

***85th Anniversary of the Cathedral Basilica of Christ the King, Hamilton
December 19, 2018***

Thank you for gathering with us today as we pray our thanksgiving for the 85th anniversary of the blessing and opening of the Cathedral Basilica of Christ the King, an outstanding landmark in the City of Hamilton, and the Mother Church of the Diocese of Hamilton, the second-largest English-speaking diocese in Canada!

Bishop Robert Barron, Auxiliary Bishop of Los Angeles, having responsibility for Hollywood, and an outstanding Catholic preacher and teacher, and founder of Word on Fire, explains that the first step in evangelization is the experience of beauty. It is why he often begins his major teaching from breathtakingly beautiful places in the Christian world – and there are many.

Bishop McNally, the fifth Bishop of Hamilton, must have had something of the same instinct and appreciation of the importance of beauty. During the construction he often said that this Cathedral was to be the most beautiful in the entire country. And as a late-comer to the Diocese, may I say that the Bishop was absolutely right! Even Cardinal Gerard Cyprien Lacroix, Archbishop of Quebec and Primate of Canada, during a recent visit here last year, acknowledged that it was so!

Beauty lifts the mind and heart and helps us recognize the presence of eternal realities! It is almost as if we are breathing-in the sacred from the moment we enter the building.

In recent years, several Pastors have requested that we celebrate the Sacrament of Confirmation for their young candidates here at the Cathedral. When they walk in – the young people, their Sponsors, and their families are spellbound! It may be the only time they come here – but having visited, they know that they have experienced something that they will remember for some time!

We know that more than bricks and mortar, this place is holy because an encounter takes place here, between God and the people, between Jesus Christ and his disciples, between the Holy Spirit and the anointed, who are made more like Christ so that we can do what he did – and what he commands us to do.

And that is the second part of Bishop Barron's recipe for evangelization – goodness. Once our hearts and minds have been lifted heavenward by beauty, they are further nourished by the holy people who witness to God's action in our world. Bishop Barron often refers to the stories of the Saints and Blesseds – and we are surrounded by reminders of them, in the Stained Glass Windows on the main level, the Clerestory Windows up higher, the Rosary Windows behind the tabernacle, and

the marble statues at the Side Altars. We can say that we are surrounded by goodness.

But even more, we can say that day after day, week after week, month after month, year after year, good people spill out of this Cathedral; no, they are sent out of this Cathedral, commissioned to live as Jesus teaches – reaching out and caring for the poor, doing acts of kindness and extraordinary goodness, and, quite simply, “renewing the face of the earth!”

The first reading from the Book of the Prophet Ezekiel speaks of the effect of such goodness, fresh clean water pour out from the east and west, from the north and south of the temple, bringing new life – the fresh water renewing the stale polluted water. That is what we do when we follow the way of the Lord, and attend to the needs of the poor and downtrodden. We bring new life and light!

Goodness abounds – and the world is made new. Bishop Barron always speaks of the importance of the stories of good people in the process of evangelization – preaching more by their example of good living than by word!

And finally, he says, only then can we speak of “truth” – the teaching of Jesus Christ, the doctrine of the Church, the demands of our faith for right living. Those truths are proclaimed right here, at the table of

God's Word. And they are proclaimed from the Cathedra – the Bishop's Chair – the place of teaching in the Diocese of Hamilton. All our senses are brought to life by God's Word – our ears by listening to the proclamation, our eyes when the Book is raised for our veneration, our nose when the Book is incensed, and our touch by the kiss by the Priest who proclaims it.

Evangelization – the spread of the Gospel – by the beauty of the building, by the goodness of the people who come to worship and who spill out of its doors, by the proclamation of God's Word, and the teaching of the Church, and finally by our prayer of thanksgiving offered at the altar which is the focal point of our gathering today and every day.

With the new LED lighting – the Cathedral Basilica is more visible and more beautiful than ever. The tower which reaches to the heavens points to the place where God is all-in-all and where we all hope to be welcomed – the heavenly homeland – taken up in God's eternal love.

We participate in that blessed experience already – in this holy place that we call our spiritual home – through our celebration of this Mass and every Mass. We are profoundly blessed to have such a place to gather and pray as a Diocesan family. Today we express our thanks to God for such a blessing!