



ARCHDIOCESE *of* KINGSTON

Letter to Faithful of the Archdiocese

January 2022

My Dear Faithful:

Our Christmas season has recently come to an end, and we now begin the weekly rhythm of Ordinary Time. The New Year also marks the beginning of the second phase of the Synod on Synodality, convoked by the Holy Father, Pope Francis. Unfortunately, in this New Year we continue to struggle through the pandemic with another new variant and another new wave. Each task, it seems, now takes extra time and effort. Let us continue to support one another, as we persevere through this time of uncertainty.

With this letter, I invite you to reflect and pray about the reduced number of priests serving our parishes and missions. As my brother priests know, and, as many of you are already aware, the average age of our priests has risen significantly over the years. Without the precious ministry of our internationally born priests, our numbers would be much lower. Unfortunately, travel and immigration restrictions due to Covid-19 have delayed the arrival of priests from abroad who were coming to serve in the Archdiocese. We have been greatly blessed with the vocations of young men studying for the priesthood; however, it will be a number of years before these men are ordained and fully prepared to serve as pastors and administrators in the Archdiocese.

These conditions prompt us to consider alternative arrangements that will ensure that the faithful of the Archdiocese can be served by the smaller number of priests available. In the future, our priests will still need to live a balanced, joyful life, allowing time for prayer and rest as well as work; the task we put before this smaller number of priests must not become so great and difficult to fulfil that it threatens this balance and their well-being. It will require clear discernment about how they will provide pastoral care to the faithful, prudently using their available time and energy. It will present all of us with the challenge of distinguishing what can be maintained and what needs to change in the pastoral ministry of the Archdiocese.

The changing circumstances that we already face are significant, as are the changes that they force upon us. The trend of church attendance has had a significant impact on the number of faithful in our parishes, particularly in rural communities. Some parishes have already lost a resident pastor, weekday Masses and even their regular Sunday Mass. The losses are very difficult to experience and demand sensitivity; it is one thing to speak of them in the abstract, but it is quite another to actually experience the effects of these changes. This too demands of us all prudence, sensitivity and care.

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With the assistance of the Council of Priests and the Personnel Board, we will continue to reflect upon, and plan for, the pastoral care of the faithful of the Archdiocese. In the meantime, I have decided to take some preliminary measures, facilitating pastoral service in the coming months. I will inform the Archdiocese, particularly the parishes most affected, of these provisions when matters are ready to be put in place. These provisions will allow me to continue acquainting myself with the parishes of the Archdiocese, give us the time that we will need to study our situation more fully and bridge the period in which we await a more promising visa situation for international priests.

I have laid out before you the task of discernment that we face as an Archdiocese, and I encourage you to join me in praying for wisdom, prudence and sensitivity, as we go about it. Our future is in the hands of the Lord, as it has always been. I trust and am confident that the Lord will provide for the priests necessary for our proper care in the future. However, the changes that seem inevitable will require from us patience and flexibility. I wish, above all, to leave with you a sense of vocation. Today, the Lord is calling each one of us to serve in the place where we live, in the present realities of the Archdiocese of Kingston. In the same way, the Lord previously called the people of the Archdiocese to address the unique concerns of their own time. As in the past, He will never fail to provide the grace, leadership, sacrifice, and the Catholic joy necessary for us to pass on the faith—in its integrity—to the next generation. So that they, in turn, may answer the Lord's call to serve Him and the Church in their own time and circumstances.

With prayerful best wishes and blessings,

+Michael Mulhall
Archbishop of Kingston