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PRESS RELEASE
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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DEDICATION OF THE NEW ALTAR AT OTTAWA'S NOTRE DAME CATHEDRAL

On February 2, at 7:30 p.m., on the Feast of the Presentation of the Lord, the Most Reverend Terrence Prendergast, SJ, will preside at the Mass of the Dedication of the new altar at Notre Dame Cathedral. On that occasion, we will also celebrate the World Day for Consecrated Life.

For more than a year, Mgr Daniel Berniquez, Rector of the Cathedral, has worked with a committee whose purpose was to consult and reflect on the characteristics and design of the new altar. The committee sought the advice of several experts, especially those of architect Maxime Brault. Archbishop Prendergast approved the proposed plan for the new altar last fall. Since then, work on the construction and installation of new altar has been underway.

The new altar will replace the temporary altar that was installed with the introduction of the liturgical changes brought about by the Second Vatican Council. The installation of the new altar will in no way affect the heritage character of the Cathedral or of its high altar which was restored last summer. Great care has been taken to make sure the new altar integrates harmoniously with its surroundings, notwithstanding the need to comply with the Church's liturgical norms. Some artistic elements of the new altar were drawn from what is already in place.

The ritual for the Dedication of an altar is rich in meaning. Rites include the sprinkling of holy water on the members of the congregation and on the new altar; the placing of the relics beneath the altar, the prayer of dedication; the anointing of the altar; the burning of incense; the lighting of the altar and the dressing of the altar. The relics of the following saints will be placed beneath the new altar: Saint Kateri Tekakwitha, first Native saint; Saint François de Laval, first North American bishop; Saint Marguerite d'Youville, first female Canadian to be canonized and Saint André Bessette, first male Canadian to be canonized.

Because of the importance of this event in our Archdiocese, and as a way to recognize the role of the Cathedral as the Mother Church of our diocese, representatives of each parish have been invited to participate in this celebration. Archbishop Prendergast will present them with a souvenir candle at the end of the celebration.

On the same day, the sacred relic of St Francis Xavier, which has been on a pilgrimage across Canada since the end of December, will be visiting Notre Dame Cathedral. Public veneration will be held throughout the afternoon from 1:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. and in the evening from 9:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m. Veneration will be followed by a closing prayer and the litany of Saint Francis Xavier at 10 p.m.

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