



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

May 2021

Dear Catholic families,

Every year the Church in Canada designates one week to proclaim the gift of family and life. The Week for Life and the Family will be commemorated this year from May 9 to May 16, with the theme, *“Family, the Domestic Church: A Sign of Hope and Life”*. Some people may ask, “How can I or my family live up to the ideal of being a domestic church?” The truth is no family is perfect; each one of us is affected by sin and therefore we all fall short of the ideal. The good news is that through our baptism we have been “incorporated into the Church and made sharers in her mission” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1213). In and through the power of the Holy Spirit we become missionaries to the world.

What is the mission of the Church in which we partake? It is nothing less than to proclaim the good news of God the Father’s saving love in Christ Jesus. Left to our own powers, this would be an impossible task but we are not alone. By our baptism we have been grafted into Christ. St. Paul says: “It is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me” (Gal 2:20). This mission to the world is meant to be carried out not only by bishops, priests, and religious, but it is for lay people and families too. In the early Church it was not only the Apostles who spread the faith. Pope Francis reminds us that “from the very beginning, Christianity was preached by lay people.” Our Holy Father repeats this teaching of his predecessor, Pope Benedict XVI, stating that “in order to take root in people’s land and develop actively, the commitment of these families, these spouses, these Christian communities, of these lay faithful was necessary.” So too, in our day, the family’s commitment to Christ is necessary. As St. John Paul II remarked in 1979: “Evangelization depends largely on the domestic church.” Recognizing our own limitations and weaknesses before such a lofty task we ask that the Holy Spirit be rekindled in you and your families so that you may proclaim joyfully the good news of salvation with a spirit of power and love.

With my brother Bishops, it is my prayer that during this year’s Week for Life and the Family, you and your family, through the grace of your baptism and through the intercession of the Holy Family, be able to live your lives as a domestic church. Empowered by the Holy Spirit, you will be a sign of hope and life attracting others to the beauty of God’s saving love in Christ Jesus.

Yours in Christ,

+ Richard Gagnon  
Archbishop of Winnipeg  
President of the Canadian Conference  
of Catholic Bishops