



PASTORAL MESSAGE
Most Reverend Albert LeGatt
Archbishop of Saint Boniface
September 8 and 9, 2012

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, members of the Church in the Archdiocese of Saint Boniface,

A year and a half ago in March 2011, I addressed all of you to speak of an effort being undertaken to identify the many good things being lived in the archdiocese, the challenges facing our Church in our world today and what we would all want to see happen in our parishes and our archdiocese. At that time, I invited pastoral councils and priests' council to discuss and consult with you and work together to create a vision and a pastoral plan or direction for the archdiocese and our parishes for the next five years.

Many people took part in this work, led by a very capable facilitator, Mr. Ronald Bisson, through numerous meetings and conversations. Today, I wish, first of all, to thank you for your strong participation and continued cooperation, all of which has indeed borne fruit in a document, a road-map for the next five years that we have entitled : *The Spiritual and Pastoral Renewal of the Archdiocese of Saint Boniface*.

In today's presentation, I wish to communicate to you the details of this plan - its five guiding principles, the Offices or services being organized to implement these guiding principles and some concrete diocesan services we can foresee providing.

The guiding principles which are meant to inspire all of the pastoral efforts within our archdiocese and parishes, spring from a sense of the mission of Jesus Christ entrusted to all the baptized, the mission of proclaiming the Gospel and building up the Kingdom of God. To do this in our world of today, we choose to be guided by these five principles.

First, we must ensure a sharing of the talents and charisms, the gifts of all the baptized, all the laity, all the religious, all the permanent deacons and all the priests.

Second, we must broaden the influence of the Gospel and of the Church within marriage and family life, with our youth, with groups and movements, both within our Church life and beyond.

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Third, we need to assert, to affirm our Catholic identity in a way that draws us into greater unity, greater communion. Religious gatherings and events will be very important in this regard.

Fourth, we wish to give greater visibility to the Church, to the Gospel, in the public forum, and in society at large. Formed by the teaching and person of Christ, Catholics must bring their voice and their participation to the fields of health care, social services, social justice, common efforts with other churches and faiths, everything that can advance the common good and thereby build up the kingdom of God for all people.

And fifth, we see the need to develop in a stronger fashion, a spirituality of stewardship within all of us. Working to develop an even greater sense of gratitude to God for His abundant graces and gifts entrusted to us, we can develop parishes where these many gifts are identified and generously shared.

The proof of anything of course is in the pudding; we have to put flesh to these principles. To this end, the people involved in our planning process over the last two years proposed the development or reorganisation of five key offices or diocesan services

First, the Office of Evangelization and Life-Long Learning of the Faith recognizes the need to proclaim and teach our Catholic beliefs, the teachings of Christ and the Church in an ongoing fashion. Here the major emphasis would be on the many ways that adults can learn and develop their own faith in a way that is personal and life-giving. People are seeking an adult understanding of life, of relationships, of faith and spirituality that gives meaning and direction to their everyday lives. While all stages from infancy to old age are important, it is the journey of faith of our adult years, from young adults to middle age and beyond, that will be the main focus of this Office of Evangelization and Life-Long Learning of the Faith. An example of its work will be to lead the RENEW process, *ARISE Together in Christ*, of which I will speak more later. This Office would also oversee formation efforts such as Nathanael, diocesan conferences and the promotion of educational sessions and workshops at the parish or regional levels. It would also prepare written and multi-media resources, such as for the Internet, to provide religious knowledge and spiritual growth.

Faith, as it matures, leads a person to service; both service in building up the Kingdom of God in our world in charity and justice, and service in building up the very life of the Church itself. For this life of the Church to be vibrant, many ministries must be strong in our parishes: liturgy and worship, catechetics, youth ministry, social justice, care for the elderly, sick and shut-ins, care for the poor, the refugees, the newcomers, and so much more. To lead and plan all this, a parish needs a strong parish pastoral council and an able finance committee.

All of this will exist and grow in each of our parishes only if the participation of all parishioners is encouraged, and education, training and formation is given to help people gain the confidence, knowledge and skills to share their gifts and talents.

Therefore, a second office or diocesan service of great importance will be that of the Office of Formation for Ministry in the Church. Its main focus will be to offer to parishes throughout the archdiocese, the support, resources and training as requested by the parishes so that the lay people in that parish can step forward and take on the roles and responsibilities needed for the life of that parish.

In all of this effort of building up the Church, the leadership role and sacramental service of the priests and deacons are essential. To give ongoing support and formation for them in their servant-leadership ministry, an Office of Clergy for Priests and Permanent Deacons will be established.

An Office of Stewardship will also be organized to promote the spirituality and practice of stewardship. A further office will be the Office of Communications linking all in the diocese through email, website, newsletters, and social media so as to promote our unity, to promote common vision and efforts. The creation or further development of these five offices will be carried out, along with the development of the already existing Offices of the Chancery and the Office of Finance and Administration.

In regards to all these offices, some will involve hired diocesan staff, many already in place; others will be composed of diocesan commissions and committees with volunteers carrying out the specific task of that Office. While operating within the limits of our financial resources as a diocese, we will do our utmost to help all parishes receive the support and tools needed to carry out the work of Jesus Christ in their midst.

For it is indeed the Lord Jesus who must be the center of all our parish and diocesan life. To help us grow in our knowledge and our experience of a life centered in Christ, we have decided to undertake the process of *ARISE Together in Christ*, offered by RENEW International.

The RENEW program was well received and brought forth many fruitful gifts in the 1980's, when many people across the diocese first experienced it. Taking up again this effort of promoting the proclamation of the Gospel and growth in people's faith, we hope to reinvigorate the pastoral life of our parishes and diocese.

Over a period of six weeks, people will gather in their homes in groups of 6 to 10 people to listen to the Gospel together, to rediscover Jesus Christ in a personal way and especially to share with one another how their faith affects their life at home, at work and in their community.

Let us have a look for a moment at what such a gathering might look like. It is an example of what each of you can look forward to with *ARISE Together in Christ*.

[In the video, a short clip of a session of *ARISE Together in Christ*]

I really encourage you to consider taking part in this *ARISE* experience. Jesus Christ comes to us through one another. Our faith grows when we learn and question and discuss together,

seeking together to know what it means to be a follower of Christ and to be a faith-filled Catholic Christian

So please consider what involvement in this experience of *ARISE Together in Christ* can bring to you, as an individual, as a family. Be on the lookout for announcements and activities regarding *ARISE* in most of our parishes this month, including a diocesan launch of *ARISE* on September 30th at the Saint Boniface Cathedral. Sign up now to become a member of a small faith community to bring life and fire to your faith.

As the year progresses, be attentive to information about further details regarding the roll-out of the Spiritual and Pastoral Renewal program for the archdiocese. This renewal will have legs and will lead to a much richer Christian life for everyone if you are informed and involved with a sense of hope and joyful generosity. So please continue to talk about this Spiritual and Pastoral Renewal and how it might be implemented in your parish under the leadership of your Pastor and Parish Pastoral Council.

As we communicate the various steps over the next five years, we also hope to continue receiving your input, suggestions and hopes, especially through your Pastor and through the Parish, the Regional and Diocesan Pastoral Councils.

Yes, we can *ARISE Together in Christ* to a deeper spiritual closeness to Jesus and a more living and life-giving Church life.

Thank you and let us go forward together.

+Albert LeGatt
Archbishop of Saint Boniface