



**LET US MAKE THIS MONTH A SPECIAL MOMENT
FOR THANKSGIVING, REFLECTION, AND PRAYER:**

**Message by the Most Reverend Paul-André Durocher
Archbishop of Gatineau
President of the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops**

The peace and love of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you, my brothers and sisters!

I write to you from the threshold of the tombs of the Apostles Peter and Paul. I am in Rome, participating in the Third Extraordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops which was inaugurated this past Sunday by our Holy Father, Pope Francis. For the next two weeks, I will join him and other Bishops from around the world, together with a number of experts, in reflecting on the Synod's topic, *The Pastoral Challenges of the Family in the Context of Evangelization*. My thoughts are on all families in their diversity, on the family of the Church in Canada, and the human family with all its challenges and opportunities in our own country and throughout the world. I unite my voice to that of Pope Francis and all Bishops in inviting the whole Church to pray for this Synod and its preparations for the Assembly that will meet next year.

This coming Sunday will be special for all Canadians. Pope Francis, the Successor of the Apostle Peter, will preside at a Mass of Thanksgiving in Saint Peter's Basilica, to celebrate the declaration earlier this year that the Universal Church recognizes two of our great pioneers, Bishop François de Laval and Mother Marie of the Incarnation, for their heroic sanctity, generous service, and the exemplary witness of their lives. His Eminence Gérald Cyprien Cardinal Lacroix, Archbishop of Québec and Primate of Canada, will be among the main concelebrants with the Holy Father.

The Sunday after that, October 19, at the conclusion of the Synod's current Assembly, Pope Francis will lead the Church in the beatification of Servant of God Paul VI, who oversaw the last half of the Second Vatican Council, as well as the promulgation and initial implementation of the Council's teachings and reforms. It was Paul VI who introduced regular meetings of the Synod of Bishops to advise and assist the Pope in leading the Universal Church. We see in him a model for evangelization and mission in today's world. Not only did he choose the name Paul in honour of the Apostle to the Gentiles, but he dedicated his papacy to revitalizing the Church's outreach to and involvement in the world.

The opening paragraph of the Preface to the *Instrumentum laboris* or discussion document for the present Synod reminds us:

The proclamation of the Gospel of the Family is an integral part of the mission of the Church, since the revelation of God sheds light on the relationship between a man and a woman, their love for each other and the fruitfulness of their relationship. In these times, a widespread cultural, social and spiritual crisis is posing a challenge in the Church's work of evangelizing the family, the vital nucleus of society and the ecclesial community.

This whole month thus brings together two major themes: strengthening the family, and evangelizing society. Saint François de Laval and Saint Marie of the Incarnation gave loving attention to the families of their day – particularly in terms of encouragement, formation, health care and schooling. Both these heroic pioneers recognized families had a mission to serve and transform society. Society depends on strong, healthy and holy families, not only to respond to the demands of the present moment but also to prepare for the future. Society needs the intimacy, fidelity, and forgiveness that only loving couples and happy families can give, just as homes and families are in turn called to care for and strengthen their communities and society. Our challenge today is to find better ways to marry family life, with the strong and holy intimacy only it can offer, to a missionary and evangelizing vision which responds to Christ's command to go forth to all peoples and to all the earth.

For Canadians, this month includes our annual civic holiday of Thanksgiving, when families and friends gather in appreciation for the blessings of life and of the past year. In addition, for Catholics, October is traditionally dedicated to the Rosary, and includes the memorial of Mary, Our Lady of the Rosary, on October 7. This past year, my diocese was involved in preparing French-language resources for the annual National Week for Life and the Family, an initiative of our Conference. As part of these materials, I prepared a short series of reflections on the family rosary. These thoughts on how the mysteries of the Rosary continue to have significance for families today have been recently published not only in French, but also in English, Italian and Spanish. I am giving printed copies to Pope Francis and to each participant in the Synod on the family. At the same time, our Conference will make the electronic texts available to everyone on its website.

The Rosary is a prayer and a meditation easily adapted to different situations in life. It allows us to see in our own joys and sufferings, our personal shadows and lights, the glories to which we are called by our Heavenly Father through Our Lord Jesus and the

gifts of the Holy Spirit. The Rosary can help us link our personal lives with the life of Christ and his loving Mother, and to reflect on how we are called by our Lord to be the salt and the light of the world.

May Mary, spouse of Joseph and mother of Jesus, with Saint François de Laval and Saint Marie of the Incarnation, join our prayer that families be sources of communion and holiness, comfort and healing, in a society which endeavours to protect all its members from violence, rejection and division.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "+ Paul-André Durocher". The signature is written in a cursive style with a cross at the beginning.

+ Paul-André Durocher
Archbishop of Gatineau and
President of the Canadian Conference
of Catholic Bishops

Memorial of Our Lady of the Rosary, October 7, 2014