



Archdiocese of Winnipeg

Office of the Archbishop

1495 Pembina Highway, Winnipeg, Manitoba R3T 2C6 • Tel: 204-452-2227 • Fax: 204-475-4409 • Web: www.archwinnipeg.ca

March 3, 2019

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

I bring you greetings as we prepare to enter the Holy Season of Lent. Pope Francis has asked us to reflect on being a Church of Missionary Disciples, not only during this Lenten Season, but throughout our lives as Catholics. This is very timely as our Archdiocesan Synod centered on being Missionary Disciples in our modern world. The Synod Theme expressed that we are *Established, Anointed and Sent in Christ* not only to live lives of Discipleship, but to be the Lord's agents in the New Evangelization of the world.

Our Synod Implementation Commission has begun its work in bringing together the proposals and applications from our Synodal process. While this work is ongoing the Commission suggests we begin to implement the 14 Global Initiatives stemming from the Synod. These Global Initiatives are opportunities which serve as key points of reference in creating a Synodal environment in our Local Church. They will prepare the way for the specific proposals reached by consensus in the Synod.

Keeping this in mind, I am asking each Deanery and every parish in the Archdiocese to consider ways of implementing Global Initiative #3, namely: ***"We encourage all the Baptized to acquire a familiarity with Sacred Scripture."*** It became very clear in our many Listening Sessions that the People of God in our Archdiocese are very concerned about our spiritual formation, and Holy Scripture is key in this, both for individuals, for groups and most especially for families. The Scriptures reveal to us the path to living as Disciples of Jesus and help us to know him personally. Pope Francis talks about this in his Apostolic Exhortation, *"The Joy of the Gospel."* How can we, as Disciples of Christ, spread the Joy of the Gospel to others unless we ourselves have been more deeply formed in Holy Scripture? St. Jerome once said: *"Ignorance of Scripture is ignorance of Christ."* There are many ways in which Scriptural prayer and study can be encouraged in our Christian communities. Discernment, creativity and perseverance will be required as we work towards this goal. The Implementation Commission is recommending *Lectio Divina* as a starting point. *Lectio Divina* is a particular way of prayerfully reading Sacred Scripture and can also be called: *Breaking open the Word*. Pope Francis has spoken much about *Lectio Divina* and strongly encourages its practice. Allowing the Holy Spirit to be active in our hearts as we study and pray with Scripture is very much the attitude we cultivated in our Synod. I include with this letter our Commission's simple guideline on how this can be accomplished. An important part of *Lectio Divina* would include families preparing for the Sunday Liturgy by reflecting on the upcoming Sunday Gospel during the week.

Each year in Canada, the Catholic Church celebrates what is known as the National Week for Life and the Family. This year it begins on May 12th and the theme is, **Listening to the Gospel as a Family!** This theme very much complements our Synod's desire for each of us to not only be more familiar with the Gospel, but to really listen to what the Gospel is saying to us. The traditional idea that "a family that prays together stays together," is worth remembering – good fruit indeed comes through formation in Scripture. I would refer you to our Archdiocesan Website (www.archwinnipeg.ca) for more information on the National Week for Life and the Family as well as for a discussion on *Lectio Divina*.

In conclusion, time spent in listening to Sacred Scripture and sharing Scripture together as a family or with others, generally allows us to be stronger Disciples of the Lord and in so doing share "the Joy of the Gospel". Please join me in beginning to implement this important Synod Initiative in our community: ***"We encourage all the Baptized to acquire a familiarity with Sacred Scripture."***

Yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Richard Gagnon", with a cross symbol to the left of the name.

✚Richard Gagnon
Archbishop of Winnipeg