



# DIOCESE OF CHARLOTTETOWN

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P.O. BOX 907, CHARLOTTETOWN, PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND, C1A 7L9  
OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

December 19, 2023

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

I vividly remember sitting comfortably in my home back in London, writing my Christmas message, just a year ago. Since then, so many things have happened!

It's been quite a year. I have experienced a lot of changes in my life, and I am sure that you have as well!

As your new Bishop, I am reflecting on two images that I wish to share with you this Christmas.

In the Gospel of John, we read that “the Word of God became flesh and lived among us, and to those who accepted Him, He gave the power to become children of God” - John 1:14.

Scripture is full to the brim of people who, by welcoming the Word of God, Jesus, into their lives experienced a profound change embedded in joy and peace.

Christmas is a time when we visit our family and friends. During these visits, we offer and receive genuine, warm hospitality which expresses the true spirit of Christmas.

Reflecting on the last six months, I am grateful for the warmth and hospitality you've offered me in so many beautiful ways. We need to extend this spirit of hospitality to our families, guests, new parishioners and new faces, filling our days with love and care for each other.

Christmas has always been a special time for our parishes and communities; a time when we are deeply committed to helping the poor and down-trodden, and the homeless. We are committed to helping the working poor who struggle to make ends meet, as well as the refugees, single parents and those who are isolated, marginalized and vulnerable. When we welcome “the stranger in our midst,” we encounter Jesus and discover the true meaning of Christmas.

Secondly, as your new shepherd, I am inspired by the journey of the three Wise Men. These three Magi, *led by a star*, overcame many difficulties and obstacles as they made their way

to adore the baby Jesus. I am also inspired by the example of the first Bishop of Charlottetown, Angus MacEachern, who, in order to bring Christ to Catholics on this Island and surrounding areas, often sailed by boat, navigating dangerous waters; yet *trusted the lighthouse light* that would ultimately and safely guide him to his destination – his mission.

Our faith and life journey is just like that. God invites us to journey with him and provides the necessary graces and stars that lead and guide us so that we can arrive safely to our destination, encounter Christ, and share Him with others.

Again, I think of this past year and all the life changes I have experienced. Having received a phone call from the Apostolic Nuncio, who communicated that the Pope had just appointed me to be the new Bishop of the Diocese, I had to gather my belongings, say good-byes to my brother priests, good friends in London, and follow the GPS directions that led me to start my ministry with you – the beloved people of the Diocese of Charlottetown!

My episcopal motto is *Jesus, I trust in you*. Trusting in God's grace, plan and mercy became my primary source of strength and joy in this transition and, indeed, throughout my entire ministry.

As we step together into the unknown and, at the same time, exciting journey of the coming year, let us renew our confidence that Christ is not a distant figure but rather accompanies us in every step of our journey of life and faith.

Let us follow the star that will lead us to Jesus, who is the Wonderful Counsellor, the Prince of Peace.

May this Christmas be a season of warm and extended hospitality, and may you experience rich family, faith, and loving moments as you venture through your faith journey this Christmas!

Wishing you a very Blessed Christmas filled with love, faith, the joy of Christ's presence and cherished gifts, I offer you my deepest prayers and blessing!

+ Joseph Dabrowski CSMA

Bishop of Charlottetown