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25 August 2020

To: The Parishioners of the Avon-Thames Catholic Family of Parishes Consisting of St. Joseph, Stratford, Immaculate Conception, Stratford, and Holy Name of Mary, St. Marys

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

At the beginning of the New Year, we were very pleased to announce the activation of your Family of Parishes. Father David Butler will serve as your Pastor, and Father Chris Pietraszko as your Associate Pastor. These appointments and the full activation of your Family of Parishes took effect on 6 July 2020.

Over the last six months, a Transition Team representing all your parishes has taken the time to consult, make decisions and communicate with you. It has been a time well spent in preparation for the activation of your Family. In 2018, our diocese had two Pioneer Families of Parishes. In 2019, we activated six new Families, and this year we will be activating nine new Families. The experience of these activated Families will be invaluable for the other Families across our diocese, all of which will be activated over the next couple years.

We chose this model so that our priests, whose numbers will decline in the years ahead, would be able to continue ministering to the needs of our parishes. In addition, this model will bring your parishes together in a closer relationship and enable you to collaborate with one another and to be more effective in the mission that Jesus has entrusted to our Church.

Pope Francis has spoken powerfully of his dream that we become a “missionary Church” – a Church that is not turned inward on itself but that reaches out to those who do not know Christ by welcoming them and announcing to them the Good News of God’s mercy and love.

Pope Francis’ dream inspires all of us. He calls us to a deeper, personal encounter with Jesus and to a confident, informed witness of our Catholic faith which attracts others and invites them to experience themselves the joy of meeting Jesus. Your Family of Parishes is now taking up this great mission. You will build a vibrant community centred on the Eucharist that supports and empowers each of its members – clergy and laity – to be involved in their parish, to journey together in faith and to be missionary disciples of Jesus in the world today, announcing his Gospel to all, especially the poor, the vulnerable and the marginalized.

We continue to pray for you. We are grateful for the work of the Transition Team. The work of being a mission-oriented Church forming disciples of Jesus is an ongoing labour of love. The core of our mission is prayer as we seek to open our hearts to the Holy Spirit. May we take up the exciting mission Jesus gives us with renewed boldness, energy and enthusiasm.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

+ *Ronald Fabbro, C.S.B.*

Most Rev. Ronald P. Fabbro, C.S.B.
Bishop of London

+ *Joseph Dabrowski, C.S.M.A.*

Most Rev. Joseph Dabrowski, C.S.M.A.
Auxiliary Bishop of London