



PASTORAL LETTER
TO PARISHIONERS OF ST. MATTHIEU
ON THE OCCASION OF THE SUPPRESSION OF THEIR PARISH

November 20, 2016 – Solemnity of Christ the King

Dear parishioners,

Suppressing a parish or closing a church building is one of the most difficult decisions a bishop may have to make. When such a decision has to be made, a community of Christ's faithful is being asked to fundamentally alter their way of life. In so doing, the community often leaves behind a sacred building where, for decades, they celebrated Mass, sacraments of initiation, confession, marriages, funerals, and so on. Letting go of a familiar worship space you call home can be heartbreaking and will require some grieving.

As a parish community, you have shown me resilience, great understanding and steadfast courage as you deliberated and discerned the outcome of today's last Eucharist and closing of the church. I wish to express profound appreciation for your collaboration in making this decision as serene as possible. I thank in a special way Msgr. André Tremblay and members of the parish council for helping me in this time of transition and change. We quickly came to the difficult realization that the pastoral and financial situations were no longer viable and a painful but right decision had to be made. I also wish to thank Fr. Vince Fiore for helping out in the last month or so in order to relieve Msgr. Tremblay and allow him to rest and enter into full time retirement.

We need to understand that we leave today with much more than good memories of beautiful liturgical celebrations and community events. And yes, many such memories add up over 63 years. We although continue to live as the people of God, as the body of Christ and as disciples of Christ evermore committed to the building of God's Kingdom. This will be possible as you integrate the neighboring Catholic parish communities that await you. I invite you to introduce yourselves to the pastor as new parishioners arriving from St. Mathieu. He and his faithful will see to make you feel at home and welcomed into

a new family and a new worship space. I have designated St. Patrick's and Ste-Anne-des-Pins as the two official parishes that will open their doors for you. It is important to note that the parish registers that hold the records of baptisms, confirmations, marriages and funerals will be transferred to Ste-Anne-des-Pins. They will therefore provide the necessary certificates or information you may require in the future.

In closing, I pray that this painful transition may be an occasion for spiritual renewal and that the Lord may bring consolation and healing to those who will grieve the loss of a beloved parish community. Take heart, God never fails those who put their trust in Him especially as we come today to the end of the Extraordinary Jubilee Year of Mercy.

With the assurance of my total commitment for the good of our Diocesan Church, I remain,

Sincerely yours in Christ,



+Marcel Damphousse
Bishop of Sault Ste. Marie