

Archbishop Smith: Everything Makes Sense

This week I went out to the Lac Ste. Anne pilgrimage site, about an hour west of Edmonton. For those unfamiliar with this place, it is the site where for generations Indigenous peoples have come on pilgrimage. It is held to be a sacred site, dedicated to the honour of Ste. Anne. Around the time of the saint's feast day, July 26th, pilgrims come in great numbers, easily 20,000 to 30,000 people over the course of a few days.

To everyone's disappointment, the pilgrimage had to be cancelled this year due to the pandemic. It was decided by the trustees, who exercise oversight of the land, that we would hold the pilgrimage virtually. Accordingly, I went out to the site this week to record the celebration of the opening mass with just a handful of people, following which I gave the customary blessing of the lake. These events will be broadcast around the time when the pilgrimage would normally open, so that pilgrims can participate remotely.

The people who honour this pilgrimage have deep faith. I found this expressed simply and wonderfully by a woman who walked with me to the mess hall for lunch following the lake blessing. She spoke with deep conviction of the importance of the faith that had been handed down to her by her ancestors, in particular her grandfather. It was from him, she told me, that she learned about Christianity. She went on to tell me that, as she continued to learn about it and live it, everything made sense.

That insight has stayed with me. "Everything made sense." More is being expressed here than that the tenets of the faith make sense. They do, of course. The "more" is that, in the light of Christianity, the meaning of all reality comes into brilliant focus. Everything makes sense; we grasp the meaning of the whole.

Why this is so finds its explanation in the teaching of St. Paul: "for in [Christ] all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or powers—all things have been created through him and for him. He himself is before all things, and in him all things hold together." (Colossians 1: 16-17). Later, a Pope who bore this Apostle's name, St. Paul VI, explained it by saying that Jesus Christ is "the great hidden key to human history and the part we play in it" (Homily, Manila, Nov 29, 1970). Because all things have been created through and for Christ, because he alone holds the key to understating the whole of reality, in his light "everything makes sense."

Something wonderful happens when we understand, when we grasp meaning: we relax. This coming Sunday, Jesus will invite the overburdened to take upon

themselves his "yoke", a biblical metaphor for religious instruction, so that our souls will find rest. It is an invitation to allow him to be our teacher, to ask him to lead us into the meaning of all things that only he can reveal. If we accept his teaching and allow it to be our definitive compass, then we, like the woman with whom I spoke this week, will see how "everything makes sense." In this knowledge we find the rest for our souls that we earnestly and urgently seek, and that Jesus alone can give.