC FAITHFUL OF SAULT STE. MARIE

May 6, 2020

On this feast of Saint François de Laval, patron saint of Canadian Bishops, Pope Francis announced publicly his decision to appoint me as Coadjutor Archbishop of Ottawa-Cornwall. This is the beginning of a new chapter in my life, one that will build upon multiple experiences that have taught me to trust the Lord. I have always been amazed at the callings I received from the Church; however, I did not always understand why I was the one chosen to assume responsibility for a new parish, a new diocese, a new ministry or a new undertaking. My first “fiat” is rooted in my love for God and for his people. It was from this fundamental principle that I responded to all the other callings in my life, offering my service with humility and thanksgiving. God's plan is not always obvious, but it is revealed to us as a Mystery. No matter how many questions I ask, the answer is often the same: "My grace is sufficient for you." So I walk gently and joyfully on a path that will be strewn with signs of divine Providence.

It is with mixed feelings that I write these words to you. Having celebrated Good Shepherd's Mass last Sunday, I feel bad for leaving you. I feel as though I were abandoning you, knowing that we are at a time in our history when the normal course of our Church life has been changed by the pandemic. This increased uncertainty about the future is added to all other issues currently touching your lives. I see so many things that still need to be finished or even started. Projects of all kinds have been discussed and / or partially started. You will need to be patient and to trust that the new Bishop will take over and provide the necessary leadership according to God's plan. Rest assured that there is an exceptional staff at the Diocesan Center, and each of them will support the new Bishop. I also have great confidence in the clergy who assume their responsibilities in their respective parishes. I am very grateful for their dedication and good collaboration over the past four years.

I plan to begin my responsibilities as Coadjutor Archbishop on June 16, 2020. Until then, I will be present in the diocese to meet the many needs and to plan with the diocesan team the steps that will follow. The restrictions imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic may complicate gatherings that would allow us to say "goodbye". We will undoubtedly find answers to our multiple questions in the days to come.

I remain with you in thought and prayer. I entrust everything to the intercession of Mary Immaculate and of Saint François de Laval.

+Marcel Damphousse

Bishop of Sault Ste. Marie

Coadjutor Archbishop elect of Ottawa-Cornwall