

A FUTURE FULL OF HOPE

Letter to the Faithful of the Diocese of Saint John

Dear sisters and brothers,

A little over a year ago, I announced to the diocese that a representative committee composed of laity, consecrated and ordained had been constituted to facilitate a re-visioning of the diocese. The Visioning Committee, made up of two lay persons and two priests from each of the three regions, as well as a consecrated person and myself, have been hard at work.

Why is a re-visioning of the diocese necessary? The simple answer is that given our present situation, it cannot be business as usual. At the present time, we have 93 communities to care for. With only 39 priests to serve you as pastors or parochial administrators, it means that 20 parishes and 34 missions are without a priest in residence. In the absence of a full-time residential pastor what happens within the parish? What mechanisms are in place to assure that under the circumstances the community continues to be all that a Catholic parish or mission should be, living out and witnessing to the faith in the larger community.

Three questions have consistently surfaced in my mind. Today, what is our experience of Church or how are we being Church? Under the circumstances, how are we caring for the Church? Concerned as we are not only about the present but also the future, how are we growing the Church? These questions will be answered differently depending on our role in the Church and whether we are lay persons, consecrated or ordained.

The goal of this process of consultation is to prepare a Pastoral Plan for the next five years. And once we have laid out the detail of a strategic plan, the conversation will need to be ongoing as we implement the dream.

It is vital for all of us to remember that our present task as Catholic Christians is to proclaim Jesus Christ in the midst of the increasingly secular world in which we live, celebrating with those who gather the signs of his presence within us and among us. Attentiveness to radiating Christ at every opportunity, evangelization and outreach are what we are all about.

All women and men have the right to hear the Good News about the creative, loving, caring and compassionate God, Jesus Christ, who came among us and remains with us. We who have heard the Good News have the obligation to share it. Being at the service of this is the challenge which awaits us and the challenge belongs to every single one of us.

The Visioning Committee has been working on a process whereby each community will be involved in the consultation. It is my hope that what we are proposing will revitalize our diocesan Church. In the very near future, the pastors, parochial administrators and Parish Pastoral Councils of our diocese will be receiving the Information Packet to begin the process. I want to assure you that we will be keeping you informed every step of the way.

