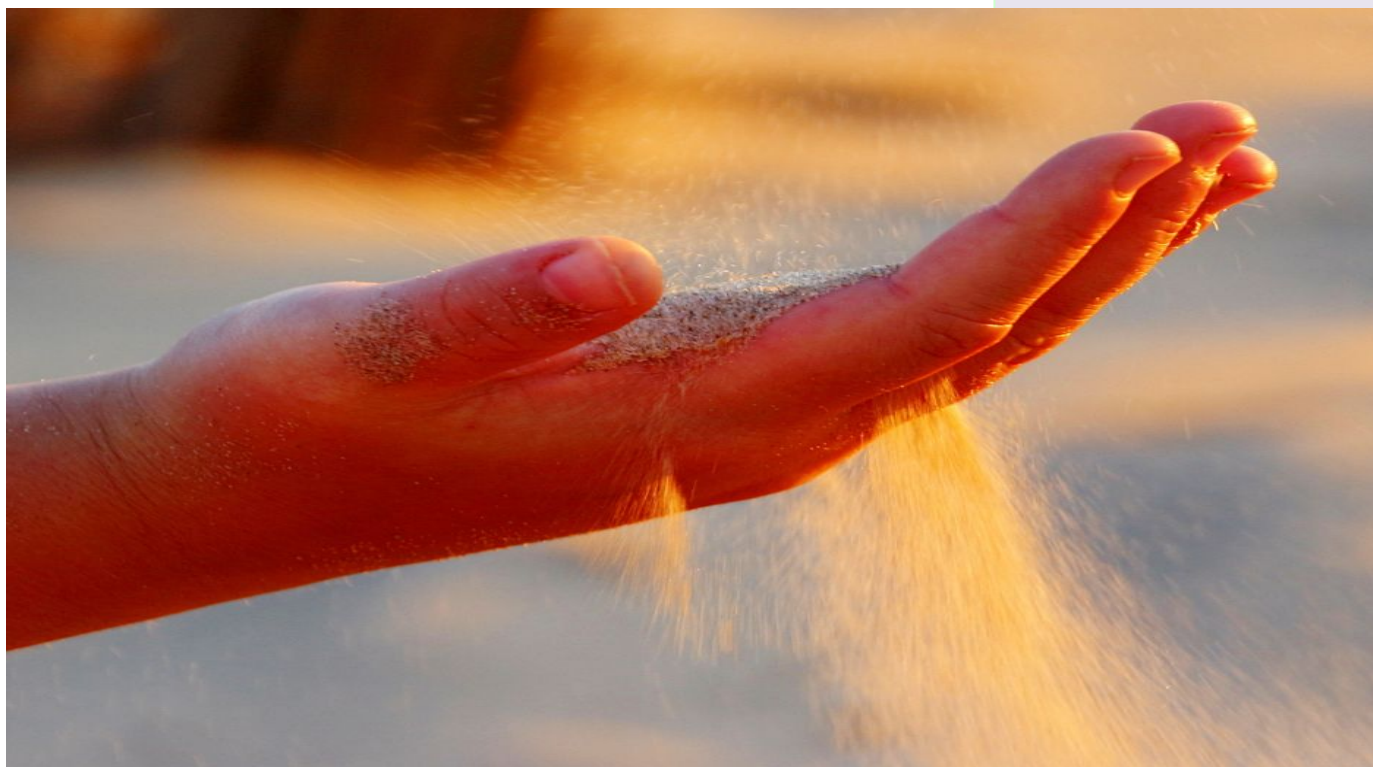




# Witness to Hope

Seasonal Offerings for Journeys in Faith



## Pope Francis says, “In the desert one hears the Word of God,

*one finds intimacy with God and the love of the Lord.”*

*It is not easy for us to be in the desert when we are surrounded by water. Without any difficulty we can transfer the brown sand of the desert to the white snow of winter. We can walk amid the snow and find the solitude of the desert. We can find a place to dialogue in silence with the Lord. This solitude increases our sensitivity to those who cry out for help. Through our support for Development and Peace we reach out to our neighbours in need. The feast of the Presentation of the Lord on February 2 marked forty days since celebrating the birth of Jesus at Christmas. This day also marks the halfway point of winter. It may not seem likely, but spring is on the way with each passing day, as we notice the lengthening of the daylight. The word Lent comes from the Old English word, lencten, which refers to the lengthening daylight hours and to springtime which is a time of renewal and new life. This forty-day Season of Lent is a time for fasting, almsgiving and prayer. The exercise of these virtues keeps us close to God and keeps us focused on service to others. May this Season of Lent lead us to renewal in our faith.*

**Bishop Wayne Kirkpatrick**

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Juana Zúniga, Leonel George and Daniel Márquez are all involved in the effort to preserve the Guapinol and San Pedro rivers and Carlos Escaleras National Park in Honduras. It is work essential to caring for our common home, and work that is dangerous and deadly for those involved. Honduras has become one of the five most dangerous countries for those who defend the environment.

In the Colón Department of northern Honduras, the Guapinol and San Pedro rivers form a vibrant ecosystem rich in plant and animal life. They spring from a hilly, forested area that was made a national park in 2012. Later, the Botaderos Mountain National Park was renamed after Carlos Escaleras, a local farmer and water defender who was killed for his work for justice.

The Guapinol and San Pedro rivers are also vital to the lives of hundreds of communities along their banks. For decades, these communities have defended the rivers from pollution by heavy industries. Soon after the national park was created, the extractive industry had its boundaries altered. An iron oxide mine was opened in the once-protected area. Local communities responded just as quickly. They organized committees and established a peaceful resistance camp. Church leaders have vocally supported the movement. Yet, the Guapinol defenders have faced violence from the state, private security and other outsiders.

Daniel is one of the Guapinol Eight, the defenders unjustly imprisoned for over two years. Juana and Leonel are members of the Committee for the Defense of Common and Public Goods in Tocoa, Colón. Three defenders have been murdered since 2020.

Development and Peace/Caritas Canada is circulating a petition with the goal of collecting 32,000 signatures (1,000 for each of the 32 people charged in Guapinol) by February 25, 2024. This petition will be presented to the Honduran ambassador to Canada, asking the Honduran government for justice for those killed and imprisoned, and to stop mining in sensitive ecological areas.

#### Sign the petition:

<https://devp.org/en/campaign/stand-for-the-land/act/>

#### To learn more:

<https://devp.org/en/campaign/stand-for-the-land/>



*Children's Choir, Tegucigalpa, Honduras*

Since 1962, the Diocese of Antigonish has held a close relationship with the people of Latin America.

From 1960 to 1982, thirteen priests and one lay person lived among the poor delivering the Good News and assisting them with developing entrepreneurial skills. Social enterprise initiatives such as establishing cooperatives and credit unions, adult literacy courses, securing funding from agencies to facilitate the building of schools, community centres, and churches. Assistance and guidance was provided in getting wells dug and electricity.

Initiated in 1970, the Credit Union, known as La Cooperativa Sagrada Familia, is the largest and most successful banking operation in Central America and celebrated 50 years of operation in 2020. Many relationships were developed and still exist today. Work with the Carmelite sisters in Tegucigalpa is helping many families and young girls. A school for girls, Fatima House, is now in its 20th year and has developed into a strong and vibrant educational facility as young women are graduating and furthering their careers that would never have been possible without the ongoing support of the Diocese.

A housing project for homeless families has provided homes for 50 families and will continue to reach their goal of 100 houses. The parents can now look for employment and the children can attend the Fatima House School receiving the necessary education so important in breaking the cycle of poverty.

#### To learn more:

<https://www.antigonishdiocese.com/update-from-latin-america/>

# Synod 2024:

## Deepening the Conversation

*"Now the Lord is calling us to return to our Churches to pass on the fruits of our work and to continue the journey together."*

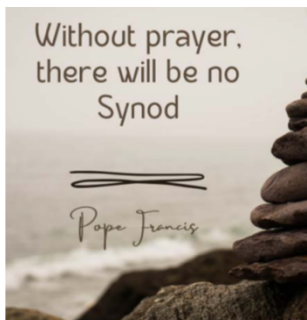
**Synthesis Document**

In October 2023, The Synod of Bishops discerned the responses collected worldwide in Synod conversations in 2021-22. The Synthesis Document has been circulated for faithful to read, reflect upon, and engage in new conversations.

In our diocese, our Synodal engagement this year will coincide with our Lenten journey. A resource has been developed for parishes and interested individuals to host conversations during Lent. Submissions from these conversations will be collected until April 8 (Annunciation of the Lord). The CCCB has requested a two-page summary by May 1.

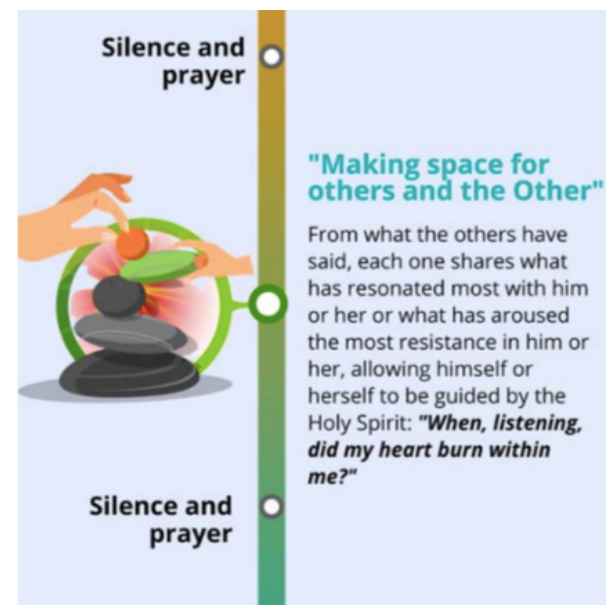
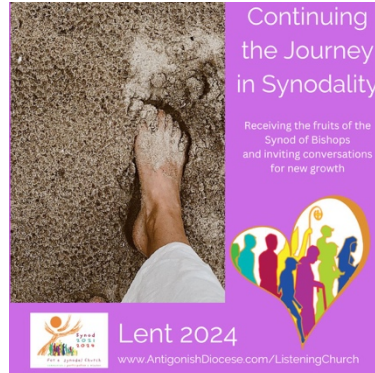
TO LEARN MORE:

<https://www.antigonishdiocese.com/listeningchurch/>



**Synod Prayer Cards are available from our Chancery Office for parishes, groups, and individuals wishing them.**

Contact our Chancery Office, Monday through Friday, 9 am – noon,  
Ph 1-902-863-3335 or email:  
[chancery@dioceseofantigonish.ca](mailto:chancery@dioceseofantigonish.ca)







February 4-10, 2024



## Dates of Note

February 4-10:  
**National Health Care Week**

February 11:  
**World Day of the Sick**

February 14:  
**Ash Wednesday**  
Season of Lent begins

## Living Lent

**Fun Facts about Lent:**  
<https://www.usccb.org/resources/scriptural-way-cross-lent>

Feb. 25:  
**Development and Peace**  
Deadline to sign the petition

March 29:  
**Passion of Our Lord**

March 31:  
**Resurrection of Our Lord**  
First Sunday of Easter

April 8:  
**Annunciation of Our Lord**  
Synod conversation summaries due

**See more events at:**  
<https://www.antigonishdiocese.com/events/>

National Catholic Health Care Week recognizes the important work of Catholic health organizations in our province and across Canada. Holding all those who are hurting in our hearts, we ask God to bless the work of Catholic health and we offer our prayers, support, and encouragement for the people of our Catholic health organizations who serve with compassion and courage.

You are encouraged to mark National Catholic Health Care Week with daily reflections and prayers, available here ([link](#))

To Learn More, please visit the Catholic Health Alliance of Canada website at [www.chac.ca](http://www.chac.ca)



How can we be instruments of tenderness and compassion in a world that is sometimes indifferent and individualistic? Pope Francis, in his message for this year's World Day of the Sick 2024, reminds us that since the beginning of creation, God has given us the capacity to enter into relationships. We are not meant to be alone. The Holy Father points out that loneliness is a deep wound in humanity, exacerbated by disease, pandemics, war, and even by a culture of individualism that neglects the most vulnerable. Let us care for relationships. Let us be close to those who suffer. Let us reach out to those who are alone.