



DIOCESE OF ANTIGONISH

Appeal to Priests

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August 26, 2013

My Brother Priests:

My name is Father Duaine Devereaux and I am a priest of the Diocese of Antigonish, Nova Scotia. I was ordained to the priesthood in 1993 and since then I have served in several parishes of our Diocese as well as in the Archdiocese of Toronto. Currently, I am the Pastor of Our Lady of Fatima Parish, Sydney River, NS. At this time, I am writing to you regarding a serious issue that touches the life of the Diocese of Antigonish.

After much consideration, and with the approval of our Bishop, Bishop Brian Dunn, the Council of Priests of our Diocese has decided to carry out an Appeal to Priests in Canada. Thus, along with Father John Barry, the Chair of our Council of Priests, and Pastor of St. Peter's, Parish, Tracadie, NS, I am writing to you as a brother priest to seek your assistance as our Diocese addresses the pastoral, legal and financial impact resulting from lawsuits against the Diocese by victims of sexual abuse going back to 1950.

As you may be aware, a Class Action lawsuit was initiated against the Diocese. Through a court approved Legal Settlement Agreement, the Diocese has paid approximately \$15,000,000 (fifteen million dollars) over three years, from 2010 to 2012, to settle this Class Action lawsuit and compensate the victims.

In addition, the Diocese is presently facing several other lawsuits by a few individuals who opted out of the class action. The Diocese had no liability insurance coverage in place to help defray the cost of any of these lawsuits. Thus, in order to offer healing to the victims, the Diocese and the parishes have contributed all of their money, savings, and investments, towards the settlement of these lawsuits. Aside from some cemetery maintenance funds, a small amount of money was left in each parish to enable it to continue with day to day operations.

The money realized from this pooling of funds along with the sale of certain diocesan assets, (such as *The Casket*, the former diocesan newspaper and the former Diocesan Pastoral Center) was not nearly enough to meet the obligations of the Legal Settlement Agreement. As a result the Diocese has had to borrow \$7,000,000 (seven million dollars) in order to meet the terms of the Legal Settlement Agreement. Needless to say, this is a huge debt for a small Diocese such as ours, where unemployment rates of 18% are common in many of our communities.

In order to repay this loan, the Diocese is in the process of selling off all of the non-core properties of the Diocese and the parishes. This is a process which is expected to continue for some years. In the meantime, the Diocese is dealing with crippling interest costs and is very severely limited in its ability to provide pastoral services to the people of the Diocese.

To add further damage to an already difficult situation, in the fall of 2009, the former Bishop of our Diocese resigned, was charged and later found guilty on the possession of child pornography in a widely publicized case.

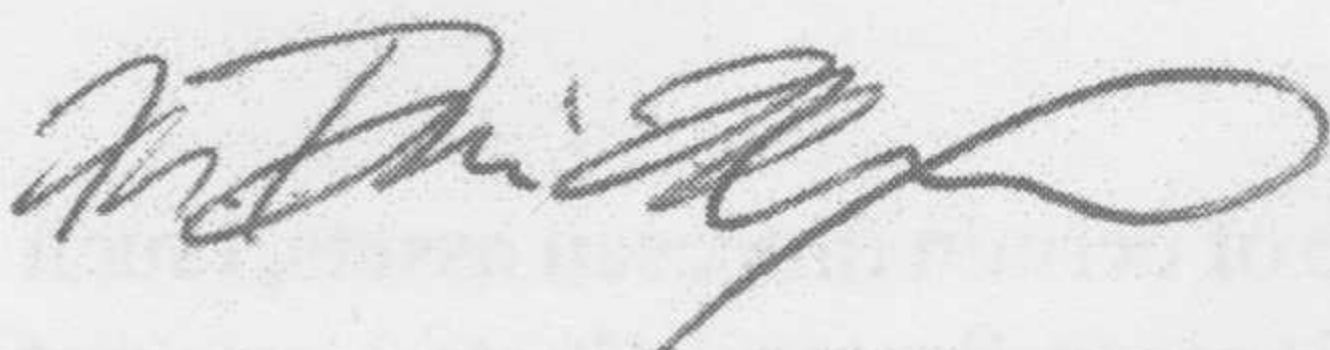
The degree of understandable rage, hurt and bitterness which all of these events caused among the people of the Diocese is immeasurable and is still felt today. The efforts to heal our Diocese spiritually, pastorally and financially are on going. Fortunately, we have been blessed with a great number of committed, generous, faith-filled (and yet struggling) lay people and clergy. They remain loyal and dedicated to the mission of the church, despite all that has happened.

We realize that every diocese and every parish has its own challenges to become the voice and face of Christ today. While very mindful of all the demands you experience, we also know that priests and other Catholics, as members of the same Body of Christ, are extremely concerned about the church they serve and cherish. This tradition of mutual support goes back to the earliest days of the Christian community as recorded in the *Acts of the Apostles*: "*The disciples determined that according to their ability, each would send relief to the believers living in Judea; this they did, sending it to the elders by Barnabas and Saul*" (Acts 11:29-30).

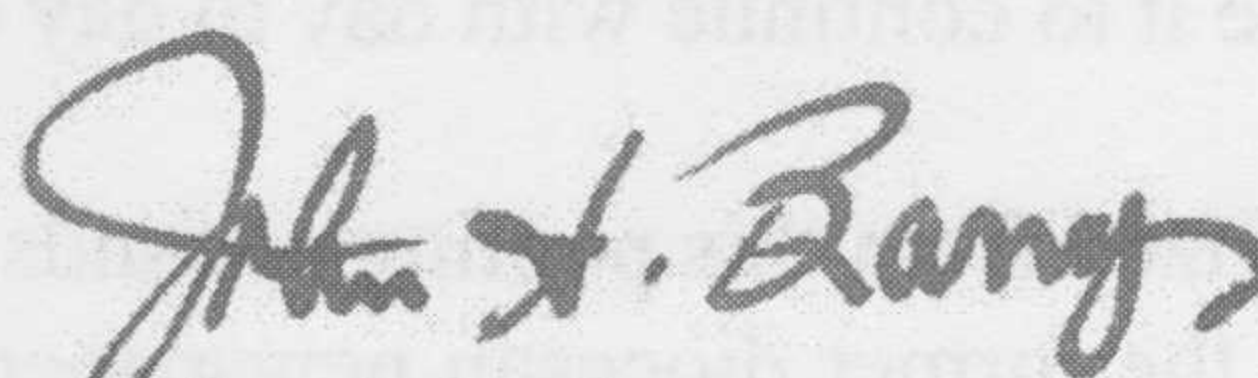
It is in this spirit that we would ask priests and other individuals to please consider donating \$1,000, or what you can afford to assist us as we attempt to meet these financial and pastoral challenges. Some priests and other individuals of our Diocese have given \$5,000, \$15,000, \$20,000 and \$25,000. If you can bring this appeal to the attention of other individuals who you think may wish to help, we would be grateful. Cheques can be made out to: Settlement Fund, Diocese of Antigonish and returned in the enclosed envelope. Receipts for Income Tax purposes will be sent out immediately. For further information, you may contact Darlene Stevenson at the Pastoral Centre and she will obtain the information you might require (darlene@dioceseofantigonish.ca).

We appreciate most gratefully your taking time to consider this appeal and thank you for your support and generosity. Above all, we ask you for your prayers at this difficult time. We apologize for the impersonal nature of this appeal but we are attempting to reach every priest in Canada.

Sincerely in Christ,



Father Duaine Devereaux
Coordinator, Appeal to Priests
Diocese of Antigonish



Father John Barry
Chair, Council of Priests
Diocese of Antigonish