

Canada needs God more than ever, Archbishop Smith tells family conference

While Canada Day is a time to celebrate our blessed country, it's also a time to reflect on where our nation has turned away from God in the mistaken notion that we simply don't need Him, says Edmonton Archbishop Richard Smith.

"Deeply aware as we are of the blessings that are ours in this country, we do also share a profound, heartbreaking, heart-wrenching sense of lament at many things we are seeing unfold in our country," Archbishop Smith said on June 30, the eve of the national holiday.

He was speaking during the homily at morning Mass at the annual Catholic Family Life Conference, an event that draws thousands of people from across Canada each year to the pilgrimage site of Lac Ste Anne, northwest of Edmonton.

"We need only think of the recent decision of the Supreme Court of Canada in the case of Trinity Western University, in which the foundational right to freedom of religion and freedom of conscience was undermined by our very own Supreme Court – which should be a body that we look to uphold our Charter rights rather than undermine them in the name of a rather subjective concept that they call the public interest," Archbishop Smith said. "And the reasons for our lament can be multiplied as we consider the continued attacks on the dignity of human life, the undermining of family, significantly by the redefinition of marriage, and so on.

"Yet this lament, real as it is within our hearts, can never among Christian people lead to despair."



Archbishop Gerard Pettipas of Grouard-McLennan blesses boy during Communion at St. Anne Shrine
Lorraine Turchansky, Grandin Media

The first reading of the day (from Lamentations 2) spoke graphically of the abject misery of the Israelites, who had been forced into exile by invading forces. But the reason for their misery, the Archbishop said, is the same for us today.

“The word of God in that first passage is clear: your so-called prophetic leaders have spoken to you deceptions, visions – ideologies, if you will – that have led you away from fidelity to God. In order to move from misery to hope, that reading tells us we must go to the very heart of why we find ourselves in the situation we do. And that is sin: having turned away from God because of surrender to a lie.

“The lie that finds itself at the basis of all others, the originating lie that finds its human expression throughout history, is that lie first proposed by the Evil One to Adam and Eve: the lie that you do not need God.

“You don’t need me to tell you that that is a lie which is being perpetuated in our own day, in our culture and our society. At the heart of it all is the lie that we do not need God, that we can do things on our own, that we can create our own selves – lies, falsehoods, which tragically continue to be perpetuated even in the face of the miseries that inevitably follow in their wake.”

The Christian response, Archbishop Smith said, must be a faith rooted in the truth that we do need God, that we have "a radical need for all that God can give us."

That truth was illustrated in Matthew's Gospel account of the centurion who begged Jesus to heal his servant and uttered the now famous words: "Lord, I am not worthy to have you come under my roof; but only speak the word, and my servant will be healed." (Matt. 8.5-17). Smith said the centurion's faith began, as ours must, with an awareness of our own powerlessness and need for God.

"The call to us is clear, to awaken once again to truth and to pray that our beloved country will awaken to truth, and in that awakening allow faith to rise up and move us, individually, collectively, as families and as a nation, back to God. Back to God with the plea that he do for us what we cannot do for ourselves, that he heal the misery that in many ways we have brought upon ourselves through our collective surrender to the lie."