

# Archbishop Smith: The Hub Without a Bubble

A couple of days ago an American friend of mine sent me an email from the U.S., with his observation that he was finding it “very weird” to be watching a game of hockey played in Edmonton in the middle of a summer heat wave. Weird, indeed. We know the reason, though. Edmonton, along with Toronto, has been chosen as one of the two “hub” cities for the completion of this pandemic-year’s NHL season.

The choice of venue was determined by a number of factors, not the least of which was the capacity of the host city to create a bubble within which the players, officials, etc. would be safe from infection by COVID-19. Hockey fans living in Edmonton can testify that this bubble is so far proving to be very effective as a deterrent, at least against them! Some people simply cannot resist the temptation to head downtown to where the hockey action is taking place to see if they can get even a glimpse of the players. No luck. That bubble is impenetrable.

A hub, as we know, is a centre of activity or of a network. Action rotates around it and radiates out from it. The Christian Gospel proclaims that the hub of all things is the Cross of Jesus Christ. All historical activity rotates around it, because God has made the death and resurrection of His Son the centre of salvation history. All hope radiates from it, since the paschal mystery is that wondrous event through which God’s love most clearly and decisively bursts into our lives with brilliant clarity.

This hub is not enclosed by any bubble. No one is excluded from a life-transforming encounter with the mercy of God poured out upon the world from the Cross of Christ. As Jesus himself put it: “And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.” (John 12:32) Jesus wants us to come to him, and to accept him and his love as the hub around which the entirety of our lives rotates, as the one in whom we at last find the true meaning and real direction of our lives.

We saw this foreshadowed in the encounter between Jesus and the hungry crowd in last Sunday’s Gospel (Matthew 14:13-21). The people went to where they knew Jesus would be found, and they allowed him to be the directive centre of the miraculous action by which a crowd numbering in the many thousands was fed beyond satisfaction with a mere five loaves and two fish. When Jesus is our “hub”, wondrous things happen. We can trust that.

To be part of the NHL hub action, the hockey players have made their way past the security bubbles to either Rogers Place in Edmonton or the Scotiabank Arena in Toronto. To share in that “hub” which is the paschal mystery of Jesus

Christ, we need only make our way to the sacraments of the Church, especially the Eucharist. There is no preventative bubble, but there is an entry ticket: faith and repentance.

May the Lord fulfill his promise and draw us all anew to him and to the love he has radiated from the Cross.