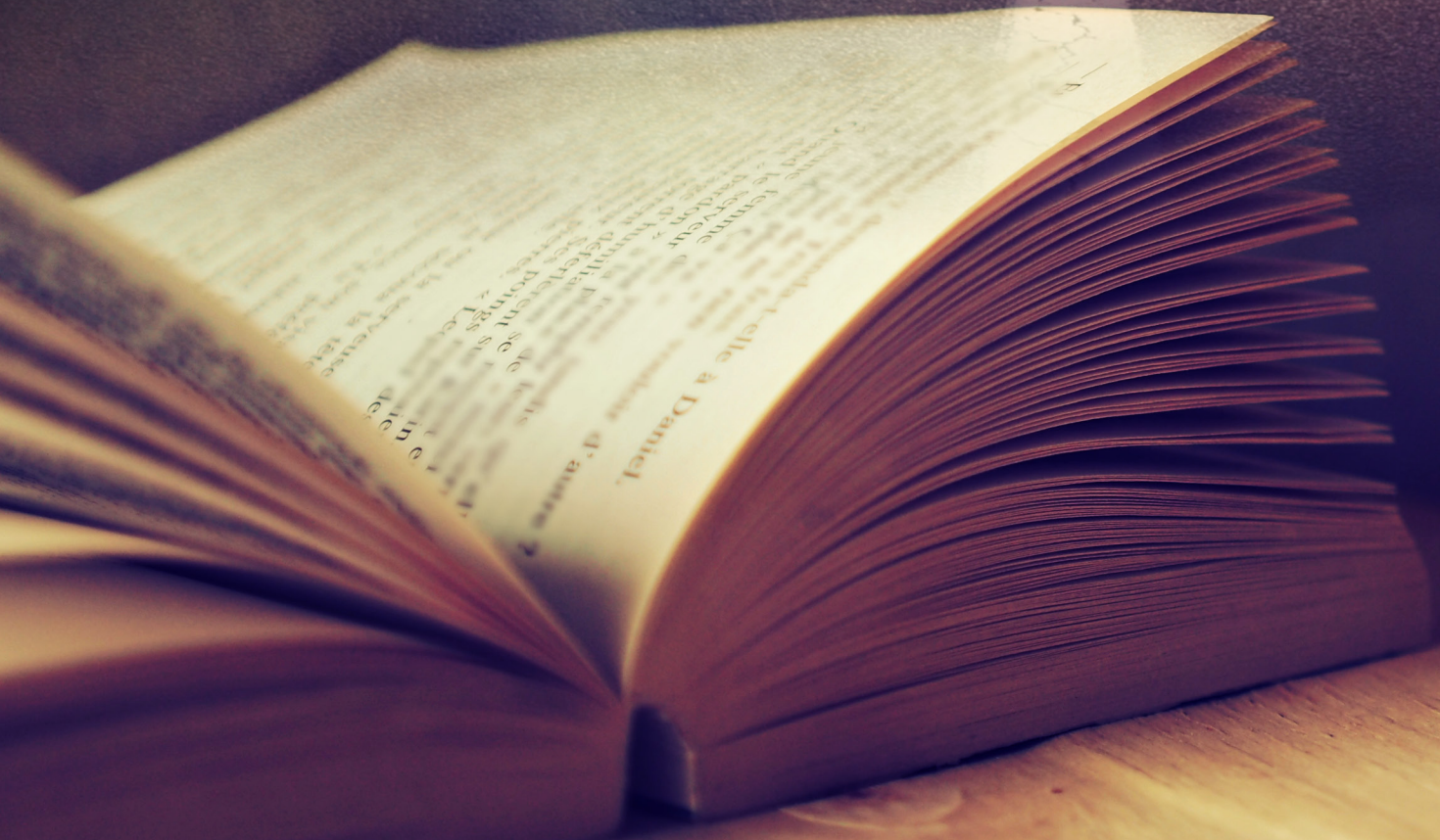
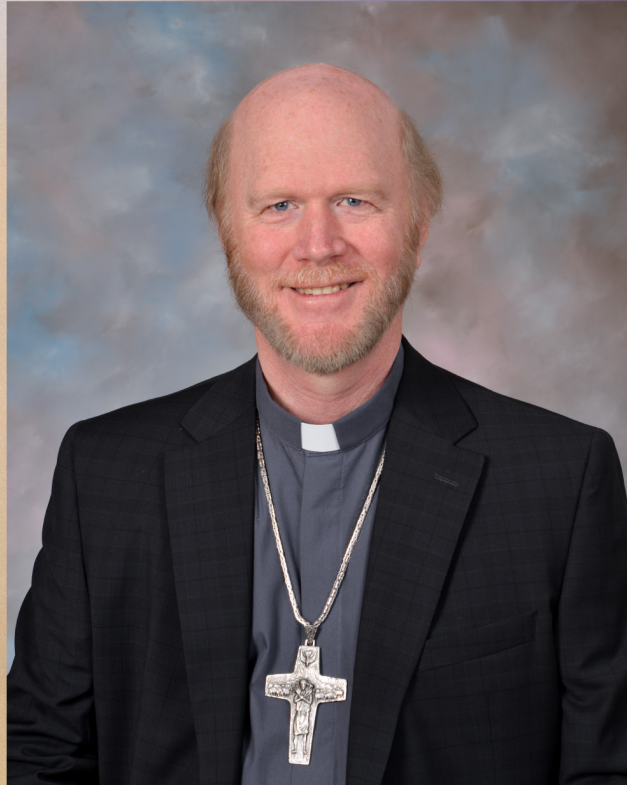


# Paths to follow

for our Church in Gaspé and  
the Magdalen Islands

Pastoral Letter from  
Mgr Claude Lamoureux





Crédit : Alfred Cassidy

## Prayer for renewed, missionary communities

Glory to You! Father of all goodness, watch over the boat of our Diocesan Church that sails and celebrates its faith in the lands of Gaspésie and Magdalen Islands.

Blessed are you! Jesus-Christ, Son of the Living God, for leading us in deep water so that the nets of our hope may be filled to the brim.

Praise be to you! Holy Spirit, for your Breath leading to sources of the renewal where you quench this thirst of love that the Gospel awakens in us.

Holy Trinity, inspire us to be diligent in prayer and fervent in the sharing of our charisms and talents for the sake of our brothers and sisters.

Christ the King, Guardian of our Diocese, unite our forces to become missionary-disciples in the heart of our renewed communities.

Mary, Mother of Christ and of the Church, thank you for inspiring among us joyful witnesses, like beacons illuminating the paths of the new evangelization.

# Amen

# Paths to follow

FOR OUR CHURCH IN GASPÉ  
AND THE MAGDALEN ISLANDS



Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Through our baptism, we are closely involved as members of the Church in the Christ inclusive mission at home today. Saint Paul brings this out in a remarkable way in one of his letters: "The gifts of grace are varied, but it's the same Spirit. The services are varied, but it's the same Lord. Activities are varied, but it is the same God who acts in all and in all. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit to be used for the general good." (1 Co 12:4-7) Everyone must find their place in the Church's mission. Pope Francis urges us to take an active part. For two years now, the synodal approach stimulate us to move forward in solidarity. I am delighted of that. Listening to the Spirit and working together are the "two legs" that keep us moving forward. In this missionary context, I am eager to share this first pastoral letter to try, modestly, to illuminate the road ahead as your Pastor.

“On our paths of faith” \*

## A breeze of renewal

The Diocese of Gaspé just celebrated its 100th anniversary under the evocative theme of "Always on the move never uprooted!". The rich history of our Diocese, from its origin to the present day, allows us to see that it has always been able to go forward, even against headwinds, despite difficulties and sometimes thanks to them.

In 2013, the diocesan committee on the situation and future of Christian communities stated that the status quo was no longer viable. Ten years later, I would add that the status quo is not even desirable. The slow erosion of the human, material and financial resources of our communities of faith has brought us to a point of no return. We must now take note of the change with lucidity and conceive together alternative solutions. Today more than ever, let's be "Always on the move never uprooted!". In conjunction with all people involved at all levels, while keeping an ear to the Spirit, I intend, with the help of each and every one, to carry on with serenity and at the right pace for each environment the vast redevelopment project initiated by my predecessor, Mgr Gaétan Proulx.

Published in June 2022, our summary report of the synodal consultations held on our territory allowed us to take stock of our Church with respect to the three constituent values of communion, participation and mission. The recommendations to be found there are testimony to the vitality, the wisdom and the audacity of our diocesan Church. Let's take pride in it.

I would like to draw your attention to the fact that many recommendations included in this diocesan report could already be put into practice without waiting for the conclusions of the Synod of Bishops which will culminate in fall 2024.

“Walk with us, Mary” \*

\* From the song "La première en chemin, Marie".

\*\* From the prayer to the Holy Spirit.

## Listening to the Holy Spirit

Can you hear the sound of the wind and the sea waves? Almost everywhere on the peninsula and in the Magdalen Islands, these familiar sounds are part of our daily lives. I hope I never lose the habit to hear it! Meanwhile, I wonder if we still hear – and I'm the first – the voice of the Lord. And if we hear it, are we listening to it? The voice of the Lord is also part of our daily lives.

Through our baptism, we are called upon to live our lives with a constant openness to the action of the Holy Spirit. Agreeing to be available to the movement of the Holy Spirit requires from us an inner disposition of trustful listening to His inspirations. As a result, we humbly acknowledge that our plans and our projects may be amended, and conduct us to take unexpected paths. I hope that our Church will be open to the presence of the Holy Spirit and ready to receive its guidance, its consolation and its inspiration.

“Come to us  
dwell in us  
enlighten us.” \*\*

## Continuing the synodal process in our Diocese

A synodal Church is a listening Church. We could indeed walk together (this is the original meaning of the word synod) and, in good faith, do not head in the right direction. Only listening to the Holy Spirit can illuminate the path and ensure safe arrival. This is where the regular exercise of "conversation in the Spirit" advocated by the current synodal approach takes on its full importance in the discernment and choices we have to make. The Spirit speaks to us in a variety of ways: through people, Scripture, events and prayer.

Our challenge is to innovate and find new ways of being together, as believers in this immense and beautiful territory. We have to remake our ecclesial fabric, create living communities that bring us together and resemble us, communities where everyone finds their place. Christ has promised us: he is alive in our midst, even when we are only "two or three gathered in his name". He always invites us to "take to the open seas" and "cast our nets into the sea". He makes us "fishers of men". That's the extent of our mission.

“You are there,  
standing, closest  
to the cross” \*

In this respect, I would like to join in the desire expressed by Pope Francis in the Bull of Indiction *Misericordiae vultus* from the Extraordinary Jubilee Year of Mercy: "How I long for the years to come to be imbued with mercy, so that we can reach out to everyone and offer them God's goodness and tenderness! May the balm of mercy reach everyone, believers and non-believers alike, as a sign of the Reign of God already present in our midst."

## On the paths of the Gospel

The Gospels show us that Jesus saw the birth of faith in the people who crossed his path. Jesus's ability to see the faith hidden in people's hearts makes the blind cry out (Mark 10:47); open the roofs (Mark 2:4); restore a leper's health (Mark 1:42). On many occasions, the Lord also invites his contemporaries to act in the name of their faith: to the blind man, Jesus says: "Go, your faith has saved you" (Mark 10:52); to the centurion, Jesus says: "Go home! May it be done to you as you believed" (Matthew 8:13); to the sinful woman, Jesus says: "Your faith has saved you. Go in peace!" (Luke 7:50); to a paralyzed man, Jesus says: "I tell you, get up, take your

stretcher, and go home" (Mark 2:11). Following in Christ's footsteps, thanks to our benevolent eyes which know how to see faith in people, even when it's wavering, we'll be able to discern the most appropriate ways to serve them, and identify the evangelization avenues likely to reach them in their respective journeys.

### **Creating small sharing groups**

In our ever-changing world, it is essential that we support each other. Like the first disciples, we are called to "cast our nets" and become fishers of men, chosen by the Lord to be witnesses to the Good News and bring hope to wounded hearts. Our paths can be strewn with obstacles and challenges. That's why it's vital that we encourage the formation of small sharing groups in our parish communities, to support, encourage and comfort each other. It could be people who come together in houses for evangelical sharing, Cursillos, Rebuilt and OSER initiatives, Alpha courses or projects of all kinds, such as exchange groups, fraternal support groups, solidarity groups, social commitment groups, humanitarian aid groups, spiritual growth groups, or prayer groups. In this way, our solidarity in mission becomes a concrete expression of our faith in Christ Jesus.

### **Three skills to apply in our evangelization efforts**

A passage from the Old Testament Book of Ruth caught my attention as I pondered the priority skills to propose to our Church. The text reads as follows: "Ruth

replied: 'Do not force me to forsake you and go away from you, for where you go, I will go; where you stop, I will stop; your people will be my people, and your God will be my God'". (Ruth 1:16) This passage of Scripture unquestionably invites our Church to make a concrete commitment to the people to whom the Lord sends us. I would sum up these skills in three action verbs: witnessing, accompanying and inviting.

### **• WITNESSING OUR FAITH at the heart of the concerns of our brothers and sisters in the faith**

On several occasions, Pope Francis reminds us of the urgent need to build bridges between people and generations. Could we make ourselves more present to the great diversity of concerns of our brothers and sisters in the faith by opting to be more of a Church on the move? The humble daily witness of our lives transformed by the Spirit's grace can lead those around us to question and open up to the Spirit's presence and action in their own lives. Faith spreads through witness. It is transmitted "by attraction", as the Pope recently said. The majority of those who follow the Lord have been there! You, as well as me.

“Through the  
bond of love,  
hold us united  
in you” \*\*

“Awaken us  
to the rights  
of others” \*\*



• **ACCOMPANYING THE DIFFERENT PATHS of our brothers and sisters in the faith**

The complexity of our world and the abundance of different life paths of the people to whom we are sent require us, as Church leaders, to adopt a posture of accompaniment in our approaches. While this posture may at first sight require us to let go of principles that may seem essential to us, it also opens up new paths of conversion for people. They can discover a presence that dwells within them and transcends them: the merciful presence of our God. God's love awakens in our hearts the desire to desire God's desire. This is the starting point of a great adventure!

“In your wisdom, guide us by your power, sustain us” \*\*

• **INVITED TO PARTICIPATE AND SHARE the responsibilities of serving the Gospel**

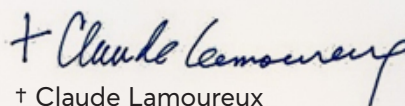
I believe that in a missionary dynamic such as the one in which our Church finds itself, it is important to invite our contemporaries to experience the relation with the Lord through our faith communities. The responsibility of discerning those who can ensure the succession and continuity of our faith heritage, by sharing the responsibilities of serving the Gospel, rests largely on whether or not we are willing to be proactive. It is also important not to ignore Pope Francis's reminder of the difference between proclaiming the Gospel, which can

“Walk with us, Mary, to the ways of this world” \*

only be exercised by the Holy Spirit for the conversion of hearts, and proselytizing.

In closing, I would like to express my great desire to walk alongside you, to accompany you in your joys and challenges, while working tirelessly to grow together in fraternity and faith in our beautiful and great Church of the Gaspésie and Magdalen Islands. I entrust our 2023-2024 pastoral year to Mary, "the first on the way, who leads us to risk our 'yes' to God's unforeseen events."

I pray that the Lord, moved by his mercy alone, will breathe powerful renewal into our Church, and I ask him to bless each and every one of you.



† Claude Lamoureux  
Bishop of Gaspé

October 1, 2023

Feast of Saint Therese of the Child Jesus, patron saint of the missions.





# Personal notes

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## La première en chemin, Marie

La première en chemin Marie, tu nous entraînes  
À risquer notre « oui » aux imprévus de Dieu.  
Et voici qu'est semé en argile incertaine  
De notre humanité Jésus-Christ, fils de Dieu.  
MARCHE AVEC NOUS, MARIE,  
SUR NOS CHEMINS DE FOI,  
ILS SONT CHEMINS VERS DIEU,  
ILS SONT CHEMINS VERS DIEU.

La première en chemin, en hâte tu t'élances,  
Prophète de Celui qui a pris corps en toi.  
La parole a surgi, tu es sa résonance  
Et tu franchis des monts pour en porter la voix.  
MARCHE AVEC NOUS, MARIE,  
AUX CHEMINS DE L'ANNONCE,  
ILS SONT CHEMINS VERS DIEU,  
ILS SONT CHEMINS VERS DIEU.

La première en chemin pour suivre à Golgotha  
Le fils de ton amour que tous ont condamné,  
Tu te tiens là, debout, au plus près de la croix  
Pour recueillir la vie de son cœur transpercé.  
MARCHE AVEC NOUS, MARIE,  
SUR NOS CHEMINS DE CROIX  
ILS SONT CHEMINS VERS DIEU,  
ILS SONT CHEMINS VERS DIEU.

La première en chemin avec l'Église en marche  
Dès les commencements, tu appelles l'esprit !  
En ce monde aujourd'hui, assure notre marche ;  
Que grandisse le corps de ton fils Jésus-Christ !  
MARCHE AVEC NOUS, MARIE,  
AUX CHEMINS DE CE MONDE  
ILS SONT CHEMINS VERS DIEU,  
ILS SONT CHEMINS VERS DIEU.

Auteur : Soeur Marie-Colette Guédon  
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