

February 2016

Dear Friends,

The end of the Christmas season has us taking down our Christmas trees and packing up our decorations. I pray that this past Christmas was a time to encounter God's love as we celebrated the birth of our Saviour, Jesus Christ. I also wish each of you a blessed new year 2016.

On Wednesday, February 10<sup>th</sup> the Church will enter the season of Lent. Lent, a time of preparation for Easter, is marked by prayer, fasting and alms giving. This year we celebrate Lent during the Extraordinary Jubilee Year of Mercy. Pope Francis has invited the entire church on a pilgrimage to focus our attention on the Mercy of God. Jesus' words in the Gospel of St. Luke, "Be merciful, just as your father is merciful", are a central theme for this Year of Mercy.

A Jubilee Year in the church includes a pilgrimage and the passing through a Holy Door. Pope Francis has opened the Holy Door at the four Major Basilicas in Rome. The Holy Father asked that every diocese have a Holy Door that our parishioners may enter through. The Holy Door for the Archdiocese of Edmonton is at St. Joseph's Cathedral-Basilica downtown. I invite you to come in pilgrimage to the Basilica and enter through the Holy Door as we come to an ever deeper awareness of God's mercy. I know that our schools have each designated a door as a Holy Door and our students have a number of resources that will enable them to enter this Year of Mercy in a meaningful way.

I pray that the season of Lent will be a time to once again deepen our relationship with God, coming once again to know of his mercy and love.

✠Richard W. Smith

Archbishop of Edmonton