



**POPE FRANCIS HAS CALLED FOR MARCH 2<sup>nd</sup>, ASH WEDNESDAY**, to be *a day of prayer and fasting for Ukraine*. Because it is Ash Wednesday, we already follow the practice of prayer, fasting, and abstinence. So the Pope's call can be met with a strong response from Catholic's world-wide. Here in our Diocese, with churches able to welcome worshippers at full capacity for the first time in two years, we, and all people of good will, are encouraged to heed the Pope's call. If you are unable or reticent to return "in person", many Parishes will be "live-streaming" their services. As well, our Diocesan website has a pre-taped Liturgy of the Word for Ash Wednesday, with Bishop Wayne Lobsinger presiding at St. Ann Parish, Ancaster. Let us pray fervently for our suffering sisters and brothers in Ukraine.

**IN A MEMO FROM OUR DIOCESAN CHANCELLOR** Monsignor Murray Kroetsch announced the long-awaited news that the Ontario Government has made major changes to COVID-19 protocols. These affect our Parishes effective March 1<sup>st</sup>. Churches may open to full capacity (including parish halls and meeting rooms). Ropes can be removed. Masks continue to be required by all who attend Mass, two-years old and older. Social distancing mandates are no longer in place. All liturgical ministries may resume – vaccination is not required. Congregational singing is permitted and choirs may resume – wearing masks. Cantors may be unmasked, maintaining 3-meter distance from others. Read the entire letter [here](#). We have waited a long time for these protocols to be relaxed. Thank you to all for your compliance.

**LENT BEGINS NEXT WEDNESDAY!** Wednesday is a universal day of fasting and abstinence from meat. "Alleluia" is not sung in any hymn or text during the season of Lent and until the Easter Vigil. The weekdays of Lent are a time of penance for the Church around the world. During these days catechumens (unbaptized persons) begin the final intense period of preparation for their baptism at the Easter Vigil. Those baptized in other churches who are preparing for their reception into communion with the Catholic Church, are also more focused during these final weeks of preparation. We pray for them all!

**THE LENTEN DAY OF PRAYER FOR PRIESTS** in the Diocese is scheduled for Wednesday, March 9<sup>th</sup>. It will be a ZOOM gathering. Priests will receive a private link to the event on Tuesday (March 8<sup>th</sup>). The session will begin with prayer at 11:00 a.m.

**OUR OFFICE FOR REFUGEES** has received official confirmation that our second arrival in 2022 will be resettling in Canada on February 28<sup>th</sup>. Milad is a young, Afghan refugee who is currently living in asylum in Tajikistan. He was originally sponsored to come to Canada in 2015 with his grandmother and two uncles at the young age of 18. Sadly, it did not happen. He was deported to Iran and then to Afghanistan. He fled to Tajikistan, while his family was resettled to Canada from Turkey in February 2020. February 28<sup>th</sup> will be a special day for Milad. May he find peace and security in his new homeland!

**TWO STUDENTS FROM ST. JEROME'S UNIVERSITY** joined students from the USA, Mexico, Central America and the Caribbean, Brazil, and South America, in a conversation with Pope Francis on Wednesday. The two-hour conversation included topics like migration challenges, including education, migration, environmental sustainability, economic justice and integral human development. The Department of Theology of Loyola University in Chicago organized the event in collaboration with the Pontifical Commission for Latin America. Pope Francis thanked the young people for their efforts in building bridges between the north and south, and in so doing, responding to their Christian vocation to bring people together! A unique and inspiring initiative indeed!

Our Lady, Queen of Peace, pray for us!

Ex corde, *+Douglas*, OMI