



Pastoral Letter To the Clergy, Religious and Faithful of the Eparchy of Saskatoon Regarding *Stewardship*

**Based on the Post Synodal Apostolic Letter *Amoris Laetitia - The Joy of Loving* and
Based on the Papal Encyclical *Laudato Si' - Our Common Home***

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

As members of the Eparchy of Saskatoon, we all have important obligations toward being good stewards of all the people and material things God has given us. In my letter earlier in 2017, we addressed “Vibrant Parishes – A Place to Encounter the Living Christ” with stewardship in mind. The Eparchy of Saskatoon was asked by the Synod of Bishops of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church to reflect and act on how our parishes could become vibrant places to encounter Christ. This was to take shape in six particular areas, including the 1) Word of God; 2) Holy Mysteries (Sacraments) and Prayer; 3) Serving One’s Neighbour (*diakonia*); 4) Leadership; 5) Fostering Unity (*koinonia*); and 6) the Missionary Spirit of the Parish.

Said differently, the role of a parish is to be a place of Sanctification (sacraments), Catechesis (education) and Administration (caring for material needs), sharing the same extended roles of the bishop and clergy. This is always found in the larger context of the obligation of each member of the Eparchy to be a Missionary Disciple. We experienced a heartfelt, face-to-face discussion at the recent Stewardship Forum with the theme, “*Do You Love Me? – Tend My Sheep – Caring For Whom And What God Has Given Us*”.

The most immediate response to this call to be Missionary Disciples is to care for those in our families. This is where God, in his vast wisdom, wants every person to learn the lessons and experience the joy of loving and being merciful. Immersed in family dynamics and learning from the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph, every family is to evangelize other families.

***Amoris Laetitia – The Joy of Loving* The Post Apostolic Exhortation from Pope Francis**

The Holy Father, Pope Francis, called bishops and representation from around the world to attend two papal synods in Rome, one during the fall of 2014 and the second a year later in the fall of 2015. They discussed the challenges faced by families in the context of evangelization and how this shapes every person to be a missionary disciple as a member of a family. Following the synods, Pope Francis wrote an Apostolic Exhortation, given to us on March 19, 2016. He stresses early in the document the importance of culture in evangelization saying, “cultures are in fact quite diverse and every general principle... needs to be inculturated, if it is to be respected and applied.” (AL Intro: 3)

After reflecting on scripture in Ch. 1, he addresses the experiences and challenge of families (AL Ch. 2; 31-57). We need to look to Jesus if we are to understand and carry out the vocation of the family (AL Ch. 3; 58-88). He continues, “...while clearly stating the Church’s teaching, pastors are to avoid judgments that do not take into account the complexity of various situations, and they are to be attentive, by necessity, to how people experience and endure distress because of their condition” (AL Ch. 3: 79). Love in marriage (AL Ch. 4; 89-164) and Love made fruitful (AL Ch.5; 165-198) echo and speak of the truths we find in the Theology of the Body. The Holy Father speaks of families and their “joy-filled witness as domestic churches” (AL Ch.6: 200). Towards a better education of children is the topic of Chapter 7 (AL Ch. 7: 259-290) and very importantly speaks of guiding, discerning and integrating weakness in the following chapter (AL Ch. 8: 291-312) “To show understanding in the face of exceptional situations never implies dimming the light of the fuller ideal, or proposing less than what Jesus offers to the human being.” (AL Ch. 8: 307) However, “At times we find it hard to make room for God’s unconditional love in our pastoral activity. We put so many conditions on mercy that we empty it of its concrete meaning and real significance. That is the worst way of watering down the Gospel” (AL Ch. 8: 311). Near the end of his letter he speaks of the spirituality of marriage and the family. (AL Ch. 9: 313-325)



Given that this letter of love addresses numerous aspects of the joy of loving, we hope to make the reading and study of that letter easier for the faithful by presenting a reflection on the document. *Witnessing to the Joy of Love* is a guide to some essential elements of *Amoris Laetitia*. It presents very short summaries of issues, but it is designed to have families, parishes or just friends discuss their experiences of family life and loving. Likewise, the recent publication entitled *Discovering the Unity of Love and Life* from the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops points to the importance of *accompaniment* as we all journey to become whom Jesus calls us to be. We are merciful when we know how to pastorally walk with others in Christ. These issues are essential if we are to evangelize those in our own families, those in our parishes as well as those beyond on the peripheries.

To seriously love our neighbours as ourselves, we have to make the connection between how we see our current lifestyles and daily decisions on the one hand and the direct impact this makes on the lives of other people in different parts of the world. This is why we need to reflect on *Laudato Si'*.

***Laudato Si'* – On Care For Our Common Home Encyclical of Pope Francis**

On September first we celebrate the beginning of the Ecclesiastical or Church New Year for Eastern Catholic and Orthodox Christians. The day was marked by prayers to enhance consciousness about the environment. In his Encyclical letter *Laudato Si': On Care for Our Common Home* originally promulgated on May 24, 2015, Pope Francis encouraged us to love one another by becoming better stewards of the environment. The Encyclical letter is now added to the body of the Church's social teaching, and acknowledges the immensity and urgency of the challenges we face.

Pope Francis explains that ecological degradation cannot be addressed without consideration for how humanity is affected (Ch.1). He addresses six serious challenges faced by everyone today, namely, pollution, climate change, clean water, biodiversity, global inequality and society's quality of life. Chapter three looks at the six deep-root causes of these growing crises, that is, 1) technology – creating circumstances with some having dominance over others; 2) technocratic mentality – technology accepted for profit with little or no consideration for how it affects entire populations; 3) Anthropocentrism – an unhealthy relationship between people and their respective environments; 4) Practical relativism – environmental degradation and social decay as a result of seeing “everything as irrelevant unless it serves one's own immediate interests”; 5) Employment – concern for financial gain at the expense of the value of labour and not investing in people; and finally 6) biological technologies - which often leads to concentrating land or markets in the hands of a few, in turn threatening small producers, biodiversity and ecosystems.

In Chapter Four the Pope speaks of an integral ecology so that all aspects of a crisis can be addressed. In Chapter Five, he proposes Lines of Approach and Action so that we can avoid endless circular discussion and actually make progress with “major paths of dialogue”. Lastly, in Chapter Six, he addresses ecological education and spirituality. Pope Francis explains, “Since the market tends to promote extreme consumerism in an effort to sell its products, people can easily get caught up in a whirlwind of needless buying and spending. Compulsive consumerism is one example of how the techno-economic paradigm affects individuals.” (LS Ch. 6: 203)

While pointing out our challenges, the Holy Father reminds us of the hope we have in making changes when he says, “Yet all is not lost. Human beings, while capable of the worst, are also capable of rising above themselves, choosing again what is good, and making a new start, despite their mental and social conditioning. We are able to take an honest look at ourselves, to acknowledge our deep dissatisfaction, and to embark on new paths to authentic freedom.” (LS Ch. 6: 205)

One of the largest myths some have grown up with is the simple word or concept referred to as “away”. Often we were told to, “go away ” when someone didn't want to be bothered, or “throw that away” as if there was a magical place an object will disappear. The fact is, when we stop and think about it, there is no such place in reality but rather it is a disposition. It might translate better as an expression of simple relationship - “not here”. So lets admit, “away” is always “here” for someone else. The Pope speaks of a “throw away” culture. Canadian Catholic Bishops say, “today, our world is marked by a system that readily discards people and food.”



Our last Annual Eparchial Appeal was based on a commandment of Jesus, ‘You shall love your neighbour as yourself.’ Mk 12:29-31 Therefore, the 2017 Annual Eparchial Appeal theme was:

“Love Your Neighbour as Yourself.... Discover the Joy of Loving.”

Closely connected with this theme is the question “Who is my neighbour?” When Jesus was asked this question, he told the parable of the Good Samaritan. Therefore, as members of the Eparchy of Saskatoon concerned about stewardship, we need to ask this very question, “Who is my neighbor?”

This year, the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops helps us reflect on this with a document entitled *Living Out Laudato Si’ – A Commentary and Practical Resource for Canadian Catholics*. We are reminded of this when the bishops quote the Holy Father saying that if individuals in society can abort babies because of possible inconveniences, disregard for other human beings in many other situations is a serious problem.

“If personal and social sensitivity towards the acceptance of the new life is lost, then other forms of acceptance that are valuable for society also wither away”.
(*Laudato Si’*, no. 120)

The commentary from the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops states:

“The Canadian Bishops remind us that Pope Francis, in his encyclical, *Laudato Si’*, has presented us with a significant contribution to Catholic Social Teaching. It addresses ecological and environmental concerns in a robust way, but within the context of a larger concern with the needs of the whole human family. It presents a vision of integral human development, where human dignity is upheld, the world’s poorest are attended to, and environmental, moral, social and political challenges are addressed in an integrated way.” (*Living Our Laudato Si’ – A Commentary and Practical Resource for Canadian Catholics*; CCCB)

It is because of the urgency of these global challenges, the request of the Holy Father and the attention given this topic by the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops that we must, as an Eparchy, address this in a serious way. Therefore, in our Eparchy, it is fitting that we make an effort to educate ourselves more about this matter so that we can respond to these crises appropriately. Our response will include a time of education, informing ourselves so a conscientious response can be made. This, as well as the call to be good stewards of the people, the goods and all of nature that God gives us, will play a role in discerning the theme of an Annual Eparchial Appeal. I have appointed Lesya Sabada to enlighten us about the various elements of this encyclical and apostolic letter, the body of material for our previous Popes on the matter, the global details of these crises and finally, how we as a Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church can respond. This will include a study of how these issues have been addressed over the years by Blessed Pope Paul VI, Saint Pope John Paul II, Pope Benedict XVI and our current Holy Father, Pope Francis. Other prominent advocates for change include the Orthodox Patriarch Bartholomew. The concept of consumption versus sacrifice, greed versus generosity and wastefulness versus sharing are some of the topics that need to be reflected on. Prayer, dialogue, learning, accepting our personal responsibility and finally taking action are the essential steps needed to be taken.

Let us acknowledge these important relationships with God, our neighbour and our world. We need to nurture an attitude of living for God, caring for others in our domestic churches and parish families, caring for other human beings, our environment that affects others and our common home where God has called us to be stewards.

May the Mother of God intercede for us as we surrender to the Holy Spirit, who elevates the importance of this concern in our hearts so that we may better “love our neighbour as ourselves”.

*Given by Bishop Bryan Bayda in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan
on the Feast of the Presentation of Our Lord in the Temple February 2, 2018.*



Link to the Apostolic Exhortation letter *Amoris Laetitia*:

http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20160319_amoris-laetitia.html

Link to the CCCB letter on Discovering the Unity of Life and Love – A Reflection on the Foundations for a Theology of Human Love:

<http://www.cccb.ca/site/eng/commissions-committees-and-aboriginal-council/national-commissions/doctrine/documents/4797-discovering-the-unity-of-life-and-love-a-reflection-on-the-foundations-for-a-theology-of-human-love>

Link to the Reflection document *Witnessing to the Joy of Love*:

<http://skeparchy.org/flo/family-life/witnessing-to-the-joy-of-love-guided-reflection/>

Link to the Encyclical *Laudato Si'*:

http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html

Link to the Canadian Bishops Reflection document *Living Out Laudato Si'*:

http://www.cccb.ca/site/images/stories/pdf/Living_Out_Laudato_Si_En.pdf