



OFFICE OF THE ARCHBISHOP

We Believe!

*The Archdiocese of Edmonton Celebrates the Gift of Faith*

## **Introduction**

Faith is the lifeblood of Christians. A wondrous gift of the Holy Spirit, faith is the opening of the heart and mind to God, who has loved us first (cf. *1John* 4:19). It is the acceptance, with trust in divine providence and wisdom, of all that God has revealed in his Son Jesus Christ. By faith working through love (cf. *Galatians* 5:6) we are led to salvation!

Such a precious gift must be constantly nourished. We are very grateful, then, that three major initiatives aimed at enabling our growth in faith will unfold in the pastoral year before us. Each in its own way brings to light various dimensions of the faith. Taken together, they form a wonderful celebration of faith's beauty and grandeur.

First of all, we celebrate this year our centenary. One hundred years as the Archdiocese of Edmonton! A century of faith-filled living! Second, we welcome with joy the Year of Faith, proclaimed by Pope Benedict XVI. This period of grace begins on October 11, the fiftieth anniversary of the opening of the Second Vatican Council, and concludes November 24, 2013, the Solemnity of Christ the King. It is offered to the Church by the Holy Father as an occasion to enrich our knowledge of the faith in the light of the Council documents and the subsequent *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. Finally, within the context of these two historic moments, we shall bring *Nothing More Beautiful*, our initiative aimed at a deepening of faith in view of the new evangelization, to conclusion.

## **Our Centenary**

When, on November 30, 1912, the Episcopal See of Saint Albert became the Archdiocese of Edmonton, its first Archbishop, the Most Reverend Emile Legal, spoke of the time as a

"wonderful transformation." Such a phrase embraces far more than a change in the ecclesiastical status of a geographical territory. It captures the effect of faith, which establishes the true boundaries of the Christian life. The gift of faith transforms us. By the act of faith, we surrender our entire lives to God, who comes to us in the gifts of Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. We entrust ourselves to God's loving providence and infinite wisdom. We accept the revelation he has given us in Christ and appropriate it as the guiding light of our lives. Such faith inevitably brings about profound and lasting changes in our lives as we detach ourselves from all that is unholy and untrue and embrace the beauty and truth of Jesus Christ and his Gospel.

Such a life of faith is possible only with the help of God's grace. In this centennial year we give thanks for the countless blessings that have enabled the people of this Archdiocese to make the sacrifices that have shaped our history and thus realize the beauty of being Catholic and the joy of living it. To commemorate this "wonderful transformation," parish artifacts and biographies have been collected and placed together in a presentation that will be brought to various points of the Archdiocese. In addition, a display will be available to the public at Edmonton City Hall. A specially commissioned icon of our patron, Saint Joseph the Worker, will be blessed at the centennial celebration of our patronal feast on May 1, 2013, after which it will tour the Archdiocese.

Our centenary, as a moment of grace, is at heart an opportunity to be renewed in our relationship with the Lord and his Church. Therefore, we have set aside a special day, during which all are invited to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation. On March 6, 2013, our priests will make themselves available throughout the day in their parishes to hear confessions and bestow God's great gift of mercy and peace.

At this time I wish to draw your attention in particular to the solemn Mass that will mark the opening of both our centenary and the Year of Faith. It will take place at Saint Joseph's Basilica, Edmonton, on October 11, 2012 at 7:00 p.m. This date has been chosen to coincide with the Opening Mass for the Year of Faith celebrated by Pope Benedict XVI in Rome.

## **The Year of Faith**

In his Apostolic Letter *Porta Fidei* (The Door of Faith), Pope Benedict XVI explains why he has called us to mark a special Year of Faith. In his own words, this is a "good opportunity to usher the whole Church into a time of particular reflection and rediscovery of the faith." (*Porta Fidei*, n. 4) Indeed, the Holy Father has summoned us, from the very beginning of his pontificate, to a renewal of faith. We have been responding in a particular way through the *Nothing More Beautiful* series, and now we have received from the Pope a new opportunity to intensify our efforts even more.

Knowledge of the treasury of faith is essential to a Catholic life fully lived. However, it is widely acknowledged that today, among our people, such knowledge is seriously diminished. Therefore, we shall take advantage of this special year to help one another renew our understanding and appropriation of what the Church teaches. In accordance with the express wishes of the Holy Father, our Office for Evangelization and Catechesis will make available to the Archdiocese particular instruction upon the Second Vatican Council, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, and the Creed.

It is very important that we not view this as simply an academic exercise. Yes, faith has a content, which must be known. Yet faith is more. In its essence it is a relationship with God. As such, faith is an opening of the heart to God who has revealed and given himself by sending his Son and Holy Spirit. This movement of the heart is, itself, the gift of God's grace, and it leads us not only to surrender to the person of Christ but also to accept the truth he has made known. This means that the act of faith must be constantly nourished through prayer, reflection upon the Word and celebration of the sacraments, especially the Eucharist and Penance.

At Sunday Mass, the faith that is nourished in the heart by sacramental grace is given beautiful expression in the Creed. We have grown accustomed to reciting this in the short form of the *Apostles' Creed*. Its full articulation is the *Nicene Creed*, with which we must likewise be familiar. In keeping with the goal of understanding and celebrating the faith in its fullness, I am hereby calling on our parishes and institutions to recite the *Nicene Creed* in the Masses of every Sunday and Solemnity throughout the Year of Faith. Explanations of its various articles will be provided on our website and to our parishes.

### **The Abiding Call to Mission**

In virtue of our faith, the summons to mission inhabits us. By faith and the sacraments we live in communion with the self-offering of our Lord for the life of the world. This impels us outwards into the world to witness to the Gospel through works of justice and charity. Indeed, such deeds gave birth to the Church in Western Canada when male and female religious orders arrived and established churches, hospitals and schools.

We are called to share the Gospel both at home and abroad. Our final year of *Nothing More Beautiful* presentations will highlight this through its focus on the beauty of the apostolate, especially of laypeople. Although the faith has taken deep root here and is in many ways vibrant, nevertheless it is true that many of our fellow citizens have yet to know Jesus Christ and the joy of life in him. Many pressing social issues are in urgent need of the light of the Gospel.

Elsewhere in our country and world the suffering of many is not absent from our concern, and we need always to be thinking of new ways to reach out in love.

In response to this imperative to mission, I wish to bring to your attention two new initiatives to be launched in the coming months. These are in addition to the other activities flowing from *Nothing More Beautiful*, as announced in my pastoral letter of last year.

#### *National Pastoral Plan for Life and Family*

The Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops has approved a national plan in service of the cause of life and the needs of the family. It belongs to each Diocese of the country to discern how the various ideas proposed at the national level will be put in place locally in accordance with particular circumstances and available resources. A cornerstone of this plan will be a week set aside annually to honour the family and celebrate life. The first of these yearly celebrations will occur May 5-12, 2013. Our Archdiocesan Office of Family and Life will be formulating activities for this week as well as for our general participation in the national pastoral plan.

#### *A New Partnership with the Diocese of Mackenzie-Fort Smith*

In his Apostolic Letter *Ecclesia in America*, Blessed Pope John Paul II asked the Dioceses of the Western hemisphere to consider how they might enter into partnerships of mutual solidarity and support as an expression of ecclesial communion (cf. *EA*, number 37.) To mark our centennial and in keeping with our missionary nature, I am pleased to announce that the Archdiocese of Edmonton is entering a partnership with the Diocese of Mackenzie-Fort Smith in the Northwest Territories. We each have gifts to share with the other in response to our respective needs. On November 21 of this year, the Archdiocese will host a gala banquet in celebration of our centenary. Funds raised at this dinner will be used in support both of our sister diocese and of the local Saint Vincent de Paul Society, which cares for our poor here at home. As this partnership unfolds, I am confident that many blessings await us.

#### **The Need for Constant Prayer**

"Apart from me you can do nothing." (*John* 15: 5) These words of our Lord remind us that our efforts can only bear fruit if we live in union with him. In order that our work derive both its inspiration and direction from Christ and, by his grace, reach completion, it must be nourished and sustained by the constant prayer of the people of God. Therefore, I ask that all members of the Archdiocese unite with me in prayer for God's blessings upon not only our centenary and the Year of Faith, but also the many works we must undertake in service of the new evangelization. The Office of Evangelization and Catechesis is placing together in one publication prayers for the new evangelization, for the protection of human life and for vocations. It will also include the

*Nicene Creed*, so that this profession of faith may become for us a daily prayer and known by heart. The publication will be available on our website and distributed throughout the Archdiocese. I ask that we pray these frequently, especially before the Blessed Sacrament. In particular, I turn for support to those among us who are confined to home or hospital through disability or illness. Your prayers will be a particular source of strength and blessing for the entire Archdiocese.

As we embark upon this time of grace, let us invoke the intercession of Mary, the model of faith. Her heart was fully open to the will of God, even to the point of its piercing by a sword of sorrow at the suffering and death of her Son. By the help of her prayers, may our hearts be open in faith to the working of the Holy Spirit, who draws us ever more closely to Christ and one another and strengthens us for mission.



✠Richard W. Smith  
Archbishop of Edmonton  
September 14, 2012  
Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross