

## OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

Most Rev. R. Anthony Daniels  
PO Box 771  
Grand Falls-Windsor, NL  
A2A 2M4



Tel: 709-489-2778  
Fax: 709-489-8431  
tdaniels@rcdiocesegrandfalls.ca

## DIOCESE OF GRAND FALLS

First Sunday of Lent  
February 14, 2016

### **Repentance is the Pathway to Mercy**

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

On the afternoon of February 6, 2016, Pope Francis made an unannounced visit to St. Peter's Basilica in Rome. He came into the Basilica quietly and without fanfare, to the delight and surprise of the thousands of pilgrims. He came, not to preside at a Liturgy or to greet the faithful, but rather, he came to pray before the relics of St. Leopold Mandic and St. Padre Pio. The Holy Father had asked that the relics of these two great saints be brought to St. Peter's Basilica during the Jubilee of Mercy to highlight the importance of repentance and confession on the pathway to mercy.



St. Leopold Mandic was a Croatian Capuchin Friar and Catholic Priest, who suffered from disabilities that would plague his speech and stature. He developed tremendous spiritual strength in spite of his disabilities and became extremely popular in his ministry as a confessor, often spending 12-15 hours in the confessional. St. Padre Pio, also a Capuchin Friar and Catholic Priest, became known

throughout the world as a great Confessor and Spiritual Director. He became a much sought after Confessor, not only because of the time he gave to hearing confessions, but because of his depth of insight into people's hearts.

Yet it is not the time that these great confessors dedicated to the Sacrament of Reconciliation or the great numbers of penitents whom they encountered for which they will be remembered; rather, it was their ability to communicate the depth of the mercy and love of God to those who came in search of forgiveness and healing. They were men who faithfully revealed the face of God's mercy.

I would like to take this opportunity to build on the words and actions of Pope Francis and invite each one of us to discover again the beauty of the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

Through the Sacrament of Reconciliation we have the opportunity to encounter not just the notion of forgiveness or the hope of God's mercy, but we have the opportunity to come face to face with Jesus – the Mercy of God made flesh.

For many, our memories of 'going to confession' as children may leave us uninspired. We can all tell stories of lining up each Friday, trying our best to make up something to say only to be met with the same indifference on the other side of the screen. But we cannot let such memories of the past keep us from experiencing what may be the most significant encounter of mercy we have ever known.

This Jubilee of Mercy and this Holy Season of Lent afford each of us the opportunity for a new and rich experience of the Sacrament of Reconciliation. We begin with an honest look at our lives – our past and our present – asking the questions: Am I at peace with God, with those around me, and with myself? What needs to change? Then, knowing those things from which we need to be freed in order to make a new beginning, we open the door to God's mercy by confessing our sins. It is in this moment of Grace that the focus dramatically shifts from our sense of sinfulness to God's loving mercy. We are forgiven, we are freed, we are made new, and we are at peace.



To my brother priest confessors I say: be available, be welcoming, be understanding, be the face of God's mercy just as Jesus was to the people of his time and still is to us today.

To my brother and sister sinners I say with St. Paul: *"For the Lord says, 'At an acceptable time I have listened to you, and on a day of salvation I have helped you'. See, now is the acceptable time; see, now is the day of salvation!"* (2 Cor. 6.2).

Let us pray for one another and let us support one another on our journey towards God's mercy.

Yours in Christ

Most Reverend R. Anthony Daniels  
Bishop of Grand Falls