



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 these regions of Canada. The theme of our busy year and its many events and projects will be: *And the desert shall blossom*, a verse from Psalm 64 that Bishop Provencher chose as his motto on seeing the vast open spaces and the challenges before him, coupled with the promise of spreading the Gospel through those faraway lands.

Since July 16, 1818, that memorable day when Fathers Norbert Provencher and Sévère Dumoulin, and the seminarist William Edge arrived at the Red River Colony, the Gospel of Jesus Christ has been preached and lived – from the plains of the southern prairies and parklands to the Rocky Mountains, and from the northern forests, rivers, and lakes to the barrens of Hudson Bay and the Arctic Ocean.

The story of this land and its inhabitants of course begins thousands of years before, with the First Nations. Then each in their own time would appear: the explorers, the fur traders, the coureurs de bois, the Métis and the settlers from eastern Canada and Europe, Today, we welcome immigrants and refugees from many nations. Since these first missionaries arrived 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 Mother 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.

It will be a yearlong Jubilee filled with many events large and small, both liturgical and cultural celebrations. There will be a variety of musical presentations, (choir concerts and a rock opera), a specially commissioned play bringing the past milestones of the history of our archdiocese to life, as well as an academic symposium. A book detailing all of our parishes will also be prepared, along with an illustrated history book (comic-book style).

The high point of the year will be on Sunday, July 15, 2018, when we will be joined by Papal Legate Cardinal Gérald Cyprien Lacroix, Archbishop of Quebec City and Primate of Canada. This celebration will include an historical re-enactment of the arrival of the first three missionaries, a solemn mass, performances by local musical and cultural groups in the afternoon and finally an evening concert featuring well-known celebrities.

2018, 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;
- Glorify God with joy and hope.

The desert has blossomed, is blossoming and will continue to blossom. Alleluia!

+ Albert L. Gatt

Most Reverend Albert LeGatt
Archbishop of Saint Boniface