

**Evangelization  
A New Springtime**

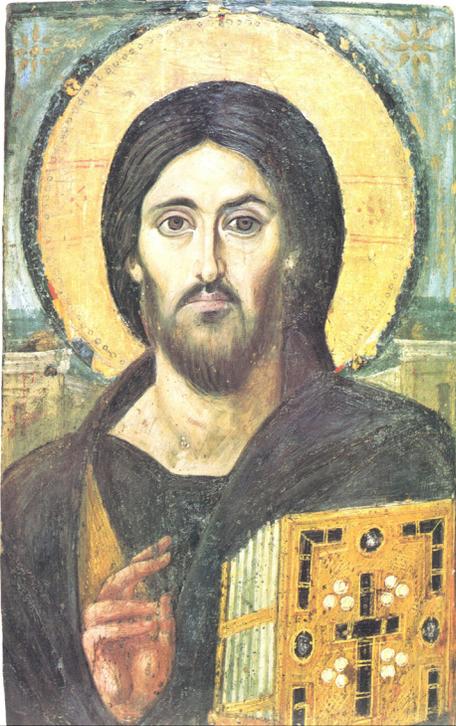
**“Encountering the Person of Christ”**

**25 Year Pastoral Plan  
Eparchy of Edmonton  
2012**



Evangelization – A New Springtime  
“Encountering the Person of Christ”  
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## Evangelization A New Springtime

### “Encountering the Person of Christ”

*Glory be to Jesus Christ!*

To the Priests and Deacons, Women and Men Religious and Monastics, and Lay Faithful,

Have you ever set out on a long-distance trip but weren't quite sure where you were going and how to get there? If you're lucky, you eventually arrived at your destination, but most likely with a few wrong turns, some backtracking, and a bit late.

It's always better to know your destination well, and with the help of some maps to plot out the best possible route, leave room for the unexpected.

Planning ahead in the Church is no different. Where are we going? Or rather, where is the Holy Spirit calling us to be as Church five years from now, ten years, twenty-five years? And how will we get there?

Over the past several years, we, your Eparchial Pastoral Council, have embarked upon an ambitious endeavour of discerning and preparing a 25 Year Pastoral Plan.

Why twenty-five years? Well, we think five years is a relatively short period of time in the life of the Church, and often brings with it rigidity, inflexibility, and a desire to maintain the status quo. Twenty-five years, on the other hand, gives us freedom to dream, to hope, to vision, yet it is still within our reach and something to strive for in a given lifetime.

Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, let us respond to God's call to be Church with insight and courage.

#### ***Eparchial Pastoral Council***

*Most Rev. David Motiuk (Eparchial Bishop), Rt. Rev. William Hupalo (Protosyncellus), Rev. Gregory Faryna (Chancellor), Jayne Bury (Vice-Chair), Orest Eveneshen, Ronald Gnyra, Rev. Gabriel Haber OSBM, Ed Kostyshen (Chair), Bill Lewchuk, Denise Lucyshyn, Gordon Mitchell, Cheryl Semeniuk, Irene Tarnawsky, Ed Hecker, Christina Mandrusiak*

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## At the Beginning of a New Era

Pope John Paul II, in his Apostolic Letter, *At the Beginning of the New Millennium (Novo millennio ineunte)*, marking the 2000th Anniversary of the Birth of Jesus, called for pastoral planning by the Church, which initiated a new stage in its journey at the outset of the third millennium.

In his opening remarks, the Holy Father recalled the words of Jesus when one day, after preaching to the crowds, he invited the apostle Peter to “put out into the deep waters and let down your nets for a catch” (Luke 5:4). Peter and his companions – the first disciples called by Christ – cast their nets and, “When they had done this, they caught so many fish that their nets were beginning to break (Luke 5:6).

Jesus’ words “Put out into the deep” ring out as loudly today as they did some 2000 years ago.

As we embark upon a period of renewal within the Eparchy of Edmonton, like Peter and the other disciples, let us also place our hope and faith in Jesus and “put out into the deep,” trusting that the Lord will also navigate our journey into a deeper relationship with the mystery of the Holy Trinity.

## Starting Afresh From Christ

Returning again to Pope John Paul II’s letter, he reminds us of Christ’s constant presence, which has accompanied the Church for the past 2,000 years: “I am with you always, to the end of the age” (Matthew 28:20).

Reassured of the Lord’s presence in our midst, the Holy Father invites us to ask ourselves the same question put to Peter, having received the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, by the first converts in Jerusalem: “What should we do?” (Acts 2:37).

The Pope goes on to say that we should not fool ourselves into believing that we shall be saved from the great challenges that face us by some magical formula but rather by a person, by Christ, who assures us: “I am with you!”

It is therefore not a matter of inventing a new program. The program already exists:

It is the plan found in the Gospel and in the living tradition; it is the same as ever. Ultimately, it has its centre in Christ himself, who is to be known, loved and imitated so that in him we may live the life of the Trinity and with him transform history until its fulfilment in the heavenly Jerusalem. This is a program which does not change with shifts of times and cultures, even though it takes account of time and culture for the sake of true dialogue and effective communication. This program for all times is our program for the third millennium. But it must be translated into pastoral initiatives adapted the circumstances of each community. (*Novo millennio ineunte*, 29)

Thus, “starting afresh from Christ,” the Holy Father exhorts the bishops, with the help of all sectors of God’s people, confidently to plan the stages of the journey ahead.

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## Pastoral Priorities

Pope John Paul II, in the same letter, draws to our attention certain pastoral priorities which become the *sign posts* or guides for the Church's journey ahead.

Among these are: holiness, prayer, the Sunday Eucharist, the sacrament of reconciliation, attentiveness to the Word of God, the witness of love, diversity of vocations, Christian unity, and the gift of young people.

Let us look at each of these in greater detail, recalling that they are all rooted in Christ, who will guide us along our journey.

### Holiness

It is a misconception that only saints are called to be holy. On the contrary, there is a universal call to holiness. The gift of holiness becomes a task which must shape the whole of Christian life: "This is the will of God, your sanctification" (1 Thessalonians 4:3). It is a duty which concerns not only certain Christians: "All the Christian faithful, of whatever state or rank, are called to the fullness of the Christian life and the perfection of charity" (*Novo millennio ineunte*, 30-31).

### Prayer

"This training in holiness calls for a Christian life distinguished above all in the art of prayer." But prayer cannot be taken for granted. "We have to learn to pray – as it were, learning this art ever anew from the lips of the divine master himself, like the first disciples: 'Lord, teach us to pray!'" (Luke 11:1).

Let us rededicate ourselves, our families, our parish communities, in the "school" of prayer "where the meeting with Christ is expressed not just in imploring help but also in thanksgiving, praise, adoration, contemplation, listening and ardent devotion, until the heart truly 'falls in love.'" "By opening our heart to the love of God, it also opens it to the love of our brothers and sisters, and makes us capable of shaping history according to God's plan" (*Novo millennio ineunte*, 32-34).

“ You shall be holy,  
for I the LORD  
your God am holy.

### Sunday Eucharist

The Sunday Eucharist is the "summit toward which the Church's action tends and at the same time the source from which comes all its strength." For 2000 years, we have stressed the Sunday Eucharist and Sunday itself as a special day of faith, the day of the Risen Lord and of the gift of the Holy Spirit. The "Sunday Eucharist, which every week gathers Christians together as God's family round the table of the word and the bread of life" is above all a sacrament of unity.

The Sunday Eucharist is and will always be the centre of our Christian lives. Here, the Pope once again insists that sharing in the Eucharist should really be the heart of Sunday for every baptized person. "It is a fundamental duty, to be fulfilled not just in order to observe a precept but as something felt as essential" in a truly devout Christian life. We have a duty to take part in the Eucharist every Sunday (*Novo millennio ineunte*, 35-36).

This has a profound impact on how we see ourselves as Church, as the people of God, and consequently guide our approach in establishing new parishes in the future, as well as amalgamating, clustering, even closing parishes.

### **Mystery (Sacrament) of Reconciliation**

The Roman Pontiff asks for “renewed pastoral courage in ensuring that the day-to-day teaching of Christian communities persuasively and effectively presents the practice of the sacrament of reconciliation” (*Novo millennio ineunte*, 37) and he calls for a rediscovery of Christ in the mystery of compassion, the one in whom God shows us his compassionate heart and reconciles us fully with himself. It is this face of Christ that must be rediscovered through the sacrament of penance.

How often have we as individuals and as a nation been deprived by the lack of a forgiving heart, a sincere desire to change the direction of one’s life, and the possibility to be reborn every day in the newness of life in the Holy Spirit?

### **Primacy of Grace**

There is often a temptation to think that results depend on our own ability to act and to plan. We forget that “without Christ we can do nothing” (John 15:5). The Christian view of life involves the primacy of grace. “God of course invites us really to cooperate with his grace and therefore invite us to invest all our resources of intelligence and energy in serving the cause of the kingdom.” Otherwise, in frustration we share the experience of the disciples and the miraculous catch of fish: “We have worked all night long but have caught nothing” (Luke 5:5).

“This is the moment of faith, of prayer, of conversion with God, in order to open our hearts to the tide of grace and allow the word of Christ to pass through us in all its power: “Put out into the deep!” (*Novo millennio ineunte*, 38).

### **Listening to the Word of God**

We are invited to a renewed listening to the Word of God, the Sacred Scriptures. Pope John Paul II writes: “It is especially necessary that listening to the Word of God should become a life-giving encounter” with God. We are challenged to make sure that every family has a bible. And for those of us who have one, we are challenged to read it regularly with the enthusiasm of the Danish Philosopher, Søren Kierkegaard, who wrote in his diary these vivid words: “The bible should read as a young man reads a letter from the girl he loves; the bible is written for me!” (*Novo millennio ineunte*, 40-41).

“ Open our hearts to the tide of grace and allow the word of Christ to pass through us in all its power.

### **Proclaiming the Word of God**

It is not enough simply to read the Word of God. We must each be prepared to proclaim it from the rooftops with authority and conviction. Here we are reminded of the words of Saint Paul who cried out, “Woe to me if I do not preach the Gospel” (1 Corinthians 9:16).

The Holy Father speaks of a new sense of mission to preach the Word of God, not to be left to a select few, but involving all Christ’s faithful, ordained and non-ordained, women and men, young and old. He says, “Christ must be presented to all people with confidence. We shall address adults, families, young people, children, without ever hiding the most radical demands of the Gospel message, but taking into account each person’s needs in regard to their sensitivity and language” (*Novo millennio ineunte*, 40-41).

To this end, we should take steps to prepare ourselves better to be ambassadors of the Word of God by daily reflecting on the Sacred Scriptures, gathering in our parishes and in private homes regularly to study the bible, praying for a renewed Pentecost.

### Witness to Love

“By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another” (John 13:35). “If we have truly contemplated the face of Christ” says the Holy Father, “dear brothers and sisters, our pastoral planning will necessarily be inspired by the ‘new commandment’ which he has given us: ‘Love one another, just as I have loved you’” (John 13: 34) (*Novo millennio ineunte*, 42).

This is the attitude with which we must approach all acts of charity towards one another in our families, our parishes and communities, and throughout the world.

### Spirituality of Communion

We read in John’s Gospel, “By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another” (John 13:35).

The very essence of the mystery of Church is embodied by communion, the intimate relationship between God and his people, Christ and the Church, among family, school, neighbourhood, and community, life in the Trinity.

Pope John Paul II has gifted us with a profound teaching on the spirituality of communion, worth citing here in detail. He says,

A spirituality of communion indicates above all the heart’s contemplation of the mystery of the Trinity dwelling in us and whose light we must also be able to see shining on the face of the brothers and sisters around us.

A spirituality of communion also means an ability to think of our brothers and sisters in faith within the profound unity of the mystical body and therefore as ‘those who are a part of me.’ This makes us able to share their joys and sufferings, to sense their desires and attend to their needs, to offer them deep and genuine friendship.

A spirituality of communion implies also the ability to see what is positive in others, to welcome it and prize it as a gift from God: not only as a gift for the brother or sister who has received it directly, but also as a ‘gift for me.’

A spirituality of communion means, finally, to know how to ‘make room’ for our brothers and sisters, bearing ‘each other’s burdens’ (Galatians 6:2) and resisting the selfish temptations which constantly beset us and provoke competition, careerism, distrust and jealousy.” (*Novo millennio ineunte*, 43)

In a world that often tends towards individualism and self-centredness – me, myself and I – and – *What’s in it for me?* – the Church is called to serve as a constant reminder of communion, that we all belong to one body, the Body of Christ.

“By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”

### Diversity of Vocations

The Roman Pontiff reminds us of the “generous commitment needed in promoting vocations to the priesthood, religious, and monastic life.” He says, “There is a pressing need to implement an extensive plan of vocational promotion based on personal contact and involving parishes, schools and families in the effort to foster a more attentive reflection on life’s essential values.”

He also reminds us of the value of all other vocations “rooted as they are in the new life received in the sacrament of baptism. In a special way it will be necessary to discover ever more fully the specific vocation of the laity” who “have their own role to play in the mission of the whole of the people of God in the Church and in the world:” “from catechesis to liturgy, from the education of the young to the widest array of charitable works” (*Novo millennio ineunte*, 46-47).

### Stake Everything on Charity

For many, the world around us is defined in terms of economic, cultural and technological progress. Yet, for many millions more, the world is a place where living conditions are far below the minimum demanded by human dignity.

The Pope put it this way: “How can it be that even today there are still people dying of hunger? Condemned to illiteracy? Lacking the most basic medical care? Without a roof over their heads? (*Novo millennio ineunte*, 50).

What will define us as the Church of the future will be how well we respond, if at all, to Christ, who identifies himself with a preferential option for the poor: “I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me” (Matthew 25:35-36).

Our response as Church is to respond in charity to the needs of the poor in our midst, beginning with those in our neighbourhoods, yet reaching out to those beyond our borders but still within our reach. This is not simply an invitation to charity. This is the only response to the mystery of God who loves and seeks love from those created in his image and likeness, his adopted sons and daughters. After all, it is the measure by which we shall be judged in our fidelity as Church to the bridegroom, who is Christ.

“ I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink.

### Ecumenical Commitment

During the celebration of the Divine Liturgy, we profess in the Creed, “I believe in one Church.” This is simply not something nice which has been added on, an appendix as it were, to the Church, but belongs to the very essence of the Church.

May the prayer of Jesus in the Upper Room, “As you Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be one in us” (John 17:21), be our prayer. May we constantly work towards the unity of all Christians.

Thus, the Pope turns to the Churches of the East: “I look with great hope to the Eastern Churches, and I pray for a full return to that exchange of gifts which enriched the Church of the first millennium. May the memory of the time when the Church breathed with “both lungs” spur Christians of East

and West to walk together in unity of faith and with respect for legitimate diversity, accepting and sustaining each other as members of the one body of Christ” (*Novo millennio ineunte*, 48).

To this end, let us be evermore faithful to our spiritual and liturgical heritage, to the legitimate patrimony of the East. Then let us rejoice one with another and say, “How very good and pleasant it is when brothers and sisters live together in unity!” (Psalm 133:1).

### Gift of Young People

In the Pope’s letter, we find a strong and urgent reference to young people. The Holy Father invites the youth to be “morning watchmen” at the dawn of a new millennium (*Novo millennio ineunte*, 9). During the Jubilee Year 2000, Rome became young with the young. The Church becomes young with the young. We realize that young people are not only the hope for the future, but they are already present and active in the Church. They really are the *morning watchmen* at the dawn of the third millennium.

When the Pope launched the idea of World Youth Day, many critical voices were raised, some even hoped that this initiative would be a great failure. Yet, the response to each World Youth Day has been great and the Church is enriched by the contribution of a generation of young people that many considered lost.

The Holy Father, in his greeting for the 15th World Youth Day held in Rome, asked the young people, “What did you come to seek? ... What have you come in search of? ... There can only be one answer to that: you have come in search of Jesus Christ! But Jesus Christ has first gone in search of you.”

The young people were seeking Christ because this need of a sure guide is typical of youth. Young people “need guides, and they want them close at hand.” For this reason they need Christ, his Word, his person, his testimony, but above all his salvation.

The Church continues Christ’s work. Jesus Christ is in the Church, the Church is born from him. Only the Church can present Christ to the young people with certainty and truth. Christ is the best guide. He is the only one who has the words of eternal life.

With their enthusiasm, young people encourage the Church to *put out into the deep*. They tell us, with the Pope, not to be afraid to leave our many certainties to become seriously committed to a life of holiness and evangelization. They invite us to be generous. They teach us to put more trust in the action of the Lord, the only one who can change the hearts of millions of young people, than in ourselves who have spent many nights fishing without catching even one fish.

We must leave the comfort and peace of the lakeside and set out towards the encounter with God and with his people. Young people are the *morning watchmen* who will awaken the Church and put out into the deep in the vast ocean of the third millennium which is opening before the Church.

“ We realize that young people are not only the hope for the future... They really are the “morning watchmen” at the dawn of the third millennium.

## Saints Cyril and Methodius – A New Method of Catechesis

Well if, as Pope John Paul II says, “the program of evangelization exists” in the “plan found in the Gospel and in the living tradition,” then we still need to translate this program into pastoral initiatives appropriate for our day and age. For this we turn to Saints Cyril and Methodius.

In 988, Prince Volodymyr, inspired by the faith and baptism of his saintly grandmother Princess Olga, accepted baptism together with all the inhabitants of Kyivan-Rus'. Saint Volodymyr consolidated his state politically under the banner of Christianity and led Kyiv to become an important centre of political and ecclesial life bridging East and West.

In the Christianization of Kyivan-Rus', Saints Cyril and Methodius, Equal to the Apostles, deserve special recognition. The two holy brothers from Thessalonika, Greece, were masters at the inculturation of the one faith among the Slavic peoples.

Pope John Paul II, in his Encyclical, *Apostles of the Slavs (Slavorum Apostoli)*, honouring the two ninth century missionaries, writes:

For the purposes of evangelization, the two holy Brothers – as their biographies indicate – undertook the difficult task of translating the texts of the Sacred Scriptures, which they knew in Greek, into the language of the Slav population which had settled along the borders of their own region and native city. Making use of their own Greek language and culture for this arduous and unusual enterprise, they set themselves to understanding and penetrating the language, customs and traditions of the Slav peoples, faithfully interpreting the aspirations and human values which were present and expressed therein.

In order to translate the truths of the Gospel into a new language, they had to make an effort to gain a good grasp of the interior world of those to whom they intended to proclaim the word of God in images and concepts that would sound familiar to them. They realized that an essential condition of the success of their missionary activity was to transpose correctly Biblical notions and Greek theological concepts into a very different context of thought and historical experience. It was a question of a new method of catechesis. (*Slavorum Apostoli*, 10-11)

The Pope said that the *generous decision* of the two saints to identify themselves with the Slavic people's life and traditions, make them “true models for all the missionaries who in every period have accepted Saint Paul's invitation to become all things to all people to redeem all” (1 Corinthians 9:22).

Saints Cyril and Methodius owe their success primarily to their wisdom and ingenuity in inculturating, that is, adapting the Gospel message into a way understandable by those desiring to receive the gift of the person of Christ.

How might we adapt the Gospel message into a way more readily understandable in our day and age? For this, let us gain a better appreciation of the Canadian landscape, the *soil* in which the Gospel message was planted. Thus, our missionary efforts will be more fruitful.

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## Understanding the Canadian Landscape

For our ministry to be fruitful in Canada, we must know for whom and with whom we are called to minister. Knowing who we are as Canadians and how we think about Church is paramount in our approach to our ministry today and in the future.

### Recent Shifts in Canadian Society

Noteworthy recent changes in Canadian Society include:

- Demographic shift
- Financial challenges
- Impact of technology
- Increasing urbanization
- A changing rural Canada
- Public expectation
- Credibility of leaders

Further, Canada is marked by an emerging awareness in:

- Importance of culture
- Value/beauty of diversity
- Recognition of disabilities
- Role of women
- Reality of poverty
- Reality of violence
- Understanding of environment
- Link of social/economic development

Also, certain changes in faith-based organizations is occurring:

- New understanding of ministry
  - Emerging role of laity
  - New role of women
  - New understanding of leadership
  - Financial challenges
  - Changing membership
  - Loss of authority and credibility
-

## A Coat of Many Colours

With its geographical vastness and varied topography – the Atlantic, Arctic and Pacific Coasts, Canadian Shield, Laurentians, Prairies, Rockies, and Tundra – of its very nature Canada nurtures diversity.

This territorial divergence has translated itself over the years into a mosaic of peoples who make up Canada. Economically, the diversity includes the fisher, logger, farmer, miner, labourer and factory worker, as well as those involved in the service industry, professional services, and high-tech industries. Culturally, the diversity includes First Nations people, English, French, Ukrainians and other Europeans, as well as immigrants from Asia, Africa, Central and South America, each with its own linguistic, cultural, and normative heritage.

This mosaic of people also finds its expression in the rich diversity of religious affiliation. While the great majority of Canadians are Christian, the Jewish and Muslim communities are also of significant size. Among Christians, nearly half of Canadians are Catholic (both Latin and Eastern) and the other half Protestant, with a notable number also of Eastern Orthodox. A number of the First Nations people are going back to many of their own spiritual traditions and views which adds another dimension to the theological and liturgical integration of so many religious traditions in the Canadian mosaic. Yet at the same time, as many as one Canadian in five is religiously indifferent or non-believing.

## Theological and Cultural Influences

Certain Western socio-cultural factors which challenge the Christian life are influential in the Canadian context. These include:

- A systematic undermining or rejection of moral and transcendent values
- A distorted sense of freedom, individualism and subjectivism
- A weakening of family and social values
- Consumerism and materialism
- A growing disrespect for the dignity of the human person as represented by the large number of abortions and prominence in the media of end-of-life issues.

“ We are called to develop a much stronger and more zealous evangelizing and missionary thrust.

To address these concrete social and cultural influences, our Ukrainian Catholic Church in Canada – clergy, religious, monastic, and laity – is called to develop a much stronger and more zealous evangelizing and missionary thrust. In other words, our Church is called to shift from a maintenance to a mission stance.

With the Second Vatican Council, a new appreciation has arisen among Catholics in Canada, including Ukrainian Catholics, of their active participation in the life and mission of the Church. Having been incorporated into Christ and his Church through baptism, all the baptized – and not just the priest – share in various ways in the priestly work of Jesus Christ.

This heightened awareness within the Church in Canada has also been conditioned by many other theological and cultural influences, including:

- The desire for spiritual and religious experience.
- The de facto extensive participation of laity in the overall life of the Church.
- Higher levels of general education which call for a deeper and more comprehensive catechesis.
- A strong sense of collaboration leading to increased cooperation in the governance of the Church at the parochial, diocesan, national, and international levels.
- The demands for accountability at all levels of society, resulting in the same demand on Church leaders.
- An overall aging of the clergy, prompting an increase in programs which foster vocations, and also the greater participation of religious and laity in leadership roles in many parishes and church programs.
- A concern for equality, calling for a wider participation of laity, and especially women, in the Church's apostolate.
- The historic and continuing dependence in Canada upon religious communities of men and women for pastoral ministry, as well as in the field of Catholic education.
- A renewed sense of identity among the First Nations people, requiring greater respect, understanding, and attentiveness from the Church.
- Greater globalization, resulting in an increased awareness to respond to the needs of the world outside Canada.
- The multi-cultural dimension of Canada's people, awakening in the Church a pastoral sensitivity to minorities and to ecumenical and interfaith dialogue.

“ A new appreciation has arisen among Ukrainian Catholics in Canada of their active participation in the life and mission of the Church.

Having gained an appreciation for the Canadian landscape in which the Gospel message has been planted, let us now turn our attention to where concretely the faithful encounter the living Christ, namely, the parish.

## Vibrant Parishes – Places to Encounter the Living Christ

Under the direction of the local bishop, who is the symbol of unity in the eparchy, the role of the parish is a key component in evangelization and in achieving these goals. It is the parish where most often the faithful have their first encounter with Christ, whether it be through attending the Sunday Divine Liturgy, a baptism, wedding, or funeral.

Evangelization often first happens on the level of the parish. In as much as every local Church is fully the Church of Christ, the development of the parish community should be our priority. And in nourishing the parish, we are one and the same time nourishing the entire Church.

For this reason, we have chosen to focus our efforts on the development of the concept of the *vibrant parish*, which we deem the best method of achieving our goals of evangelization.

A vibrant, alive, and active parish will draw ever nearer to Christ those who practice their faith regularly, as well as those who do so infrequently or not at all.

Therefore, our strategy for a new evangelization calls for the development and implementation of the concept of a *vibrant parish*.

### Characteristics of a Vibrant Parish – in General

A vibrant parish, in general, may be characterized by the following:

**Eastern Christian Heritage** – The universal Church calls us to foster our own Eastern Christian expression of liturgy, theology, spirituality, and discipline, allowing it to be a true gift not only to ourselves but for the entire Church.

**Person Oriented** – Remembering that the goal of evangelization is always the human person, as individual and in the context of community.

**Ministry Oriented** – Fostering a practice of ministry to those in need both within the Church and outside of the Church.

**Accessibility** – Our parishes are called to be accessible to all – both those within our Church and those outside of our Church – through prayer life and programs, making the parish an alive and thriving community.

**Openness to Others** – Building our own communities but also being open to others, for example, other Eastern and Western Catholics, Orthodox, and other Eastern Christians, other Western Christian, and other faiths.

“ A vibrant, alive, and active parish will draw ever nearer to Christ those who practice their faith regularly, as well as those who do so infrequently or not at all.

### Characteristics of a Vibrant Parish – in Particular

A vibrant parish, in particular, may be characterized in the following terms:

**Leadership** – where pastor, clergy, religious, monastics, and laity work together to make the parish a place where the faithful encounter the living Christ.

**Liturgy** – where the faithful worship God and grow in his grace.

**Catechesis** – where the faithful learn about their faith and their Church.

**Koinonia** – where the faithful build community.

**Diakonia** – where the faithful go beyond the parish in a desire to serve others.

**Missions** – where the faithful evangelize others, inviting them to a life in Christ.

## Falling in Love – A Lesson from Life

*From getting to know someone,  
to falling in love and getting married,  
to living happily ever after.*

*From knowing Christ,  
to loving Christ,  
to serving Christ.*

Evangelization is a lot like falling in love.

Have you ever fallen in love? If so, how did you know that this was the person you wanted to spend the rest of your life with? Well, most likely at first you spent a lot of time getting to know the person. You dated. You shared long walks. You chatted. You enjoyed a meal together. Then a spark ignited and your relationship moved beyond friendship. You fell in love.

And once you fell in love, you couldn't spend enough time together. A natural glow was ever present on your face. A twinkle in your eye and a spring in your step. Words were often unnecessary to express what was in your heart. You thought to yourself, *This is the one!* Then you proposed marriage, and it was accepted.

And once married, you couldn't stop doing enough for each other. Serving each other. Every gesture, every action was an expression of your love for each other. A kiss. A gift. Flowers on every occasion, and even sometimes for no reason at all. Then a family. A first child. A second. A third. Growing together and growing old together. For an eternity.

“ Having fallen in love with Christ, we can't help but shout it from the rooftops!

## Getting to Know Christ

Our relationship with Christ is very similar. If we don't know who Jesus is and what he teaches, then it shouldn't be surprising that not everyone chooses to pray and worship him regularly.

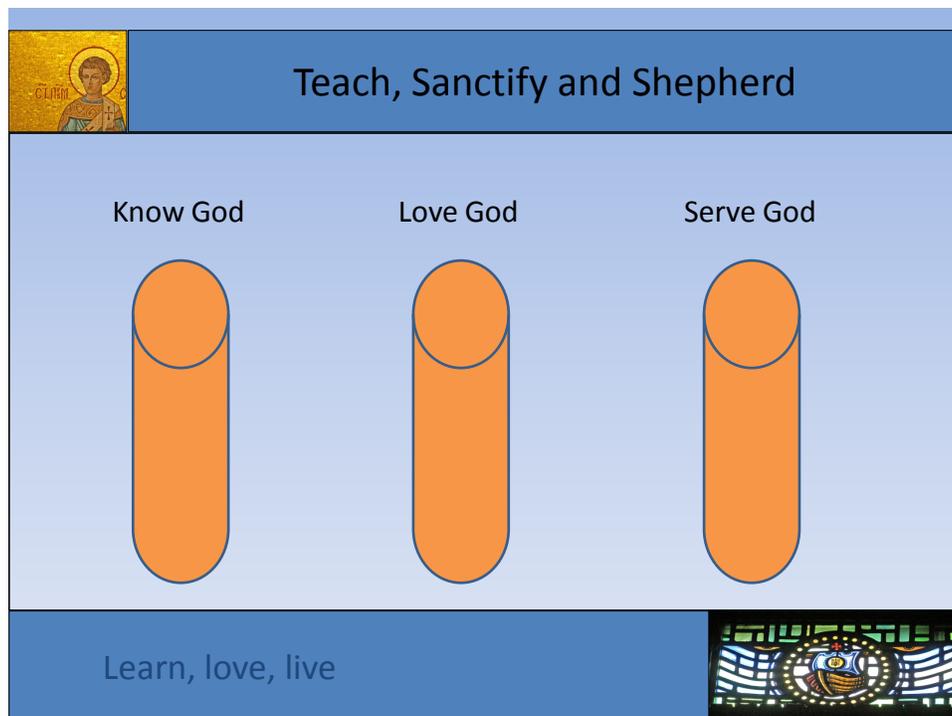
So, to know Christ, we have to spend time with him. In prayer. In the Church. Reading the bible. Learning the Ten Commandments. Learning our catechism. And not just as children preparing for our First Holy Communion, but as children yes, but also as youth, young adults, adults, seniors, even until the sun sets on our earthly lives.

And having come to know Christ better and the love of the Father and of the Holy Spirit, we can't help but want to spend more time with him. We pray. We worship. We attend Church. We celebrate the Divine Liturgy and the sacraments. We grow in sanctity and holiness. We're in love with Christ.

And having fallen in love with Christ, we can't help but shout it from the rooftops. We've found a great treasure, a precious pearl, and we want to tell others. So we serve one another. Caring for the poor and the marginalized. Practicing stewardship. Volunteering. Charitable work and outreach.

Thus, the goal of our parishes is to help people to deepen their relationship with Christ, by coming to know God, to love God, and to serve God. Let's explore this further.

## To Know God, to Love God, and to Serve God



We can describe Jesus' mission on earth in terms of his "Triple *Munera* or Function." Christ, who is *Prophet, Priest, and King*, comes to *Teach, Sanctify, and Shepherd*.

The *Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches* can offer us some insights into what this teaching, sanctifying, and shepherding ministry is all about. The Code, in describing the ministry of the pastor, states:

*Canon 289, §1.* In carrying out the function of **teaching**, the pastor is bound by the obligation of preaching the word of God to all of the Christian faithful so that they may grow in faith, hope, and charity rooted in Christ and that the Christian community may render that witness of love which the Lord commanded; the pastor is also to lead the Christian faithful to full knowledge of the mysteries of salvation by catechetical formation accommodated to the age of each one; for giving this formation he is to seek not only the assistance of members of religious institutes or societies of common life in the manner of religious, but also the cooperation of the laity.

§2. In carrying out the function of **sanctifying**, the pastor is to take care that the celebration of the Divine Liturgy is the centre and culmination of the whole life of the Christian community; and also to labour that the Christian faithful are fed with spiritual food through devout and frequent reception of the sacraments and through conscious and active participation in the divine praises; he is also to be attentive especially to confer the sacrament of penance to foster the Christian life; for which reason he is to make himself readily available to administer this sacrament; even with the help, if it is appropriate, of other priests who understand various languages.

§3. In fulfilling the function of **governing**, the pastor is first of all to know his flock; since he is the minister of all the sheep, he is to foster growth in the Christian life both in individual members of the Christian faithful and in associations, especially those directed to the apostolate, and in the entire parish community; therefore he is to visit the homes and schools insofar as the pastoral function requires it; to look out zealously for adolescents and children; to exercise paternal love for the poor and sick. Finally he is to have a special care for labourers and strive that the Christian faithful offer assistance in the works of the apostolate.

Obviously the pastor cannot do it all. Rather he necessarily calls upon the collaboration of the parishioners in the ministry of teaching, sanctifying, and shepherding.

As a parish then, our sacred task is to carry on the mission of Christ, namely, to learn what Christ taught and to teach others, to embrace his love and to love others, and to imitate him by serving others.

Let us now explore some practical ways how our parish might go about doing so.

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## Three Pillars of Parish Renewal – Word, Eucharist, and Service

Three Pillars of Parish Renewal		
Word	Eucharist	Service
Teach and Learn	Pray and Celebrate	Care and Share
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Scripture Study</li> <li>• Catechesis and Faith Development</li> <li>• Formation of Laity and Clergy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Word of God</li> <li>• Eucharist and Sacraments</li> <li>• Spirituality and Devotions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stewardship</li> <li>• Building Community</li> <li>• Serving those in Need</li> </ul>
Learn, love, live		

Our pastoral plan of evangelization is based on three pillars of parish renewal: Word, Eucharist, and Service.

Let us explore each in turn, and specifically what already existing ministries and programs we anticipate enhancing or new ones which we wish to introduce so that our Church over the next twenty-five years may be even more blessed.

### Word – Teach and Learn

This pillar intends to help us better know Christ, our faith, and our Church.

#### *Scripture Study*

The study of the Word of God and the Sacred Scriptures is essential in coming to know God's plan for our salvation.

In the Old Testament we come to know through the *Torah* the origins of Israel, its laws, and its covenant with the God; through the *prophets* - the historic account of ancient Israel and Judah and the works of prophecy; and through the *writings* the poetic and philosophical works such as the *Psalms* and the *Book of Job*.

In the New Testament, we recount the life of Christ through the *Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John*. In the *Acts of the Apostles* we follow the Gospel message being carried from Jerusalem, expanding outward to Judea and Samaria, Syria, Asia Minor, Europe and eventually to Rome. In the *Epistles* or *Letters* such as of *Paul, Peter, John, James, and Jude* we read of accounts written to

particular Christian communities often containing advice about providing pastoral care to their churches. And finally, in the Book of Revelation the worlds of heaven, earth, and hell are brought together in a final confrontation between the forces of good and evil.

The Scriptures are central to the Christian faith in Jesus Christ as the Son of God and Messiah.

To come to know Christ better and his teachings:

- Each person and family is invited to discover or rediscover the Sacred Scriptures through regular reading and reflection upon the bible.
- Every parish or parish district is encouraged to organize regular bible studies, systematically working their way through the Old and New Testaments.
- Parish catechetical programs are to include age appropriate bible material, emphasizing the stories and parables of Jesus.
- Bible study days, *Scripture Fest*, conferences, workshops, and seminars are to be organized on an eparchial basis.

### ***Catechesis and Faith Development***

In addition to Scripture studies, the knowledge about our faith is nourished and developed through on-going catechesis.

In the past, our catechetical approach was primarily directed at the level of children, in particular, in preparing them for their First Holy Communion and Confession. Today, however, we recognize the need for continuous faith development among children, youth, young adults, adults, and seniors alike. In other words, our new catechetical approach will be directed at all ages of our faithful, *From Cradle to Grave*.

While much general catechetical material is readily available on-line and from various religious and non-religious bookstores, as Eastern Christians, Ukrainian Catholics in particular, our catechetical formation should necessarily be based upon material appropriate to our Eastern Christian heritage and spiritual patrimony.

Therefore, keeping in mind the six major tasks of catechesis as expressed in the *General Director for Catechesis* and the *Catechetical Directory for the Ukrainian Catholic Church* – 1. Promoting Knowledge of the Faith, 2. Liturgical Formation, 3. Moral Formation, 4. Teaching to Pray, 5. Education for Community Life, and 6. Missionary Initiation – the following catechetical strategies are foreseen:

- The approved catechetical material for children and youth within the Eparchy of Edmonton is the *God With Us Series*, published in collaboration by the Eastern Catholic Churches in North America specifically for Eastern Christian Formation.
- Parishes or parish districts are encouraged to introduce the *Generations of Faith for Byzantine Churches*. The five-year program brings together the entire *parish family* using an inter-generational approach to catechesis, addressing the Liturgical Church Year, the Sacred Mysteries (Sacraments), the Divine Liturgy, and morality. Emphasis is given to the Church Fathers and Tradition.

“ Our new catechetical approach will be directed at all ages of our faithful - from cradle to grave.

- The Eparchy will develop for parish usage a Ukrainian Catholic *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*. This is the process through which interested adults and older children are gradually introduced to the faith.
- Christian life is centred on the mystery of the Incarnation of Christ, the union of God and man. The faithful obtain union with God most importantly through the Sacred Mysteries (Sacraments) which are received with faith after appropriate preparation. The Eparchy will prepare for parish usage resource material for those preparing to receive the Sacred Mysteries, as well as provide for post-sacramental care.

### **Formation of Laity, Clergy, Religious and Monastics**

It is said that it takes a whole village to raise a child. The same can be said of a parish – it takes a whole parish to raise a Christian. But to do so, parishioners require formation and assistance in the process. How can we assist them in this all important responsibility?

- Parents are always the *first educators* of their children in matters of faith and morals. Yet, at times they lack the time, ability, or motivation to provide the necessary Christian formation. Eparchial on-line and home-kit materials will be developed to support parents in their efforts.
- Grandparents can also provide assistance in the faith-rearing of their grandchildren. Babas and didos are often called upon for babysitting services. Some of the time spent with their grandchildren can include: telling of bible stories, teaching basic prayers, colouring icons, watching Christian DVDs, building puzzles of saints, etc. Call it *Baba and Dido Power!*
- Parishes are blessed by the active presence of Sunday School teachers and catechists. The Eparchial Catechetical Office can offer support and training for catechists, thus enhancing their contribution in building up the faith development of a parish among children, youth, young adults, adults, and seniors alike.
- Youth often respond best when given the opportunity to let their gifts and talents shine through, including in faith formation. *Youth Evangelizing Youth* intends to develop their skills further and involve young people in the ministry of evangelization among their peers.
- Clergy, religious, and monastics undergo their own human, spiritual, intellectual, and pastoral formation during their years of initial formation in seminaries, houses of study, religious communities, and monasteries. However, they can continue to grow in their faith, personal, and professional development through annual periods of study days and retreats, *on-going formation and education*, as it were.
- Newly ordained priests and deacons and newly vowed or consecrated religious and monastics require special attention, in particular, following their first five years of ordination or consecration. Mentorship and guidance is necessary to aid them positively in their initial years of service in the Lord's vineyard.
- Foreign clergy will benefit from programs of inculturation to help them adjust to life in a new country, for example, in relation to the active collaboration of the laity and the role of women in the Church.

“ It takes a whole parish to raise a Christian.

The Eparchy of Edmonton can provide assistance in the formation of its laity, clergy, religious, and monastics primarily through its Chancery Offices, Catechetical Commission, Youth Office, Ecumenical Office, and Presbyteral Council.

The Eparchy also relies upon the Patriarchal Catechetical Commission for the development of catechetical resources for use in the Ukrainian Catholic Church throughout the world, for example, the 2011 *Catechism of the Ukrainian Catholic Church*.

In Canada, the National Catechetical Commission of the Ukrainian Catholic Church and the Metropolitan Andrey Sheptytsky Institute of Eastern Christian Studies (Ottawa) are invaluable resources in the field of faith formation and development. Regarding the latter, it is the hope of the Eparchy of Edmonton to establish a *Satellite Campus of the Sheptytsky Institute* in Edmonton to provide additional opportunities for education and formation in Eastern Christian Studies.

And more locally, Newman Theological College, Saint Stephen College, and Saint Mary's College are excellent centres of Christian learning.

### **Eucharist – Pray and Celebrate**

Having come to know Christ, this pillar helps us to love him more through prayer and celebrating the Word of God, the Eucharist and the Mysteries (Sacraments), and our Eastern spirituality.

### **Word of God**

Again, Pope John Paul II, in his Apostolic Letter, *At the Beginning of the New Millennium (Novo millennio ineunte)*, reminds us of two pastoral priorities regarding the Word of God. In *Listening to the Word of God*, we are invited to rediscover the Sacred Scriptures so that it may be “life-giving encounter with God.” And in *Proclaiming the Word of God*, we are called upon to preach the Gospel to the people of God, beginning with our families and friends.

To help us in our efforts to reclaim the Word of God, our pastoral plan foresees the following strategies:

- The *Family Bible* was once a cherished treasure in each and every home, given a place of prominence and distinction. Let us ensure that every individual and every family owns a bible and drinks from its life-giving sources regularly.
- Not all translations of the bibles are alike. A new Gospel book and Epistle Book, adopted for official Eparchy of Edmonton usage in parishes and liturgical publications, will help the reader and the listener in listening to and proclaiming the Word of God in our Ukrainian Catholic tradition.
- To encourage daily meditation of the Sacred Scriptures at home, school, work and Church, a Ukrainian Catholic pocket-size resource will be made available, including the complete Scripture readings for daily and Sunday Divine Liturgy. The resource will also include the daily and Sunday tropars, kondaks and propers for easy use by cantors and others at the celebration of the Divine Liturgy.

“ We are invited to rediscover the Sacred Scriptures so that it may be life-giving encounter with God.

- Develop a resource book and provide training for Lectors to help them proclaim the Word of God as contained in the Scriptures so that they may be easily and fruitfully heard by the faithful in attendance at Church.
- Offer regular workshops and conferences for clergy to assist them in developing their preaching and homiletic skills, enabling them to foster a living commentary on the Word of God, applicable to our daily lives and circumstances.
- Promote and develop among the people of God an understanding and appreciation that the Word of God is an integral part of the liturgical action of the Divine Liturgy, from which flows the Eucharist. In other words, in the celebration of the Divine Liturgy, we encounter the Living God in the Word of God, that is, the Word made Flesh, and in the Eucharist, in Body and Blood of Jesus.

### ***Eucharist and Mysteries (Sacraments)***

Liturgy is above all the celebration of the mystery of our salvation, accomplished in the passion, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, by means of the Holy Spirit, rendering us children of the Father. This mystery is communicated to us in visible signs through the sacraments, known in the Christian East as the mysteries.

The Church invites us to discover, or rediscover as the case may be, the mystery of salvation in history and in liturgy.

Our twenty-five year pastoral plan can help us do so through the study, reflection and implementation of the *Instruction for Applying the Liturgical Prescriptions of the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches*,” which serves as a blueprint for liturgical renewal in the Eparchy.

The *Instruction* beautifully recalls the meaning and mystagogy of the mysteries in the following terms:

The Lord makes himself present when the Word of God is proclaimed in the assembly and welcomed with a pure heart. In Christian Initiation, the children of the Church receive the gift to die with, be buried with, and be raised with Christ the Lord (cf. Rom. 6:1-11; Col. 2:20; 3:1-4). In being conformed to Christ the Priest, it has been given to some of his children, chosen for the ministry of priesthood, to serve his priestly, prophetic, and royal people, and to pronounce the epiclesis so that the Spirit may place them in the presence of the divine majesty, to render him glory and praise, and to express thanksgiving. In the wedding Feast of the Eucharist, the Spouse offers her his Body and Blood, the beginning of the promised and invoked kingdom, rendered ardent by the fire of the Spirit. In Marriage, the Church unites herself to the Spouse in the fecundity of new children and in the commitment of witness and evangelization. In the sacrament of Forgiveness, the son that was lost but has been found (cf. Lk. 15:11-32) is re-admitted to the presence of the Father. In the holy Oil for the sick, the Church invokes her Lord for healing and the remission of sins. United to Christ praying, to whom the monk in particular aspires his whole existence, she offers up praise, thanksgiving, and epiclesis supplication to the Father continuously in the Holy Spirit. Her liturgy extends itself in the “time of salvation,” the seasons of which are laden with grace.

“ The Church invites us to discover, or rediscover as the case may be, the mystery of salvation in history and in liturgy.

In the complexity of these mysteries, the terrestrial liturgy already unites the earth to heaven, and thus to the divine and perfect liturgy celebrated there, until the time when, upon the return of her Lord, humanity will be allowed to see God as he is and to unceasingly adore the most holy Trinity.” (*Instruction*, 1)

Concretely, our twenty-five year pastoral plan calls for the implementation of the *Instruction* – with pastoral prudence but with zeal – in the following manner:

- The celebration of the sacraments, above all the Divine Liturgy, is an action of the Church, that is, of the assembly of all the members of the people of God, of the Body of Christ. As such, parishes are to find ways to encourage the active participation of all the Christian faithful.
- Christian Initiation, that is, baptism, chrismation, and Eucharist, is the celebration of the entrance into the life of Christ and into the community that lives in him. The *Instruction* explains that: “This entrance, initiated with the first call to the faith, reaches its culminating point in the Paschal Mystery of Christ, in whose death we are immersed to be raised in his resurrection which renders us children of God and the temple of the Spirit. ‘Anointed’ by the Spirit for the work of the Kingdom, we are thus rendered fit to participate in the banquet of the Kingdom” (*Instruction*, 42). The administration for infants and children of the three sacraments of baptism, chrismation with the holy myron, and Holy Communion, in conjunction with or at least one not long after another, will be restored.
- Christian Initiation, the beginning of our lifelong journey into the life of Christ, is an apprenticeship into an existing Christian community. As such the administration of the three sacraments of baptism, chrismation, and Holy Communion should ordinarily take place on a Sunday or Feast Day, in the presence of the greater worshipping community.
- The tradition of the Christian East is for baptism to take place through the rite of triple immersion. This meaningful and highly expressive rite is to be restored.
- Under the influence of the Roman Catholic Church, first Communion was often postponed until school age. The administration of the Divine Eucharist to infant neophytes is to be restored. The frequent reception of the Eucharist, the Bread of Life, nourishes infants and helps them to grow spiritually.
- While the restored practice of full initiation for infants is being introduced, care is to be taken not to interrupt the necessary and progressive catechesis of children, beginning when they are ready to learn the mysteries of faith, but continuing throughout their adult lives.
- Special liturgical celebrations are to be developed which correspond to the various steps of human growth and catechesis among children and young people.
- Pope John Paul II, in his Apostolic Letter, *At the Beginning of the New Millennium*, reminds us that Sunday is the “summit toward which the Church’s action tends and at the same time the source from which comes all its strength. The Sunday Eucharist is and will always be the centre of our Christian lives.” Families and parishes are encouraged to rediscover and recover Sunday as the Lord’s Day, together with the reception of the Divine Eucharist.

“ Parishes are to find ways to encourage the active participation of all the Christian faithful.

- Fasting, including the Eucharistic Fast, as a spiritual discipline is to be renewed, corresponding to the different conditions of life in the world today.
- The discipline of non-liturgical days, where the Divine Liturgy is not celebrated during the weekdays of Great Lent, is to be recuperated. Instead, the celebration of the Presanctified Liturgy is to be fostered.
- Priestly ordination, monasticism, and women and men religious are to be valued and vocations encouraged.
- The diaconate, instituted not for the priesthood but for the service of the bishops and presbyters, is to be renewed, both in its liturgical and extra-liturgical mission.
- Marriage finds meaning in the matrimonial covenant, established by the Creator, by which a man and a woman establish between themselves a partnership of the whole of life. By its nature, marriage is ordered toward the good of the spouses and the generation of and education of children. Improved marriage preparation and post-sacramental care can contribute to the sanctification of the different moments in the journey of Christian couples. Special attention is to be paid to nurturing and supporting young couples and families.
- All have sinned, but through the death and resurrection of Christ and the celebration of the sacrament of penance, all can obtain remission of their sins, dying to themselves and living for God. Parishes are called to emphasize moments of liturgical prayer to which penitential value is particularly attributed. Pastors are called to foster an attitude of conversion of heart throughout the liturgical year, in a particular way during the times of preparation for the feasts, above all in the Great Fast preceding Easter. They are to provide regular opportunities for individual confession.
- The anointing of the sick is a prayer for healing; this healing is the work of Christ, the physician of our souls and bodies. Pastors are to renew their pastoral efforts in visiting the sick and elderly in hospitals, private homes, and senior residents, celebrating the sacrament of anointing for those physically and mentally who are gravely ill.
- The liturgical year, that is, the cycle of the annual feasts which revolves around Easter as its centre and the fixed feasts and movable feasts, constitute a marvellous plan which renders present the moments of the history of salvation and permeates the spiritual life of the faithful. Parishes are to pay renewed attention to the various feasts of the liturgical year.
- The calendar of saints is an integral part of the liturgical year. Each day the life of one or more saints is recalled. The veneration of saints affirms that holiness and deification are within the grasp of each and every Christian. The faithful are encouraged to foster a new appreciation for the saints.
- To promote a better understanding and celebration of the liturgy, the Eparchial Liturgical Commission, in collaboration with the Eparchial Catechetical Commission, is to prepare revised English and Ukrainian language liturgical books for approved use in the Eparchy of Edmonton.

“ Be filled with the Spirit, as you sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs among yourselves.

### ***Spirituality and Devotions***

Saint Paul writes to the Christian community at Ephesus saying, “Be filled with the Spirit, as you sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs among yourselves, singing and making melody to the Lord in your hearts, giving thanks to God the Father at all times and for everything in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Ephesians 5:18-20).

To help us respond to God’s love, we can improve our spiritual life in the following manner:

- Prayer is the practice of the presence of God. In prayer, we touch the heart of God. Yet at times each of us struggles with our prayer life. A new resource to be developed, *Teach Me to Pray*, is intended to help individuals, families, and parishes alike to rediscover the “school of prayer.”
- The Old Testament calls for prayers seven times a day (cf. Psalm 118:164). The New Testament reiterates this precept where the Lord reminds us of the need to “pray always and not to lose heart” (Luke 18:1). We can sanctify the whole day by restoring the celebration of the Divine Praises – vespers, complines, matins and the hours, as well as molebens and akathists – in private or in common throughout our parishes and parish districts, beginning with the Cathedral. This privileged source of prayer nurtures individuals, families, groups of the lay faithful, as well as clergy, monastics, and religious, forming them into small Christian prayer communities like those of the Early Church.
- The temple or church building serves as a reminder for us of heaven itself, lifting us up beyond our worldly concerns, transferring us to another world, to the presence of God. In the Eastern tradition, the sanctuary, narthex and baptistery, icons and iconostasis, incense, prayer facing the East, vestments, processional cross, and banners, etc., serve as signs which shows us the way toward Lord and the Heavenly Jerusalem, leading us to his Kingdom of God. The Eparchial Commission of Sacred Art can provide assistance to parishes – existing or new – in suggesting improvements which correspond with the meaning and criteria of our own liturgical tradition.
- Icons are windows into heaven. Icons covering the events of the life of Christ, Mary and the Saints can also help us in our spiritual journey. The Eparchy is desirable of establishing a *School of Iconography* where current and newcomer iconographers alike can practice and develop their skills.

“Prayer is the practice of the presence of God. In prayer, we touch the heart of God.”

## Service – Care and Share

Having come to know and love Christ better, this pillar helps us to follow him through witness and service.

### *Witness and Testimony*

#### *Stewardship - a Divine Vocation*

If we go back to the very beginning, to the creation of the first human pair in the image and likeness of God, we find two divine commandments given by God: 1) “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth; and 2) subdue the earth and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth” (Genesis 1:28).

From the very beginning, as human beings we have been called by God to be His faithful stewards, *caretakers* or *managers* of all that rightfully belongs to Him.

A good and faithful steward is one that not only looks after his owner’s property or business, but also works diligently to foster order, development, and growth, so as to bring about a good yield and profit for his owner.

From the very beginning, God has asked us to look after the earth He has created: to work and to cultivate the land, to look after its vegetation, to look after all the sea creatures and the animals upon the earth. The list does not end there.

He also expects us also to be good stewards of everything that has been entrusted to us: our own personal lives, our health, the gift of time, our talents and wealth, our families and children, our neighbours and community, our nation, and finally, his Gospel – the Good News, and his Church, the kingdom of God throughout the world.

Our twenty-five year plan is a call to good stewardship on two important levels: a) the personal stewardship of every individual within the Eparchy; and b) the collective stewardship of families, parishes, religious communities, and the Eparchy as a whole.

#### *Personal Stewardship*

Good stewardship of God’s vineyard, the Eparchy, over the next twenty-five years, first and foremost is dependent upon the personal stewardship of individual baptised members within the Eparchy.

Thus, the first goal of the twenty-five year plan in the area or pillar of *Service* is to raise awareness and practice of good personal stewardship.

As mentioned above, good personal stewardship begins with the sincere acknowledgement that all is grace, and that everything belongs to God: my life and my purpose, my time, my gifts and talents, my education and skills, my health and wellbeing, my possessions and wealth. We are called to be good stewards of all the gifts entrusted to us, and to use them wisely, bringing gain and profit to the Owner – our Lord.

“ God expects us also to be good stewards of everything that has been entrusted to us.

*Life, Purpose and Mission*

As human beings created in the image and likeness of God, we have been created to be self-giving persons: a self-gift to God and a self-gift to others. This in essence is the very purpose and goal of our lives; and our happiness depends upon it. Being a steward of the gift of life, begins by exploring and choosing the way in which we feel best to live as a self-gift to God, and to others, and then finding the courage and grace to fulfil it. This is good stewardship.

*The Gift of Time*

Good stewardship of time means giving God the best time of every day, and one whole day – Sunday – of each week. This is time spent with God in prayer, in meditation, while reading the Bible, by participating in the Divine Liturgy and the Divine Praises. Further, we make good use of the gift of time by dedicating it to family and friends, to productive work, education, service in the community, volunteer and charity work, recreation, and rest. This is good stewardship.

*Gifts, Talents, Education and Skills*

Every person is endowed with certain gifts or talents. These need to be discovered and nurtured by education and the development of skills, so that our talents may be used for the benefit of the common good, within the community and in society at large. “Freely you have received, freely give” (Matthew 10:8). This is good stewardship.

*Health and Well-being*

First of all, we are called to be good stewards of our souls, to nurture our relationship with God, and to keep our baptismal garment in order, unstained, by frequent participation in the sacraments of Penance (confession) and Holy Eucharist.

We are also called to be good stewards of our bodies, because the body is temple of God and the Holy Spirit dwells within (1 Corinthians 2:16). We have the responsibility to look after the body God has given us, without making it an idol of worship: to maintain a good and healthy diet, to exercise and keep fit, to control stress, to refrain from harmful habits, to allow for rest, to maintain the proper dignity of the body, keeping it holy and free from all defilement.

“ As human beings created in the image and likeness of God, we have been created to be self-giving persons.

*Possessions and Wealth*

In the Lord’s Prayer we pray, “Give us this day our daily bread.” If we ask in faith, God promises to provide us with all that is essential for life: physical and spiritual food, clothing, shelter, work, possessions and security. Often, he even provides us with an abundance of temporal things, which exceeds far more than what we truly need. He does this with the hope that we in turn will share from our abundance with those who are in need. Sharing our wealth is good stewardship.

Many Christians continue to practice the Old Testament custom of tithing – giving back to God ten percent of all income in acknowledgement that all belongs to God – and they have in turn, received many further blessings from the Lord. Tithing is good stewardship.

*Collective Stewardship*

Good stewardship of God’s vineyard, the Eparchy, over the next twenty-five years, also depends upon the collective stewardship of families, parishes, religious communities and the entire Eparchy as a whole.

Thus, the second goal of the twenty-five year plan in the area or pillar of *Service* is to raise the awareness and practice of collective stewardship.

Collective stewardship also begins with the sincere acknowledgement that the universe – the earth and everything upon it – is the property of God. Human communities, from the smallest family unit to society at large, have been called to be stewards of God’s creation, the earth, its resources and environment, all that dwells upon the earth and all the treasures of the earth.

The greatest treasure entrusted to our collective stewardship is the Word of God (the Gospel), as revealed by us by God the Father, in fullness through His Son Jesus Christ, and His divine kingdom upon the earth – the Church.

#### *The Gospel and the Church*

Jesus once said that “the kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and hid; and for joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field” (Matthew 13:44). Then, in another parable, he said that “the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking beautiful pearls, who, when he found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had and bought it” (Matthew 13:45-46).

The Gospel, which is the Word of God, together with His kingdom, the Church, established by the death and resurrection of Christ and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, constitute the greatest gift and treasure upon this earth. This is the *Pearl of great price*. As stewards of the Gospel and the Word of God, we are called not only to safeguard it but to live it, to sow it into hearts of others, and to pass it on faithfully from one generation to the next.

The Church is the kingdom of God on earth, a vineyard planted by God Himself. Our mission in life, as stewards of the His vineyard, is to make the world a better place and to extend God’s kingdom upon the earth.

#### *My Neighbour*

After the death of Abel, the Lord asked Cain, “Where is Abel your brother?” And Cain replied, “I do not know; am I my brother’s keeper?” This was the answer of an envious murderer.

By no means can this be the reply of a person who seeks to be God’s faithful steward. The well-being of our neighbour, both spiritual and physical, is our business. We cannot say, *I don’t know*, or *I don’t care*.

We are called to be our brother’s keeper (in the biblical Hebrew, brother refers to brothers and sisters). We are responsible collectively to look after those around us because every neighbour is my brother or sister. This is good stewardship.

#### *Family*

Collective stewardship begins in the smallest unit of society, the family. Every Christian family is a micro-church, a community of baptized believers. This is where the concept of personal and collective stewardship is first taught and nurtured, mainly by the example of parents.

As head of the family, the father is given the authority by God to shepherd in His name. He is entrusted with the responsibility of looking after the spiritual and physical well-being of his spouse and their children. As the heart of the family, the mother receives a special gift of the Holy Spirit to love and to nurture family members in God’s name.

“ Collective stewardship begins in the smallest unit of society, the family.

Children are a gift from God. They belong to him. He entrusts children to the care and collective stewardship of parents. Both husband and wife, as father and mother, are called to raise new sons and daughters for God and his kingdom. To accomplish this task, the home must become a school of love, where everything is taught mainly by parental example. This is good stewardship.

Parents who put their careers and personal interests ahead of their children and home are accountable before God for poor stewardship.

### *Community*

Families form communities and live in community with others. The needs and concerns of any given community (village, region, town, or city) are entrusted to the collective stewardship of those who reside in that community. The needs and concerns include issues such as: safety, law enforcement, education, recreation, cleanliness, order, waste management, environment, future planning, and development. Taking an active role in serving the community is good stewardship.

Christians are called to be good stewards of two distinct communities. In addition to being good stewards within the community they live in, they are also called to be good stewards of their parish, the community of believers to which they belong.

In essence, the parish community is an extended family of brothers and sisters in Christ. As good stewards of God's gift (the vineyard He has planted), all parishioners share a common responsibility for all the needs and concerns of the parish community. These needs and concerns include: good liturgy, music and singing, the proper explanation and celebration of all sacraments, catechesis of adults, youth and children, devotional prayer, and spiritual development, hospitality, pastoral care of souls, charitable works of mercy, outreach and mission, parish finances and property management.

### *Leadership*

At one point, Jesus called his apostles to himself and said to them: "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those who are great exercise authority over them. Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant. And whoever desires to be your slave – just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many" (Matthew 20:25-28).

“ For Christians, leadership is understood in terms of stewardship.

Jesus confirmed His own word about leadership as stewardship at the Last Supper. "He rose from supper and laid aside His garments, took a towel, and girded Himself. After that, He poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel with which He was girded" (John 13:4-5). After he had finished washing the feet of His disciples, he sat down and said to them: "Do you know what I have done to you? You call Me Teacher and Lord, and you say well, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you" (John 13:12-15).

For Christians, leadership is understood in terms of stewardship. All authority originates from God and belongs to God. No one can claim authority for himself. It has to be given. Anyone in the position of authority and leadership serves only as a steward of God. Eventually he or she is accountable to God how the given authority was used (or abused).

According to the Gospel, any Christian in the position of leadership and authority was to see himself as servant: a steward of God's authority and a servant for those over whom he has been given authority. This is good stewardship.

*The Earth and all that lives upon it*

Finally, the entire human family of nations upon the earth are called by God to be personal and collective stewards of the earth, its environment and resources, and all the living things that live in the seas and on land. These things have been given by God for humans to use for their needs, but they must be respected, cared for and never abused.

### **Building Community**

The word *hospitality* is derived from the Latin word *hospes* which means *guest*. To be hospitable is to be welcoming and friendly to guests. In Greek, the word for hospitality is *xenia* which is derived from the word *xenos* meaning *guest*.

Hospitality is not so much a task as it is a way of living life and sharing with others: being welcoming and friendly to guests, travellers, and foreigners. A home that lives and breathes hospitality is a home that is alive.

In the ancient world and in the early Church, hospitality was taken very seriously. It was a public and sacred duty to welcome strangers and travellers, to offer them food, shelter, and protection. The honour of the entire community was at stake. Hospitality was viewed as a pillar on which the moral structure of the world rested.

Today, our understanding of hospitality has been reduced to the idea of inviting friends, family, parishioners, or fellow-believers for dinner and fellowship, whether at home or in the parish hall.

Our challenge is to go beyond the conventional understanding of hospitality and to re-discover the gift of hospitality as it was understood in ancient times and by the early Church.

In our twenty-five year plan, the third goal in the area of *Service* is to renew the spirit of hospitality in our parishes and in the Eparchy as a whole. Hospitality will not just happen unless we give it deliberate attention.

Since hospitality is a way of life and not a task, the following strategies will help us cultivate it over a lifetime:

*Creating an effective hospitality committee.* First, create a Hospitality Committee within each parish pastoral council consisting of parish members who are excited about the practice of hospitality within the parish and are committed to its renewal.

*Being welcoming to one another.* A second step in renewing hospitality is to begin to be more welcoming to one another within the existing parish community. It takes work and effort to create an internal *welcoming spirit*. The natural human tendency is to form cliques or circles of friends that are not always open or inviting to others. Every parish member must consciously take on the role of being a host, not a guest.

“ Our challenge is to go beyond the conventional understanding of hospitality and to re-discover the gift of hospitality.

*Paying attention to the stranger and guest.* The next step in the renewal of hospitality is to pay attention to the stranger and the guest: to simply greet new people coming to church, to smile, to welcome them into the community and to a place, to make them feel *at home* when they have mustered enough courage to come to church, and thus to further *en-courage* or *to give them courage* to come again.

*Making the church available for prayer.* The third step in the renewal of the spirit of hospitality is to have the church open for prayer during the day at set times. An unlocked door is a personal invitation for people to enter and to pray. It is also a silent witness to the fact that this church, this parish, is open to all and invites everyone to enter into the presence of Christ and to encounter him in the silence of the church's sacred space.

*The community table and fellowship.* Another step is the community meal and social events. Parish communities, just like families, need to eat together to sustain their identity as a community. Not only is the table central to the practice of hospitality in the home but also in the church. The community table in the church hall and fellowship meals and gatherings are an important extension of the Lord's Table and the festive celebration of the Divine Liturgy. Such gatherings provide opportunities to sustain existing relationships and build new ones.

*Offering hospitality to visitors, travellers, immigrants, refugees, and to the homeless.* Another step in the renewal of hospitality is to be more friendly and welcoming to believers and non-believers, to travellers, strangers, and immigrants, to be willing and ready to provide travellers and homeless with food, shelter, and protection.

## **Serving Those in Need**

### **Social Outreach and Works of Charity**

Jesus once said that the Kingdom of God is like a mustard seed, which a man took and put in his garden. "It grew and became a large tree, and the birds of the air nested in its branches" (Luke 13:18-19).

Every parish is the kingdom of God on earth. It has the humble beginnings of a mustard seed, but over time with God's grace, grows into an active community, a living tree.

As a living tree where birds find shelter and nest, every active parish community is called to be a refuge, a place of rest and protection for the weary, the downcast, the heavy laden and those in need. It is in the living and active parish community that people encounter the living God. "Come to me, all who labour and are heavenly laden, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28).

In our twenty-five year plan, the fourth goal in the area of *Service* is to develop the area of Social Outreach and works of charity.

***Creating an effective Social Outreach Committee.*** The first step developing social outreach on the parish level is to create an appropriate committee of laity within parish council, a committee consisting of parish members who are excited about social outreach and charity work, and are committed to its development in the parish.

“ Every parish has the humble beginnings of a mustard seed, but over time with God's grace, grows into an active community, a living tree.

**Exploring needs, possibilities and resources.** The second step would be for the committee to take time to explore existing needs, possibilities, what commitments and activities the parish can realistically accomplish, possible volunteers, and resources.

**Praying and deciding.** The third step would be to pray for God's guidance and will: *Lord, what works of charity and outreach do you want our community to be involved in?* After receiving some kind of confirmation through prayer, the community may decide on what projects (spiritual or corporal) it will initiate and sustains. The possibilities are numerous. *Corporal works or projects of mercy:* food bank collections, clothing drives, used items and furniture for those in need, support for existing hospices and drop-in centres for the poor, soup kitchens, community meals, parish nursing and advocacy, aid to single mothers, helping immigrants and refugees, fundraising for established charity organizations at home and abroad in third-world countries, etc. *Spiritual works or projects of mercy:* visitation of the sick and shut-ins, helping those who grieving (Grief Share), helping those who are struggling with separation or divorce (Divorce Care), offering assistance to the lonely, depressed, and those struggling with substance abuse.

### **Social Justice**

In our twenty-five year plan, the fifth goal in the area of *Service* is to develop parochial and eparchial initiatives in areas of social justice within Canada itself.

Charity reveals itself in many ways. The first and foremost way in which it expressed is be means of works of mercy, both corporal and spiritual. Corporal acts of mercy include: feeding the hungry, donating clothing to those in need, finding shelter for the homeless, providing medical attention to those who are sick. Spiritual acts of mercy include: visiting the sick, the lonely, and the dying, counselling those in distress. Acts of charity, whether corporal or spiritual, serve to alleviate the pain or suffering. They deal with the symptoms of a given social problem.

*Social Justice* is charity, or works of charity, aimed at changing society, by conquering root causes for serious social problems.

One of the greatest challenges that we are faced with as a Church today is the issue of human life and its dignity. Driven by a secular mind-set and a *culture of death*, various practices are promulgated as being a norm for human society: abortion, stem cell research which destroys human embryos, abortive contraceptives, sterilization, free sex outside of marriage, and euthanasia. All these practices not only erode the dignity of human life from the moment of conception to the moment of death, they also become the root cause for a multiplicity of social problems and concerns.

The challenge for the next twenty-five years will be simply this: how can we as a Church, or an eparchial and parochial level, respond to areas of social injustice?

- *Where do we see social injustice in our midst?* The first task that lies before us to identify areas of social injustice in the society we live in on an eparchial level.
- *Informing and making people aware.* The next step would be to gather information and make our own faithful aware of the moral injustices that are happening in our midst.

“ Social Justice is charity aimed at changing society, by conquering root causes for serious social problems.

- *Appropriate action:* Then, with the help of God's light and guidance, we need to find ways, both on an eparchial and parochial level, how we as an eparchy can make a difference. We definitely will not be able to address all areas of social justice, but can identify areas where we can concentrate our efforts and make significant contribution in making the world a better place.

### **Missions**

In our twenty-five year plan, the sixth goal in the area of *Service* is to develop the area of mission within the Eparchy: mission parishes in cities, towns, and possible Aboriginal communities.

Are there any new opportunities? What approach should be taken with respect to the establishment of new parishes and/or mission communities?

## **The Priesthood of the Laity**

Today, when we think of *priesthood*, we most often think of those men who have received the laying on of hands by their bishop and have been ordained presbyters or priests.

Yet, there is another priesthood. The Priesthood of the Laity.

Saint Peter, in his First Letter, writes, "You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light" (1 Peter 2:9).

We have almost entirely forgotten that through baptism all have been incorporated into the Body of Christ, the Church. Not only have we become members of Christ, but we also share in the priesthood of Christ.

In the New Testament, the term *priest* is never used for ordained clergy but for either Christ, the *High Priest*, or for all the baptized faithful:

"Come to him, a living stone, though rejected by mortals yet chosen and precious in God's sight, and like living stones, let yourselves be built into a spiritual house, to be *a holy priesthood*, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 2:4-5).

Only in later centuries did the notion of priesthood become associated with ordained ministry.

Rather, the New Testament notion of priesthood recalls that, "As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ" (Galatians 3:27), which we find repeated in our very own Rite of Baptism: "All you who have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ. Alleluia!"

To be baptized means to put on Christ. And to put on Christ means also to put on the priesthood of Christ. Not just for the priests, but for all the faithful too!

Thus as Christians we all share – priest, religious, monastic, AND laity – in Christ's priesthood. As such, we are ALL called to share in Christ's teaching by preaching the Word of God and by being catechized. We are ALL called to share in Christ's sanctifying by praying and participating in the

“ Let yourselves be built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

celebration of the sacraments, above all the Divine Liturgy. We are all called to share in Christ's shepherding by feeding the hungry, giving drink to the thirsty, clothing the naked, caring for the sick, and visiting the imprisoned (Matthew 25:31-46).

While honouring the valid ministry of the ordained priesthood, let us recover the notion of the priesthood of the laity in the Church, at home, at school, at work, and in the world.

Also, in this way we can recapture a more sacramental model of the ordained priesthood, where priests become less preoccupied with budgets, managing personnel and worrying about the physical plant of the church buildings, and do what they enjoy most – celebrating baptisms, the Divine Liturgy, and the sacraments, preaching, preparing couples for marriage, and visiting the sick and the elderly.

## Hope for a Better Future

The Bishops of the Second Vatican Council, in their Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the World of Today, *Gaudium et spes*, spoke of the close link between the Church and the whole human family:

The joys and hopes and the sorrows and anxieties of people today, especially of those who are poor and afflicted, are also the joys and hopes, sorrows and anxieties of the disciples of Christ, and there is nothing truly human which does not also affect them.

Their community is composed of people united in Christ who are directed by the Holy Spirit in their pilgrimage towards the Father's kingdom and who have received the message of salvation to be communicated to everyone. For this reason [the Church] feels itself closely linked to the human race and its history. (*Gaudium et spes*, 1)

These are the same “joys and hopes and the sorrows and the anxieties” of the faithful of the Eparchy of Edmonton, and beyond, that has prompted us to develop through much prayer and reflection this 25 Year Pastoral Plan.

It is our hope that the pastoral plan for a new springtime of evangelization outlined above will help prepare us and our parishes to become the Church God intends for us to be in the next twenty-five years, to become people and places in which we encounter the living Christ.

As our pilgrimage leads us to the Father's Kingdom, through Christ, guided by the Holy Spirit, may we be truly disposed to knowing, loving, and serving God more perfectly.

***Glory to God!***

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## Evangelization – A New Springtime “Encountering the Person of Christ”

### *25 Year Pastoral Plan for the Eparchy of Edmonton*

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