



FROM THE VINEYARD

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POPE FRANCIS ARRIVED IN IRAQ TODAY, the beginning of an historic four day visit to that country and the Christian communities there. “I come as a pilgrim of peace, in the name of Christ, the Prince of Peace,” he told government authorities gathered in the Presidential Palace. The Holy Father has called for an end to the acts of violence and extremism which have so plagued that country and afflicted the Christian community there. Let us pray for Pope Francis’ safety on this trip, and that his visit will bear the fruit of peace and fraternity!

ST. BENEDICT PARISH IN MILTON (Diocese of Hamilton) opened the doors of their new church for the first time on the first Sunday of Lent. This happened after years of planning and building, and a delay of weeks imposed by the pandemic lockdown. And I rejoiced with them in spirit! I was the founding pastor of St. Benedict Parish in 2012 but fulfilled that role for only ten months before being whisked away as the Auxiliary Bishop of Hamilton. Father Jim Petrie and parishioners have done their best for many years celebrating Mass in a school gymnasium, and now find themselves opening St. Benedict Church in rather odd circumstances with gathering restrictions. Nonetheless, the new church is beautiful, and I look forward to being there for the Dedication on the Feast of St. Benedict in July.

BISHOPS IN ONTARIO are urging Catholics to make their voices heard on the issue of Conscience Rights for Health Care Providers. With Bill C-7 poised to expand the criteria for Medical Assistance in Dying, it is more important than ever to ensure that doctors, nurses, pharmacists, and others are not compelled to participate in Euthanasia against their deeply held moral convictions. This is an opportune time to urge our provincial government to enshrine conscience rights for medical personnel in legislation. By going to the website for Coalition for Healthcare and Conscience, you can learn more about this issue and can use the platform to send a letter to the Premier, the Minister of Health and your own MPP. We will have more information about this topic on our Diocesan website next week.

PRIESTS OF THE DIOCESE WILL JOIN IN AN ONLINE SESSION, on Tuesday next week led by Father James Mallon. Father Mallon, from the Archdiocese of Halifax, is a noted writer and speaker on the subject of parish renewal. He will address us on the theme of “Thriving in Relentless Change: Is it Possible for Priests?” The Priests’ Ongoing Pastoral and Spiritual Formation Committee has organized this online seminar, a well-timed one for us, given all the impacts our parishes have experienced because of the pandemic.

THE ASSEMBLY OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS OF ONTARIO (ACBO) will also meet online this week for several days, in our biannual Plenary. The present and future impacts of the pandemic upon the Church will certainly be a prominent theme. Please pray for us and for the guidance of the Holy Spirit upon our Assembly!

Fraternally, + Daniel