



OFFICE OF THE ARCHBISHOP

February 2020

Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Once again we are preparing for our annual Day of Confessions. This year it takes place on Tuesday, March 3. On that day, all the priests of the Archdiocese of Edmonton will make themselves available throughout the day to hear your confession, and to grant that greatest of all gifts: absolution, forgiveness in the name of Christ. It's the moment of truth-telling that sets us free. It's the moment of forgiveness that brings us peace.

As we prepare, I suggest we reflect on this invitation from Jesus himself: "Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest." (*Matt 11:28*) Here Jesus makes very clear his desire to lift from our hearts all that is weighing us down. There is no heavier burden than unrepentant guilt; it expresses itself in fear, anxiety, clouded thinking, and eclipsed moral vision. Peace is not possible as long as we live with the sin from which we have not been released.

Jesus wants to lift that burden. He makes that possible for each of us by means of the Sacrament of Penance, also called the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Central to it is the act of confession, that special moment when we place ourselves before the tender and merciful gaze of the Lord, speak the truth, and profess our sorrow to the priest, who is ordained to act in the very person of Jesus. When the priest pronounces the words of absolution, Christ forgives us completely, and the burden is lifted. The peace that he wills for each of us is bestowed – the peace that comes from knowing that in spite of any and all wrongdoing, Christ continues to love me, to call me his own, and help me to continue on the path to holiness in life.

Pope Francis reminds us that there is no sin that God cannot pardon; all we need to do is ask for forgiveness. Remember that God is *always* merciful. Trust in Him. Confess your sins and allow Him to lift your burden and give you peace.

Yours sincerely in Christ,

✠Richard W. Smith
Archbishop of Edmonton