



LETTER OF BISHOP THOMAS DOWD

TO THE FAITHFUL OF THE DIOCESE OF SAULT STE. MARIE

Dear brothers and sisters,

Today, Thursday October 22, 2020, it was announced in Rome that Pope Francis has appointed me as the new bishop of the diocese of Sault Ste. Marie. I wanted to take this occasion to express my greetings to all of you, and to share with you my joy.

The Lord has a funny sense of timing. A friend had invited me to spend the first part of Thanksgiving weekend with a group of his friends on Manitoulin Island, a place I had never before been. Autumn was in full glory at that point. I had the chance to discover a truly beautiful part of God's creation while I was there, and to rest and be renewed.

I left early on the Sunday morning, to drive back to Montreal. It was a bright sunny day. I keep a rosary hanging on the rear view mirror of my car for occasions just like this, so I took advantage of the long drive to pray. As my drive continued I remembered that I was in the diocese of Sault Ste. Marie, and that this diocese was waiting for a new bishop to be appointed. I prayed for all of you, and for the future bishop to be appointed, whoever he might be.

Little did I know, of course, that I was actually praying for myself!

I spent Thanksgiving Monday preparing for a retreat that was I was to be giving via video to a group of priests in Newfoundland. My first talk was scheduled for 6 pm Eastern time. With half an hour to go before it began, I received a call from the Pope's ambassador to Canada, Archbishop Luigi Bonazzi, informing me that Pope Francis had appointed me to the diocese of Sault Ste. Marie.

My first reaction was, "Wow!" Archbishop Bonazzi needed to know, of course, if I would accept. What he didn't know was that the talk I was scheduled to start to give in less than 30 minutes was all about how a priest was meant to be a man of hope, open to God's plan and sharing in the story of God's providence as that story continues to be written in our world. Again, the Lord has amazing timing, and he didn't need to hit me over the head to get me to see his will in this case. So, of course, I said "Yes!"

I found myself in a bit of a daze that evening, and for the next few days. I love my home city of Montréal, and when I became a priest for this diocese it was with the firm intention of living out my days in service here. Northern Ontario is a bit of a leap into the unknown! That said, when I was named an auxiliary bishop I realised that I had to live my life as one completely given over to God, including geographically. The Our Father prayer includes the words "Thy will be done", and I try and pray those words like I mean them. If there is one thing that I have learned, it is that when we really do give our lives over to the Lord, we will have joys and we will have challenges, but one thing is for sure: it will always be full of surprises!

That, for me, has been the greatest wealth coming from my vocation: the chance to meet people from all walks of life, and more importantly to share our stories -- which, of course, includes the story of faith. When I was made a bishop in 2011 I chose the Latin motto "Cor et anima una", which means "to be of one heart and mind". The Bible proposes this as an ideal for the Christian community, and for me it means having the chance to share in a part of the story of grace that the Lord continues to write for all of us.

I look forward to getting to know you in the weeks and months ahead. In the meantime I ask you to please keep me in your prayers, and I will keep you in mine. God bless you!

Your brother in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "+ Thomas Dowd". The signature is written in a cursive style with a cross at the beginning.

+Thomas Dowd

