



MESSAGE OF BISHOP NOËL SIMARD FOR THE NEW YEAR 2021

"To create happiness, I speak words of consolation!" is the theme of our pastoral year 2020-2021. It is of great relevance in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic which has brought with it suffering, desolation, enormous economic and social problems as well as death. This pandemic has greatly affected our personal, family and social life and has forced us to rethink our priorities and lifestyle. It has exposed our misconceptions and revealed the shortcomings of our health, economic, social and political systems. It has also appealed to our responsibility in the search for the common good, to the acceptance of the limits of our individual freedoms, to a greater sense of solidarity and mutual aid. In the face of restrictions in our human relationships, it has forced us to find new ways to meet others and to create happiness, especially in the little things and the daily routine of life.

Despite the appearance of the vaccine, which opens new hopes for the elimination of the pandemic, we must continue in 2021 to put prevention measures into practice and act together to counter the spread of the virus. More than ever, we must go beyond our personal, parochial, provincial or national selfish tendencies to come to the aid of all our brothers and sisters in humanity. In his encyclical "Fratelli tutti" on fraternity and social friendship, Pope Francis vows that "all together we can revive a universal desire for humanity... We need a community that supports us, that helps us and in which we help each other to look ahead. How important it is to dream together" (Fratelli tutti, n.8).

In the name of human fraternity, of the dignity of every human person, of respect for life in all its forms, in the name of peace, justice and mercy, the foundations of prosperity, in the name of our common home which is Mother Earth, may we know how to make our own "a culture of dialogue as a path, common collaboration as a way of conduct and mutual knowledge as a method and criterion" in 2021 (Fratelli tutti, n. 285).

May the Child Jesus who constantly comes to meet us, especially to those in need or excluded from our living together, find in us hearts, that are welcoming and open to His coming! May He watch over our families, our parishes, the Church and Pope Francis, over the sick, over our world still too afflicted by hatred, violence and the pandemic that continues to rage and sow misery and death! May the year 2021 bring health, consolation and happiness! May Jesus, the divine Messiah, accompany us and help us to live the gift, fraternity and solidarity! May He make us authentic mediators of peace, love and sharing, joyful witnesses of His presence and full of hope! May Mary our Mother help us!

Have a happy, joyful and holy New Year!

✠ Noël Simard
Bishop of Valleyfield