



February 27, 2020

Dear friends and parishioners of Mary, Mother of the Church Parish,

One of the most important tasks of a bishop is the appointment of priests to be shepherds of a parish community of faith, to be their pastor responding to the spiritual needs of all and leading them to live out together the mission of the Church, the mission of Christ. In this diocese, I work with the College of Consultors, a group of five to six priests acting as my senior advisors, to discern how to do this as best as possible for all parishes over the years.

One of the practices we have established is the number of years in total a priest will serve in any given parish. When a pastor is initially named to a parish, it is for six years, the standard term set for all priests in Canada as mandated by the Conference of Catholic Bishops in Canada many years ago. Then, when this term is finished, it can be renewed or extended. The policy we have adopted in the Archdiocese of Saint Boniface is that, all things being favourable for the parish and for the priest, an extension of three years can be given so that the total number of years a priest will be in a parish in our diocese is nine years. This policy has been in place for several years now. Therefore, over the last few years as the situation has arisen where a priest has completed nine years in a parish, I approach him to begin discussions as to what new parish he will be assigned to on August 1st of that year. And thus, over the years, each parish benefits from the strengths and approaches of a variety of pastors.

I bring this to your attention because that is exactly Fr. Kevin's and Mary, Mother of the Church's situation this year. Fr. Kevin was appointed pastor of Mary Mother on August 1, 2011, and when he had completed the initial six-year term in 2017, he gladly accepted the three-year extension. In my heart, I believe these past nine years have been very positive and life-giving both for you, the parishioners, and for Fr. Kevin personally.

However, the limit of nine years has now arrived, and I have already had conversations with Fr. Kevin about which will be his next parish come August 1st of this year.

I know this will very justifiably bring a note of sadness to all of you; your appreciation of Fr. Kevin in his ministry and as a person is very deep. Solid bonds of friendship and of cooperation have developed between you and your pastor. It is wonderful to see this, and your community of faith is all that much stronger because of these past nine years. There is much for which we all give thanks to God.

However, beyond your understandable sadness of the moment, I am also very sure you are asking: “Who will be our next pastor?” In response to this, the College of Consultors and I have begun the planning, the discernment, to determine who would be a priest that could help assure the continuity of all the graces of God at work in your community at present.

In this regards, I am asking your assistance. On Wednesday, March 18, 2020, at 7:00 PM, I am inviting all who would be interested to meet with me at Mary, Mother of the Church Parish for an evening of discussion and sharing about how best to effect the transition.

As I have already done in several parishes also in a time of transition, I would like to hear your thoughts around questions such as these: What would you hope/expect the next pastor to do at Mary Mother, to work at accomplishing with you? What kind of personal traits and of pastoral style would you want your next pastor to have? And, what can the parish, through its lay leadership (Parish Pastoral Council and Parish Finance Committee) and all of the parishioners, do to assure a warm welcome of the new priest and a fruitful transition of priestly leadership and service.

I believe if we communicate with one another and work with one another, myself as bishop and yourselves as the faithful of Mary Mother, that we allow God to continue to do his wonderful work amongst us. God is good, all the time!

Wishing you a very rich Lenten season and looking forward to working with all of you for our Church and for the glory of God.

With the assurance of my prayers for you, I humbly ask for your prayers for me.

Sincerely in Christ,

+ Albert LeGatt

+Albert LeGatt
Archbishop of Saint Boniface