



**THE OPENING OF THE HOLY DOOR OF ST. PETER'S BASILICA IN ROME**, marking the beginning of the *Year of Mercy*, was a simple yet solemn event. Because the date coincided with the visit of the CCCB Presidency to Rome, we were able to concelebrate with Pope Francis on December 8<sup>th</sup>, a distinctive blessing for us. The Feast of the Immaculate Conception, a holiday in Italy, began quietly enough. The weather was damp and chilly in the morning, and warmed up later in the day. The liturgy was classic Vatican, the choir was melodic, and the homily was moving. As I passed through the Holy Door, I prayed for the Diocese, for the Priests, Deacons, Lay Pastoral Associates, Seminarians, support staff, and parishioners, that this Holy Year would be a blessing for us all – an opportunity to experience the mercy of the Lord!

**THE OPENING OF THE HOLY DOOR OF THE CATHEDRAL BASILICA OF CHRIST THE KING** in Hamilton will take place during a ceremony that begins at 7 p.m. on Sunday evening, December 13<sup>th</sup>. We will gather in McNally Hall, the lower level of the Cathedral, where prayers will be said, scripture read, and hymns sung. Then we will proceed to pass through the Holy Door for the first time during this Jubilee Year of Mercy. Please join us for the ceremony, which promises to open our hearts to His grace at work within. May this special year be a blessing in the life of each parishioner in the Diocese of Hamilton!

**ON DECEMBER 8<sup>th</sup>, FEAST OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION**, the Oblate Community at the General House in Rome, invited Bishop Lionel Gendron, Monsignor Frank Leo and me to join them for a festive dinner. The feast is one of the important “community” events for the Oblates, and I was happy for the invitation. The Superior General and his Council are visiting OMI communities in the northwestern part of the United States these days, so the house was more relaxed and happy than normal. (Just kidding!)

**MY MOTHER ARRIVES THIS WEEK FOR A MONTH LONG VISIT** to celebrate the Christmas Season. It is always a joy for me to welcome her for such an extended stay. For many years she made Christmas special in our family home, so you will understand that I consider it a privilege to be able to make the feast special for her in her later years. She will join the Diocesan staff for our annual “Christmas Mass and luncheon” which takes place next Friday. And she will be staying up late for the always beautiful celebration of Midnight Mass at Christmas.

**NEXT WEEK WILL BE FILLED WITH COMMITTEE AND COUNCIL MEETINGS** for December. At our Finance Committee meeting Jim Long will be presenting the 2016 Budget estimates for approval. It is always a challenge to plan ahead, but we make our best efforts. Our forecast is based on the experience of the past few years – and includes as many “unforeseen” expenses as possible. Thanks to Mr. Jim Long and the Administration Offices for their determination and hard work!

**THE VISIT OF THE CCCB PRESIDENCY TO THE ROMAN DICASTERIES** ends this afternoon. The return flight home begins early tomorrow morning. While the visit has been interesting and hospitality has been generous, I will be very happy to climb into my own bed on Saturday night and settle down for a good night's sleep. Rome is a remarkable city, many beautiful sites, restaurants galore, and historic churches. It is a city where people walk everywhere. After our two-week visit, I feel I have walked from one end of the city to the other! The highlight, of course, was our visit with the Holy Father and our participation in the opening of the Holy Door and beginning of the Year of Mercy. I am blessed to have had such unique experiences!

Our Lady of the Annunciation, pray for us.

Ex corde, + *Douglas*, OMI