

# *My dear faithful of the archdiocese,*

December 8, 2025, on the Solemnity of the Immaculate Heart of Mary and the Patroness of our Archdiocese, we will begin our celebration of the 200th anniversary of the Archdiocese. On January 27, 1826, Pope Leo XII erected the Diocese of Kingston and nominated Alexander MacDonnell as the first Bishop of Kingston. With this Papal act, Kingston became the second diocese in Canada and the first Roman Catholic diocese erected in the British Empire since the Reformation! It so happens that the anniversary begins as the Jubilee Year of Hope of 2025 comes to an end. It is our hope that the Jubilee will be a complement to the celebration of the anniversary with many combined graces for the Archdiocese.

The initial preparations for our anniversary began in 2024. The Priest's Council of the Archdiocese met in that year to consider the general direction of our celebrations. I was deeply edified by their common desire to celebrate the anniversary in a manner that would aim to sustain the life of our many parish communities for future years. An anniversary committee was formed of lay people from across the Archdiocese and began the challenging task of planning our celebrations. An enormous amount of work has already been accomplished, and they deserve our deep thanks.

We live in the historical path of a wonderful heritage. Several weeks ago, on my return from the bishop's meetings in Montreal, I stopped at the Church, St. Raphael, in the Archdiocese of Ottawa-Cornwall. This small community is the location where our first Bishop, Alexander MacDonnell, lived and offered his priestly and then episcopal ministry to the faithful of Ontario. Here, a Church was built along with a bishop's house, and the small college of St. Iona for the education of young adults. After moving his residence to Kingston, the Lord blessed his tireless efforts with the development of many parishes, as the waves of settlement increased with every year of the nineteenth century. The establishment of the religious communities so dear to our present Archdiocese took place during this time. Their vocations and ministry led to the opening of many hospitals and schools, which have served the faithful over the years.

It is our hope to plan celebratory events with the aim of promoting parish renewal. We wish to avoid a year of celebration that will be quickly forgotten at the end of 2026. Rather, I pray that our celebrations may put in place the foundation for the continued renewal of the Archdiocese for the next 25 years. As always, this will take place within the heart of the Church, guided by the Holy Spirit, in the implementation of the Second Vatican Council, with attention to the particular needs of the Archdiocese in these years. A Eucharistic focus, a dedication to prayer and conversion, mark the Church's renewal in each generation.

As a focused theme for the anniversary, I chose the following phrase from St. Paul's letter to the Philippians, "To know Christ and the power of His resurrection" (Philippians 3.10). This phrase captures a beautiful sentiment and prayer in St. Paul's heart as he writes to his beloved fellow believers in the city of Philippi. St. Paul is in prison. The Philippians have recently sent prayers and assistance to him. He, in turn, consoles and exhorts them in their spiritual pilgrimage, and he shares with them his deepest and most intimate desire to know Christ and the power of His resurrection. Through the ministry of the Church, these words are not only addressed to the Philippians mentioned above, but to the baptized in all ages. For centuries, these words, inspired by the Holy Spirit, have been a source of great strength to Catholics. Let us embrace these words for ourselves during this anniversary. May our souls express and strengthen a desire to know Christ, to listen to His words in the Gospels, to receive in faith His precious body and blood in the Eucharist, and in our prayer grow into a deep personal relationship with the Risen Christ. This will involve an experience of God's overwhelming love, a movement of conversion from our sins, and a commitment to make Christ known to the world.

In subsequent letters, I hope to reflect further on these words of St. Paul and to appreciate more fully his understanding of the power of the resurrection. At this stage, let us begin with prayer. I invite you to read St. Paul's letter to the Philippians and prayerfully reflect on the beauty of his writing.



*May the Lord guide our plans for the anniversary and continue to send his bountiful graces to our parish communities.*