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(Pastoral Letter 23/2020)

September 8, 2020 The Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary

My Dear People,

We have been living in a time of uncertainty for many months now, challenged to be a people of hope who live the Gospel with joy. We have the gift of time for inward reflection and the gift of time for prayer, reading, and contemplation.

On May 1st, as a country we gathered for the Consecration of Canada to the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of the Church, in time of pandemic. On June 20, the feast of The Immaculate Heart of the Blessed Virgin Mary a pastoral letter was issued indicating that our churches could re-open as early as the first weekend in July. Now as we begin another school year, our schools will open on September 8, the feast of the Birth of Mary. It is truly a September to remember as a new world awaits our parents, students, teachers and all the associated support staff. Let us remember that Mary, Mother of our Redeemer and of the redeemed, Mary reigns as the Queen of heaven - Regina Caeli. She is a powerful intercessor. We entrust ourselves to her maternal care.

Our times of isolation have reminded us to care for each other and for the gift of creation. Beginning with the World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation on September 1 and continuing to October 4, the feast of St. Francis, the patron saint of ecology, the Church celebrates this time as the Season of Creation. This Season is an annual ecumenical celebration of prayer and action to protect our common home. This year's celebration takes place within the context of the 5th Anniversary of *Laudato Si'*. It is a fitting time for all people to reaffirm their vocation to be stewards of creation. We have come to realize that everything is connected in our world and we must work together to help repair our broken world. Pope Francis said, we hear the voice of creation admonishing us to return to our rightful place in the natural created order, to remember that we are part of this interconnected web of life, not its masters.

September 1st also marks the anniversary of the invasion of Poland, the beginning of World War II. It is a reminder to pray for an end to all wars and help promote a more peaceful and tolerant society. For the first time, Nova Scotia is celebrating September as Polish Heritage Month.

It is unfortunate that we cannot truly plan due to the uncertainty of the COVID-19. When we re-open our meeting rooms and parish halls, we will have to abide by the same protocols we have in our churches. All will be required to wear masks and we will not be able to share food and drink. It is my hope that I will be visiting parishes, meeting with clergy, talking with committees online and gaining a better understanding of our pastoral needs.

St. Ninian our patron saint pray for us – feast day September 16

Bishop Wayne Kirkpatrick