



NEWS ARCHIVE:

Roman Catholic Diocese of Saskatoon

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Most Rev. Albert LeGatt appointed Archbishop of St. Boniface, Manitoba



Most Rev. Albert LeGatt has been appointed Archbishop of St. Boniface by Pope Benedict XVI. The announcement was made Friday, July 3, 2009.

By Kiply Lukan Yaworski

After eight years as bishop of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Saskatoon, Albert LeGatt has been appointed Archbishop of St. Boniface, Manitoba, replacing retiring Archbishop Emilius Goulet, 76.

“During my time in Saskatoon I have experienced so many of God’s blessings in all of the people of the diocese and in what I have lived together with them. I will really miss Saskatoon,” said LeGatt.

“At the same time, it is with joy, peace and expectation that I say yes in joyful obedience to the Holy Father’s request, asking me to go to St. Boniface.”

LeGatt will continue to serve as diocesan administrator in Saskatoon until his installation as Archbishop of St. Boniface Monday, Sept. 21.

After that, a diocesan administrator will be elected by the Diocesan Consultors, to serve in leadership until a new bishop of Saskatoon is appointed by Pope Benedict.

An advisory body to the bishop, the Diocesan Consultors include Rev. Ron Beechinor, Rev. Ken

Beck, Rev. Rhéal Bussière, Rev. Paul Donlevy, Rev. Michael Koch, Abbot Peter Novecosky, OSB, and Rev. David Tumback.

In 2000, when Saskatoon Bishop James Weisgerber was appointed Archbishop of Winnipeg, diocesan administrator Rev. Ron Beechinor provided leadership as diocesan administrator until LeGatt was appointed bishop in 2001.

Born in Melfort, Saskatchewan in 1953, LeGatt grew up on the family farm near Pathlow. He attended school in St. Brioux, SK, and at Collège Notre Dame, St. Louis, SK., before obtaining a BA at St. Boniface College at the University of Manitoba in 1974, majoring in Philosophy and French.

He served as a Canadian University Service Overseas (CUSO) volunteer from 1974-77, teaching French at a secondary technical school in Ghana, West Africa. Following that experience, he entered the seminary at Le Grand Séminaire de Québec in 1977 and pursued

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studies in theology at Laval. He was ordained to the priesthood on June 19, 1983 in St. Brieux. He was appointed the sixth Bishop of Saskatoon by Pope John Paul II on July 26, 2001.

Reflecting on his time as bishop of Saskatoon, LeGatt noted the sound and fruitful foundation provided in the diocese of Saskatoon by previous bishops, including Bishops James Mahoney and James Weisgerber.

LeGatt also stressed the blessing that the people of the diocese have been to him as a bishop.

"I first arrived in the diocese of Saskatoon realizing what a blessing it was to come to this particular diocese with all of its strengths and gifts – including a very good and caring clergy, and a very faith-filled and engaged, participating laity – arriving in the midst of all of the many efforts that were undertaken to really make this church of Saskatoon a church of all of its members, in terms of lay formation and lay participation," he said, reflecting on all that has been accomplished and lived together with the people here over the past eight years (*see related article p.3*).

"It's with a lot of sadness that I'll leave the diocese of Saskatoon – I've seen the sadness also in people's eyes as the news was announced, and I'm really touched by that," he said.

"At the same time, it is with great expectation and confidence that I go to St. Boniface. In



the same way that I discovered so many gifts of faith and kindness, of generosity and trust here in Saskatoon, I am sure that God will grace me with the same gifts in St. Boniface, and I greatly look forward to working with the people, clergy and religious there," LeGatt said, noting he already has some knowledge of the community, both from his university studies there, and from friendships among the clergy.

"As well, in Archbishop Goulet, who is retiring, I have a friend who will be there to help with the transition, and I have in Archbishop Weisgerber across the river a good friend and support and mentor," LeGatt added.

"Before this, I had every good reason to want to stay in Saskatoon until I would myself retire at 75 here, and now, I have every good reason to go to St. Boniface, because those reasons are God's reasons," he said. "The journey we're all about is being open to God's ways."



Bishop Albert LeGatt blesses the fields during the annual pilgrimage to Mount Carmel.

Bishop Albert LeGatt reflects on his eight years as shepherd of Saskatoon



By Kiply Lukan Yaworski

The Roman Catholic Diocese of Saskatoon's outgoing bishop met the news of his appointment as Archbishop of St. Boniface with mixed emotions.

"I will deeply miss this wonderful diocese of Saskatoon, especially all of its people, very many of whom I have come to know and cherish over our last eight years together," he said. "At the same time, I look forward with joy to the prospect of getting to know the people of the Archdiocese of St. Boniface, and to become part of another family."

His time as bishop of Saskatoon has been both fruitful and challenging, LeGatt said, reflecting on some of the highlights and efforts undertaken since he was first named bishop in 2001.

"These past eight years have brought times of joy, but also many challenges, and also times of suffering. God has been faithful, very faithful in strengthening me and consoling me and guiding me, and in guiding



Bishop Albert LeGatt at a Saskatchewan Centennial Celebration in October 2005.

us all together," said LeGatt. "This diocese has helped me so much in learning what it means to be a bishop."

Heartaches have included the loss of St. Elizabeth's Hospital in Humboldt as a Catholic facility, and in particular the division that the controversy caused in Humboldt and area, LeGatt said.

"Losing 10 priests in short order has also been a sorrow – through death, transfers, and some leaving the priesthood. I understood why they transferred out of the diocese or left the priesthood, but it was still a suffering for me," he said, reflecting on the ongoing challenge of a clergy shortage.

However, renewed efforts in the area of vocation promotion are bearing fruit, with nine young men in the seminary as



Bishop Albert LeGatt lights the Easter Candle during an Easter Vigil celebration at St. Paul's Cathedral.

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of this fall, he added. The arrival of international priests in the diocese has also been a blessing, LeGatt said. “We need to continue to find ways to be mutually enriching to each other, sharing cultural experiences and experiences of church that may be different.”

LeGatt said he has found great joy and encouragement in seeing the engaged laity in the diocese. Especially heartening is to witness the active involvement and leadership of so many young adults, including youth ministers working in the diocese and parishes, as well as young adults involved in such things as the Diocesan Youth Retreat Team, St. Thomas More College, Catholic Christian Outreach, Face-to-Face Ministries, and Rock the Mount.

“Our diocese has a lot of young people on fire with faith, and with love for the Church, and especially with a love for Jesus,” he said. “Even though I realize they may be a minority among their peers, they are bringing so much to the Church. They are a minority that is really going to be a spark, a light for the wider society and the wider Church,” he said.

The list of initiatives under LeGatt’s leadership as bishop includes a multi-year Parish Vitality Reflection; the restoration of the order of sacraments of initiation; a statement about sacramental sharing with Christian of other denominations; establishment of a Marriage Task Force to work in areas of marriage preparation and marriage enrichment; a diocesan Eucharistic Congress held in October 2007; and the launch of a Diocesan Vision.

Other highlights have included making Our Lady of Guadalupe First-Nations faith community a full-fledged parish; the growth of the Iraqi-Chaldean Catholic Church in Saskatoon; and a long list of ongoing encounters with people and groups in the diocese. LeGatt said he treasures those many encounters: attending parish events, participating in a diocesan CWL convention, gathering with the Knights of Columbus, meeting volunteers at a Pastoral Care Appreciation event, connecting with leaders in Catholic health and education, or working with so many dedicated people on the Diocesan Pastoral Council.

“Another joy has been being a witness to the commitment of so many dedicated people to service and to justice, and to reaching out to the poor and the suffering, whether that’s through support of Friendship Inn, or working for Restorative Justice or so many other efforts,” he said.

The recent Uniting in Faith campaign to build a new diocesan Cathedral and Catholic Pastoral Centre in conjunction with construction of a new home for Holy Family Parish in northeast Saskatoon has also been a huge undertaking for the diocese under LeGatt’s leadership.



Bishop Albert LeGatt reads the proclamation creating Our Lady of Guadalupe parish in Saskatoon.

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“The project will continue to go ahead,” he said. “From a financial point of view we are very well on our way, with final plans and decisions about the tendering process now being looked at. I won’t be here for the building phase of the project, but I’m completely at peace with that. God asks us to do a certain thing and I have tried to be faithful to that. Now God sends in another instrument and another servant to continue the work.”

LeGatt acknowledged there have been challenges around the Uniting in Faith project. “We have heard opposing voices, with valid concerns. They come out of the difficulties that parishes are themselves facing, or they are expressions of the important priority of seeing to the poor and to those in need,” LeGatt said. “Yet I firmly believe this project has the potential to really strengthen and to catapult the diocese into a new and stronger chapter of what it means to be Church in south-central Saskatchewan.”

The project has already created “a much larger conversation” about what it means to be a diocese, and what it means to have parishes working together, he noted.

Reflecting on his Episcopal motto *Ut Unum Sint*, “That They May Be One” (Jn17,22), LeGatt said that the greatest suffering occurred when unity was lacking.

“However, that is completely overshadowed and overwhelmed by all the ways that I’ve seen people again and again striving for that unity: a unity of faith and a unity of hospitality and a unity of service,” said LeGatt, expressing his gratitude for all that he has experienced in the past eight years, and his trust in God’s plans for both the diocese of Saskatoon and the archdiocese of St. Boniface.

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Bishop Albert LeGatt at the Diocesan Eucharistic Congress in Saskatoon, Oct. 2007.