



Dear Parishioners and Pastors,

I wish all of you a blessed Holy Week. There is something very special about Holy Week: beginning with the triumphal entry into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, and ending with the Resurrection of Jesus on Easter, we are partakers on a drama unlike any other: the Son of God is praised and exalted, shares intimate moments with his twelve apostles, is accused of blasphemy (a capital crime in that time and place), is condemned to death, carries his wooden death-bed through the streets to Golgotha, is killed, is placed in a tomb, from which he rises to new life on the third day. So much of the content of our faith is enacted for us these days; the drama plays out in our hearts.

For a number of excuses, I have not written to the archdiocese in many months. Holy Week impels me to say a few things, both personal and communal.

My Health Those of you who have seen me lately will attest to my relative strength and my mobility. I'm not 100% yet, and I may never be that again in my life. But I am getting around, and able to engage in my more activities than in the recent past. I have been able to get around with a cane, so I returned my walker to the Red Cross. I attended the annual meeting of the Assembly of Western Catholic Bishops in Victoria near the end of February. I and my Coadjutor Charles Duval have started visiting parishes on the weekends and installing pastors who have come to our archdiocese in the past year. I've helped with School Lenten Confessions. I participated in the parish mission at St. Joseph's Parish in Grande Prairie. Anyone who observes me will admit that I'm a bit unsteady on my feet, but I'm getting stronger by the week. All good news.

Charles Duval My coadjutor Charles Duval has moved into my residence with me, and we have been spending good time together, sharing in the many stories of my past as archbishop and Charles' plans as future archbishop. As you all know, Charles Duval will be ordained as a bishop on May 14th (if you're hoping to attend this, you must get a no-cost ticket from your parish). As I take up celebrating Confirmations in the archdiocese, I will bring my coadjutor with me. Slowly but surely, he will come to know the communities and parishioners of our diocese. Born and raised in la belle province du Quebec but educated partly in English, he is perfectly bilingual. He has held positions of responsibility with the Canadian Redemptorists, including youth and parish ministry, so he's no stranger to shepherding the People of God. I am grateful to have been assigned a coadjutor well in advance of my retirement.

Speaking of which, many ask me about this. Following the recent tradition of the Church, bishops retire at 75 years of age. This will happen to me on September 6th, 2025. I still have to make some plans for my retirement, but I've already had some discussions with the Canadian Redemptorist leadership. The plans to this point focus on Toronto – I know, that's a conundrum to many red-blooded Albertans I speak with. I already know this will be difficult for me – I'll be very sad to leave this land and people that I have come to know and love. But I believe that it is the best option for my future. As long as my health lasts, I hope to come back to Grouard-McLennan from time to time.

Fox Lake Church

A new church has been completed and furnished in Fox Lake, where the previous church suffered an electrical wiring fault a few years ago and burned beyond repair. And the new church looks stunning! It was completed with funds from the insurance, plus some added dollars from our north-south partnership with the Archdiocese of Toronto. Our next building project to take some shape (only in concepts and drawings ... no ground-breaking yet) will be a new church in Grouard. You will recall that this was destroyed by arson, as many other churches across western Canada suffered similar fate. We could say that the Church in Canada is rising from the ashes ... our tears are being turned to joy!

Share Lent

Development and Peace-Caritas Canada each year develops a Share Lent campaign which engages countless Catholic to pray and reflect on the situation around the world of poverty, under-development and need on many fronts. Their present campaign, called Turn Debt into Hope, seeks to free developing countries from massive debts that have been engaged in as they try to deal with crushing need in their countries. In the past few weeks, two members of the Development and Peace team have visited our archdiocese and others in Alberta and the NWT. Luke Stocking, the interim director of D&P, along with Carmen Michaud, animator for D&P in Alberta and the Northwest Territories, are presently visiting the dioceses in Alberta and the Territories. They spend the better part of a week with us in Grouard-McLennan, sharing the message and benefits of D&P both here and in the developing Global South. It was hoped that Bishop Jorje Izaguirre from Peru would be our special guest on this tour, but unfortunately, he couldn't get a visa to Canada in time. I pray that in short order, Bishop Izaguirre may be granted a visa so that he can appear himself and share with us the good benefits that flow from our donations to Development and Peace-Caritas Canada.

Jubilee Year of Hope. Pilgrims of Hope

Hope is a popular buzzword these days. And there are many events being planned in our own archdiocese as part of the Pilgrimage of Hope --- watch for these to be advertised in your deanery or parish. Our Holy Father Pope Francis has been reflecting and writing much on hope these days.

Do we fully understand what hope is? I suspect many of us would be hard pressed to define hope. Try to do that in fifteen words or less. It may challenge your understanding of this theological virtue. (On that note, try to define the word "virtue".)

I wish you all a very blessed Holy Week. I look forward to the Chrism Mass at the cathedral in McLennan on Tuesday 15 April at 7:30 p.m. If you've never attended this, try to make the effort ... it's a wonderful celebration of the whole archdiocese.

+ Gerard

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "+ Gerard Pettipas, C.Ss.R.", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Most Rev. Gerard Pettipas, C.Ss.R.
Archbishop of Grouard-McLennan