



DIOCESE OF SAINT JOHN

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Office of the Bishop

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

RE: UPDATE ON CATHEDRAL RESTORATION EFFORTS

It has truly been a year of transformation at the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception. We are experiencing a new and deepening desire for mission at our mother church. Growing numbers of people, including young families, students, newcomers and those who are making their way back to the Church are filling the pews. Outreach ministries continue to grow, serving the poor and the marginalized. Lay apostolates are flourishing, and leaders are coming forward to contribute to the spiritual vitality of the Church. Eucharistic Adoration is offered daily, sometimes even for 24-hours around the clock. Our Saint John Regional Mission on November 27-29 at the Cathedral was a powerful experience of the Lord's presence through the Sacraments and prayer. People are hungering for an encounter with the living God. And when we provide opportunities, he moves in power.

We began the year with a major push towards discerning a potential diocesan capital campaign to restore the mother church of the diocese. The diocesan planning study (February 20-April 20, 2023) provided some key recommendations that will help the diocese to become campaign-ready, which we continue to discern with diocesan leadership.

The momentum continues! Diocesan faithful have responded to the call to support the Cathedral restoration contributing more than \$30,000 towards this effort through our annual Corpus Christi collection, as well as other donations throughout the year. Your generosity enabled important work to continue on our Cathedral, including securing the windows over the last few months.

I am also delighted to announce the sale of the former Saint Vincent's High School, the proceeds of which (less an assessment for stewardship and for pastoral needs) will contribute approximately \$500,000 towards important work on the Cathedral tower. Saint Vincent's will be developed into residential apartments, while Steepleview just next door, a joint effort of the Diocese of Saint John, Knights of Columbus, Sisters of Charity of the Immaculate Conception and the Cathedral, will see the development of more affordable housing, a daycare, community gathering space and more. This will give the neighbourhood a much-needed facelift in the very near future.

Of course, the pearl is the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception! It is vitally important, not only for its heritage value but also for the missionary outreach and spiritual revitalization it provides in an area of the diocese that desperately needs a Catholic Christian presence. There remain immediate needs at the Cathedral that must be properly managed in order to be good

stewards of this beautiful place of worship. With the completion of the roof (phase 1) and ceiling work, which allowed us to remove the scaffolding, we now turn our efforts toward the next phase which will address significant work on the bell tower.

We are taking an alternative conservation approach towards completing the remaining phases of the Cathedral restoration, working with a structural engineer that specializes in heritage buildings. By looking at the root causes, investing in further evaluation, monitoring and comprehensive design, this approach is anticipated to yield significant savings overall compared to what was previously quoted. This will allow us to plan for the future, being proactive in our long-term care of the Cathedral.

Turning our efforts towards the bell tower, the most prominent symbol on the Saint John skyline, and as we approach the end of the fiscal year, I am encouraging you to prayerfully discern a generous personal donation towards the Cathedral restoration. Gifts of either a one-time or monthly donation (payable either by cheque, email money transfer or automatic withdrawal), multi-year pledge, securities, bequests, or life insurance, are a tremendous blessing and aid significantly in the success of these restoration efforts. If you have any questions, or if you know of any people or organizations/businesses that could potentially make a significant gift to the Cathedral restoration, our Finance Department would be happy to assist you. Please contact Kelly Hudson, Director of Finance and Administration, at khudson@dioceseofsaintjohn.org.

I am counting on your fervent prayer for this work of restoration and ask you to pray through the intercession of Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception, as we give God permission to move powerfully in our diocese. Please be assured of my prayers for your families.

United in prayer and mission,



✠ Christian Riesbeck, CC
Bishop of Saint John

December 8, 2023

Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception