



# FROM THE VINEYARD

Newsletter No. 132; February 19, 2021

**THE SEASON OF LENT HAS BEGUN** with churches in most of our Diocese open at 30% capacity, while those in the North Bay-Parry Sound Health District remain at a limit of ten people. My sincere thanks to the priests, parish workers and volunteers who are doing their best to minister in the current restrictions, enabling the faithful to gather in a safe environment. We want to assure the safety of parishioners and their good health – physical and spiritual!

**“BEHOLD, WE ARE GOING UP TO JERUSALEM,”** is the message of Pope Francis for Lent 2021. It is a quick and inspirational read, and one that will help to frame our Lenten journey in the coming weeks. As the Holy Father says, “During this season of conversion, let us renew our faith, draw from the living water of hope, and receive with open hearts the love of God, who makes us brothers and sisters in Christ.”

**THE SENATE’S PROPOSED AMMENDMENTS TO BILL C-7** will greatly expand the criteria for Euthanasia and Physician-Assisted Suicide, even beyond what Parliament had originally planned. The changes include removing the “reasonable foreseeability of natural death” criterion and a further expansion of so-called Medical Assistance in Dying (MAiD) to the mentally ill. At the bill’s third reading, Senator Denise Batters spoke eloquently about the potential dire consequences of these changes upon the vulnerable, an impassioned plea that can be viewed here. This is a time for us to write to our Members of Parliament, letting them know that these proposed changes to Bill C-7 go too far, well beyond what the courts called for, and puts at risk those with mental health issues and physical disabilities. A good fact sheet on Bill C-7 was prepared by the Canadian Bishops last year and provides helpful background.

**THE YEAR OF ST. JOSEPH** was announced by Pope Francis in December and will run until this December 8th, the Feast of the Immaculate Conception. Despite the complications of the pandemic, we want to ensure that we mark this special year, dedicated to the foster father of our Lord. I have enjoyed good discussions with the pastors of our four parishes named for St. Joseph, and with the Sisters of St. Joseph here in Peterborough. Plans are still taking shape, but already we have begun to build a page for the Year of St. Joseph on our Diocesan Website. And I look forward to broadcasting a Mass on You Tube from our Cathedral on March 19, the feast of St. Joseph. Lest we forget, St. Joseph is patron of the universal Church and of Canada!

**THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE OF OUR PRIEST BENEFIT FUND** met online earlier this week. I was heartened to learn that, with all the challenges the pandemic brought to our churches this year, the annual PBF collection did remarkably well – down from 2019, but not as much as you would expect. Thanks so much to all who generously contributed to that annual collection, individual parishioners and the councils of the Catholic Women’s League and the Knights of Columbus who responded to a special appeal letter sent to them.

Fraternally, + Daniel