Live the Word

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Catholics Making a Difference

A Shepherd behind Bars

I was in prison and you visited me. Not many of us truly live these the words of Matthew 25:36, but Joanne Klone does – on our behalf, on a daily basis. Joanne is a Catholic prison chaplain and the shepherd of an often-forgotten flock.

One visit to a session with inmates at the brick-lined chapel in the Fort Saskatchewan Correctional Centre and it's easy to see both how much this chaplain loves her vocation, and how much she means to those she serves.

Joanne is entrusted to look after the spiritual wellbeing of this unlikely flock. Of course she prays with them, sings with them, and leads them in Bible reflection. But she also serves on the frontline for some very practical matters, such as informing an inmate that one of their loved ones has died. If their record prevents them from being allowed to go to a funeral, a memorial in the chapel is offered to help them in their grieving process.

If necessary the chaplain can even make funeral arrangements. She reminds inmates that there is power in prayer, and that they are not powerless, because they can pray.

For Darryl, a man who's been in and out of jail many times, the chaplain's ministry is a great comfort. "She just supports us, encourages us, doesn't judge us, and accepts us for who we are and allows us to be authentic," he says. "That's what's important about this Church, it allows us to be authentic. It helps us to address the spiritual needs of us as human beings, and that's important for change."

Joanne never dreamed that she'd be spending so much time in jail. She worked in parish ministry for more than 15 years. Over the years she had taken courses, attended pastoral institutes, and even went through the Formation for Pastoral Services at Newman Theological College to help in her ministry. One day she decided to pursue a Bachelor of Theology degree, leaving her job at the parish in the hopes of becoming a hospital chaplain.

However, after a surprising turn of events, Joanne became a prison chaplain. She quickly realized she was well prepared to serve her new flock with skill and professionalism because of her studies at Newman.

"When they come to the chapel, we have to be responsible in what we teach them. Our theology has to be sound, and it has to be grounded. They know when you know what you're talking about. We're so fortunate and so blessed to have this college in Edmonton."

Thank you for supporting Together We Serve. Your gifts help Newman Theological College provide academic education and Catholic formation both for seminarians and for lay students like Joanne.

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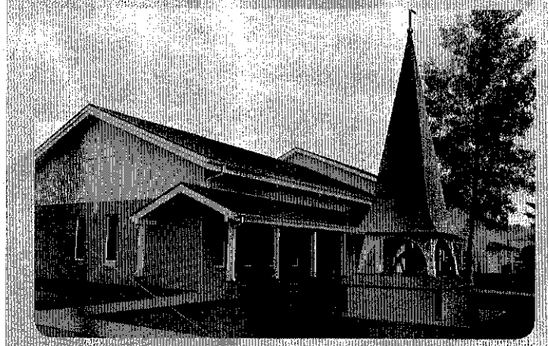
Rebuilding a Place of Worship and Community



For the people of Fort Simpson and the Deh Cho region of the Northwest Territories, the new Sacred Heart Church is much more than a building. It's an answer to prayers, a dream come true, a step toward reconciliation.

The community of 1,200 lost its former church when it was deemed unsafe and then demolished in 2012. Residents and the Diocese of Mackenzie-Fort Smith had struggled for many years to fund the building project, until the Archdiocese of Edmonton responded with assistance.

Thanks to the generosity of the people of the Archdiocese – through their gifts to the Together We Serve annual appeal – construction began in Fall 2016 and the new church was formally dedicated on September 17, 2017. The project also received help from private donors, Catholic Missions in Canada, and the Diocese of Hamilton.

"It's a beautiful gift. It's like people's prayers have been answered," said Mike Cazon, who travelled from nearby Trout River to attend the Mass of Consecration.

Father Joe Daley, pastor of Sacred Heart, could hardly conceal his joy. "It's almost unbelievable that this long-time dream of the people of this region is becoming a reality," he said.

The new church also represents a step beyond the legacy of Catholic-operated Indian residential schools, including Lapointe Hall, which once stood across the street from the old Sacred Heart Church.

"The church that was here was a 'residential' church," said Melissa Hardisty, who was raised Catholic but left the faith. "Now that we have a new church, it shows us that we can have a new beginning."

And now she hopes her daughter will be among the first to celebrate First Communion there.

Most Rev. Mark Hagemoen, Bishop of Mackenzie-Fort Smith, is grateful to all who helped make the new church a reality.

"A sincere and heartfelt THANK YOU goes out to the Archbishop and the people of the Archdiocese of Edmonton for making this crucial project possible for the Deh Cho Region and our Diocese. Blessings to you, Mahsi Cho (Thank you)!"

Your gifts to Together We Serve help serve our sisters and brothers in the Diocese of Mackenzie-Fort Smith.

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