



Heart to Heart

December 4, 2020 (#420)

WISE MEN WEAR MASKS! So do good shepherds! This year's Christmas Crib at the Chancery has a COVID-19 pandemic addition. The Magi and the shepherds, who are not part of the Holy Family "bubble", are wearing masks! Since they cannot follow the social distancing protocol, the masks are mandatory! Thanks to the Christmas decorators for reminding us of our responsibility to care for one another especially during these dangerous times!

BISHOP MICHAEL FISHER, an Auxiliary Bishop in Washington, D.C., was appointed the 15th Bishop of Buffalo by Pope Francis earlier this week. Bishop Edward Scharfenberger, Bishop of Albany, has served as the Apostolic Administer since the retirement of Bishop Malone. The installation will take place on January 15, 2020, at the Cathedral of St. Joseph in Buffalo. We pray for the new Bishop, that his ministry be blessed.

BISHOP-ELECT WAYNE LOBSINGER met this week with the planning committee established to assure that things are well-prepared for his Episcopal Ordination on February 2nd. The committee worked on the invitation list – strictly limited by COVID-19 protocols. Participation at the ordination will be by invitation only. The Bishop-elect has already visited his future residence and his future office in the Chancery. Work will be done to assure that both are ready to welcome him. Please continue to pray for our new Bishop as he prepares to take on this new service to the Diocese.

DECEMBER 8th IS THE SOLEMNITY OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION of the Blessed Virgin Mary. It is the patronal feast day of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate, my religious community, of several Parishes in the Diocese, and of several dioceses across Canada. At the Basilica of Our Lady, a novena of Masses is being celebrated daily, concluding on the feast day. During these pandemic days we pray in a special way for Mary's intercession for an end to the suffering and death caused by the coronavirus! Happy Feast Day to all who celebrate!

THE PERSONNEL BOARD HELD THE FIRST MEETING YESTERDAY to discuss the clergy moves for 2021. With the assistance of the ZOOM platform, we received reports from the Deans which provided an overview of the needs throughout the Diocese. As well, we reviewed the many responses to the questionnaire sent to Priests early in November. The next meeting is set for mid-January, 2021. Questionnaire responses can be returned until then.

UPDATED DIRECTIONS HAVE BEEN RECEIVED FROM THE ACBO regarding *WorshipSafe* revisions. They relate to mask wearing protocols, reception of Holy Communion, pew cleaning standards, mask exemptions, and contact tracing sheets. These revisions will be sent to Pastors and Parishes throughout the Diocese. A [video](#) on how best to receive Holy Communion has been prepared by the Archdiocese of Toronto. We pray that the current spike in COVID-19 cases in certain parts of the Province does not lead to a second shut-down of churches in our Diocese. Strict adherence to these first-rate standards in our Parishes should inspire confidence with municipal, regional and provincial government whose decisions can affect us all.

BILL 3, THE COMPASSIONATE CARE ACT, passed Third Reading *unanimously* in the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. Originally tabled in 2017, and re-introduced in 2018 during the 42nd Parliament of Ontario, the Private Member's Bill will become law upon Royal Assent. The Bill mandates the creation of a provincial framework to improve access to palliative care in hospitals, long-term care homes, hospices and home care. Congratulations to MPP Sam Oosterhoff on getting unanimous support for his first Private Member's Bill!

Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception, pray for us!

Ex corde, + *Douglas*, OMI