

WELCOME AND LISTENING AS TWO COMPASSES DURING ADVENT!



During the month of October, meetings were held to launch the diocesan pastoral year in the diocese's 5 pastoral zones: the Petite-Nation Zone, the North Zone (the parishes of Haute Gatineau), the Centre Zone (Gatineau, Buckingham and L'Ange-Gardien sectors), the West Zone (Hull and Aylmer sectors) and the English-speaking Zone. In all, nearly 220 diocesan men and women (lay people, deacons, and priests) took part. During these meetings, participants experienced spiritual conversation, an experience of sharing and listening to the Word of God. They also discovered the themes proposed for the next two years, namely welcoming and listening. It's less a question of themes than of pastoral preferences or deeply human and evangelical attitudes. Four areas were identified as those from which the practice of welcoming and listening could be further explored. These are 1) Listening to the Word; 2) Listening to the Spirit; 3) Listening to others; and 4) Listening to the world.

In the Church, "speaking" is part of the mission that Christ entrusted to his disciples. Yet we know that too many words can prevent us from understanding God and each other. So, a Church that doesn't listen (enough) runs the risk of not knowing how to speak and proclaim. The first person to listen is obviously God, his word, and his Spirit. And since we are called to work in the same mission of Christ, we need to listen to each other (so that we can better discern and decide together). Finally, to be a Church incarnate in our time, we also have to listen to the world in which we live (with its joys, its cries, its fears, its hopes...).

During the season of Advent, which begins on 3 December, the theme proposed by Vie liturgique is: **Come, Lord! Show us your face**. This invitation to the Lord sounds like a call to live in his presence. To express the desire to see the Lord's face is to enter the great communion that spans the ages, as many psalms remind us. This invitation enlarges our hearts, makes us available to listen to the Word of God, and opens our hearts to others. Advent, the liturgical season par excellence of waiting, reminds us that there can be no waiting without listening and welcoming. Because of the importance of listening and welcoming, because of the challenges involved, and because of some of the difficulties in living out these attitudes, it's a good idea to make them pastoral preferences during Advent. They are essential if we are to wait successfully and welcome the face of God, the Emmanuel, whom we will celebrate at Christmas. Take heart! Let's not be afraid to take up the challenge of welcoming and listening this Advent.