

Communities need to come together, share their light, say Edmonton Prayer Breakfast speakers

Sandy Prather says that after experiencing a night of literal darkness during a pilgrimage in Spain, she was reminded of how Jesus' light led her out of her own time of spiritual darkness.

"I have found that I cannot navigate my life without that light, because I tried it," said Prather, a veteran Catholic retreat leader and the guest speaker for the annual Edmonton Prayer Breakfast at the Shaw Conference Centre April 25.

The prayer breakfast gathers together civic, church and business leaders from the Christian community to pray and show support for Mayor Don Iveson, the city council and police and fire departments.



Sandra Prather Chris Berthelot, Grandin Media

Prather described how – after leaving the faith for 10 years – the 'light of Jesus' broke through the darkness in her life, and she eventually returned to her faith and achieved a master's degree in theology.

She then shared her experience of walking through Spain's popular Camino de Santiago – or 'Way of St. James' – pilgrimage route in 2010, which she navigated with other pilgrims using flashlights.

Prather says the experience taught her that Jesus was the light guiding her own life, and that it also taught her the need for the community to work together to have peace in the world.

“We are meant to harness the power of community in carrying our light,” said Prather, who gave the example of how the pilgrims’ combined light from their flashlights made it easier to follow the trail.

“One candle is good ... but many candles have a bigger power,” she said.

Iveson says he was impressed by how timely Prather’s message was, and said that it’s an important message for those in public service.

“It’s a reminder that our collective action has a positive impact in our communities,” said Iveson.

Prather says that her pilgrimage taught her that she needed to stay connected to the true light, which is Jesus, which she says she accomplishes through prayer and reading her Bible.

“(The pilgrimage) gave me new insight into what Jesus means when he says ‘I am the light of the world’,” said Prather, who [received the Kevin Carr award](#) for Christian Leadership from Newman Theological College last August.

Dawn Magee, who attended the breakfast, says that she appreciated how Prather used the imagery of light and darkness to express how important it is for the whole community to work together.

“We have a dark community and city right now, and we need to be the light wherever we go, not just the Catholic faith but all faiths together in one community,” Magee said.

Iveson says that he has seen the power of community at work at city council meetings, particularly when the council brought citizens together to brainstorm different solutions to problems like climate change.

“Another way of looking at it is we asked these human beings of good will and good nature to gather together and pray on a difficult question that leaders were struggling with,” said Iveson during his speech.

“That spirit of bringing people of good will together, to pray together on tough questions, on the challenges that they are trying to solve...that is the spirit that is behind public service,” he said.

Prather says that she appreciated the chance to share her faith at the breakfast, and emphasized that everyone – especially public servants – carry a light inside themselves that they must share with the world.

"We need all the gifts, we need all the lights—the peacemakers, the justice doers, the compassion transmitters, the lovers of life and the savers of life," said Prather.

"And together, we push back the darkness."