



Bishop Albert LeGatt signs the decree creating Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish in the Roman Catholic Diocese of Saskatoon. The decree was signed during a joyful celebration Feb. 18 by the new aboriginal parish, composed of First Nations, Metis and non-aboriginal people.

Our Lady of Guadalupe parish officially created Feb. 18, 2007

By Kiply Lukan Yaworski

SASKATOON – A long-time aboriginal faith community is now officially a parish in the Roman Catholic Diocese of Saskatoon.

Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish was formally established by Bishop Albert LeGatt, who along with Chancellor Rev. Paul Donlevy, signed the parish decree Feb. 18 during a joyful Sunday afternoon celebration of the Eucharist.

The main goal of a parish as a Christian community is to “know God’s love, to receive that love, to celebrate and to reflect it,” LeGatt said. “That’s what Our Lady of Guadalupe is called to do, like any other parish: to be a place where God’s love is discovered, shared, celebrated and reflected to the world. And of course, your particular richness would be that you do that within the deep treasure of your First Nations spirituality.”

The community’s reasons for wishing to become a full-fledged parish were cited during the celebration: “to know that we belong here permanently, and we are equal to every other parish and its community; to be affirmed that this form of living the Catholic faith is normative, good and accepted in this diocese; and to be in communion with other parishes, knowing that as we receive we also have gifts to give.”



Bishop LeGatt reads the proclamation.

The parish vision was also stated: “to build a strong faith community; to empower and equip aboriginal people to become leaders in their families, communities and the Church; and to integrate First Nations culture and spirituality in sessions and celebrations.”

All of the ministry and outreach of Our Lady of Guadalupe is based on “the strength of the community as a circle, as people coming together to give life to each other, to give healing to each other, to bring Christ to each other,” the bishop said, encouraging the new parish to move into the future “helping each other to go forth as strong, Spirit-filled people of God.”

Guadalupe House faith community began in 1984 and includes First Nations, Métis and non-aboriginal people. Operating out of a parish centre on Avenue J. South, the community gathers at nearby St. Mary’s Catholic Church for Eucharist every Sunday afternoon.

The parish decree acknowledges the community’s stable population, its active ministries including sacramental preparation, RCIA and ongoing catechesis to all ages. The community “celebrates the sacraments and wakes and funerals of aboriginal people providing pastoral care through the ministration of priests, religious and laity within the community, as approved and supported by the diocese of Saskatoon,” adds the decree.

Led by a pastoral team that includes Priest Moderator Rev. Bill Bernard, CSsR, Rev. Leo English, CSsR, and Parish Life Director Verna Vandale, Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish’s celebrations and liturgies integrate aspects of Native tradition and culture, such as smudging with sweetgrass, praying in the four directions, hymns in Cree, and the presence of drummers and dancers.

Parish programs include pastoral care of the sick and infirm, 12-step pilgrimages, community outreach, and a variety of prayer evenings that include praise and worship, gospel singing, Bible sharing and healing circles. The ministry of Our Lady of Guadalupe has also reached beyond the borders of the diocese, with representatives traveling to areas such as Ile-a-la-Crosse, Wollaston Lake, Water Hen, and La Ronge to provide outreach, music and ministry.

Priests and sisters who served the Our Lady of Guadalupe community through the years were acknowledged during the Feb. 18 celebration, with many in attendance to receive words of thanks from Parish Life Director Verna Vandale.

She expressed the community's gratitude to all those who have walked with the Guadalupe community: "those who started from scratch and built everything up, those who empowered us as aboriginal people to heal."

"They walked with us, they allowed us to feel our feelings, to express our emotions, they even allowed us to be angry at the church," said Vandale. "Deep in my own heart I am very grateful for that, because that is where I came from and that is the road I walked. Today I love my church and I love my culture."

The creation of the parish is a moment of great joy and thanksgiving, she said.

"It is truly a milestone for us today as aboriginal people, and for our brothers and sisters in Christ who have walked with us, who have been there for us through all these years – there to teach us and help us, as we have also taught them," said Vandale with emotion. "We as a Guadalupe community – our cup is overflowing."



Bishop Albert LeGatt, Chancellor Rev. Paul Donlevy, and priests and sisters who have served the Guadalupe faith community in Saskatoon were honoured Feb. 18 as part of a celebration marking the formal establishment of Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish within the Roman Catholic Diocese of Saskatoon.

