

Pastoral Letter of Archbishop Mulhall to the Faithful of the Archdiocese of Kingston and the Diocese of Pembroke

My dear faithful of the Archdiocese and Diocese,

As I begin my final months of episcopal service in the Diocese of Pembroke and begin my ministry in the Archdiocese of Kingston, I wish to write a joint letter to you. I do this because I have been very conscious in these past weeks of the difficulty of serving the Church of both Pembroke and Kingston, attempting to be present for the important events in the life of each community. I hope to prepare a similar letter for you in the coming months before a new bishop is appointed for the Diocese of Pembroke.

On Saturday, 29 June, the Holy Father Pope Francis celebrated Mass for the Solemnity of the Apostles Peter and Paul at St. Peter's Basilica in Rome. In recent history, this Mass has been an occasion for the presentation of the *pallium*, which is given to the Archbishops who have been appointed in the past year. The *pallium* is a liturgical band of wool worn at Mass by the Archbishop. It symbolizes the bond of unity and the participation of the Archbishop in the supreme pastoral office of the Holy Father. This pastoral office comprises the essence of the office of ordained ministry in the Church, namely, the ministry of sanctifying, teaching and governing the holy people of God.

The pastoral office of the Holy Father plays a fundamental role in our lives as Catholics. Central to our faith is the belief that the Holy Spirit continually guides the Church in all aspects of its life, including the election of Popes. In the past decades, these have been men of great holiness and ability. They have followed the will of God and wisely guided the Church on a sacred pilgrimage through the turbulent times of our modern world. We should truly give thanks to God for his blessings. Since 1960, three of these Popes have been canonized. Our more senior members of the Church will recall St. John XXIII, who convoked the Second Vatican Council (1962-65), placing his full trust in the guidance of the Holy Spirit. The true teachings of this Council continue to guide the Church on her pilgrimage. The courage and long suffering of St. Paul VI led the Church through turbulent years of the late 1960s and early 1970s. For a few brief months we were granted the warm smile and goodness of Pope John Paul I. His early death led the way for the magnificent ministry of St. John Paul II, who set the Church on a confirmed path towards the Third Millennium. Few Popes have had such an effect upon the Church as Papa Wojtyla. His determination to plumb the depths of the Council's pronouncements has given to the Church a body of teaching which addresses the most pressing issues of our present age. Pope Benedict XVI served the Church with a deep humility and powerful insight into the mysteries of our faith. His homilies and teachings will be a gift to the Church for centuries. In Pope Francis, the Lord has prepared a pastor who has challenged the Church to go out into the world with renewed confidence, knowing that the groundwork of teaching and reflection is available for us to speak the truth. His beautiful teaching on marriage and human love is found in the document *Amoris laetitia* (The Joy of Love, 2016). This teaching presents to the Church the invitation to convert its missionary glance towards humanity and to see through the eyes of the loving Saviour. This conversion, I pray, will allow the Church to speak the

fullness of the Gospel's truth to all generations in today's world. As the Church goes out with confidence into the world, may her priests and faithful accompany in charity and truth those who in any way are distant from the true teachings of Christ. May the grace of this discernment awaken in the hearts of all humanity the beauty and joy of the Gospel, a true understanding of the human person and the rich expression of human sexuality in marriage.

Each of these pastors has played a providential and complementary role in the living teaching office of the Church, a magisterium which serves the truth of the Gospel of Jesus, and continuously discerns the unique needs of our "today". The needs of this "today" have been marked by a divide between the truth of God's plan for the true happiness of his people and a world which at times becomes intoxicated with its own power and technological prowess. This divide has deeply affected humanity's relationship with the Divine. The remarkable technological development of the past century has introduced a fundamental question for humanity! "Just because I am able to do something, does this mean that it is ethically good to do it?" Humanity's struggle to properly address this question over the past century has led to the continued possibility of nuclear destruction, the fragility of the environment, the resort to war and violence, and the loss of respect for human dignity. Fifty-one years ago, St. Paul VI addressed this very question as humanity had developed an intrusive method to regulate the transmission of life. The teachings of *Humanae vitae* (Of Human Love, 1968) addressed the very core of this divide between technological development and the truth regarding human sexuality. The profound teachings of St. John Paul II confirmed this teaching. His writings and preaching provided for the Church an attractive teaching on the dignity of human sexuality and marriage, while at the same time identifying the danger of a false sense of liberty which led humanity away from God. This teaching has borne enormous fruit. However, the divide has continued to grow in the Western world, and the grave effects of the loss of the sense of the Divine in people's lives has become more pronounced. In this context, the message of accompanying charity in truth, as proposed by Pope Francis, needs greater and greater development in our pastoral approach.

This model presented by the Holy Father asks a great deal. It can be an enormous challenge for us to strike out "into the deep", that is, into the world, and to learn the new and vital lessons of evangelical presence. It asks that each of us develop our understanding and acceptance of the truth of Christ's gospel, while at the same time developing skills that allow us to accompany, listen and discern with those who differ from the beliefs of the Church in any way. Accompaniment is not a compromise to find a common agreement, nor is it an excuse to dissent from the teachings of Christ's Church. One who accompanies must be committed to one's faith. A growth in this charism to accompany is the fruit of prayer. In prayer, Jesus allows us to appreciate the sin of our lives and, at the same time, he consoles us through his mercy. The Christian who experiences the presence and accompaniment of Jesus in prayer becomes equipped, through God's grace, to accompany properly, listen to, and discern with others the joys and challenges of our common earthly pilgrimage. There is no shortcut in this grace-filled charism.

The story of the “Road to Emmaus” in the Gospel of Luke is an attractive example of the Risen Lord’s lesson for the Church (Luke 24.13-35). Christ’s example is to accompany, listen and discern with unbelieving disciples and, through his presence and explanation of the Scriptures, to bring these disciples to belief. I invite each of us to reflect upon this beautiful passage and to allow the Holy Spirit to form our hearts in likeness to the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

In this context, I am deeply thankful to the priests, religious and, above all, the married couples who have lived this vital charism highlighted by Pope Francis. I call to mind the special programs regarding the danger of euthanasia, the patient ministry of sacramental catechesis, the marriage preparation programs and the introduction of this teaching in our High Schools. I am also thankful for the cooperation of the Renfrew County Catholic School Board in making this program available.

It will be a joy for me to grow in my knowledge and appreciation of the parishes of the Archdiocese of Kingston in the coming months. I look forward to my individual meetings with the priests of the Archdiocese of Kingston, so that we can reflect together upon the challenges of priestly and pastoral ministry today, identify the needs and future initiatives for a better ministry to the faithful. I know that I will come to know of the many generous examples in the Archdiocese of Kingston of a deep appreciation of this invitation of Pope Francis.

My dear faithful, let us keep one another in our prayers in these coming months.