



Catholic Diocese of Victoria

Office of the Bishop

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Pentecost, June 9, 2019

Dear People of God,

In the light of Christ, which shines forth always—and especially in these times—we are invited to embrace the present poverty of our Church and Diocese. This poverty is experienced in different ways, and on many levels, from the pain of victims of the sexual and conscience abuse crisis in the Church to the reduction of sacramental and pastoral provision in some communities. The Holy Spirit is inviting the Church of the Diocese of Victoria to embrace the poverty of our reality in humble trust; not wringing our hands, stuck and frozen in fear, or locked away in an ‘upper room’.

Now is the time to recall our own reception of the Sacrament of Confirmation, through the outpouring of the Holy Spirit and anointing with Chrism oil. We turn to the grace of God, seen in small and significant ways in those who have been added to the People of God through the Sacraments of Initiation which I am privileged to celebrate on the Confirmation trail throughout the Diocese.

The Holy Spirit leads the Church of Victoria with grace and hope. I pray that we may all be renewed in the grace of our own personal Confirmation when the same Holy Spirit, given to the Apostles at Pentecost, came upon each of us with an array of gifts to strengthen our faith and mission.

The gifts of the Holy Spirit are showered on the whole People of God. For each place and historic time, we are given an invitation to be led by the protagonist of the mission of Christ who rekindles in us a faithful impulse capable of transforming everything for the mission (cf. *Evangelii Gaudium*, #27).

I would like to outline some of the fruits of the Holy Spirit, as demonstrated in our Diocese:

Ten parishes are ministered to with five pastors in a new alignment of parish collaborations, which share more dynamically the resources available for pastoral ministry. This realignment will enhance a more collaborative and relational involvement of all the baptized, calling forth co-responsible leadership for the building up of each community for mission and discipleship.

In this Easter/Pentecost season, more than one hundred people have been selected by pastors to be trained to lead gathered Christian communities in the Sunday Celebration of the Word in the absence of a priest, so that the faithful may be nourished as the living body of Christ for the evangelizing mission of the Church.

A Diocesan Pastoral Council is planned to start in October 2019, designated *Extraordinary Mission Month* by Pope Francis. This initiative will involve people throughout the Diocese to assist and collaborate with the Bishop to benefit the life of the whole Diocese. Through dialogue,




discernment, and strategic planning, the Bishop will be assisted in the three-fold Apostolate of Teaching, Celebrating, and Governing so the whole People of God may grow in charity, justice, and peace, to reflect ever more clearly the light of Christ to our world.

The amazing grace of the Holy Spirit is so very present and celebrated in our Diocese on this Feast of Pentecost, to breathe new gifts and confirm once again the missionary-discipleship that we are all called to.

The fundamental challenge for us pastors, educators, catechists, faithful Catholics, and people in ministry, is to go out as on the first Pentecost, beyond the secure 'upper room' maintenance of parishes and Mass schedules that benefit a few, to a Church of encounter and accompaniment. In this way, all 860,000 people in these Islands may experience the joy of the Good News and the abundant life in Christ Jesus. *And he said to them, "Go into all the world and proclaim the good news to the whole creation."* (Mark 16:15)

Together, may we all be renewed in the gifts of the Holy Spirit, who has been so graciously poured out in our Baptism and Confirmation.

In communion,

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Most Reverend Gary Gordon
Bishop of Victoria