

Third Annual Archbishop's Dinner

Hyatt Regency Hotel

28 October 2014

Reverend Fathers and Sisters; Distinguished Guests; Ladies and
Gentlemen:

Introduction

How truly wonderful it is for us to be gathered here this evening as an Archdiocesan family for this Third Annual Archbishop's Dinner. I look forward to this evening because it allows me – in a less formal setting than at Holy Mass – the opportunity to express my gratitude to you for being such a vital Catholic community – a growing and generous family, proud of its identity and thus able to reach out and be the “salt of the earth” in this area of the southwestern mainland of BC which the Lord has given us as our Vineyard.

There are hundreds of you to thank – 900 I believe! – and I only wish I could express my thanks personally to each and every one of you. Especially deserving of our gratitude are the patrons and sponsors of this Dinner who are listed in your program, as well as to all the volunteers who helped to prepare for this evening. Thank you so very much.

My remarks tonight are divided into two sections. First, I would like to review with you the major initiatives of this past year in the life of the Archdiocese, giving you sense of just where we are going in charting the future course of the Church, at least insofar as we can do so. After all, we can't in any way stifle the Spirit of God who is always so

full of surprises. And second, I would like to explain where the proceeds from this Dinner are going; that is, supporting our Office of Service and Justice, especially in two of its ministries which are among the corporal works of mercy: the ministry to migrants and refugees; and the ministry to prisoners, victims and their families.

I. Charting our Church's Future Course: Our Priorities

Last year I reported to you that we had embarked on a plan in which we had identified three priorities of the Archdiocese for the next three years. Do you remember them? First, growing a culture of vocation; second, evangelizing the family; and third, stewarding God's gifts. I won't deal with each goal in turn, but want to talk about them in light of Pope Francis' teaching, especially that found in his apostolic exhortation, "The Joy of the Gospel," released last November. In that document the Holy Father shares his dream of "a missionary option" for the Church; "that is, a missionary impulse capable of transforming everything, so that the Church's customs, ways of doing things, times and schedules, language and structures can be suitably channelled for the evangelization of today's world."¹ For the Pope, everything today is to be put into "a missionary key." His is a forceful call for a more missionary Catholicism in the broadest sense, one with arms open to the

¹ Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, 27.

world, and so must we be: open to *our* world here in British Columbia.

1. Seminarians, Candidates and Aspirants for Ordained Ministry

The first, but by no means the only, missionaries are our priests. We need them to proclaim the Word of Jesus Christ and celebrate the Sacraments – and not just for us, but for our children and grandchildren. Without the Eucharist, the Church cannot survive.

This year, I am very pleased to say, we have 27 men studying to be priests for the Archdiocese of Vancouver. Here I want to thank the Serra Club and all those in the newly formed Vocations Committees in 17 of our parishes for their prayers and support. Of those 27 men, six are seminarians for our new Missionary Seminary *Redemptoris Mater*. These men – three from Italy, one from Rwanda, one from the Ivory Coast and one from Costa Rica will soon be joined by three more, two from the Philippines and one from the United States. They will be Vancouver priests, incardinated into our Archdiocese, though they will be released at some future date for ministry in the missions of China and Asia. Next year, God willing, we shall have one ordination to the priesthood and perhaps four to the diaconate from among our seminarians.

As an aside, you should know that the seminarians have fielded a basketball team, aptly called the Vancouver Seminarian Black Ops, and they are ready to compete with our local high schools to show the

young, human and sometimes competitive side of Christ the King Seminary!

There is also more good news about ordained ministry. The first class of 18 candidates for the permanent diaconate is now in their fourth year of formation, and I am grateful that their theological studies are largely entrusted to St. Mark's College. They will be preparing for diaconal ordination before the end of next year. These men are currently joined by 8 aspirants who are now in the second year of the program. I am convinced that our permanent deacons will add strength to the ministry and will be a powerful witness of proclamation and service in our local Church.

With the support of the Vocations Office, a Vocations in Progress Discernment Group (VIP) has recently been formed for young women considering the consecrated life. It is under the direction of Sister Mary Sabina, a Dominican Sister of St. Cecilia. Around 15 young women have been attending.

Again, I urge you to continue to pray for an increase of vocations to the priesthood, diaconate and consecrated life from among our parishioners.

2. Evangelizing The Family

Another priority of the Archdiocese is that of evangelizing the family, that absolutely fundamental unit of the Church and society. As

has become very clear recently because of the Synod in Rome, the Church faces many challenges in helping the family live its mission as revealed in God's loving plan. Good preparation is more necessary than ever, and the Office of Life, Marriage and Family, has been working to revise and strengthen our marriage preparation course. It has been considerably enriched by adding sections on the theology of the body – one of Pope St. John Paul's greatest contributions to the Church – and by a more concerted effort to ensure that young couples know and understand Natural Family Planning.

One disconcerting note, and you may not be surprised by this, is the number of marriages in the Church has fallen by about 1/3 in the last ten years.

3. Evangelization and Formation

Spiritual and doctrinal formation are absolutely necessary if the laity are to carry out their mission in the Church, and there are some great new initiatives underway.

Before we can deepen our faith we must be deeply rooted in a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. This is a point Pope Francis addresses this point at the very beginning of his Exhortation. He reminds us to put first things first in all our efforts at catechizing children, young people and mature men and women. He wrote: "I invite all Christians, everywhere, at this very moment, to a renewed personal encounter with

Jesus Christ, or at least an openness to letting him encounter them.”²
To “believe in” Jesus is personally to welcome him into our lives,
clinging to him in love and following in his footsteps. All spiritual and
doctrinal formation builds on this personal relationship.

For pre-school and very young children, we have introduced a
beautiful and effective Montessori-based, Scripture-focused faith
formation program for children called “Catechesis of the Good
Shepherd.” It is highly Scriptural and liturgical, and engages children,
leading them to an encounter with the person of Jesus Christ – and not
merely to knowledge about him. Well over 50 catechists have
participated in becoming certified to teach in this program.

St. Jude’s is the first school in Canada to have the Catechesis of the
Good Shepherd formally in the school programming for religious
education, and other schools have begun training teachers.

You might be interested in knowing that we have 7,500 children in
our PREP programs, with 1,500 catechists dedicated to teaching them, as
well as 2,225 children in the Liturgy of the Word program, supported by
over 500 leaders. Many of you are present here. Thank you for your
patience and perseverance! And we can’t forget that more than 16,000
students – a record – are enrolled in the 50 primary and secondary

² Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, 3.

schools in the Archdiocese which offer regular religious instruction. This is truly marvellous!

For youth ministry, a priority has been to help ensure that all parish programs have a catechetical component, so that our young people will be equipped to meet the questions and challenges of Catholic life in the 21st century. Progress has been made, and shortly specific resources for teen catechesis will be recommended to parishes and offered support.

Again two things to be thankful for. The Spirit Day for young people held in the fall attracts well over 2,000 youth. It is the largest annual gathering of Catholic youth in Canada. For our young adults – 18 and older – preparations are already underway for World Youth Day in Krakow, Poland, in the summer of 2016.

When we look at opportunities provided for adult faith formation, I am very pleased that most parishes already have reached the Archdiocesan goal of offering at least four opportunities for ongoing formation. These include everything from the new *Symbolon* program, to Fr. Robert Barron's "Catholicism," Great Adventure Bible Studies, and Catholic book and CD racks for parish foyers. Project Timothy, a parish-based initiative directed by the Office of Evangelization which employs the materials of Catholic Christian Outreach to evangelize and equip Catholics to evangelize is currently present in 12 parishes.

Also very present in our parishes is the RCIA program, which has

shown a modest increase in numbers over the past few years. It is especially strong at St. Andrew Kim, and in parishes with outreach to the Chinese community. Every year, nearly 500 are baptized or received into the Church at the Easter Vigil.

Other recent initiatives include the founding of “Catholic Voices,” a group of men and women trained to present Catholic teaching on controversial issues to the public in a persuasive yet gentle way. And this Christmas more than 20 parishes have arranged to distribute freely more than 2,500 copies of the New Testament and 5000 books on prayer by Peter Kreeft.

While there are four annual offerings sponsored by the Archdiocese for lay formation already in place, we are looking to the future to set up a more comprehensive initiative – a fully established Institute of Lay Formation, perhaps in collaboration with St. Mark’s College and/or Redeemer Pacific College. The growing awareness of the identity and mission of the laity in the Church requires that we provide more formation, so that they can take on the important responsibilities increasingly expected of them. Or, in Pope Francis’ words: “The formation of the laity and the evangelization of professional and intellectual life represent a significant pastoral challenge”³ – a

³ Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, 102.

challenge that I hope we will have the creativity and audacity to meet.

Many other movements and associations also provide spiritual and doctrinal formation for young people and adults. The Archdiocese is blessed to have a great many of such groups and initiatives. Among them – and I apologize for omissions! – are Focolare, the Life in the Spirit seminars, Cursillo, the Neocatechumenal Way, Couples for Christ in all its various configurations, men’s groups, ENDOW, El Shaddai, BLD, Charismatic Renewal prayer groups and others, the various opportunities offered by the Prelature of the Holy Cross, the lay Dominicans, Franciscans, Scalabrinians, and Oblates of Mary Immaculate, the Oblates of Westminster Abbey, the Christian Life Communities of the Jesuits, Regnum Christi, Communion and Liberation, Madonna House, Catholic Christian Outreach, Legion of Mary, the Knights of Columbus, and Catholic Women’s League. And this list is far from complete!

To celebrate and deepen our faith you are also aware of several larger Archdiocesan events like the ONE Conference, held at the Convention Centre and now in its fourth year; the Men’s Conference, Man Alive!, the Women’s Conference, and the Catholic Educators’ Conference. All of these witness to the vigour of Vancouver Catholicism.

There is a lot happening in the Archdiocese, but we cannot forget

that we are meant to “go forth,” to leave the comfort zones where we are at home, and bring the Gospel to the wider community. Here I return briefly to Pope Francis and “The Joy of the Gospel.”

“If we have received the love which restores meaning to our lives,” the Holy Father asks, “how can we fail to share that love with others?”⁴

While Pope St. John XXIII, opened the windows of the Church, Pope Francis wants to open the Church’s doors to the world outside. The Gospel, he never tires of repeating, is for the whole world; and he wants us to bring its message everywhere. We are formed to bring the Gospel to others.

Stewardship of Our Infrastructure

Now to turn to something more concrete. Indeed, to real concrete! Essential to the Church is her infrastructure – the schools, churches, parish centres, rectories, convents and other buildings – necessary for her to fulfill her mission of gathering people for worship, for fellowship, for education and formation, and for outreach to the community.

We are so blessed that Vancouver is a growing Archdiocese, a growth largely due to immigration. Our problems are not those of a Church with too many unused church buildings or empty convents. Far

⁴ Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, 8.

from it!

There are, I would estimate, about 120,000 Catholics who are regular church-goers, even if not, unfortunately, every Sunday. Now that's under 30% of those who have been baptized within our boundaries. On a given Sunday, our census tells us we have 87,000 people in the pews. This certainly drives home to us why the Holy Father is on the mark in urging us to bring the Good News to the community around us.

This past year I was able to dedicate two new churches: St. Mary's in Gibsons and St. James in Abbotsford; to bless the new rectory at St. Patrick's Parish; to open the new wing at OLPH; and to turn the soil for a new school at St. Augustine's Parish and a parish centre at St. Nicholas in Langley. Moreover, Notre Dame High School will soon be fully completed.

Undoubtedly, though, the biggest project this year has been the construction of the new John Paul II Pastoral Centre at 33rd and Willow, on the former site of St. Vincent's Hospital. If all goes according to schedule, we are slated to move in to the new complex by the end of this December. Besides providing new offices for the Archdiocese and the Catholic school board, it will, at long last, provide nine apartments for our retired priests in what is named the St. Joseph Residence. This office project was made possible because of the sale of our current

offices at 150 Robson. The Men's Shelter will remain there in its present location until a new site is provided downtown by the purchaser. It was a condition of the sale that we would not abandon our nearly 60-year commitment to those seeking shelter in the downtown. And those terms are being honoured.

Other projects in our needed infrastructure renewal are being planned. The Project Management Office, now directed by Father Stan Galvon, is currently working to develop guidelines for the Campus Master Plans and feasibility studies which every parish is to complete by November of next year.

An "Earthquake Early Warning System" is in place, and in November all Archdiocesan elementary and secondary schools will be interconnected with a special earthquake alarm, so that students can take early action to protect themselves in the event of a seismic event. This is certainly a "first" in the Pacific Northwest and will help ensure the safety of our children.

II. Ministries Benefitting from the Dinner

Generosity of the Archdiocese

Dear friends: your generosity and volunteer service to your parishes, the Archdiocese and the wider Church is exemplary and inspiring. Such generosity manifests a true ecclesial spirit rooted in gratitude for what the good Lord has given you and a desire to return

those gifts to him with increase.

Especially noteworthy was the overwhelming outpouring of support for our Filipino brothers and sisters who suffered from Typhoon Yolanda last November. More than \$1,131,000 was raised by Catholics in the Archdiocese. This past August, I was invited to be part of a team from Development and Peace to visit those areas in Leyte, Samar and north Cebú which were devastated by the typhoon and received assistance from Vancouver and the rest of Canada. To experience first-hand the gratitude of the people for new homes built, boats launched and services provided by your help reminded me once again that there is no structure in the world comparable to the Catholic Church in being able to provide a network, through our dioceses and parishes, for ground relief and assistance. The links of faith and solidarity that bind us together in the Body of Christ are, indeed, truly magnificent!

Ministry to Migrants

Now, in the few minutes remaining, I will say a few words about the two ministries that will benefit from your philanthropy this evening.

Again, please indulge me for bringing you back to “The Joy of the Gospel” where Pope Francis addresses a serious problem in today’s world. He calls it the “globalization of indifference,” which he describes as follows: “Almost without being aware of it, we end up

being incapable of feeling compassion at the outcry of the poor, weeping for other people's pain, and feeling a need to help them, as though all this were someone else's responsibility and not our own."⁵ To counter this tendency, the Lord has "summoned us to the revolution of tenderness,"⁶ whereby we run the risk of face-to-face encounter with others, with their pain and their pleas. Outreach to those in need must always be personal but, at the same time, it also entails a passion for justice, "a deep desire to change the world"⁷ in light of the Gospel.

In his Exhortation, Pope Francis grants a special place to initiatives of evangelizing the poor – and certainly migrants, refugees and prisoners can be counted in that number. He asks us to understand Jesus' command to his disciples: "You yourselves give them something to eat!" (Mk 6:37), by "working to eliminate the structural causes of poverty and to promote the integral development of the poor, as well as small daily acts of solidarity in meeting the real needs which we encounter."⁸

Tonight we are given an opportunity show that solidarity by embracing two vital ministries in the Archdiocese sponsored by our

⁵ Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, 54.

⁶ Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, 88.

⁷ Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, 183.

⁸ Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, 188.

Office of Service and Justice under the direction of Evelyn Vollet.

The Archdiocese of Vancouver welcomes migrant workers, whether the seasonal farmworkers who come from Latin America, and with whom and for whom we have developed an Hispanic Ministry to reach out to them. Six parishes are currently very active in ministering to them by visiting the farms, bringing them to Mass and Confession, and offering faith formation, especially those who have not yet received all the Sacraments of Initiation. With the guidance of Father Richard Zanotti, who coordinates this apostolate with other priests and sisters in the Archdiocese, we are working to ensure that all Spanish speaking seasonal workers can easily be connected to the Catholic community.

Temporary foreign workers come here to work in hospitality, food service, housekeeping and care for children and the elderly. Often they find themselves alone having left their families in their country of origin in order to come to Canada. They are vulnerable to the perils of secular society and often risk losing the practice of their faith. Couples for Christ, the Handmaids of the Lord, St Mary's Migrant Ministry, St Joseph's Migrant Ministry and other parish groups host regular workshops to include practical and spiritual support to the temporary foreign workers in our Archdiocese.

The last group that the Office of Service and Justice works with are refugees. The Archdiocese has sponsored refugees for more than thirty

years, beginning with the Viet Nam boat people crisis. In the past six years, the demand has again increased significantly with the crises in the Middle East, Burma and Africa.

In 2013 the Archdiocese welcomed 550 refugees. More than 95% were Iraqi Chaldean Catholics who were being persecuted and threatened with annihilation. To date, we have landed more than five hundred families. Many parishes have undertaken sponsoring these families, and the Archdiocese works with them in ensuring successful resettlement.

Ministry to Prisoners, Families and Victims

You can well imagine the need for human and other resources to facilitate these programs. The same is true for our prison ministry.

Catholic Charities Justice Service began nearly thirty years ago in the Archdiocese and was dear to the heart of Archbishop Carney who was keen to provide pastoral care to prisoners, their families, and, where possible, their victims and their families. He embraced wholeheartedly the model of restorative justice and entered into contracts with the Correctional Service of Canada.

In recent years, because the Canadian government has committed fewer resources for providing counselling, workshops and programs, the void has been filled by setting up a program involving active Catholic volunteers. In the past ten years the number of volunteers has gone

from 28 to as many as 190 who this year are involved in this ministry. The dedicated work of volunteers is of the utmost importance; it ensures that as a community we are committed to this corporal work of mercy. But these volunteers need to be recruited, trained, placed, and monitored. That takes professional oversight, organization and resources.

Our volunteers visit federal prisons and are making inroads in provincial institutions as well. They are also working to educate parishioners and the wider public on a Catholic approach to ensuring justice to prisoners, victims, families and society at large. This is a beautiful ministry, one in which the mercy of God and the virtue of hope shine forth so clearly. It is my fervent hope that this ministry will continue to flourish and, with your help, grow.

To visit those in prison is to visit Christ himself, just as to welcome strangers is to welcome the Lord who is in our midst.

Conclusion

I hope that this “State of the Church” address has inspired you to thank the Lord for all that he is doing in the Archdiocese of Vancouver. He has blessed us with faithful priests and Religious; he has enabled so many apostolic initiatives to flourish; and he has raised up a laity which is fervent and open-hearted. I, too, thank him for the unmerited grace of allowing me to be your shepherd. Together let us ask the gracious

Virgin Mary, Queen of the Holy Rosary, to embrace us and ask for an outpouring of tender mercy from her Divine Son.

Thank you all so very much. Oremus pro invicem. Let us pray for one another.

✦ J. Michael Miller, CSB
Archbishop of Vancouver