



For the more than 1.2 billion Christians around the world who are members of our Church, this is an important and solemn moment. The Cardinals of the Catholic Church, in prayer and meditation, free from interference by the outside world, will begin their Conclave to elect a new Successor to the Apostle Saint Peter.

The word “conclave” refers to a place with a key. Only a few staff are permitted occasional access to the Cardinals. They gather in prayer in the Sistine Chapel, just as before Pentecost the Apostles went to “the room upstairs” where they “constantly devoted themselves to prayer” (Acts of the Apostles, 1.13-14). The prayers of the Cardinals echo those almost 2,000 years ago: “Lord, you know everyone’s heart. Show us which one ... you have chosen” (Acts 1.24). This time, however, it is not Peter who summons the brethren and addresses them. It is the Cardinals, brothers in faith, who meet to discern the one whom the Lord has chosen to hand on the keys he has given Peter, “the keys of the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 16.18).

My brothers and sisters, I extend an invitation to you, on behalf of the Bishops of Canada and our brother Bishops around the world. The invitation comes from us as “successors of the Apostles, who together with the successor of Peter, the Vicar of Christ, the visible Head of the whole Church, govern the house of the living God” (Second Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, no. 18). We invite each of you to join the Cardinals and the whole Church in praying to the Holy Spirit to show who is to be chosen as the new Successor of Peter.

As a sign and instrument of unity and communion, the new Pope will be called to lead the successors of the Apostles and all the faithful in apostolic teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread and the prayers (Acts 2.14, 37-42). Let us pray that he, with Peter and like Peter, will be bold and strong in his witness, standing with the Apostles, speaking out, exhorting those near and far away, and capable of moving hearts to conversion and reconciliation.

May our prayers themselves be a witness to our communion and unity as Church. May they

strengthen and renew our belief as Catholics that “Jesus Christ, the Eternal Shepherd,” has “placed Blessed Peter over the other Apostles, and instituted in him a permanent and visible source and foundation of unity of faith and communion” (*Lumen Gentium*, no. 18).

**+ Richard W. Smith**

Archbishop of Edmonton and  
President of the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops

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