



WILLIAM T. MCGRATTAN



BISHOP *of* CALGARY

April 28, 2020

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

When the COVID-19 pandemic began to affect our Province and Diocese in mid-March, we put in place safety measures that were in compliance with the requirements of the Alberta Health Services to protect parishioners, employees and clergy. These have included the temporary suspension of the public celebration of Masses, limiting the number of people present in the church for personal prayer while still making available the celebration of other Sacraments with pastoral directives for the clergy to celebrate them in a safe manner. We have also modified the working arrangements of our employees in order to ensure their safety and well-being while providing necessary service through the parish offices and the Catholic Pastoral Centre.

While gathering for Mass as a parish community is not possible at this time, the priests continue to celebrate Mass privately for the intentions of the faithful and explore other various ways to pastorally connect with them.

In the meantime, there have been inquiries from parishioners about ways to support the parish and the ministries of the Diocese. This is a sensitive topic to address with so many uncertainties that continue to impact each one of us in unexpected ways. Many parishioners may already be facing financial difficulties as a family, and the first priority must be to take care of the needs of family and loved ones. The parishes and the Diocese continue to rely on the generosity of the faithful to carry on during this time of pandemic and the temporary suspension of Masses. Currently, only 10% of the annual revenue comes through pre-authorized giving while the remainder of the donations are received through the normal weekly offering at the weekend Masses.

In the last six weeks, most parishes have reported a 50% reduction or more in weekly revenue. With parish revenue being impacted, there was the need to act in a responsible way to mitigate the financial stress on the parishes and to ease their burden. Thus, the Pastoral Centre suspended the monthly parish levy and this is in effect until the end of the year 2020.

ROMAN CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF CALGARY

Catholic Pastoral Centre | 120 17 Ave SW, Calgary, AB T2S 2T2

Phone: 403-218-5526 | Fax : 403-264-0272

In addition to this measure, the monthly loan and interest payments owing from the parishes for renovation projects and the building of churches have also been suspended for the same period of time while our Diocesan Together in Action (TIA) campaign continues. Furthermore, all areas of operations both at the parishes and the Diocese have been reviewed to identify potential cost savings. Government subsidy programs at the federal and provincial levels to deal with COVID-19 have also been assessed to determine if we would qualify given their current requirements.

In response to this emerging financial challenge, the following cost-containment strategies will be implemented in the parishes and in the Diocese.

1. In consultation with the Presbyteral Council and the College of Consultors, there will be a 10% reduction in the monthly salaries for the priests and the Bishop, beginning in April 2020.
2. All employees in the month of April will receive their full salaries through the federal government's wage subsidy program in both the Pastoral Centre and the parishes.
3. In consultation with the Diocesan Finance Council and the College of Consultors, the Catholic Pastoral Centre will temporarily lay-off 63% of its employees, beginning on May 1, 2020.
4. In consultation with the pastors and their Finance Council chairs, the parishes will retain those employees who will provide essential services while placing on temporary lay-off the remaining employees, beginning on May 1, 2020.
5. Employees who will be temporarily laid-off and who are eligible for Employment Insurance (EI) will receive 55% of gross earnings with a 25% "top-up" of gross earnings from the employer. This allows these employees to receive a total of 80% of their gross earnings and the provision of allowable benefits.
6. Parishioners continue to donate by dropping off their weekly donations to the parish office, by automatic bank withdrawals previously set-up, and by donating online using their credit cards. We thank you for your continued financial support!

Parishioners who wish to continue their financial support of the parish have several options for giving. Most parishes have online donation portals. The website of the Diocese (www.calgarydiocese.ca) also has the ability to receive your online donations and direct your contribution to your parish and to diocesan programs. You may also request from your parish the pre-authorized giving forms to set-up recurring monthly donations transferred directly from your bank account. The parish and the Diocese thank you for any contribution you are able to make recognizing that these are difficult financial times for many people.

7. In the coming months, we will focus our collective efforts on promoting revenue generation and financial stewardship. Parishes are encouraged to first raise funds for operations and, with their best efforts, to collect for Together in Action (TIA).
8. While loan and interest payments have been suspended, we encourage those parishes with loans for building projects to continue collecting donations and remitting these to the Diocese before the end of the year to target the principal of their loan, which will assist them in their ongoing repayment strategy.

As Bishop, having been involved in these deliberations, I am acutely aware that these decisions are very difficult to bear especially for those who are directly impacted. These cost-containment measures, however, are necessary for the Diocese and parishes in order for us to meet our current fiscal responsibilities and to provide financial stabilization in the years ahead. It is my hope that in times like this, we will draw confidence, wisdom and guidance from our faith, and ask God in His wisdom to be present in our decisions so that they reflect compassion, prudence, and justice.

I am truly humbled by the ongoing generosity of parishioners in these most difficult financial times and the leadership and sacrifice of our clergy. On behalf of the clergy and the employees, I extend my deepest gratitude for your support.

Most important at this time are our prayers of support for each other. We pray for the parishes and the Diocese, for your fellow parishioners and the parish team, and we remember those who are suffering from illness, especially those who have died and frontline workers and essential service providers who have had to make a tremendous sacrifice affecting their families and loved ones during the COVID-19 pandemic. We are grateful and thank you for this witness.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "William T. McGrattan". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

† Most Reverend William T. McGrattan