



# Catholic Diocese of Victoria

Office of the Bishop

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## **CLAIMING THE PAST WITH GRATITUDE LIVING THE PRESENT WITH ENTHUSIASM LOOKING TO THE FUTURE WITH HOPE**

Dear Brothers and Sisters of the Diocese of Victoria,

*"Were not our hearts burning within us while He was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the Scriptures to us." (Luke 24:31)*

This is a year of Pastoral Planning in the Diocese of Victoria. I have chosen, as a Scriptural focus for this year, the well known passage from Luke 24:32 describing the Disciple's encounter with the Lord on the Road to Emmaus. The Disciples had passed through a period of despondency and confusion when they learned that Jesus had been crucified. Their Faith was now put to the test as all their hopes had been dashed with the news of the Lord's death.

The truth however, was that the Lord had never left them alone, He had risen and now appeared to them on the road – the rocky road of Faith. He put things in perspective for them and revealed the Hope that is in the Word of God and He strengthened their Faith when He revealed himself to them in the Breaking of the Bread. They would now go forth in courage and live the future with confidence and hope in Jesus.

In a certain sense, our Diocese is living its own Road to Emmaus Story. If we glance back over the past decade or so, we acknowledge very openly, the woundedness that has been present in our community, not only in the financial crisis of recent years but also in the strained unity between members of our community – factors which have caused in the hearts of some, a certain despondency and a lack of trust either towards the Diocese or others in our community. At the same time, we also recognize that there have been wonderful examples of Faith, achievement and dedication over these years as well. And as we cast an eye over our long historical past, we acknowledge the special role our Diocese has played in the social and religious development of the Pacific North West. We recall, for example, the many impressive accomplishments of our clergy, religious and lay faithful over the past 167 years. In fact, the reality has been that in all the achievements, challenges and, yes sorrows, the Lord has always been with us. To live our Faith then is to sincerely **CLAIM OUR PAST WITH GRATITUDE.**

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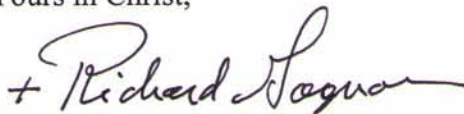
It is also important and vital to live our Catholic Faith with courage in the present day. With the Second Vatican Council's call for each one of us to live a personal holiness and in Pope John Paul II's challenge to the Church in the Third Millennium to trust in the Lord and have the courage to "... *put out into the deep....*" we know that Jesus is with us as we face the tremendous challenges of our day. We are called today, to live our Faith not with complacency, but to **LIVE THE PRESENT WITH ENTHUSIASM.**

Finally, we do have a sure future to look forward to as Jesus reminds us in Scripture: "*Remember that I am always with you until the end of the age.*" (Matthew 28:20) We look to the future trusting always in the Lord's guiding presence, for the Church is His Body and we know, as Pope Benedict XVI pointed out in his Encyclical, *Spe Salve*, that "*.....the person who has hope lives differently...*" With this assurance, we **LOOK TO THE FUTURE WITH HOPE.**

The Pastoral Planning effort this year which we have entitled, *Claiming the Past with Gratitude; Living the Present with Enthusiasm and Looking to the Future with Hope*, has its limitations due to its time frame and scope, however, it will serve as an important jumpstart in bringing into focus our present and future pastoral planning for the Diocese over the next five years. Our process will bring into consideration not only the experience gained in the past, but also the previous efforts at Pastoral Planning such as the Synod of 1986-1991, as well as connecting with the work currently being done by our Strategic Planning Committee and the Diocesan Feasibility Study undertaken last year. We have much to do in the present and in the near future but Pastoral Planning will only be successful if we work together with the Lord always in our midst.

I am deeply grateful for the work of our Pastoral Planning Team and all who have participated to date and I look forward to the Second Phase this Spring with our Discerning Groups – I encourage all our people to participate in the Discerning groups of our Second Phase.

Yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Richard Gagnon" with a cross symbol to the left of the name.

Most Reverend Richard Gagnon  
Bishop of Victoria

February 26, 2010