

## **Vision for the Future: New Life in Christ**

The celebration of the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Winnipeg Metropolia of the Ukrainian Catholic Church in Canada has been a time of grace, a very special time to reflect seriously – as Church and as individual faithful – on our Christian vocation, and to make a serious effort to respond to Jesus' invitation to draw closer to him.

We now conclude our series of spiritual reflections, which have been an important part of our Jubilee celebrations aimed at our spiritual renewal.

Today, every Ukrainian Catholic parish throughout Canada joins together once again to reflect upon the theme of a "Vision for the Future: New Life in Christ."

*Themes: The need for people who live from the heart; Who is Jesus Christ for us?; Only love can save the world from destruction.*

### **The Need for People who Live from the Heart**

Many Christians today are tired of living superficial lives. They desire to move beyond the surface of Christianity. They are turning away from a purely worldly orientation to a life centered on God, on love, because God is love. They want to take seriously St. Paul's advice: "Be not conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind." (Rom 12:2) They are looking for a deeper relationship with Christ.

In spite of all the horrible things that are going on in the world – the unprecedented violence, bloodshed, torture, oppression, terrorism, injustice, attempted genocide, slaughter of the unborn, massacre of the innocent, which the Holy Father John Paul called the culture of death; add to that the negativity we see in the Church: the scandals, lack of vocations to the priesthood and religious life, the break-up of Christian marriages and family life – it is no wonder that there is a failing spirit, a sense that something is definitely wrong.

That's the bad news.

But the good news is that beneath all the darkness and death, beneath all the confusion, a greater power is at work, and something new is coming to birth. While prophets of doom are crying: "Repent, for the end is near," Pope John Paul declared: "Repent, for a new beginning has come! While some prepare for disaster, the Holy Father calls the Church and the whole world to begin the new millennium with a burning hope that God is still at work renewing his beloved creation. There is a feeling in the air, a sense of something entirely new in the making.

So, in spite of the horrible things happening around us, there is also a feeling in the air, a sense that something entirely new is the making. As the Holy Father described it: "The tears of this century have prepared the ground for a new springtime of the human spirit."

The celebration of Jubilee 2000, of God entering our human condition, of becoming one of us, was certainly a moment of special grace and the outpouring of God's Holy Spirit, and to share it with others.

It was and continues to be an invitation to open wide our hearts to this new thing God is doing; to receive with gratitude the pouring out of God's love and to generously share it with others.

This is our only hope in world that has gone mad; in a world where reason and technology were supposed to give us the solution to the world's problems, when meanwhile, with all our scientific and technological know-how, we seem to be on the brink of disaster; when not only religious leaders, but men of science are warning us that we have already reached a point of no return; that we are on a suicide course.

Something is definitely wrong. We all feel it. We can send a man to the moon and back, but after 2000 years of Christianity we still haven't learned to get along with each other. We can't keep peace in our families, in our countries. There is so much violence, hatred, and greed. Why? What's wrong? What happened?

What has happened is that we've all but lost our soul. Jesus said: "What does it profit a man if he gains the whole world, but loses his soul?" We've given up our soul for material things. We've sacrificed the real thing for a false security. But life without a soul, without a heart, is life without love, without God.

We cannot live without loving and being loved. Moreover, love which does not lead to God is a sad love, and is doomed to die. If we're not loving, we're dying. Without love, without God the mind goes insane; reason becomes unreasonable. Only love can bring us back to our senses. Only love can heal our sick world. Only a whole-hearted response to the call of Jesus, the call of love can free our soul from the bondage of death. Jesus invites us not to be content with the superficial, but to go deeper into his heart. He invites us to touch the wounds of his tremendous love.

### **Who is Jesus Christ for Us?**

The celebration of the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Winnipeg Metropolia is a time of grace, a very special time to reflect seriously on our Christian vocation, and make a serious effort to respond to Jesus' invitation to draw closer to him.

When on the day of Pentecost the Holy Spirit descended on the disciples, they became so intensely aware of the presence of Christ, they were so deeply convinced of his tremendous love for them, that from that moment on Christ was able to see through their eyes, speak through their lips, and do his mighty works through their hands. In other words, with the awareness of the presence of Christ in their hearts, the disciples were able to be Jesus for others.

This is our Christian vocation: to be Jesus for others.

Jesus said: "You will do the works that I do, and even greater than these you will do." What works was Jesus talking about? He was talking about sacrificial love, compassion, and forgiveness. Jesus said: "By this will they know that you are my followers if you love one another."

In order to make this happen we need to become intensely aware of the presence of Jesus in our hearts. We need to know Jesus and his tremendous love for us. This can happen only through heart felt prayer. Jesus said: "If you, evil as you are, know how to give good things to your children, how much more will your Heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him."

When Jesus began his public ministry we hear him calling us to "Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand!" You might notice that there is nothing negative in his call to conversion, to repent. There is no threat of destruction or punishment, or condemnation. There is no doom or gloom. Jesus is inviting us to wake up to a new reality. In calling us to repentance Jesus is inviting us to a radical change of heart; to change our whole outlook on life, on God, on ourselves, on others. Why? Because there is something totally new in the offering.

### **Only Love Can Save the World from Destruction**

In contemporary terms it might sound something like this: "Look, I know things are bad in the world, really bad. But in spite of all the rotten and evil things you see on television every day, and hear over the radio, or read in the newspapers and experience in your own life, God still loves the world. I said it before very clearly, and I'll say it again:

"God loved the world so much, that he sent his Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish, but will have eternal life."

Even now something absolutely wonderful is happening. Something totally new is in the making. God is releasing a new energy in the world, his Holy Spirit, that can change all of this. The Spirit of God has the power to change the minds and hearts of men, women, and children, and renew the face of the earth.

"God is doing something that is beyond your wildest dreams. A new era is dawning. The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand." In spite of the great apostasy, rejection of God, and counterfeit Christianity, men, women and children are being offered the grace to recognize the presence of God and his tremendous love for them.

"Yes, God is with you. He dwells in your heart. His love and forgiveness are in you. Sin, evil, and even death itself do not have any power over you; not unless you let them. Because they have been conquered and utterly destroyed by God's tremendous love."

Jesus invites us to share in his life; to humbly submit to his baptism of fire; to allow him to immerse us in the fire of his compassion, love, and forgiveness; that through the power of the Holy Spirit we might be transformed into his likeness and do the things that he did; to bring his Kingdom on earth as it is in Heaven.

The future, said the Holy Father John Paul II, holds tremendous possibilities for those who open themselves to the power of the Holy Spirit. When this happens, he said, we can take part in a "new springtime that heralds the transformation of ourselves, our Church, our nation, our entire planet."

This is the challenge before us: to recognize the presence of Christ in our hearts; to place all our trust in his unconditional love; to love him with our whole heart and soul; to become like him.

This is the purpose of human life on earth, and our only hope for a world that has gone mad; that we, who claim to be his followers continue to bring the liberating message to men and women by the example of our lives; that we become clear witnesses of the one who said: "I am the way, the truth, and life . . . I have told you all these things so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full."

### **Jubilee Prayer**

Lord, Jesus Christ, as we celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the establishment of the Ukrainian Catholic Metropolia, we give thanks for your loving kindness and the abundant graces received during the span of fifty years.

We also humbly ask for the grace of an ever deeper realization of your loving presence; that we are all children of one Heavenly Father.

Again and again, we pray for the grace of perseverance in faith; that we may all be united in your loving and compassionate heart, and that with renewed enthusiasm, love and compassion, we might continue the work of salvation for the glory of our Heavenly Father.

May your holy will be done on earth, as it is in Heaven! Amen.