



OFFICE OF THE ARCHBISHOP

September 2017

Dear Friends in the Jewish Communities of Edmonton:

Continuing a custom that I began several years ago, I am pleased on the occasion of your High Holy Days - Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur - to offer my personal best wishes and those of the entire Catholic community to all members of your synagogues and the Jewish communities residing here in Edmonton.

The themes of the High Holy Days – life and death, repentance and forgiveness, creation and redemption, judgment and mercy, hope in this world and in the world to come – are of great significance for both of our traditions. It is a great gift to take the time to reflect upon these realities individually and communally, and to re-set our lives on the pathways of life that flow from them.

Moreover, it seems to me that our world today needs the witness of right relations and open dialogue between our faith communities. We, Jews and Christians can work together to promote religious freedom, to foster the moral principles of our faiths, particularly the sanctity of life and the significance of the traditional family, and to cultivate the moral and religious conscience of society.

Here in the Edmonton area, we can be very proud of the many ways in which our two communities, along with many others, already engage in this common witness together. These days, for instance, Catholics and Jews enjoy many positive and life-giving initiatives together, notably through our schools and educational forums, through social and civic engagements and through mutual associations with organizations such as the Capital Region Interfaith Housing Initiative, the Edmonton Interfaith Centre for Education and Action and the Phoenix Multifaith Society for Harmony. Through such institutions and activities, we are modelling together respect and solidarity for all people of good will, regardless of their religious heritage or cultural expression, and based upon our shared values as Christians and Jews.

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Still, I wonder sometimes what more we might do together as Catholics and Jews to demonstrate our commitment to one another and the loving and merciful nature of God. Perhaps we could find ways to work more closely together to break down walls of suspicion between our faith communities through educational or social gatherings. Perhaps we should work together on a specific project such as addressing the conditions that lead to family violence or sexual exploitation in our city. I can only think that such a witness would contribute to the well-being of everyone living here in the Edmonton area.

At a recent meeting with Jewish leaders at the Vatican, Pope Francis blessed his audience with the following words: “May the Eternal One bless and enlighten our cooperation, so that together we can accept and carry out ever better his plans”. I make these words my own as you celebrate your High Holy Days this year.

May this message from our community add to the joy of your celebrations and may it be the will of our Lord to grant us all a year ahead that is both good and sweet!

With warmest regards,



Archbishop Richard W. Smith