

Archbishop's 2021 Christmas Message

Dear People of the Archdiocese of St. John's:

On the second Sunday of Advent we heard the following verses from St. Paul's letter to the Philippians:

***Brothers and sisters, I thank my God every time I remember you,
constantly praying with joy in every one of my prayers for all of you,
because of your sharing in the Gospel from the first day until now. (Phil. 1:3-5)***

2021 has presented many challenges to the people and clergy of the Archdiocese of St. John's: the continuing coronavirus pandemic, the court judgement of the Archdiocese's vicarious liability for the abuse at the Mount Cashel Orphanage, news reports of unmarked graves at former Indian Residential School sites, this week's announcement of the Archdiocese filing for creditor protection and that the province is moving back to pandemic restrictions and capacity limits of Alert Level 3.

When I think of the challenges we have faced, like St. Paul, I thank God for all the ways so many of you have "shared the Gospel" with me and inspired and strengthened me by your witness of lived faith:

- The clergy and chaplains who have continued to serve and inspire in our parishes and institutions, in person and via innovative technologies;
- The consecrated religious who as corporate entities and individuals have so wonderfully contributed to the care and support of the most in need;
- The parish and diocesan lay staff members who have gone way beyond the call of duty in their cooperation and service;
- The parish and community volunteers who have continued to give (and often increased) the time, energy and sacrifice of their service in the parishes, food banks and outreach organizations of our communities;
- The medical personnel, first responders, counsellors and community leaders who have worked long and tirelessly in caring for the sick and seeking to respectfully protect all of us from harm;
- The parishioners who have remained steadfast and generous in their spiritual and financial support of their parishes, priests and the archdiocesan community.

2021 has not been an easy year for our Archdiocese. However, because of the lived faith, hope and charity of so many, it has been a year in which much good has been done and much love has been shared.

I expect that the year ahead may be even more challenging but I have no doubt that if we face it together with trust in God and one another, the Lord will not be found wanting in the graces and blessings that He will bestow upon us all. And so I make St. Paul's words my own in encouraging all of us to:

***Rejoice in the Lord always: again I will say, Rejoice.
Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near.
Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving
let your requests be made known to God.
And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and your minds
in Christ Jesus. (Phil. 4:4-7)***

With prayers and best wishes for God's blessings upon you during this Christmas season and always,

Yours in Christ,
+Peter Hundt
Archbishop of St. John's. NL