



Office of the Bishop

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Ash Wednesday, March 1, 2017

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

As we begin this Season of Lent, I would like to highlight once again the importance of deepening our spiritual lives through the means of renewal that we have at our disposal. Our renewal occurs through fasting, prayer and almsgiving and in a special way, through the listening and pondering more deeply the Word of God. May we renew our encounter with Christ - in the sacraments and in our neighbour.

I want to remind us of the call to renewal that we received in November 2013, when we received our five-year Diocesan Pastoral Plan. In the three years since our Congress, our diocese has indeed experienced a renewal through prayer, intentions, actions, and hope. I thank each of you for your support and involvement, and pray we can continue to build on the positive momentum created by the Congress and our Pastoral Plan.

At the time that our Pastoral Plan was promulgated, an Implementation Committee of dedicated clergy and lay individuals from each of our seven deaneries was formed. The mandate of the Implementation Committee was to guide and oversee the delivery of the 72 recommendations of our Pastoral Plan. This Implementation Committee has met faithfully since November 2013 and the progress is evident in the new and expanded initiatives throughout our diocese, including a new Youth Director, a new Communications Officer, new Family Life and Social Justice Ministries, the diaconate formation program and the faith formation program, and numerous other fulfilled objectives. A detailed list of accomplishments has been compiled on a "report card" found on our website.

I write to you today inviting you to review the report card, take pride in accomplishments to date and pray for renewal as we move forward. I also write to announce the transition of the Implementation Committee to a permanent Diocesan Pastoral Council, in fulfilment of one of the recommendations of the Congress. Becoming a Diocesan Pastoral Council will allow this engaged group to continue the momentum of the past three years, with a constitution to govern its function and sustainability. This Diocesan Pastoral Council will continue to oversee the implementation of the Pastoral Plan of the Congress.

Also in 2013, I invited each of us to deepen our own personal commitment to Jesus Christ and to consider how our whole Catholic community can be more effective in witnessing to our faith in this society in which we live. As we enter into this Season of Renewal, I now invite you to continue to be renewed in your faith commitment, in light of our evolving plan and in discernment for the future.

Thank you all for your prayers, intentions, actions, and commitment to our Pastoral Plan. May St. Ninian, our diocesan patron, continue to guide our renewal and our Plan for 'Rebuilding Trust and Hope.'

Sincerely in Christ,

† Brian Joseph Dunn
Bishop of Antigonish