



ROMAN CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF THUNDER BAY

SPRING 2026

Newsletter

“Go into all the world and proclaim the Good News” (Mark 16:15)

Catholic Pastoral Centre

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What’s It Like Being a Bishop?

A frequently asked question, and in a nutshell, busy.



As I celebrate my first anniversary as bishop, I ask myself, “Where has the year gone?” It’s been a whirlwind of activity, and I pray the forecast for the years ahead will bring

more of a breeze than a tornado. The learning curve has been enormous, and there is more to learn. I no longer have the responsibility of parish ministry, like visiting the sick in the hospital or at home, working intimately with one or two or three school communities. I no longer feel the familiar patterns of accompanying grieving families as we prepare for a funeral or preparing a couple for marriage and children for sacraments, or working with parishioners on all levels of parish life. However, between Parish Councils, Finance Council, Catholic Women’s League and Knights of Columbus, and

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the gamut of parish life, my days and weeks were indeed full. My days and weeks now make me feel like I'm a ball in a pinball machine; bouncing from one meeting to the next and not having much time to get anything accomplished. This is not a complaint, but simply the nature of the role.

Holding on to my years of parish ministry I keep my pastoral mind and heart close at hand as I spend much of my energy on administration. I miss the rhythm of parish life and since I am called to this new role, I embrace it and ask for continued prayers and guidance to fulfill it to the best of my ability. To help me, I do my very best to keep my mind and heart focused on what I have learned throughout my years of being a parish priest. This, I hope will keep me grounded in all that lies ahead of me.

Accompanied with, "What's it like being a bishop?" is, "Are you enjoying being a Bishop?" There is certainly joy in being with people in parishes across the diocese whether it be celebrating the Holy Sacrament of the Mass and Confirmation in parishes and visiting schools, and of course joining in meals and at special events. However, when it comes to the workload of my office and its numerous portfolios, the joy seems to disappear. Don't get me wrong, having to deal with very important and necessary issues can bear good fruit, however, it can also be intense, time consuming and emotionally and physically exhausting.

Although my administrative role seems to claim much of my attention, I draw from my years of parish ministry to keep my vision for the pastoral

needs of the diocese as her key administrator. I ask myself, "are the decisions I make for the spiritual and common good of the faithful?" I need to be accountable for the decisions I make. Decisions that affect our priest personnel whether they be Canadian-born or foreign-born, the ongoing challenge of recruiting more priests who will serve the diocese well and not simply fill a vacancy. I need to be financially responsible for collecting and spending money in the name of the diocese. I need to practice synodality, to hear the people and respond accordingly. Although synodality doesn't mean democracy, it does mean to listen and 'journey with'. I need to keep my mind and heart on the whole of the diocese and not only on individual parishes or circum-

Catholic Action Centre Thank You *By Michelle Beck*

The Catholic Action Centre (CAC) acquired a new van for pick-up and deliveries. On February 11, 2026, Bishop Campeau blessed the van.

Many generous donors made this possible. We would especially like to thank an anonymous donor from Gull Bay and the Retired Teachers of Ontario Association.

The CAC served over 3700 clients in 2025. There are many necessities of life provided at the CAC like used clothing, shoes, linens, kitchen items,

furniture and mattresses.

The CAC has a prayer room of Christian books and deacon Frank Beck will meet with anyone to pray with them. Our priority is to provide necessities to the poor. Donations can be dropped off: Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays from 9:30 am to 3:00 pm.

The CAC is grateful to their 30 volunteers who have given over 4100 volunteer hours in 2025. Blessing to everyone in our shared responsibility to minister to the needy. ✚



Pictured with the Bishop are Directors Barb Koczur, Deacon Frank Beck and Michelle Beck, Minister of Service.

stances. I don't face this process alone. I am grateful that I have a College of Consultors who guide and influence me in decision making. I am grateful for my Priests, Deacons and Ministers of Service who speak to me openly about their concerns in ministry and to all those who present ideas and suggestions for the betterment of their parish and the diocese. Some decisions are very difficult, painful and emotionally wrenching. I ask myself, are the people in the pew, the faithful, you, who are reading this article—are your spiritual and pastoral needs being met by me and my leadership with the support and presence of your pastor? I must trust that they are. At least to the best of my ability and that of theirs.

It goes without saying that a bishop can do very little without

priests. I told my priests at our first Priest Meeting in April last year that they were my priority on many levels, because without them, the diocese would crumble. On that note, I strive to guide my priests to grow as leaders in liturgy, pastoral ministry and administration. It is with them that your pastoral needs are met.

As a new bishop, I was welcomed as a member of the CCCB (Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops) and the ACBO (Association of Catholic Bishops of Ontario). This may come with more responsibilities, nationally and provincially. Although I have not been given any specific role with the CCCB yet, I anticipate something soon. I currently hold the role of the Provincial Spiritual Advisor for the Catholic Women's League of

Canada. On that note, I want to plug the upcoming Provincial CWL Convention this July. It will be hosted by the Catholic Women's League of Thunder Bay. I look forward to seeing a good representation of CWL members there to welcome women and Spiritual Advisors from across the province.

What's it like being a bishop? It's a lot. It's busy. It can be overwhelming at times; it includes fulfilling many responsibilities and addressing countless issues through discussion and in turn finding solutions. With God's help and with your prayers, I trust that since I was called to the office of bishop, I will not only grow into the role but prove to be a good leader. †

St. Joseph's Friendship Tea *By Lorraine Wyder*

The Women of St. Joseph Parish in Dryden hosted the InterChurch Friendship Tea on November 1st, 2025 where the theme was "Pilgrims of Hope". Lorraine Wyder, Chair explained the logo to those in attendance.

A wonderful packed afternoon was enjoyed by those churches in attendance. †



***Pictured are:
Red - Odette Belanger;
Orange - Dana Cain;
Green - Geraldine Savian;
Blue - Consuelo Capovilla; Waves - Claudine Savage
Black- Anchor - Maureen Roberts.***



The Platinum Jubilee in Thunder Bay

By Fr. Piotr Dudek OMI

Sunday, October 19, 2025, was a day filled with joy and heartfelt gratitude to God and to all who have been part of the seventy-year journey of St. Mary Our Lady Queen of Poland Parish in Thunder Bay. The parishioners, friends and guests gathered to celebrate our faith and unity and to give thanks for all those — both priests and parishioners — who have built and sustained this spiritual and Polish home for seven decades. By a beautiful gift of God's providence, the Platinum Jubilee of St. Mary's Parish took place during the Year of Hope, Jubilee Year 2025. United with the Universal Church, as Pilgrims of Hope, we celebrated with deep awareness that we, too, are Pilgrims of Hope, walking together in faith.

The celebration began with a solemn Mass, presided over

by the Most Reverend Alan E. Campeau. The concelebrants were the Very Reverend Jacek Nosowicz, OMI, Provincial of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate, and the pastor, Father Piotr Dudek, OMI. As the joyful hymn "Czarna Madonna" filled the church and candles flickered before the image of Our Lady, Queen of Poland, the spirit of the community was palpable. We were filled with gratitude for the countless blessings God has bestowed upon this parish through the loving intercession of Mary. In his homily, Bishop Campeau emphasized the vital role and power of prayer in the life of the parish. He explained that prayer opens our hearts and inspires us to remain a welcoming and grateful community, one that strives to bring Christ's light and hope to everyone.

The story of St. Mary's Parish began in 1955, when Bishop Edward Q. Jennings — the first Bishop of Thunder Bay — recognized the growing Polish community in the city. He invited the Missionaries of La Salette to help establish a new parish. At that time, about 827 Polish-speaking Catholics — roughly 216 families — called Thunder Bay home. Their faith, determination, and love for their heritage shaped the heart of the parish. Bishop Jennings, in a remarkable act of trust and commitment, declared that Our Lady Queen of Poland Parish would always be entrusted to priests of Polish origin and language — a promise that continues to this day. Over the years, the parish has been guided by our beloved shepherds: the Polish-speaking La Salette Fathers for 37





years, the Franciscan Fathers for 13 years, Diocesan priests for 15 years, and since 2021, the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate, who now carry on the legacy of pastoral care and missionary spirit.

Following the Mass, the celebration continued at the Polish Hall transformed into a place of laughter, music, good food and heartfelt reunion. The afternoon sparkled with warmth and fellowship as generations came together — from the pioneers who helped build the parish to the youngest members of our community who will carry it forward. Between the music and joyful conversations, one could feel the heartbeat of a parish deeply alive — a family celebrating not only seventy years of history but also seventy years of faith shared, friendships

formed, and lives changed. As the day drew to a close, one message shone clearly: God's grace has always guided this parish — and always will. St. Mary's continues to be a place where faith and culture meet, where generations gather, and where hope is renewed. With grateful hearts, we move

forward, inspired by the past and strengthened by the promise of the future. Together, we remain what we have always been — a faithful, and welcoming community of Pilgrims of Hope. †



St. Augustine's Parish: Lookback *By Grace Daigle*

This year marks the closing of St. Augustine Church, Baird, originally known as St. Ann's Mission to St. Andrew's Parish. Pastoral care was first provided by Jesuits.

The church was built in 1915, near the French separate school after Jesuit Missioner Fr. Labele proposed erecting it; inspired by the coming of the Grand Trunk Railway running out of Port Arthur with a station at Baird. The plan was approved with the backing of fifteen French Families: Allen, Beauclair, Belanger, Berube, Bisson, Bonenfant, Cahier, Couture, Foucault, Legros, Methot, Perrier, Renaud, Ross, and Vaillant.

The first pews were hand-made with no centre aisle, rather two narrow side ones. For lighting, oil lamps were used and attached to the wall. A stove at the back supplied heat, with long pipes running the length of the church. The floor

was painted gray. In 1920, pink silk and lace drapes were hung behind the altar, improving the wall of the sanctuary. In 1938, the pews were cut and re-arranged to form a centre aisle with two side aisles next to the walls. Father Cano installed a furnace in the basement, and repainted the walls in lighter colours before erecting two side altars. In 1963 and 1964, the whole interior was renovated and redecorated in pleasing colours under the direction of Fr. Favotto. Plastering was done by the Vaillant brothers and modern light fixtures were installed by the Dohertys. A new tile floor was laid, and new pews were installed by the parishioners. The windows were given a soft stained-glass effect, and new pictures showing the Way of the Cross were hung.

When established as St. Augustine's Parish in 1935, diocesan priests looked after the spiritual needs of the

community. The Scalabrini Fathers served for a time in the Parish before the diocesan priests resumed pastoral care into the present. In 1935, the first resident pastor was Rev. Father McGivney of Toronto who served for a short while before Fr. McDonald later that same year. The parish was extended to serve an area from Schrieber to Kaministiquia. A year later, Very Rev. Dean McHugh was pastor. Under his guidance, the original rectory was constructed. Despite hard times like the middle of the Great Depression in 1938, electricity was installed and many other improvements were added to the rectory.

The 1950s began with the arrival of Fr. Halpin of White River, who decorated and furnished the rectory before Fr. Cano arrived on the first of January, 1951. Progress saw a new heating system in the Church, the property fenced in



St. Augustine's 75th Anniversary Mass/W Deacon Bill Mckinnon (left) Father Ken Pottie and Father Joseph Favotto at the outdoor Altar, 1990



and landscaped, the basement enlarged to form a church hall, and a new organ purchased. Fr. Cano was transferred to Schrieber, and in 1959, Rev. Joseph Bellan—the first Scalabrini priest—arrived for a short time.

An overhead photo of the church taken by H.R. Oakman was featured on a Peterborough Postcard circa 1955.

On May 15th 1960, Fr. Joseph Favotto arrived at St. Augustine from Chicago to replace Fr. Bellan. What was meant to be a temporary assignment lasted 19 years. Recalling this, Fr. Favotto said “I was coming from Chicago to replace him, as he was leaving for a visit to his folks in Italy (...) As a substitute, all I could do was carry on [when the stay continued]; and this gave me an opportunity to take stock of the situation. A month or so later, my superior asked me to take over as a pastor; and I accepted.”

Being an energetic person, changes to the church and grounds began. With the

help of the Vaillant boys, many pine trees were planted, which remain on the grounds today. “As I had always loved trees, those in front of the church and rectory were not enough for me (...) I asked the Vaillant boys to scurry around the country-side for pines, which they promptly planted around the whole property. They are still growing and growing.” Fr. Favotto also said Two new parishes, St. Theresa’s in Kakabeka Falls, and St. Joseph’s in Shebandowan were established.

Fr. N.E. Trembley came in 1980 to replace Fr. Favotto for four years, and in this time, Fr. Gregory and Fr. Mckie helped out in the expansion of the church and its missionary work. In 1984, Fr. Anthony Turner arrived at St. Augustine and construction saw washrooms added to the church and the rectory remodelled. Church members in 1986 through family donations in memory of Donald Teskey added a deck to the rectory, and later, St. Augustine’s spiritual life was

renewed with the arrival of Fr. Kenneth W. Pottie. Several youth and teen groups, plus boy scouts were introduced to the parish. Fr. Pottie extended the service of the church to the parishes in St. Phillip’s in Hymers, as well as Kakabeka Falls and Shebandowan. Deacon Bill McKinnon celebrated his ordination at St. Theresa’s in January 1987, serving both churches.

Ten years later, there was no better time than Easter Sunday Mass to bless a new statue of the resurrected Christ, done by Bishop F. Henry in the sanctuary. The Bishop celebrated Mass with the parish priest, Fr. Ciaran Donnelly, for a packed-to-overflowing congregation. The hand-carved basswood statue, the work of noted sculptor Frank Potocnik, hung on the wall behind the altar. A native of Slovenia who immigrated to Canada in 1948, he had been a sculptor since 1965. His work has been in many exhibitions and collections throughout the years. It was Fr. Ciaran Donnelly’s idea to replace the old crucifix of the church with the new statue. Then the Altar Society and the rest of the parishioners raised the necessary funds and commissioned Frank Potocnik to do the work of art. †

Sources:

- September 20, 1990—Chronicle Journal Article
- June 1997—NWOC Staff Article
- Yearbooks 1950, 1990—Roman Catholic Diocese of Thunder Bay Archive



Overhead Photo 1955, Copyright H.R. Oakman, Peterborough Postcard Co.

Society of St. Vincent de Paul (SSVP) Corpus Christi Conference



Our Conference, based at Corpus Christi Church currently consists of seven (7) members supported by Fr. Terry Sawchuk as our Spiritual Advisor. Our Mission is to live the gospel message by serving Christ in the poor with love, respect, justice and joy. We hold an annual general meeting (AGM) and meet as required to accomplish our goals for each year.

Our primary role is to provide funding for nutrition programs to nine catholic schools in the city: Our Lady of Charity, St. Paul, St. Pius X, St. Vincent, St. Francis, Bishop E. Q. Jennings, Corpus Christi, St. Margaret, and St. Bernard.

Our funding is provided by the parishioners of Corpus Christi as well as the Catholic Women's League from Corpus Christi, the Knights of Columbus Council 1130, the Sisters

of St. Joseph, private family donations through the Thunder Bay Community Foundation, St. Dominic's Church and the Bishop's Campaign.

Since our focus is to ensure children are nourished, at the end of the school year, we assist with funding to various like-minded organizations for food sustainability over the summer months. In 2025, donations were made to Evergreen United Neighbourhood, the Good Food Box, Urban Abbey, the Salvation Army for their summer in the parks program, as well as to the RFDA. Due to our involvement with the schools, we were invited to participate in the Pilgrimage of Hope walk organized for Catholic Education Week in 2025. A similar project is in the works for 2026.

Each year, we award the Patricia Barber Memorial

bursary to a student from St. Ignatius school who is pursuing studies aimed at social justice. In addition, as part of our Outreach mandate, we assist with serving hot lunches at St. Margaret school when asked.

If anyone is interested in joining our group, please feel free to contact Mary Jane Kurm at 807-633-7529 or Karen St Pierre at 807-474-8536. If you wish to contribute to our program, you can do so by mailing a donation to the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, c/o Corpus Christi Parish, 664 Red River Road, Thunder Bay, ON P7B 1H8, by direct deposit on line to ssvp.cc@tbaytel.net or through Canada Helps. We are so grateful for all the support we receive from our Catholic community – we could not do it without you! †



Members and parent volunteers during a hot lunch at St. Margaret School



Pilgrimage of Hope Walk

Behind the Veil & the Way of the Cross

By Fr. Terry Sawchuk

In the weeks and days leading up to his sacred passion, Our Lord Jesus faced an increasing amount of hostility and opposition. He was accused of blasphemy, of violating the Sabbath, of witchcraft and, at one point, was even in danger of being stoned to death. Faced with such hostility and threats, the Gospel says that Jesus “hid himself” (John 8:59) and no longer went about openly (John 11:54). This hiddenness represented in our churches today through the veiling of the statues and sculptures during the home stretch of Lent (Passiontide) recalls the same hiddenness of Christ and how he and his disciples had to move about discreetly and covertly.

While the statues are largely concealed, the stations of the cross that surround us in church remain unconcealed. Their visibility invites us to focus more intently on the saving passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ and on the reality of suffering in

our own life and in the world.

The stations of the cross as a form of prayer bring us back to the early years of Christianity, when devout Christians in Jerusalem retraced the last steps taken by Christ on his way to the cross and the tomb. Pilgrims would later journey from distant countries to do the same. In later years, when pilgrimages to the Holy Land became difficult or impossible to make, towns and villages and churches were encouraged to create their own local way of the cross. This would allow people to make a kind of simulated pilgrimage which could be done in the safety of their own community. By the 1700’s the number of stations in the way of the cross was officially fixed at fourteen, and since that time, the fourteen stations of the cross have been a standard fixture in Catholic churches around the world.

In the stations of the cross we find a mix of both suffering and consolation: The suffering

of being condemned, of carrying the cross and of falling along the way, and the consolation of receiving help from others (Simon of Cyrene), of knowing the presence of loved ones (The Blessed Mother), and of unleashing the power of compassion (Veronica, Joseph of Arimathea, Nicodemus).

It is this mix of suffering and consolation that makes the Way of the Cross so powerful and relatable, because in many ways our lives too are a mix of both. It has been said that Jesus “didn’t suffer so we wouldn’t have to; he suffered so we’d know how to.” May the Way of the Cross encourage and empower us along our own way, to always look to Jesus who gives us vision to see how grace flows both from cross and consolation.

“We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you. Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.” †



Who is Development and Peace – Caritas Canada (D&P)?

It is the official international organization of the Catholic Church in Canada, founded in 1967 by the Catholic Bishops of Canada and has 13,000 members. It is a democratic movement for international solidarity with a two-fold mission that addresses the root cause of poverty, oppression, and inequality with partners in the Global South. The vision is one where our human family lives on a healthy planet in dignity, solidarity, justice and peace.

Overseas, in 2024-25, the organization worked with over 100 local groups that empowered communities in 47 local partnerships to defend their human rights, to act for peace and to take charge of their own

development. Approximately 7.18 million people were reached directly and indirectly through 59 community projects and humanitarian aid. With government funding decreasing, D&P is grateful for all donations which help fund these projects.

In Canada, D&P educates Canadians about the causes of impoverishment which inspires us to advocate and to act for change. The Fall Education and Share Lent Campaigns across Canada increase awareness. Thunder Bay Council encourages parishes to have a D&P representative attend these workshops to become informed and to raise support in their parishes across the

diocese. The workshops can be accessed in person or by ZOOM technology.

The D&P School program is active in Thunder Bay and in 433 Catholic schools across Canada. Students learn how to engage in social and global justice issues by living their faith.

Visit the website (devp.org). Live your faith by becoming a member and join us as we work for peace, justice and dignity for all.

Contact Thunder Bay Diocesan Council, Development and Peace – Caritas Canada, pavletic2@tbaytel.net †



Altar Stones: Their Meaning and Importance

By Grace Daigle-Matkowski

Before the sale of the Bishop's Residence last Spring, heavy wooden crates were discovered and moved from its basement to the Pastoral Centre Archive. Inside those crates were approximately thirty altar stones.

An altar stone is a piece of natural stone containing a relic in a cavity and intended to serve as the essential part of an altar for the celebration of Mass in the Catholic Church. Consecration by a bishop of the same rite is required. In the Byzantine Rite, the antimimension, blessed and signed by the bishop, serves a similar purpose.

Historically, and differing from the Jewish practice of building altars of many stones, early Christian altars were built of wood and shaped like house tables, a tradition that persisted until the Middle Ages. The first stone altars were the tombs of martyrs, which Mass was sometimes offered over, either on a stone slab encasing the tomb or on a structure placed above it. When the first Christian basilicas were built, the altar of the church was placed directly above the tomb of a martyr, as was discovered in the case of St. Peter's Basilica and the Basilica of Saint Paul Outside the Walls.

Before the Second Vatican Council, Latin Church priests could lawfully celebrate Mass

only on a properly consecrated altar. This consecration was carried out by a bishop, and involved specially blessed "Gregorian Water" (water to which wine, salt, and ashes are added), anointings and ceremonies. The First Class relics of at least two saints, at least one of which had to be a martyr, were inserted in a cavity in the altar which was then sealed, a practice that was meant to recall the use of martyrs' tombs as places of Eucharistic celebration during the persecutions of the Church in the first through fourth centuries. Also, in the cavity were sealed documents relating to the altar's consecration.

The tabletop of the altar, the "mensa", had to be of a single piece of natural stone (almost always marble). Its supports had to be attached to the mensa. If contact was later broken even only momentarily (for instance, if the top was lifted off for some reason), the altar lost its consecration. Every altar had to have a "title" or "titulus" in Latin. This could be The Holy Trinity or one of its Persons; a title or mystery of Christ's life, Mary in one of her titles, or a canonized saint. Traditionally, a church's main altar shared its dedication with the church itself, emphasizing the altar as the church's central purpose rather than mere fur-

nishing. To allow Mass outside a Roman Catholic church, such as for military chaplains, missionaries, or outdoor pilgrimages, portable altars (which is what altar stones are) were utilized.

Like the ones found in the basement, these were usually blocks of marble, often about six inches by nine inches in width and height and an inch thick, consecrated as described above. A priest with a field kit could simply place this stone on any available surface such as a stump or log to celebrate Mass, or it could be inserted in a flat frame built into the surface of a wooden altar. Many Roman Catholic schools usually have a full-sized, decoratively carved wooden altar (which, being wood, cannot be consecrated) in the gym or auditorium that can be taken out and prepared for Mass, with an altar stone placed in the "mensa" space. †



ONTARIO PROVINCIAL COUNCIL OF
THE CATHOLIC WOMEN'S LEAGUE OF CANADA

79th Annual Provincial Convention & Annual Meeting of Members

JULY 5 - 8, 2026

THUNDER BAY, ONTARIO

VALHALLA HOTEL & CONFERENCE CENTRE

Details & Registration Information can be found at:

<https://cwl.on.ca/conventions/>



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*United as Sisters in Christ - gathering from near and far
to build the Kingdom of God with joy!*

cwl.on.ca

