

THE ECCLESIASTICAL PROVINCE OF ONTARIO
The Most Reverend Anne Germond, Metropolitan

Commemoration of John Donne; Priest and Poet

March 31st, 2020

Dear friends,

Grace and peace to you in this extraordinary time of life in the midst of COVID-19. As we prepare to enter the paschal mysteries I pray that you will encounter the crucified and risen Christ in new and meaningful ways – even as we are unable to gather for public prayer and worship. There is not one among us who can ever recall a time when this has ever happened, and when churches around the world have been closed for an extended period of time.

The Ontario House of Bishops has been meeting regularly via Zoom and we are delighted with the creative way that congregations in all dioceses are reaching out to parishioners and offering new and exciting ways of being the church. Three weeks ago no one would have imagined that live-streaming worship and zoom bible studies and meetings would become the norm. The learning curve has been steep but everyone has adapted well to the change and we are feasting on the Word in numbers of beautiful ways. Thank you for all that you are doing in Ottawa to stay connected with each other – particularly to those who are most isolated and those who do not have easy access to the internet.

Thank you for the warm Ottawa welcome you extended to me on March 14th when the electoral synod elected the Very Rev. Shane Parker to be the 10th Bishop of Ottawa. It was a prayer filled day in which God acted. On behalf of the Ontario House of Bishops, I extend our heartiest congratulations to Bishop-elect Shane and assure him of our prayers and support as he prepares for his Consecration and Seating as your new bishop - as the mantle of episcopal leadership is handed from Bishop John to Bishop-elect Shane and you begin a new ministry in Christ. I have invited Bishop-elect Shane to participate in the Ontario House of Bishops meetings and the Primate has extended a similar invitation for the upcoming April meetings of the National House of Bishops which will meet via zoom.

Before moving on, I would like to extend my sincere thanks to all the nominees who allowed their names to stand for election – the Ven. Dr. Peter John Hobbs, the Ven. Brian Kauk, the Rev. Kathryn Otley, the Rev. Mark Whittall, and the Ven. Christopher Dunn. They are fine leaders in the Diocese of Ottawa and were gracious in the weeks leading up to the election and in stepping aside during the course of the synod. Thanks are also due to the Episcopal Elections Committee under the leadership of Canon Doug Richards and Kim Chadsey and to Chancellors Robin MacKay and Henry Schultz for offering their knowledge and wisdom on a number of legal matters. I am also grateful for the ongoing leadership of Bishop John Chapman and I look forward to thanking him in person when his retirement celebration is reconvened.

Prior to COVID-19, the date for Bishop-elect Shane's Consecration and Seating was set for Pentecost Sunday, May 31st 2020. The Consecration of a new Bishop falls under the jurisdiction of the Provincial Synod, while the Seating of a Bishop is a Diocesan event. While it is still too early to tell whether we will be permitted large gatherings by that time, I want to assure you that the Provincial Officers and myself will be working hand in hand with the Executive Officers of the Diocese of Ottawa to ensure that the Consecration takes place on the appointed day so that there is as smooth a transition from one bishop to the next.

The 'bare bones' requirement for a Consecration service is to have a Chief Consecrator and two Co-Consecrators, and three representatives of the laity (who were present at the electoral synod) present for the ceremony. Depending on the government restrictions for gatherings at the time, the service could be live-streamed and there could be as few as seven persons gathered together in the Cathedral. Should this be necessary, we will find ways to arrange for the Seating and also handle the necessary paperwork which is required at the time of consecration.

In the context of the Canadian Church's history there is nothing unusual in having such a smaller consecration. All of our early bishops went to Lambeth to be consecrated by the Archbishop of Canterbury of the day by two attending bishops.

In this season we are called to continue to be the church, even when we cannot be together for church. COVID-19 is affecting each one of us deeply but we love and serve a God who is always with us regardless of the circumstances. I am hearing stories of courage and commitment by many of Christ's followers as they continue to speak gospel language in the midst of the second pandemic – the pandemic of fear. I know that God's Holy Spirit will guide us in this new time to make a wise decision with respect to the Consecration and Seating of your new Bishop.

In his sermon *Devotions upon Emergent Occasions* by John Donne, he writes about the catholicity of the Church and how what she does belongs to all and how each time and circumstance are translated by those who write those chapters. He says, "*God employs several translators; some pieces are translated by age, some by sickness, some by war, some by justice. But God's hand is in every translation; and his hand shall bind up all our scattered lives again, for that library where every book shall lie open to another*." God's hand is in this 'translation' as we remain faithful to our calling and work together as communities of faith to combat COVID-19.

And now, may the peace of God which passes all understanding keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God, and of his Son Jesus Christ. And may the blessing of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit rest upon you all this holy season,

I remain yours in love and peace,



The Most Rev. Anne Germond
Metropolitan