



**2019 National Week for Life and the Family:  
Letter to Catholic Families from  
the President of the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops**

May 2019

Dear Catholic families,

Once a year the Church in Canada sets aside a week to celebrate and reflect upon God's great gifts of life and family. Jesus tells us in John's Gospel that he desires for us to have an abundant life (*Jn 10:10*). The fullness of life we are to experience is only possible through the power of the Holy Spirit. In the Father's loving plan for humanity, families are called to share in and be a sign of his life-giving presence. This year's Week for Life and the Family will be observed from May 12 to May 19, with the theme, "*Listening to the Gospel as a Family*".

We live in a world of constant news; bad news, fake news, shouldn't we hear some good news? The word Gospel literally means "Good News." As Catholics we are the recipients of this Good News. Of the many negative words we hear today, there is one Word which is truly good news, Jesus, whose name means "God saves." What is the good news? Simply put, the good news is that God, our loving Father, has sent his only begotten Son, Jesus, so that whoever believes in him might have eternal life (*Jn 3:16*). It is by the power of the Holy Spirit that we are able to proclaim Jesus as Lord and call God "Abba, Father" (*1 Cor 12:3; Rom 8:15*).

When we hear good news, our hearts are filled with joy and we want to share that good news. Pope Francis tells us that "the joy of the Gospel fills the hearts and lives of all who encounter Jesus. Those who accept his offer of salvation are set free from sin, sorrow, inner emptiness, and loneliness. With Christ, joy is constantly born anew" (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 1). The Gospel is a saving message not only for us, but for all peoples; "the good news must first be proclaimed to all nations" (*Mk 13:10*). The Holy Father teaches us that "the best incentive for sharing the Gospel comes from contemplating it with love, lingering over its pages and reading it with the heart" (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 264). Saint Boniface asks, "Can there be a more fitting pursuit in youth or a more valuable possession in old age than a knowledge of sacred scripture?" And Saint Jerome famously said that "ignorance of the Scriptures is ignorance of Christ;" let us come to know Jesus more deeply by *listening to the Gospel as a family*.

With my brother Bishops, it is my prayer that on the occasion of this year's Week for Life and the Family, you and your family will be empowered by the Holy Spirit to encounter Jesus more fully by listening to the Gospel, and that you may joyfully live out this saving message by becoming witnesses of God, the Father's loving presence in the world.

+Lionel Gendron, P.S.S.  
Bishop of Saint-Jean-Longueuil  
President of the Canadian Conference  
of Catholic Bishops