

LANGUAGE POLICY FOR THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN SASKATCHEWAN

1. Foundation

1.1 The French speaking settlers in the early 1600's came and brought with them their language, culture and faith, laying the ground work for the establishment of the Catholic Church in Canada. It was not long until a growing number of English and European settlers would soon arrive bringing with them multiple other denominations. The Church recognizes the significant contributions made by French speaking Catholics in ensuring that the faith continued to flourish in Quebec and to other provinces of Canada. It was through the strategic efforts of the Catholic Church that these French speaking settlers from Quebec came to Saskatchewan to establish French speaking communities where they continued to practice their religion and language. Religious Orders established French language schools, hospitals, convents and seminaries to support the Church and the faith of the French speaking Catholics in Saskatchewan.

1.2 The Catholic Church at the Second Vatican Council recognized that it was well-founded to change its practices to allow celebrations in the language of the people. This means that the Church recognizes that religious practices are all the more significant when they are celebrated in the individual's language. In addition, Pope John XXIII in his encyclical *Pacem in Terris* enjoins the public authorities to treat minorities favorably in these words:

"Indeed, the best interests of justice are served by those public authorities who do all they can to improve the human conditions of the members of these minority groups, especially in what concerns their language, culture, ancient traditions, and their economic activity and enterprise." *Pope John XXIII (1963). Pacem in Terris*, (on-line, no. 96), Vatican.

http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-xxiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jxiii_enc_11041963_pacem.html

1.3 As well, Pope John Paul II, during his trip to Canada, emphasized the importance for all to feel responsible for the common good of society and for maintaining unity, a unity based on mutual love which he defines in these terms: "Mutual love means, in its fundamental dimension, the relationships between human beings, built on the respect for the individual dignity of the other and the genuine concern for one's true well-being." (Words of a pilgrim, Homily Winnipeg / St. Boniface, September 16, 1984, p. 227)

1.4 In studying the application of this policy to Canada's linguistic communities, it is important to note that the Church in Canada has two official languages, French and

English, and that no geographical boundary has ever been imposed or even suggested for their use. For example, the use of French in liturgical celebrations or in pastoral life has never been limited to Quebec, Acadia or French Ontario. On the contrary, the general practice of the Church has been to study the needs of the faithful and the Church has been encouraged to respond sensibly and generously to the faithful's linguistic and cultural needs.

- 1.5 The privilege and opportunity to practice one's religion in French in the context of French culture have always been, for many, part of the living tradition of Francophones in Saskatchewan. Indeed, the history of the province reveals that, for many generations, French Canadians have been practicing Catholics. When French speaking Catholics settled in Saskatchewan, they saw the Church, its institutions and its staff not only as instruments for assuring their faith but also as essential elements for the development and vitality of the language and culture of their communities. Until very recently, many villages and municipalities were, for all intents and purposes, French speaking. The local church, the parish hall and the Catholic school were the heart of the community. Not so long ago, the Church and the Francophone community saw a close connection between language and faith, a link well reflected in the popular saying at the time: "Whoever loses his language loses his faith!" Lately, demographic changes have meant that in many places, the use of French has been greatly reduced or even eliminated. Although fewer in number, today's Francophone Catholic communities continue to believe that access to pastoral and liturgical services that respect their language and culture is vital to their survival.
- 1.6 In creating the Conseil pastoral francophone interdiocésain de la Saskatchewan (CPFIS), (Francophone Inter Diocesan Pastoral Council of Saskatchewan) the Catholic Bishops of Saskatchewan recognize the important contribution of French Canadians to the development of the Church in Canada (priests, religious, lay people) and more specifically the contribution of the French speaking people of Saskatchewan to the development of the Catholic Church in Saskatchewan. The Bishops also recognize the importance of fostering "the development of the faith according to this culture so that our Saskatchewan Church is enriched." (Letter from the Bishops of Saskatchewan to the Francophone and bilingual parishes, January 19, 1999)
- 1.7 The mandate of CPFIS is to represent Francophone Catholics in the province with the Catholic Bishops of Saskatchewan in order to promote their pastoral needs and foster the growth of the province's Francophone and bilingual parishes. In addition, CPFIS works to strengthen the relationships between these parishes, to facilitate the exchange of ideas and resources across the three dioceses and to encourage the sharing of pastoral efforts at all levels. In so doing, it promotes the development of faith among the faithful of French language and culture.

2. Purpose

2.1 The purpose of this policy is to promote and develop the French and bilingual parishes in Saskatchewan, to provide French language services offered by the Church, its agencies and its staff.

3. Policy

3.1 By virtue of the history of the Catholic Church in Canada, that of the Francophone community within the Church in Saskatchewan, and Canada's linguistic duality, the Catholic Bishops of Saskatchewan, concerned with its responsibilities for the development and growth of the French speaking Catholics of the province, commit to:

- i) give the French language its historical place within the Catholic Church in Saskatchewan;
- ii) promote the use of French where this use will be used for the growth of French and bilingual parishes;
- iii) recognize the need of French speaking parishioners to a pastoral and liturgical life in French as well as services in their language;
- iv) increase its ability to communicate in French and to identify measures favorable to the development of Francophone and bilingual parishes;
- v) recognize the importance for French speaking parishioners to participate fully in parish life in their language;
- vi) acknowledge that the extent to which French pastoral services is not determined by a majority/minority vote in a win-lose scenario but rather in one of mutual respect, understanding and promotion of linguistic and cultural identity;
- vii) recognize and appreciate the uniqueness of francophone and bilingual parishes as contributing and supporting the dualistic and bilingual nature of Canada.

3.2 Aware of its responsibilities, the community of Catholic Francophones agrees to :

- i) engage in a regular dialogue with the Bishops and represent their needs and wishes;
- ii) actively seek various means to meet its needs; and,

- iii) to be involved in the development of the Church in Saskatchewan in order to come together to be an ever more vibrant Christian community.

4 Objectives

4.1 The objectives of this policy are:

- i) the implementation and promotion of French language services;
- ii) the promotion of a concerted approach between the dioceses and the French and bilingual parishes to ensure the efficient use of the available bilingual resources and to exploit their full potential; and,
- iii) the implementation and promotion of mechanisms of collaboration between priests / leaders of French and bilingual parishes.

5. Implementation

- 5.1 Bishops, in collaboration with CPFIS, are responsible for the implementation and evaluation of this policy. To this end, the Bishops, with the support of CPFIS, will develop and co-ordinate the guidelines necessary for the application of this policy.
- 5.2 Every priest, religious, or lay person assigned to a French or bilingual parish is jointly responsible with the lay leadership and the parish as a whole for implementing this policy according to the established guidelines.
- 5.3 An annual report will be prepared by CPFIS members describing the existing situation in French and bilingual parishes, highlighting the progress and results of the steps taken and proposing recommendations that are deemed appropriate.

6. Field of application

- 6.1 This policy applies to all parishes identified by CPFIS as parishes that are French or bilingual and who, after consultation, wish to receive services in French.