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To parishioners and all the faithful of the Diocese of Antigonish,

A few weeks ago, I wrote to you on the occasion of the Season of Lent. Now I wish to write you a longer letter to share with you some of my impressions of this first month.

Installation Ceremony

I was particularly happy with the celebration of the Installation Ceremony on January 25th and the presence of representatives throughout the diocese. The presence of so many people who enthusiastically participated in the celebration was particularly uplifting for me. Special thanks to those who prepared for the celebration and those who were involved in a variety of ministries and services. Special thanks to Cecile Miller and Edwina LeBlanc who welcomed me on behalf of the people of the diocese. Thanks as well for the tapestry that was given to me at that time as your gift to me. Thanks to all who were able to attend this ceremony and to all who continue to pray for my ministry here.

Deanery Gatherings

Thanks again for your welcome as I visited the seven deaneries during the past few weeks. Each evening had its own characteristics reflecting the parishes of the area and each was a wonderful celebration. I was able to reflect on the daily readings, speak about the role of the bishop and meet innumerable people from each area. The celebrations showed much planning and I am grateful for these opportunities to allow some initial contact with so many throughout the diocese. I look forward to meeting people in their individual parishes, but this shall take some time.

On my visits, I immediately realized the fact that many, many people are involved in a variety of ways in their own parishes. I met people who assist the parish as members of the CWL or KOC, who volunteer as liturgical ministers, or who do all kinds of hidden service in the parish. This service is an expression of the generosity and commitment that I experienced from so many people as I have traveled through the diocese. The presence of these characteristics gives me great hope for I recognize that many people are involved in this service as a response to their baptismal call.

During the next few weeks, I plan to meet with the members of the six religious congregations in our diocese. This will give me an opportunity to meet the religious who are serving or have served in a variety of ways. I want to acknowledge that they provide an inspiring example of witness for us all.

Relationship with the Priests

I arrived in the diocese on January 18th and had an opportunity to meet with the priests of the diocese at two luncheons on January 20th and 21st. In this way, I was able to meet many of the priests and I experienced a real willingness on their part to take the step to begin the relationship with a new bishop. I am very grateful for the welcome that I received from the priests and I look forward to deepening our relationship. I wish to highlight the importance of the ministry of the priests, especially as we celebrate this Year for Priests. Please pray for all the priests in the diocese that the Lord will bless all of us with the special grace of holiness during this year. Over the next few weeks, I plan to continue to meet each priest to get to know him and support him as he serves (or has served) in this diocese.

Need for Healing

At this stage of the legal settlement, we are in the process of pooling the resources of parishes as one expression of our commitment as a diocese to the healing and reconciliation of the survivors of sexual abuse. While this stage makes us realize in a new way the hurt and difficulties connected with this settlement, I have met many who have expressed the real belief that something good will emerge from this pain. Many have expressed that they are ready to do whatever is

necessary to bring healing to those who have experienced great loss in their lives. As we all deal with our own personal responses to the legal settlement, may the Spirit of Peace continue to penetrate our lives as we commit ourselves to being instruments of the Lord's healing in our local church.

Mi'kmaq Pastoral Council

Two years ago, representatives of the seven reserves in the diocese met to form a Pastoral Council. Its mission statement is:

The Pastoral Council in unity with the Grand Council strives to unify, to empower, to revitalize the spirituality of the Mi'kmaq Nation by deepening and affirming the language, culture and traditional values in the Catholic Church of the Diocese of Antigonish and in their communities.

The main issue discussed at its meeting on February 27th was the celebration of the 400th anniversary of the Baptism of Chief Membertou. A celebration will take place in Port Royal on June 24 (the date and place of the Chief's Baptism) and another in our own diocese on August 1 at Chapel Island. Furthermore, to highlight this anniversary, our Chrism Mass will be celebrated this year at Eskasoni on March 29 at 4 pm. Meanwhile the representatives of the Pastoral Council will be organizing an event in each of the First Nations' communities. In a particular way, they will be organizing the journey of a cross through the various Mi'kmaq communities between May 23 and June 24. Thanks to Fr. Robert McNeil, Episcopal Vicar, and to all the priests who are involved in the ministry to the Mi'kmaq Nation.

Appointments to Pastoral Offices

During the period when the diocese did not have a bishop, many priests took on extra burdens and I have thanked them for their service. In a particular way, I wish to thank all those who assumed the extra service to the whole diocese: "thanks for your generosity and commitment." Since my installation, I have reappointed all those who serve in leadership positions in the various offices of the diocese.

During the next few months, I shall be working with the Diocesan Personnel Committee to consider new pastoral appointments for the spring.

Share Lent Campaign

All are invited to be aware of the Share Lent campaign of Development and Peace. This annual financial campaign also provides the opportunity to enhance our awareness of the need to be in solidarity with those who are suffering from hunger, injustice, violence, environmental degradation, lack of resources, and marginalization. Through our share in this campaign, we give help to groups and people who struggle to remedy injustice, who defend the rights of the weakest and who speak on behalf of the poor. Please be generous to this year's **Share Lent** campaign.

Confirmation

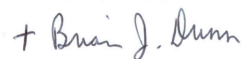
I am in the process of preparing my schedule for confirmation and I look forward to celebrating this important Sacrament of Initiation with the young people of the diocese.

Closing

As I reflect on my time in the diocese, I realize that, though pain and hurt remains in the hearts and lives of many, I also have experienced an excitement throughout the diocese and a real desire to grow in our faith. I reaffirm my openness to being available to meet with any person who needs some time.

Extending to you my prayers that the Spirit of the Lord will continue to be with us as we respond as disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ, I remain,

Sincerely in Christ,



Most Reverend Brian Joseph Dunn
Bishop of Antigonish