

# Love One Another

by Archbishop Richard Smith of Edmonton, CWL National Spiritual Advisor

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*Dear Sisters in the League,*

*These are my notes from Archbishop Richard Smith's talk at Provincial Convention in Fort McMurray in June 2007. They are certainly not a complete and concise recount of his talk. I ask for your understanding where there are errors and omissions.*

*Blessings,*

*Jeanne Davis, VP & Spiritual Development Chair*

*Edmonton Diocesan Council*

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Being Christian is not the result of an idea but rather because of a personal encounter with Jesus. Many of us are cradle Catholics and we can take things for granted but we must remember that it is our encounter with Jesus that challenges us and changes us.

The Christian is one that is totally convinced that God loved us. We are sized with this truth and we cannot help but reflect it on others. What happens in our encounter with Jesus that leaves us changed and seized with this truth?

We need to place our encounter in the context of the Church, a body that is called to love. The mystery of the Church is founded in the mystery of the Holy Trinity. The act of self-revelation is an act of love. God loves us and throughout history God has progressively revealed himself and the perfect revelation was Jesus Christ.

Jesus called himself the Son of God. As monotheist, how could Jesus be God if the people believe in only one God? And then God is revealed in the Holy Spirit? In the very act of revealing himself in Jesus Christ, God performs an act of rescue by fashioning a people united in Jesus. God's will for the world is the Church. The Church, by God's will and action, must always be a communion of love and it is within this communion that we follow Jesus as disciple.

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The Pope tells us that in this communion of love, there can never be room for poverty that denies dignity of life to a person. The Church is not a collection - we are a communion where each individual is loved, accepted, encourages, supported, forgiven! Church is where an individual can stand out apart in harmony with the rest. It is life the difference between a concert and a symphony!

It is so much easier to stand back and not come forward. But we are called to come forward, to speak, to hear and to act. If my God given gift is not to be a source of humiliation, I must give to others not only something special but something of myself. The dynamics of the encounters frees me to not only share my gift but to give of myself to another.

God's grace is what we receive in our encounter with Christ. The true me, the one created by God, is often buried, for all kinds of reasons, such as fear, shame, guilt. In our encounter, our true self is extracted. It reminds me of the tar sands and how when the oil is removed, the true sand is revealed. At times this is a painful experience as we become aware of our sinfulness. Yet when Jesus gazes in us, and goes through all the layers hiding, he looks within, he sees the true self and the process of extraction is done in one question. DO YOU LOVE ME? He knows of our sin but he is God and he can deal with that. He just asks "DO YOU LOVE ME?" If yes, then asks "Feed my sheep".

If we are to truly love one another, then we must encounter Jesus over and over. The most important place of course is in the Eucharist. The real presence of Jesus is not a static presence, He is present in his saving act of dying on the cross, offering himself to the Father by his death. We are in communion with Jesus in his offering by offering our lives. That is a moment of encounter and it draws us out of a buried space and into our mission, to give ourselves to others, to the world.

A second place of encounter is in adoration. In front of the Blessed Sacrament, we are spending time with Jesus, with the Truth. We are brought to an awareness of ourselves.

A third place of encounter is in our concrete service to the poor. It is then that we discover ourselves, our own poverty. We are radically dependent on God. We are only stewards and so we are called to care for those who have less than we do.