



Diocese of Corner Brook and Labrador

Dear People of the Corner Brook Diocese:

During this time when social distancing has become the norm and many different directives are written for the safety of all concerned, my attention focuses on you, the people of the diocese, and on those who are the most vulnerable in our society. How I wish to speak to each one of you personally, and be present to you, assuring you of my care and concern for your well being.

It is with great sadness that I cancelled all my remaining visits to the parishes and look at an empty church while live streaming the Mass on Sundays and weekdays. I was especially dismayed by having to cancel a Confirmation Retreat in Stephenville, a planned visit to the Innu people in Sheshatshui and the Annual Chrism Mass that gathers us together. These are only some of the events that are postponed until such time as the present precautions are no longer necessary.

My thoughts go out to all of those who have lost a loved one or those who planned to get married in the next few weeks. The present precautions are an added weight to carry or restrict the joyousness of the festivities. St. Paul tells us "to weep with those who weep and to rejoice with those who rejoice"; I pray that no one ends up carrying the burden alone, nor feels let down in their moment of joy.

All of this re-emphasizes the need to be present to one another in whatever way we can. I encourage the priests to phone their parishioners and parishioners to phone their priests. Not everyone is comfortable in taking the first step, but everyone's life is enhanced when the step is actually taken. Set a goal each day; call five people and tell them you are thinking of them. It may be the very thing they need to hear.

In a time of social distancing my mind turns to greater closeness. Though I am new to these parts, and have my roots a bit all over, I would like you each to know of my deep and abiding affection. After all, you are the reason why I became a priest; you are the people to whom I was united by Christ.

Please join me on Sundays at 10:30 a.m. (10 a.m. in Labrador) and weekdays at 9 a.m. (8:30 a.m. in Labrador) for a live streaming of the Mass. Please join together in praying the Rosary, from the comfort of your own home each evening at 7:30 p.m. (7 p.m. in Labrador) and let us keep in mind all those who work on the front lines, those who are COVID – 19 positive and all those who are more vulnerable and who suffer from anxiety and excess worry.

May the Peace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

Fraternally in Christ,

Bishop Bart