PRESS RELEASE
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Ottawa, May 6, 2020

POPE FRANCIS ANNOUNCES DIOCESAN AMALGAMATION,
NAMES BISHOP DAMPHOUSSE TO OTTAWA-CORNWALL
AND BISHOP DESROCHERS TO PEMBROKE

Many changes are coming to what were yesterday the Archdiocese of Ottawa and the Diocese of Alexandria-Cornwall. The Holy See announced at 6PM Rome time that the two dioceses would become one today, on the Feast of Saint François de Laval. His Excellency the Most Rev. Terrence Prendergast becomes the first Archbishop of Ottawa-Cornwall. Pope Francis also appointed His Excellency the Most Rev. Marcel Damphousse, until this morning Bishop of Sault St. Marie, to be Coadjutor Bishop of Ottawa-Cornwall. In addition, Pope Francis appointed His Excellency the Most Rev. Guy Desrochers, until this morning Auxiliary Bishop of Alexandria-Cornwall and Auxiliary Bishop of Ottawa, to be the new Bishop of Pembroke.

Born in St. Joseph, Man., Bishop Damphousse was ordained a priest in 1991 for the Archdiocese of Saint-Boniface. He earned a Bachelor’s degree in Psychology in 1984 at the University College of Saint Boniface, followed by a Bachelor’s degree in Theology in 1989 from Saint Paul University, Ottawa. In 2002, he received a Licentiate in Spiritual Theology from the Teresianum, a Carmelite Pontifical Theological Faculty in Rome. For several years, Bishop Damphousse taught at the Manitoba Catholic School of Evangelization, and was Diocesan Vocations Director for 12 years. He was Rector of the Saint-Boniface Cathedral in Manitoba when, on June 28, 2012, Pope Benedict XVI named him bishop of Alexandria-Cornwall. He served there until November 12, 2016, when Pope Francis appointed him bishop of the Diocese of Sault Ste. Marie. Archbishop elect Damphousse will become the Archbishop of Ottawa-Cornwall upon Archbishop Prendergast’s retirement.

Archbishop Guy Desrochers, a Redemptorist, was born on May 23, 1956, in Hull, Quebec, in the current Archdiocese of Gatineau. He completed his honours diploma in Fine and Commercial Arts at Algonquin College in Ottawa. From 1972 to 1979, he worked as a graphic artist for Le Droit in Ottawa. In August 1983, he entered the novitiate of the Redemptorist Fathers at Sainte-Anne-de-Beaupré and in 1989, he was ordained a priest. From 1989 to 1995, he was responsible for a small team of missionaries made up of four Redemptorists from the Diocese of Gaspé, Quebec. From 1995 to 1998, he was the superior of Aylmer, in the Diocese of Gatineau-Hull. From 1998 to 2005, he practiced ministry at the Shrine of Sainte-Anne-de-Beaupré. From 2005 to 2008, he was appointed Superior of the Pavilion de Saint-
Rédempteur in Saint-Augustin-Des-Desmaures, a place of refuge for the retreats of ecclesial groups. From 2008 to 2011, he was director of Sainte-Anne’s Magazine. From 2011 to 2015, he was appointed rector of the Shrine of St. Anne and superior to the international community that provides spiritual service to the shrine. He became a spiritual assistant to the Shrine of Sainte-Anne-de-Beaupré, Quebec, and a preacher of spiritual retreats in Canada and the United States. He regularly devoted part of his time to preaching retreats throughout North America. Pope Francis appointed Hi Excellency Most Rev. Guy Desrochers as Auxiliary Bishop of the Diocese of Alexandria-Cornwall on December 12, 2018.

The Diocese of Alexandria, founded in 1890, was renamed Alexandria-Cornwall in 1976. The Diocese had 27 parishes and missions, with a population of 60,000 Catholics served by 34 diocesan priests, two priests who are members of institutes of consecrated life, four seminarians, 16 permanent deacons and 18 religious sisters who are members of religious institutes. The Diocese covered an area of 1,290 square km (498 square miles).

The Diocese of Bytown, founded in 1847, was renamed the Archdiocese of Ottawa in 1886. The Diocese has 106 parishes and missions, with a population of 400,000 Catholics served by 131 diocesan priests, 58 priests who are members of institutes of consecrated life, 3 seminarians, 71 permanent deacons and 638 men and women religious who are members of religious institutes. The Archdiocese covered an area of 5,818 square km (2,247 square miles).

The amalgamation will ensure more efficient management of the Church’s resources while respecting the bilingual nature of the region. Archbishop Terrence Prendergast, S.J., who at the time was the Archbishop of the Archdiocese of Ottawa, was named the Apostolic Administrator for the Diocese of Alexandria-Cornwall on January 16, 2016. At that time, he was tasked with making a recommendation about the possible amalgamation of the two dioceses. Over the following years, a series of consultations was held in the two dioceses and a recommendation was sent to the Vatican in June 2017. On April 27, 2018, it was announced that Pope Francis had united the Diocese of Alexandria-Cornwall to the Archdiocese of Ottawa “in the person of the bishop.” Thus Archbishop Prendergast became the ninth Bishop of the Diocese of Alexandria-Cornwall. On December 12, 2018, Father Guy Desrochers, C.Ss.R. was named the auxiliary bishop for the Diocese of Alexandria-Cornwall. In early 2019, a Transition Committee was struck consisting of key representatives of both dioceses. Over the past year, they have been meeting to discuss and work out the various aspects of uniting the two dioceses into the new Archdiocese of Ottawa-Cornwall. Although the canonical amalgamation has now been announced, the civil amalgamation will take place several months from now following an Act of Parliament.

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Media Contact: Robert Du Broy
Director of Communications
613-738-5025, ext. 238
819-593-6377 (mobile)
rdubroy@archottawa.ca