



**2016 NATIONAL WEEK FOR LIFE AND THE FAMILY:
LETTER TO CATHOLIC FAMILIES FROM
THE PRESIDENT OF THE CANADIAN CONFERENCE OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS**

May 2016

Dear Catholic families,

Every year the Church in Canada sets aside one week to celebrate Life and the Family. This is also a special moment to reflect and pray on how the family and life itself are two fundamental gifts from God. This year's Week for Life and the Family will be observed May 8 to 15. During this Jubilee Year of Mercy, it is especially appropriate that we focus on the irreplaceable role the family has as God's first school of mercy.

We are all painfully aware of the innumerable challenges confronting our families. Despite their best efforts, parents frequently find themselves heart-broken by the many hardships and challenges which their children confront and experience when facing the painful choices of life. To make matters more difficult, many in our society have lost their way and do not know where to turn. We need only think about the situation in our country as it debates the issue of euthanasia and assisted suicide. That so many place their hope for a good death in the possibility of access to physician-assisted suicide is surely a sign that our society is experiencing tremendous disappointment in finding love and mercy. Those who feel themselves loved seldom choose death. The world needs mercy!

The Lord Jesus tells us that he is "the way". This simple teaching is the Gospel in miniature. Christ is the fullness of mercy. Jesus is the way. He shows us this, and opens it before us, in his teaching, his life, his death and his Resurrection. Each of us is called to imitate the Lord in his life-giving justice and merciful self-giving love. We are to do this in our daily lives: at home, at school, in our work places. Following Our Lord's way is only possible in *union* with Christ who offers us his very life in word and sacrament, and most especially in the Eucharist which is the "source and the summit of the Christian life".

With my brother Bishops, it is my prayer that during this year's Week for Life and the Family, you as today's disciples of Christ, with your families, from coast to coast to coast, will gather around the Table of the Lord to draw more deeply from the cup of his transforming love. Following the example of our Mother Mary and good Saint Joseph, and through their intercession, may our homes become havens of peace where the way of Christ is cherished and nurtured, and schools of mercy in which children flourish and future generations learn to give of themselves joyfully and generously.

(Most Rev.) Douglas Crosby, OMI
Bishop of Hamilton
President of the Canadian Conference
of Catholic Bishops