

Be Not Afraid

Bishop John M. LeVoir's Monthly Column for *The Prairie Catholic*

October 2008

Good-bye and Hello

It is now the time for me to leave Stillwater and to say “good-bye” to St. Mary’s and St. Michael’s as Pastor. As I have said to many people, I was fully expecting to spend the next eight years as the Pastor of the Stillwater Churches, as well as Canonical Administrator of the school and faith formation programs. But, the will of God, expressed through the call of Pope Benedict XVI, changed all of that. I was totally surprised by the call of the Holy Father to be a Bishop. Never has a surprise made such a dramatic shift in my life.

I want to say “thank you” to the good and faithful parishioners of St. Michael’s and St. Mary’s. I have been overwhelmed with prayers, good wishes, encouragement, and cards, letters, and gifts. There have been so many telephone calls and e-mails. It is all of these that send me off to my ordination and installation as the Bishop of the New Ulm Diocese on September 15, the Feast of Our Lady of Sorrows. There could not be a better send off, nor a better foundation on which to build my ministry to the people of New Ulm.

Everywhere that I have turned recently, people have made sure to wish me well and to assure me of their prayers and support. The farewell reception on August 31 at St. Michael’s, planned by both St. Mary’s and St. Michael’s, was so well done and so enjoyable. On September 2, I had the opportunity to celebrate the first school Mass of the year and to see the children whose Catholic education I hold so dear. The Dominican Sisters had a dinner for Father Wenthe and me. We all had such a good time. I spent most of my time at St. Mary’s Wild Rice Festival on September 7 saying “good-bye.” Still, there were many meal invitations that I had to turn down because of the lack of time.

Now it is time for me to say “hello” to the Diocese of New Ulm. Ever since the announcement was made that I was to be the Bishop of New Ulm, the people of New Ulm could not have been more welcoming. Archbishop Nienstedt, my predecessor as Bishop of New Ulm, has welcomed me warmly to the Province, and has encouraged me and offered his prayers and assistance. Monsignor Douglas Grams, the Diocesan Administrator of New Ulm, has been most helpful in advising me and guiding me through the many steps to ordination and installation. The diocesan staff has welcomed me and it is evident that they are so happy to have a Bishop again.

I have attended a couple of social occasions with priests of the diocese and they have welcomed me as well. The stories that they tell are so very helpful to me as I learn about the diocese, and its history and people. I celebrated two opening school Masses the first week of September, one in Sleepy Eye and one in New Ulm. The priests, religious, faculties, staffs, and students greeted me with smiles and handshakes. All of these events have helped me in my transition. I even made a video for the 2008-2009 Diocesan Ministries Appeal. That was an

enjoyable experience, even though Sister Mary Charles, Director of the Office of Communications, had to do a number of retakes.

So, it is time to say “good-bye” to Stillwater and “hello” to the Diocese of New Ulm. I do not know the details of what God wants me to do in the Diocese of New Ulm, but He has a plan. I know that whatever He has planned for me will be good and that He will give me the strength that I need to do His will. Still, I am fully aware of my weaknesses and my anxiety given the weighty responsibilities of a Bishop. But, as September 15 approaches, I am comforted by the prayers and encouragement of so many. Thank you one and all!

"God has created me to do Him some definite service; He has committed some work to me which He has not committed to another. I have my mission – I never may know it in this life, but I shall be told it in the next. Somehow I am necessary for His purposes. I am a link in a chain, a bond of connection between persons. He has not created me for naught. I shall do good, I shall do His work; I shall be an angel of peace, a preacher of truth in my own place, while not intending it, if I do but keep his commandments and serve Him in my calling. Therefore, I will trust Him."

- Adapted from a prayer by Venerable John Henry Newman