

## OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

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## DIOCESE OF GRAND FALLS

Lent 2022

*In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. And just as he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove on him. And a voice came from heaven, "You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased."*

*And the Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness. He was in the wilderness forty days, tempted by Satan; and he was with the wild beasts; and the angels waited on him.*

*Mark 1:9-13*

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

For me, the Liturgies of Holy Week and the Easter Triduum are precious. There is so much rich symbolism and meaning in every prayer and every gesture. I enjoy the unique beginning of the Palm Sunday Mass as people gather near the entrance of the church and, with palms in hand, recreate the entrance of Jesus into Jerusalem. I have been humbled to receive the Renewal of Priestly Commitment from my brother priests during the Mass of Chrism. I look forward each year to kneeling before my sister and brother Christians to wash their feet and wordlessly attempt to imitate Jesus at the Last Supper. I have watched with tears in my eyes as people come forward to personally venerate the Cross with deep devotion. And I have been caught up in Easter joy in celebrating the Easter Vigil – passing from darkness into light, remembering again the long history of God’s interventions to redeem us, communally renewing our Baptismal promises and commitments, and then welcoming the Risen Christ into my life in the Eucharist.



As I write this letter we are gradually coming out of the ‘restrictive world of the pandemic’. Over the past two years our celebrations of Holy Week and the Easter Triduum have been seriously marred, and in places, canceled. We have seen our churches closed, our numbers restricted, and our rituals trimmed. We have been unable to praise God in song or greet our neighbor with a warm handshake. Moments of family solidarity such as funerals, weddings and

baptisms have been hurt by restrictions on travel and on numbers. We even think differently about our church gatherings – “Am I safe?”, “Is there someone near me with Covid?”.

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Each year, the First Sunday of Lent recalls the temptation of Jesus in the desert. I have quoted from St. Mark’s Gospel above. What strikes me about this Scripture passage is how starkly different the first paragraph is from the second paragraph. In the first paragraph Jesus is named the ‘Son’, the ‘beloved’, in whom the Father is ‘well pleased’. Then immediately, Jesus is ‘driven’ into the wilderness, ‘tempted by Satan’ and alone with ‘wild beasts’.



Is it possible to think of the last two years as our ‘desert experience’? Have we not been ‘driven’ into a pandemic we did not choose? Haven’t we been tempted by anger, frustration, and despair? Have we not been forced to live without seeing family, friends, grandchildren, and sick relatives?

And yet, we have never ceased to be the Father’s ‘beloved’ in whom God is ‘well pleased’. And we have always been cared for. We have been ‘waited on’ by God’s angels – some angelic and some very human.

For Jesus, his desert experience was the beginning step of a journey that led him to the Cross and Resurrection. As we begin Lent 2022, and as we emerge from our desert experience of the last two years, we know with certainty that if we journey with Jesus we will also be led to the Cross and Resurrection – to newness of life.

Let us pray for, and with, one another.

Yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read "R. Anthony Daniels". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Most Reverend R. Anthony Daniels  
Bishop of Grand Falls