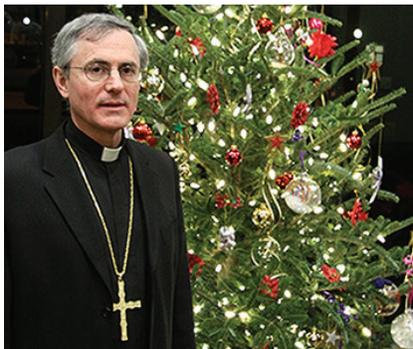


Bishop Fabbro's Christmas Greetings

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

I extend to you my warmest greetings and assure you of my prayers. May you experience the great joy of the Christmas season.

At this time of year, in a special way, we are filled with anticipation and longing for the coming of Jesus. Advent is a time for personal preparation, to ask ourselves, "Am I ready to welcome Jesus?" Amid the bustle of Christmas traditions, such as family gatherings, cultural observances and gift-giving, I encourage all of us to take some time to still ourselves and to reflect on this question. May we prepare our hearts for the coming of Jesus through prayer and repentance, and may we lead lives of generosity, justice and charity. By following our own baptismal call, each of us illuminates the world with the good news of God's love.



The year 2017 has been an active year for the people of our diocese. Much work has been done leading up to the implementation of two pioneer Families of Parishes in January: the Chatham Catholic Family of Parishes and the Catholic Family of Parishes in Norfolk. These two pioneer families will be test-beds for the rest of the diocese. Their experience will provide valuable information and learning for other parishes. In the years ahead, our diocese will comprise some thirty Families of Parishes.

Early in the year, we celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of the Canadian Catholic Organization for Development and Peace. This organization, founded in 1967 by the Bishops of Canada, was inspired by the appeal of Pope Paul VI, that the Church hear the cry of those in developing countries who are suffering hunger, misery, sickness and despair.

In April, Bishop Joseph and I travelled to Rome where with our brother bishops from Ontario we visited Pope Francis. We spoke with him about issues facing our Church and our society, not the least of which was the recent legislation which allows euthanasia and physician-assisted suicide and which, in Ontario, fails to protect adequately the conscience rights of healthcare workers. You will be hearing more about this issue from me in the new year.

Several parishes reached important milestones this year. I mention here only Assumption Parish, the oldest parish in Ontario, which celebrated 250 years since its foundation in 1767. In August, I dedicated the new Good

Shepherd Church in Lakeshore. In November, the spire of Ste. Anne's Church in Tecumseh was reinstalled after a decade-long hiatus.

Considerable construction has been taking place at St. Peter's Seminary, which is undergoing a full modernization and restoration. The revitalization will enable the Seminary to realize its potential as a leading house of formation in Canada for those preparing for the priesthood, the diaconate and lay ministry.

On May 13, Catholics across Canada marked 100 years since the first apparition of Our Lady of Fatima. That same day, I ordained a new priest for our diocese, Father Glen Ball. In June, Bishop Dabrowski ordained two transitional deacons, who are on the path to priesthood next April. In November, I ordained eight permanent deacons.

This past year, we said farewell to our deceased friends and colleagues, including Fr. Paul Rocheleau, Fr. Edward Brereton, Fr. Eugene Bugala, Fr. Joseph Bagatto, Fr. Paul Mooney, Fr. Patrick Fuerth, Fr. Dennis Wilhelm, Deacon John Vallely, as well as a number of Religious sisters.

On Canada Day, at St. Peter's Cathedral Basilica, I celebrated a special Mass with Bishop Joseph, Bishop Emeritus Sherlock, and many priests, deacons and lay faithful. We joined with other dioceses in the consecration of Canada to the Immaculate Heart of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

Thank you for your amazing generosity to our diocese this year. I am very grateful for your donations to your parish, to the restoration of St. Peter's Seminary, to boost the Priest Pension Fund, and to support the Thanksgiving Appeal; as well as to the Share Lent campaign and the national effort which raised \$12.5-million for the Myanmar Crisis Relief Fund.

I invite everyone to our parishes to celebrate the birth of our Saviour and to wish one another God's peace for the coming year. May you have a blessed Christmas, filled with wonder and love.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

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

