

Archbishop Smith: Pastoral Conversion in Practice

At the very outset of his papacy, Pope Francis called the entire church to pastoral conversion for the sake of the mission of the Church. We know that fidelity to the Gospel requires a radical change of heart. This call of the Holy Father is addressed, in addition, to the Church's practices and structures. If anything at this level needs to be changed in order better to serve the mission, then it must be changed. With this blog post I am announcing two ways in which the Archdiocese is moving forward in response to this call in the context of current challenges.

First, I introduced just last week in the Archdiocese a new mission-driven organizational approach to ministry. For some time now we have been involved in a process of strategic re-thinking, yet all of that came to a rather crashing halt with the onset of the pandemic. The revenue crisis brought about by the outbreak necessitated a very close look at how we could continue our necessary ministry with radically reduced resources. That rather practical concern soon gave way to the deeper question of how the Lord might be calling us, in current circumstances, to re-think radically everything that we do for the sake of mission. This led to a months-long intensive process of reflection that has finally issued in the new approach we are launching on this Feast of the Exaltation of the Cross. What better day? The proclamation of Christ's victory over sin is the heart of ecclesial mission. We must be ever alert to new ways to proclaim the Gospel and to be sure that our every effort is in line with, and in service to, our fundamental evangelical duty.

The second initiative is undertaken in conjunction with the other Bishops of Alberta and the Northwest Territories. The call to pastoral conversion is reaching us anew in the pandemic context. The experience over the last number of months has called into question many of our prevailing assumptions and modes of behaviour, and now people ponder what must be changed in the way we live for a future of hope. Via our new Pastoral Letter [here](#), released today, the Alberta and NWT Bishops are inviting our people to engage in conversations around this very point. The letter will summon us to ponder our past, present and future in the light of key principles of Catholic Social Teaching through participation in seven panel discussions. Each event will be a moderated discussion among four to five persons of one particular principle of the Church's social doctrine. These will be registered and distributed on a weekly basis by Grandin Media, which will offer the opportunity for remote participants to offer their comments and/or questions. This feedback will, in turn, be used by the Bishops and their colleagues to inform future pastoral and catechetical endeavours as we move together into a post-pandemic future.

For further information on this endeavour in service of pastoral conversion,

Grandin Media has a story [here](#), with information and a schedule of panel discussions [here](#).

May all of our efforts at ongoing pastoral conversion bear fruit in lives renewed by the encounter with Jesus Christ, who, by His Holy Cross, has redeemed the world.

Here is a Facebook Live interview from this morning regarding both subjects.