



DIOCESE OF SAINT JOHN

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Office of the Bishop

May 15, 2023

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

On June 23 and 26, 2023, the Diocese of Saint John will be moving its chancery offices from the current location at 1 Bayard Drive in Saint John NB, to the Villa Madonna Retreat House in Rothesay, NB. The chancery offices will be closed from June 20-27, re-opening in our new location at 115 Villa Madonna Road on June 28, 2023.

Diocesan leadership at all levels felt that now was an opportune time to right-size operations. For the last several years, the chancery building and the Villa Madonna have both been operating below capacity. While the Villa Madonna has over 60 rooms, it has not used more than 40 for any given retreat the in many years. Because of this, the Diocese can use the surplus 20 rooms as office space.

This consolidation of resources will result in significant annual operational savings for both the chancery offices and the Villa Madonna, allowing us to continue raising up disciples who are joyfully living out the mission, proclaiming the Good News of Jesus Christ and making disciples of others. One way we are doing this is by increasing our pastoral presence at the mother church, the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception. A second priest has been assigned full-time, effective June 1. The Cathedral will continue to serve those most in need in uptown Saint John, as well as people from all over the diocese for significant liturgical celebrations. It is amazing to see how the Holy Spirit is moving through the spiritual and outreach ministries.

Holiness and mission are two sides of the same coin. To be effective missionary disciples we need to provide opportunities for people to encounter Jesus, grow in holiness, and be equipped for the mission. By investing in the Villa Madonna, we serve the people and parishes of the Diocese of Saint John, providing facilities and programs that aid the process of spiritual renewal, faith development and evangelization. I hope that in the coming months the Villa Madonna will become an even greater resource for parishes as a place of encounter with Jesus, fueling missionary activity for many years to come.

The chancery offices will occupy the west wing of the Villa Madonna, which is just above the kitchen and dining room and separate from the rest of the retreat house. This will allow the offices to be closed off for minimal impact on retreatants. Diocesan and Villa Madonna staff are excited about the possibilities this partnership brings. We look forward to hosting an open house in the fall for people to come and see the new space, take a tour of the Villa Madonna, and maybe even make plans to come back for a retreat.

This move has come about quickly, but I believe providentially. I am grateful for the support of my Leadership Team, Council of Priests and College of Consultors, Diocesan Finance Council, and the Villa Madonna Board of Directors, who collaborated with me in prayer and discernment. And I would like to thank the staff of the Villa Madonna and the Diocese of Saint John who have been working diligently to prepare for this upcoming move.

Please join me in giving God permission, entrusting our diocese to the intercession of Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception as we embark on this new and exciting journey.

Sincerely in Jesus and Mary,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Christian Riesbeck". The signature is written in a cursive style with a small cross at the beginning.

✠ Christian Riesbeck, CC
Bishop of Saint John