



## Archbishop's Christmas Message 2016

Joy to the world, the Lord has come!

The angel reassured the shepherds that the birth of Jesus, our Saviour, means, “great joy for all the people” (Luke 2.10).

Canadians will celebrate with joy the Sesquicentennial of Confederation next year.

Catholics have other reasons to rejoice. Founded on June 25, 1847, the Archdiocese of Ottawa in 2017 will mark its 170<sup>th</sup> anniversary and the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Marian Congress held in our centennial year 1947.

We rejoice at the foundations laid by our forebears—our clergy, religious, and lay people—who have built our wonderful Catholic legacy of churches, institutions, and service.

We rejoice that, from earliest days, the Church of Ottawa has cared for the orphan, the widow, and the stranger.

In joy, Christians see Christ in the marginalized, the captive, and the elderly.

Pope Francis advocates joy, notably in his encyclical “The Joy of the Gospel” (*Evangeliium gaudium*) and his exhortation “The Gladness of Love” (*Amoris laetitia*).

Following his lead this Pastoral Year, we are continuing our theme “the family: home of love, mercy and joy” basing ourselves on St. Paul’s Letter to the Galatians: “the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace...” (5.22).

The pope calls us to renew our encounter with Jesus. Joy will then flow into our encounters with others at home, at work, and in society generally. We will be “missionary disciples” to the lost, suffering, and broken people in our diocese.

Spontaneously, we rejoice at the sight of a newborn child. Each baby demonstrates God’s creativity and goodness.

How much more joyful is it to contemplate the birth of Jesus Christ! Through it, God shines the light of his love into the darkness of the world.

The true joy of Christmas is the gift of eternal life Jesus has given us through his Cross and Resurrection. We celebrate this miraculous event begun on a dark winter’s night two thousand years ago.

Mary and Joseph experienced the joy and the challenges of family life with the birth of Jesus in humble circumstances. Love and wonderment met in this tiny child. Today, we also meet Christ in our family. In times joyful or difficult, he is brought to birth in our homes and hearts.

This Christmas, may the example and intercession of the Holy Family—Jesus, Mary, and Joseph—enrich your family with the gifts of peace, mercy, and joy!

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