

February 2, 2021

MESSAGE FROM THE BISHOP

First Meeting of the Diocesan Evangelization Team

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

More than a month ago, we began to set up a team that will take charge of a new evangelization project for our diocese. I have asked a fellow priest, Fr. Sean Wenger, a member of the Companions of the Cross community in the Archdiocese of Ottawa-Cornwall, to facilitate the first Zoom meeting of the evangelization team that took place last Saturday. He has worked closely with me in the founding of the evangelization team for the Archdiocese of Ottawa-Cornwall, and has a specialization (Ph.D.) in the field of the New Evangelization.

After having heard the suggestions of my advisors, I asked nine people with aptitudes or experience in the field of evangelization to be part of our new team: first of all, Mrs. Yvette Bourque (a catechist already working for our diocese in marriage preparation, in a group of young adults and for the faith education of students and families), Deacon Adrien Chaput (also a catechist of the diocese for the Christian initiation groups), Mr. Patrick Sullivan (evangelist and lay preacher already very present online), Renée Sylvain (former member of CCO and member of the Madonna House community for several years), Mme Lucile Tourigny (volunteer deeply involved in the francophone community of Saint-Jean-Baptiste), Fr. Réal Ouellette, representing the clergy and faithful of the francophone sector of our diocese, Fr. John Burchat, representing the clergy and faithful of the English-speaking sector, Fr. Michael Smith (Vicar General and Moderator of the Curia) and Deacon Chris Barrett (in charge of Communications for the Diocese, who will be an important asset in making known to all the initiatives and future activities undertaken by the Evangelization Team.

At the end of this first of two sessions given by Fr. Wenger, CC, the members of the new team expressed their great satisfaction and appreciation for the rich content of the teachings imparted to us, which were divided into three periods of one hour each. The purpose of this first session was to help us grasp the essence and urgency of our duty to evangelize now, as envoys of Christ to form new disciples; to better understand the secular reality in which we live today by using statistics based on recent surveys of Catholic and other believing communities, before embarking left and right on all sorts of projects that would end up dispersing rather than gathering; to begin by identifying a dream or long-term vision before structuring ourselves as a team, a dream that would become truly unifying and capable of energizing our entire diocese. Once the dream is well elaborated and defined, the objectives and the means to realize it concretely will follow.

Understand that even though we are still in the early stages of development, we are all very enthusiastic and full of faith in the inspirations and actions that the Holy Spirit will raise up in the hearts of our team members and in the hearts of all the faithful and future disciples that the Lord will be able to add to His great family.

I thus urge you, dear members of the clergy and faithful, to carry this new project of evangelization intensely and faithfully in your daily prayers from now on. Let us pray that this project will become a rallying point for our entire diocese and that it will arouse in hearts the enthusiasm to become true disciples of Christ, converted and transformed in depth by his immeasurable and unconditional love for each one of us.

You will soon have at your disposal a diocesan prayer that we can all recite for the success of this ambitious project.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

+ Guy Desrochers, C.Ss.R., Bishop of Pembroke