

OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

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DIOCESE OF GRAND FALLS

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Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

The historic first phase of our **Diocese of Grand Falls Synod Journey** is complete. Our Diocesan Synthesis has been written and sent to the Atlantic Bishop's Assembly where it was integrated with the other Atlantic Dioceses. The Atlantic Synthesis has been forward to the CCCB and our national Synthesis is ready to send to Rome.

I would now like to share with you some reflections on our Synodal Journey. These reflections come from the members of the Synod Committee who not only prepared all the preparatory material: bulletin inserts, Prayers of the Faithful, video presentations, and Parish Listening Session Meeting Agenda and Schedule, but were the ones who attended the 45 Parish meetings to listen what you wanted us to hear. Three words come to mind: gratitude, hope, and anticipation.

Our committee members were struck by the deep sense of gratitude that people expressed. First, to Pope Francis who courageously began this journey. Secondly, the committee members expressed their deep gratitude to everyone who came to their parish meeting and shared their concerns and their hopes for the Church they love. And thirdly, gratitude expressed by so many across the Diocese for being given the opportunity and the encouragement to honestly share what is in their hearts and on their minds; for the chance to be listened to.

Our committee members also recognized a sense of hope (sometimes expressed with caution) among the people of this Diocese. People are hopeful that this Synodal Journey will bring about changes for our Church; changes that will bring new life to our beloved Church. We saw this hope expressed on two levels: Universal and local.

First, people are hopeful that Pope Francis will receive with genuine openness the input of people throughout the world including the people of the Diocese of Grand Falls. People recognize that there are some changes/shifts that can only be made at the Universal level by the Pope and the Holy See. And everyone understands the difficulty of bringing about meaningful change in the Church. Yet, people offered their concerns and their dreams to the Holy Father with hope.

Secondly, our committee recognized that many of the issues of concern raised at our Parish Listening Sessions properly need to be considered at our Diocesan Level – local consideration for

local concerns. Our Synod experience of the past few months has shown us that we can gather together in prayer and reflection to face the challenges facing our parishes now and into the future. The Spirit is amongst us, moving us forward in hope.

This brings me to the third word: anticipation. Everywhere our committee members met with parishioners, they heard a common refrain: this meeting has been great, but I hope its just the beginning. People are worried that, like so many 'projects' of the past, reports will be written, filed, and collect dust. There is a real sense of anticipation in our Diocese among those who participated in the Synod Journey that we are discovering a new way of 'being church'. I believe that we now need to move from a time of **listening** to a time of **dialogue**. Our listening sessions have raised real concerns that need real solutions. We can discover those solutions in respectful, charitable, dialogue – listening to one another and engaging with one another in an exchange of ideas that will help us uncover what the Spirit of God is saying to us and to confidently follow where the Spirit leads us.

Our Diocesan Synod Committee is already planning a second round of Parish Meetings which we anticipate will occur early to late Spring 2023. These meetings will focus on the issues and concerns raised by you during the Parish Listening Sessions. In preparation for those meetings, the Synod Committee will be formulating reflections in the form of Bulletin Announcements and Video presentations for distribution to all parishes. This will be a time for each of us to 'See, Evaluate and Act'. It will be a time to **see** issues not only from our own experience but also from the experience of others; to see facets of the issue that have eluded us. It will be a time to **evaluate** how the issue began, what allowed the issue to flourish, how it has impacted our parishes and evaluate a variety of solutions. And it will be a time to **act** with a wisdom and generosity that does not seek our own comfort but seeks the highest good.

Please continue to pray for the success of our Synodal Journey.

In Christ

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "R. Anthony Daniels". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a cross at the beginning.

Most Reverend R. Anthony Daniels
Bishop of Grand Falls.