



**2017 NATIONAL WEEK FOR LIFE AND THE FAMILY:
LETTER TO CATHOLIC FAMILIES FROM
THE PRESIDENT OF THE CANADIAN CONFERENCE OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS**

May 2017

Dear Catholic families,

Every year the Church in Canada sets aside one week to celebrate Life and the Family. This is a special time to reflect on the importance of the family and to renew our commitment, as followers of Christ, to upholding the dignity of human life at every stage of development, from conception to natural death. This year's Week for Life and the Family will be observed from 14 May (Mother's Day) to 21 May, with the theme, "Love Grows by Giving . . ."

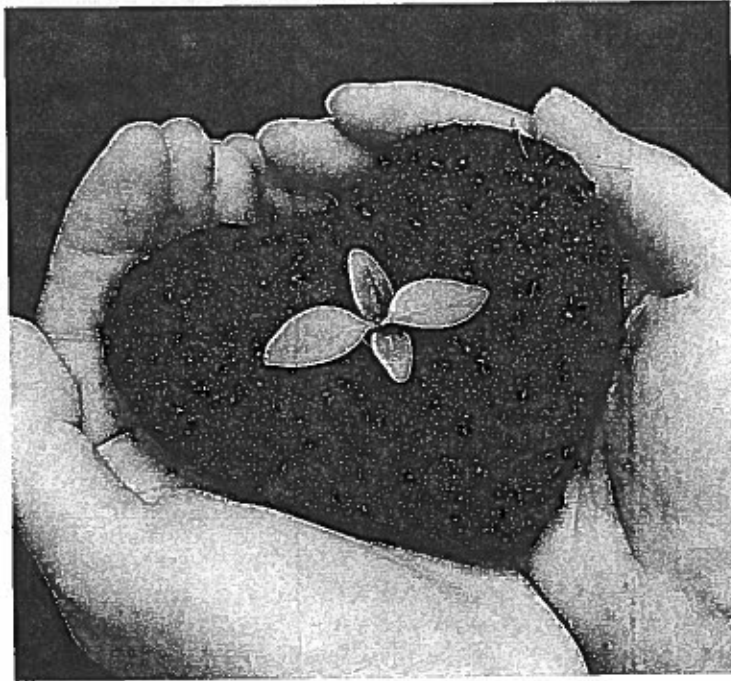
None of us is unaware of, or immune to, the pain created by the great challenges confronting contemporary families. In their 2011 document "Elements of a National Pastoral Initiative for Life and the Family," the Bishops of Canada observed that "virtually every form of poverty – material, emotional, moral or spiritual – has its origin in some kind of deprivation within the family". What is most lacking today is love – the kind of love that Jesus Christ came to give; a love which gives without counting the cost; a transformative love which can be found in its perfection only in Him who is love incarnate and in whom we can be transformed and empowered to love just as He loves. To a society confused about the nature of love, Pope Francis offers a piercingly insightful reflection on love's true meaning in his recent Apostolic Exhortation *Amoris Laetitia*.

Each of us is called to *imitate* the Lord Jesus in his life-giving justice and merciful self-giving love. As the Holy Father points out, we are to do this wherever life finds us, but especially, and perhaps most challengingly, in the family! In this, the Lord blazes a trail for us, and what is more, He provides the means by which we are to follow Him and to arrive at our ultimate destination. Jesus tells us that He himself is "the way" and, we might say, "the means". Following the Lord's way is only possible in *union* with Him, He 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 and your family may be inspired by the example of Our Lady who, in her openness, was called to contain the fullness of God's Love. Let us approach the Table of the Lord with Marian openness and, drawing deeply from the cup and the loaf of her son's transforming love, allow ourselves to become the love and the peace for which our world so desperately yearns.

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

“LOVE GROWS BY GIVING”



National Week for Life and the Family May 14-21, 2017

In God's great plan of love for humanity, the family is intended to be the privileged place where merciful love is first encountered and nurtured. Every family has its challenges; but parents and children who seek Christ through prayer, in the Word of God and the sacraments gradually become more and more like Christ who is mercy made flesh. In the family, the Christian child becomes the recipient of Christ's love, exemplified by the self-giving lives of his/her parents and is thus empowered to make the sincere gift of self which the Second Vatican Council tells us is the only meaning of love. The child who receives unconditional love is, in the very receiving, empowered to bestow unconditional love. During this National Week for Life and the Family (May 14-21), let us celebrate our families' wonderful calling to be nurseries of unconditional love.

Pope Francis has repeatedly called the faithful to "go to the periphery" in extending God's unconditional love and mercy. As he reminds us: *"Faith finds expression in concrete everyday actions meant to help our neighbours in body and spirit" ... feeding the hungry, visiting the sick, welcoming strangers, offering instruction, giving comfort, incarnating God's unconditional love – being His hands and feet in the world ... "on such things will be judged.*