



And the desert shall blossom

In 2018, the Catholic Church in western and northern Canada will celebrate a momentous anniversary, the 200th anniversary of the establishment of the RC church in this wide and beautiful, yet also challenging and even at times forbidding land.

From the plains of the southern prairies and parklands, and then beyond the mountains to the Pacific Ocean, from the northern forest rivers, lakes and then beyond the barrens of the Hudson Bay and the Arctic Ocean, the Gospel of Jesus Christ has been preached and lived.

The story of this land and its inhabitants of course begins centuries before, with the First Nations. Then each in their own time would appear: the explorers, the fur traders, the Métis and the settlers from eastern Canada and Europe. Today, we welcome immigrants and refugees from many nations. Since the arrival of FR, Norbert Provencher (later first bishop of Saint Boniface) 200 years ago the Gospel has been proclaimed to all the inhabitants of this land. The Church, parish by parish, diocese by diocese, has been built up, welcoming all. The reign of God has been built up, a reign of justice, peace and love.

In this anniversary year of 2018, the Archdiocese of Saint Boniface invites all to join in celebrating the story of this land and its peoples as a story of faith and love blessed by God in many and wondrous ways. The Church established by Bishop Provencher invites all its sister Roman Catholic dioceses of western and northern Canada to give thanks to Jesus Christ for all those women and men of faith, laity, religious and priests who built up the Church over 200 years. As we engage ourselves together to be missionary disciples in the spread of the Gospel today and tomorrow, we remember and honour all the dedication and faithfulness of the years gone by.

The Archdiocese of Saint Boniface also invites its sister Christian Churches, its friends of all faiths and spiritualities and indeed all people of good will to join in celebrating the rich diversity of gifts we bring to and receive from each other.

It will be a yearlong Jubilee filled with large and small liturgical and cultural celebrations. There will be plays and varied musical presentations, (choir concerts and a rock opera), symposiums and historical displays and exhibitions.

All are invited to an all-day celebration to be held on Sunday July 15, 2018 at the St. Boniface Cathedral, Archbishop's Residence and the University of St. Boniface.

The past especially if it is seen with wonder and gratitude, is always key to understanding and living fully the present. However, so is the future, especially if it is to be filled with hope and commitment.

A year to:

- Celebrate 200 years of faith and Christian community, committing ourselves anew to sharing the Good News of Jesus.
- Give thanks for all that was light and to ask for forgiveness for all that was darkness, committing ourselves anew to true Reconciliation and unity, justice, harmony, compassion, inclusion, tolerance and peace.
- To glorify God with joy and hope. The desert has blossomed, is blossoming and will continue to blossom. **Alleluia!**

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