



NEWS RELEASE JANUARY 4, 2017:

RESIGNATION OF BISHOP FREDERICK HENRY

In accordance with canon 401 § ii of the Code of Canon Law, his Holiness Pope Francis has accepted the resignation of Most Reverend Frederick B. Henry as Bishop of the Diocese of Calgary due to health concerns.

Most Rev. Luigi Bonazzi, Apostolic Nuncio to Canada, announces that the Holy Father has named Bishop William Terrace McGrattan, currently the Bishop of the Diocese of Peterborough, as his successor.

The installation of the new Bishop will be on Monday, February 27, 2017 at 7:30 p.m. which will be at St. Mary's Cathedral.

In the meantime, Bishop Henry has been named Apostolic Administrator of the Diocese of Calgary.

We thank Bishop Henry for his unstinting service, and we welcome Bishop McGrattan to our Diocese.

Bishop Henry's resignation letter sent to Pope Francis is attached.

Resignation Letter to Pope Francis

February 6, 2016

His Holiness Pope Francis
Vatican City

Your Holiness

Greetings and prayerful best wishes! I started writing this letter on August 21, 2013. The time has now come to update it and send it to you.

I will celebrate my 73rd birthday on April 11, 2016. I was ordained to the priesthood in 1968 and to the episcopacy in 1986, and have been the Bishop of Calgary since 1998.

After considerable prayer and reflection, I have come to the conclusion that I should step down as Bishop of Calgary and retire in accordance with Canon 401.2.

The principal reason is my medical condition. I suffer from a type of arthritis known ankylosing spondylitis for which there is no cure. AS is also an autoimmune disease meaning that the body's immune system becomes confused and begins to "attack" the body. In AS, the joints in the spine are the target of the immune attack resulting in pain and stiffness (inflammation) in the neck and back.

The first symptoms of AS typically start in late adolescence or early adulthood. Although I have suffered from a sore back from my early 20s, it wasn't until about 35 that I was diagnosed as having this disease. The inflammation of AS usually starts at the base of the spine, where the spine attaches to the pelvis. This inflammation can spread upwards to involve other parts of the spine. As the inflammation continues, new bones form as the body tries to repair itself. As a result, the bones of the spine begin to "grow together" or fuse causing the spine to become very stiff and inflexible. The discs in my lower back (lumbar region) and my neck have fused limiting my basic mobility. I can no longer turn my head sideways but must turn the whole upper body to look left or right. In addition, I can't really look up but have a permanent stoop and my feet are much more familiar to me than the sky.

When the immune system is confused, it can attack other parts of the body than the joints and tendons. Over the years, I have had several bouts of inflammation in my eyes, a condition called uveitis or iritis. These attacks – requiring the taking of two different types of eye drops (atropine and pred forte and sometimes an eye injection) to deal with the iritis, with good management this is usually short term. I have not had an attack for the last six months – thanks be to God.

It also affects the lungs and the heart. My lung capacity is severely diminished and walking any distance, I am breathing hard after walking only one or two blocks, or climbing stairs is difficult, as is sitting in one position for any length of time.

Although my doctor was concerned about my heart, all the tests turned out negative and my heart condition is comparable to other persons my age. My hearing is also greatly diminished and getting worse.

I have been on the anti-inflammatory drug Naproxen for 37 years and Humera, a new biologic self-injected drug for about 5 and 1/2 years which has brought some pain relief. However, I live with severe chronic pain and stiffness of the spine affecting both posture and daily activity. My condition cannot be reversed. I have jokingly said that "pain is my best friend, we are always together" but it is wearing me out and limiting my ministry.

I believe that someone younger with more energy, stamina and pastoral vision should take over the role of Ordinary for the Diocese of Calgary. The needs of this ever-expanding diocese are enormous. I have given it my best and I am past my "best due date" – it is time to retire. I would like to propose that my retirement take place effective December 31, 2016.

Wishing you all the best, I remain,

Sincerely yours in Christ,

✠ F. B. Henry
Bishop of Calgary