



OFFICE OF THE ARCHBISHOP

August, 2012

Dear Friends in Christ,

Throughout the past three years we have become increasingly aware of the reality of homelessness in Alberta. The City of Edmonton's "Ten Year Plan to End Homelessness" and several other initiatives have reminded us of our responsibility as Catholics, and members of the Interfaith community, to "find new and creative ways to address the issue of homelessness and affordable housing in our communities".

I am writing to ask for your support of Catholic Social Services (CSS)' *Welcome Home* program, which is a volunteer-based service that offers companionship to individuals and families who are making the transition from homelessness. Operating in collaboration with Housing First agencies, specially trained *Welcome Home* volunteers provide companionship to newly housed individuals and families to reduce their experience of social isolation and loneliness. The relationship between the volunteers and the newly housed 'participants' is based upon openness and a respect for the strengths and gifts of each person, so that the participants may truly feel at home in their new communities.

In order to have enough women and men to journey with these participants, a minimum of 100 volunteers will be needed from our Archdiocese. We thank those parishioners who have already signed on as volunteers to *Welcome Home* and are now matched with participants. However, many more volunteers are needed, and I ask that you please encourage your parishioners to become involved in this important program.

As you plan your parish programs for 2012-2013, I ask that you contact Sr. Mary Clare Stack, CSS Parish Relations Manager, to arrange: a *Welcome Home* workshop with your parishioners; a workshop within your Deanery; or partner with other Christian denominations in your community so that the *Welcome Home* program can "bear abundant fruit". Sr. Mary Clare may be reached at [sister.maryclare@catholic-socialservices.ab.ca](mailto:sister.maryclare@catholic-socialservices.ab.ca) or (780) 378-2455.

May God bless you abundantly for your leadership, cooperation, and support.

✠Richard W. Smith  
Archbishop of Edmonton