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**Pastoral Message**  
**Archbishop Albert LeGatt, D.D.**  
**Archdiocese of Saint Boniface**  
**Second Sunday of Lent**  
**March 20, 2011**

Hello dear sisters and brothers, all you who together belong to this Body of Christ and Temple of the Spirit that is the Church of the Archdiocese of Saint Boniface. I am coming to speak to you in this manner because of a pastoral and spiritual effort which I wish to undertake with all of you. That initiative is the spiritual and pastoral renewal of our life as a Church, as a people of faith, as the baptized united in Christ our Head.

I have had the occasion to visit most of the parishes of this diocese and to meet many of you. Thank you for the warm welcome you have offered me. I have been struck by the strong faith and much good will of so many. People do wish to be engaged in the Church and help it to be truly alive and relevant and welcoming.

In my first year, you taught me much about the diocese and your particular parishes. To get to know you I asked of you, through many groups, a number of questions that reflected upon the strengths and needs of each parish or community and how we might, as a diocese, be of service to you.

I discussed these questions and consulted with many people. We renewed the two essential consultative bodies of any diocese, that is to say the Diocesan Council of Priests and the Diocesan Pastoral Council. Now, I believe we are at a stage where it would be very helpful to develop together a common vision, a common direction and a common pastoral plan. This is needed to guide your efforts at the parish level and the efforts of the archdiocese to support and strengthen your parish's life.

As Christians, followers of Christ, our mission, our multi-faceted way of bringing about the full life of the Church is of course set by the mission of Christ. It is Christ's vision we follow, it is Christ's mission we live out. As he preached and taught and healed and gathered and befriended; as he died and rose again and sent the Holy Spirit; as he loved to the end and continues to love us, he sets before us the way to go. It is the way set out before each of us as we are baptized and confirmed.

As Jesus lived and died and rose again and sent his Spirit upon us, we can see that he was a Prophet - teaching and setting out the light of God's truth. We can see that he was a High Priest – leading and uniting people in their praise and offering to God the Father. We can see that he was a Shepherd-King, a servant-leader – building up a community marked by love, justice, peace and reconciliation.

Baptized into Jesus Christ, the Prophet, we also are to preach and teach. We are to seek an understanding of the truth and light of our faith. We are to be witnesses, helping one another and all people to welcome this Good News. And so we ask ourselves; how can we do this, and especially do this better, in our world of today often marked by indifference to all things religious?

Baptized into Jesus Christ, the High Priest, we also are to be a people of prayer and celebration. We are to seek an attitude of prayer and spiritual life based on giving thanks and glory to God. We are to be joined to Christ in offering our voices, our prayers, our very lives as a joyful offering of gratitude, of thanksgiving. With him we are to offer to God the Father our prayers and intercessions for the Church, for the poor and the suffering, for all people. And so we ask ourselves; how can we grow in our liturgical life in a way that nourishes our deepest longings and sends us out to love and to serve?

Baptized into Jesus Christ, the Shepherd-King, the servant-leader, we also are to build up our families, our friendships and all other relationships, our parishes and communities, indeed all of society, all of humanity into the Kingdom of God. We are to foster realities of mutual support, of dialogue and collaboration, of care for the suffering and oppressed, of reconciliation, so as to bring about peace and harmony. We are to wash each other's feet and serve the needs of others, especially the need for the fullness of life. How can we indeed become a Church where they will know we are Christians by our love and by our charity and justice? And so we ask ourselves; where does Christ and our world call us to go in seeing to the needs of all?

These are many questions, many challenges, but the Spirit will guide us if we listen, if we discern, and if we plan and organize. And that's why I'm coming to you today, to ask you to be a part of our diocesan effort at setting out a common vision and common pastoral plan. Your understanding, and especially your support and participation, are vital to our growing together in faithfulness to Christ's call.

Such efforts have been undertaken in the past in this diocese. And in fact last year through the efforts of consultation at the parish, regional and diocesan level, by both priests and lay faithful, two priorities were set out for immediate action. The first was education in the faith and spiritual formation, especially for adults. The second was greater communication within and throughout the diocese.

We have been working on both these areas with several new initiatives. In fact, this DVD presentation is one sign of wishing to reach out and engage all the baptized of our diocese in working and planning for our Church now, and for our Church in the future.

We have made efforts to revitalize our missionary endeavours, efforts to create a commission that will promote vocations, efforts to communicate and link our many social justice works, efforts to develop our catechism programs so that they are also an opportunity for the parents of the children to journey in their own understanding of the faith, efforts to strengthen our marriage and our youth programs. As we have done this, what has really been encouraging is to see and hear the desires and hopes of so many people. People do want their Church to be alive. People do want their Church to be relevant and filled with the wisdom of God. People do want their Church to be a place where all can belong and all can contribute.

With this strong foundation and a clear sense of purpose, I do believe now is the time to set out a comprehensive vision and a detailed pastoral plan, and it is time to do this together.

With the Diocesan Council of Priests and the Diocesan Pastoral Council, as well as with the team of people delivering pastoral services and some other key people of the diocese, we have already begun this process. We have identified key challenges: religious indifference, the reducing number of priests, the need to find new and better ways to understand and share our faith with all. The challenge overall is to discover, to rediscover or to renew the baptismal call of all of the faithful in living out the three-fold mission of Christ – to evangelize, to celebrate, to commit oneself - and that in our world today.

We have set out a proposed vision which includes the participation of all, with opportunities for all to grow and opportunities to share their gifts and to build up the Church together. We have brought forward concrete ways to bring this about.

These challenges, this vision, these concrete opportunities of living and advancing this vision are set out in a pamphlet you are receiving along with this address. The questions I now wish to set before you are twofold. Please consider them and share your thoughts with your pastor and members of your Parish Pastoral Council:

Firstly, what is your considered opinion of the description of these challenges, vision and concrete opportunities? Is this the Church you wish to have, you wish to be? And, is there anything else you wish to add?

Secondly, how can we bring about this vision of a Church faithful to the call of Christ, faithful to the call of our common baptism? In concrete ways? In our midst, in our parishes?

For example, what is needed in the area of youth ministry? Of adult faith education? Of catechism? Of liturgy? Of justice? Of pastoral care for the sick and the elderly? For the new immigrants among us? What do you need and desire for your parish?

We need a vision and a pastoral plan, with goals and objectives and the necessary human and financial resources.

And what is especially needed is that we journey together in this, that there are many opportunities for your voices to be heard and for your participation to be welcomed.

Why is this so important that we do this together? Why is it so essential that all, as they wish, can be involved? It is because in the end, the defining gift and work of Christ within His Church, His Body, is that of communion. What we do and how we do it serve but one purpose – to be united, to be one and in communion with one another in charity and love.

That was and is Jesus' ultimate prayer and work as we hear in the Gospel of John, chapter 17, 21-23: "...so that they may all be ONE, as you Father, are in me and I in you, that they also may be in us (...) so that the world may know that you have sent me (...) and that you loved them even as you loved me ”.

The great rediscovery of the Second Vatican Council was that as Church we are firstly a Church of communion even as the Council set out the ways of living communion in all aspects of the Church's life in the modern world.

Now is the time to take up again, in fidelity to all that has been so richly lived and developed throughout the years in this wonderful archdiocese, a renewed vision and a renewed pastoral plan for this communion.

I thank you in advance for your support and participation in this effort at whatever level you are involved. And thank you especially for your prayers for the success of this spiritual and pastoral renewal of our diocese. We place everything in the hands of Jesus Christ, our Head, confident in the wisdom and power of the Spirit in all of us the baptized.

Thank you and may God abundantly bless this Church of Saint Boniface, all of us. Thank you.