



## *Diocese of Corner Brook and Labrador*

March 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2021

### **Re: YEAR OF THE FAMILY**

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

Grace and Peace in our Lord Jesus Christ.

It is my joy to announce to you that, beginning on the Feast of St. Joseph on March 19<sup>th</sup>, 2021 and culminating on the 10<sup>th</sup> World Meeting of Families (in Rome) on June 26<sup>th</sup>, 2022, Pope Francis has declared a special year of the family. It is his hope that, by declaring this special Year of the Family, the Church will make every effort to reach out to every family, offering them opportunities for spiritual growth, pastoral support and family-oriented activities, thereby rediscovering the great gift of family, journeying together in mutual support and affection, building one another up in love.

As we approach this special year dedicated to the family, I want to encourage each parish, and each group and ministry in the parish, to use this opportunity to reflect on how they can better serve and support the families in their area. Setting time aside to pray for families, and reflecting on how best to serve their needs, will not only promote the importance of family life but will go a long way to renew our parishes and their ministries. Emphasis should not only be placed on developing new initiatives, but in strengthening existing ministries to families, and in removing barriers that can hinder and frustrate access to the parish, the Pastor and the various ministries and services that are being offered.

As we approach this special year, dedicated to the family, I would also like to address myself directly to the many families that make up our diocesan family. We need your help and involvement. Please let us know if there are things we can do, things we can do differently, or things that stand in the way of working in closer collaboration with you. I also foresee a greater collaboration and groundswell among families themselves, as they work together to develop worthwhile supports and initiatives.

As in all things, it is good to begin with some initial ideas; these, in turn, may well need to be developed, amended and adapted to suit particular circumstances.

- Young Catholic Mothers coming together (with a small group of grandmothers offering childcare nearby).
- Parish Family Nights with food, activities and a period of song and prayer.
- Parish picnics with organized activities for families.
- Sledding party sponsored by the parish or Catholic organization.

- A family-centered hike, followed by Mass or Prayer Service on the top of a hill.
- Celebrating milestone anniversaries at a Sunday Mass (together with invitations/festivities).
- Children-focused homilies/Masses.
- Parish Talent Show (with donations going to a food bank).
- A weekend family camping experience (with family activities, campfire, etc.)
- A monthly prayer service for home use (marking particular seasons and feasts).
- Providing /developing resources for families that struggle (i.e. Single mothers).
- Marriage enrichment programs, mentorship or "Date Nights".
- Follow-up after wedding ceremony (at three or six month intervals).
- Promoting the Family Connection Resource on the Diocesan Website ([www.rcchurch.com](http://www.rcchurch.com)).

The diocese also has a special Facebook page for those families, parishes and individuals who want to share ideas with one another. Search for "Diocesan Family Connections" on Facebook.

Pope Francis has also asked us to look at his Apostolic Exhortation on the family, "Amoris Laetitia". I hope to write two or three short letters, throughout the year, reflecting on different aspects of it. I encourage everyone to read it for themselves. Throughout the year, please do not hesitate to share any of your own ideas to better celebrate and support the family. I am encouraging everyone to be generous in sharing their ideas with others, for it is in sharing our ideas that they are naturally re-worked and adapted to suit the needs of all.

In order to begin this special year, dedicated to the family, we invite our diocesan family to join us in praying a Novena to St. Joseph, on the 150<sup>th</sup> year of Pope Pius IX declaration of St. Joseph as Patron Saint of the Universal Church. The Novena prayers will be live-streamed on the diocesan Facebook page each evening at 7 p.m. beginning Thursday, March 11<sup>th</sup> and culminating on the Feast of St. Joseph on March 19<sup>th</sup>. May we find, in St. Joseph, the support and protection that our families need.

Finally, I would like to impart my blessing on all the families that make up our diocese. We are greatly blessed in you.

May the Lord, who chose to be reared in a family much like yours, bless the love that you have for one another and multiply it a hundredfold. May the prayers of Mary and Joseph, who struggled to do God's Will, in all that was being asked of them, support and encourage you day by day. And may God almighty, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, be with you now and always. Amen.

Fraternally in Christ,



Bishop Bart van Roijen

Bishop of Corner Brook and Labrador

