

*Pursuing the mission of Jesus joyfully...*

**Let's go towards our brothers and sisters – Let's spread the Word of God  
Let's share with our brothers and sisters**

**PASTORAL ORIENTATIONS  
2015-2018**

presented to our Christian communities

I want to give a follow up to our Pastoral Letter, «*The urgency to act now for the future of our communities*», which came out in March 2013, the year we celebrated the 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary of our diocese. Today, it appears to me that the following four proposals are the most urgent dimensions for us to work on over the three years ahead. They express a vision of the Church which imposes itself in the present world:

- A Church that serves the new evangelization
- A Church where the baptized assume responsibility for their own community
- A Church of missionary disciples who generously plant the seed of the Word of God
- A Church which move forward with humility, joy and hope

I hope the vision proposed here will be inspiring and will help us pursue the mission of Jesus, while at the same time transform us into a missionary Church in our own place, the Gaspésie and Magdalen Islands.

Your brother, by the grace of God your bishop.

† Jean Gagnon  
Bishop of Gaspé

**1. A CHURCH THAT SERVES THE NEW EVANGELIZATION**

To evangelize is to obey the mandate received from Jesus: «Go therefore! Make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the Name of the Father, of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you». (Mt 28, 19-20) Nowadays, missionary activity represents the biggest challenge of the Church and consequently, the missionary cause must be given priority (*The Joy of the Gospel, No 15*). It has become necessary to move on from a pastoral maintenance action to a truly missionary pastoral mentality. (*Apparecida Document, No 370*)

***Being a Church that serves the new evangelization requires that :***

- 1.1 We keep on giving major importance to faith formation, first with the young, including their parents and the Christian communities.
- 1.2 We extend the new evangelization service to all age groups, with a focus on catechesis and sharing on the Word of God, supporting new initiatives, without leaving aside existing movements.
- 1.3 We pursue the mission of the Church in this world by «going out» to meet our brothers and sisters, through new approaches for those who have distanced themselves from the community, those who struggle to find meaning for their life, who need to be heard, supported, accompanied, helped. «Happy are you, if you do that». (Jn 13, 17)

**2. A CHURCH WHERE THE BAPTIZED ASSUME RESPONSIBILITY FOR THEIR OWN COMMUNITY**

The Church is the place where the baptized as community experience communion with God and with each other (Jn 12, 21). No parish lives for its own sake. In a Church called «The People of God», the overall responsibility must not weigh on the pastor only: as any leader, his role is not to do everything, but to make sure everything is being cared for. It is important to involve all the baptized, according to each one's God given gifts, to assume some service to their community, with the conviction that they act in solidarity and as such they realize the common mission. (P.L. No 14)<sup>1</sup>

***A Church that gives priority to the baptized when it comes to responsibility must:***

- 2.1 Sustain each community that commits itself to live and act according to the four fidelities expressed in Acts 2, 42, and encourage any effort the baptized make to implement actions concretely in the areas of pastoral and administrative responsibilities.
- 2.2 Provide support and formation programs for the Parish Pastoral Teams (PPT), Sectors' Pastoral Councils (SPC) and Fabrique members. Keep on providing formation for the lay leaders of Sunday Liturgies of the Word and Christian funerals.
- 2.3 Affirm the Pastoral Sectors in their present structure as a place that enables reflection and pastoral planning, as well as collaboration between Fabriques. Foster a sense of responsibility and encourage team work that reflects a communal spirit and initiatives that sustain vitality within communities and sectors as well. (P.L. p. 11)

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<sup>1</sup> P.L. refers to the Bishop's Pastoral Letter, 2013

2.4 At the Diocesan Services level, we shall remain actively engaged in various research and formation endeavors, namely: providing support to Christian communities in their catechetical, liturgical and pastoral responsibilities, in administration, in formation to leadership, team work, as well as to capacity to delegate responsibilities.

### **3. A CHURCH OF MISSIONARY DISCIPLES WHO GENEROUSLY PLANT THE SEED OF THE WORD OF GOD**

God still calls every disciple of Jesus to concretely play a role in today's Church and world. (Mt 28, 18-20). Every believer and community must search out which way the Lord indicates them to engage in. All of us are invited to accept such call: that is, to depart from our comfortable zone and courageously reach out to all in the peripheries who need the light of the Gospel. (*The Joy of the Gospel, No 20*)

*As a community of missionary disciples we have:*

- 3.1 To root our Christian faith in the Word of God and a personal encounter with Jesus, for there lies our treasure. Try by all possible means to make it known, to meditate on it and to share it to younger generations as to all age groups (L.P. p. 5, No 10). In fidelity to the model set by the Lord, it is imperative that today's Church move out of its comfort to proclaim the Gospel to all, in every place and on every occasion, without hesitation, repugnance or fear. (*The Joy of the Gospel, No 23*)
- 3.2 To find ways to integrate into our pastoral action Calls that will make us constantly aware of the necessity for the baptized to respond and serve in all areas of the community's responsibilities, making it a point to call particularly on new persons, including the young. It has become urgent to discover many personal gifts that can add to the service of each community. (P.L. p. 8, No 18)
- 3.3 As a diocesan Church, to continue to call on resources inside and outside the diocese, with a focus on mutual support and complementarity which should be made available among dioceses, aiming in this way at the progress of the Church's universal mission.

### **4. A CHURCH WHICH MOVES FORWARD WITH HUMILITY, JOY AND HOPE**

As Jesus' disciples and considering the urgency to move forward, allow me to invite you to face that new stage of our diocesan Church with unfailing hope. When Bishop Ross was faced with the heavy responsibility that lay before him, he wrote: « To accomplish so many works, we must place our confidence in God who promises He will be with his apostles right on to the very end of time». (Mandement d'entrée, 1923, P. L. p. 9, No 22)

***As a Church that wants to move forward with humility, joy and hope, we must:***

- 4.1 Open ourselves to Pope Francis' invitation: «Let us rediscover the soft and comforting joy of spreading the Gospel, even if we have to sow the seed with tears. Let present day people who are searching for meaning, sometimes with anxiety even, sometimes with hope, let them hear the Good News from missionaries of the Gospel whose life radiates with piety, from those who had a chance to be the first to receive in their life the joy of Christ.» A missionary community that is happy knows how to celebrate every victory, however small it may be, every step forward in the process of evangelization. (*The joy of the Gospel, No 10 & 24*)
- 4.2 Make efforts to maintain a minimum number of permanent pastoral workers needed to uphold the pastoral mission (pastors, deacons, pastoral agents), yet also continue to call widely on the baptized according to their personal gifts and local needs, so many may assume concrete responsibilities in their own community and pastoral sector.
- 4.3 Encourage those already committed permanently to develop a real concern for the commitment of a large number among the baptized. Let that their specific work be about planning, support, formation and accompaniment of the committed baptized, without neglecting to show them all their gratitude.

**PRAYER FOR THE COMMUNITIES SO THEY MAY ASSUME  
THEIR COMMON MISSION**



God our Father, look with kindness upon your Church  
Living in the Gaspésie and the Magdalen Islands.

Sustain the communities of disciples who make up our Church,  
so they may celebrate the presence of the Risen Christ,  
proclaim his Word and be witnesses of his charity.

Give us the generosity to use our talents  
in the service of our brothers and sisters  
and to play an active part in the life of our community.

Choose among us young and adult members  
who will accept to spend their life in the service of the Church  
so the Gospel of Jesus be always for us  
the beacon that enlightens and guides our life.

Lord Jesus,  
You once said that the harvest is broad, give us, through the power of your Spirit,  
the courage to call abundantly and to respond wholeheartedly. AMEN.