



Heart to Heart

April 28, 2017 (#283)

THE ASSEMBLY OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS OF ONTARIO (ACBO) will complete their *Ad Limina* visit tomorrow evening with Mass at the Basilica of St. Mary Major. A festive dinner at the Canadian Pontifical College hosted by the Rector, Father Eric Sylvestre, P.S.S., will follow. Our own Father Adrian Lee, who is completing a program of study in Canon Law, is one of the residents at the College and a co-host. It will be good to see him again!

THE AD LIMINA VISIT IS A PILGRIMAGE TO THE THRESHOLD OF THE APOSTLES, to the Tombs of Sts. Peter and Paul, where we are renewed in faith and courage. Led by Cardinal Thomas Collins, the Bishops celebrated Mass at the Tomb of St. Peter under St. Peter's Basilica, first thing on Monday morning. It was a deeply moving experience to pray, surrounded by Popes (and James III – *Bonnie Prince Charlie*) who have served the Church through the centuries. The Priests, Deacons, Consecrated Religious, Lay Pastoral Associates and Lay Faithful of the Diocese of Hamilton were remembered in prayer. We also celebrated Mass at the Basilica of St. John Lateran, the Pope's Cathedral, on Wednesday, and at St. Paul-outside-the-Walls today. Our time of prayer as brother Bishops was an important part of our time together.

THE MEMORABLE MEETING WITH POPE FRANCIS on Tuesday morning was clearly the highlight of the week for the Bishops (and Mr. Lou Piovesan, Acting General Secretary for the Ontario Bishops)! The meeting in the Papal Library of the Apostolic Palace, covered a wide range of topics, including the vital importance of assuring conscience rights for physicians and medical practitioners who do not wish to participate in euthanasia and physician assisted suicide, and the importance and benefit of prayer and preaching in the life of the Bishop. Pope Francis spoke personally about the profound sense of peace he has experienced since his election, and from this deep peace, he said, joy springs forth! Bishop Fabbro, CSB (London), and Bishop Fred Colli (Thunder Bay) presented the Holy Father with a beautiful beaded stole prepared by Ojibway parishioners. Other gifts and fraternal wishes were exchanged and the two-hour event was over in a flash! Catholic News Service and Salt & Light TV interviewed Bishop Fabbro, President of the ACBO, and me, after the visit. Their reports can be found on our Diocesan website.

VISITS TO SIXTEEN DICASTERIES made up the important work of the visit. For our visits to the various Congregations and Pontifical Councils, and Curial Offices of the Vatican, a Bishop was assigned to be the "lead" for the conversation, providing introductory comments and raising points of interest or concern that the Bishops wished to discuss. Either the Prefect or the Secretary of the Dicastery responded with questions or comments. Conversations were always lively, informative and fraternal. Such meetings are prime opportunities to learn about current Church issues and to share about the life of the Church in Canada.

ON MONDAY THE BISHOPS TRAVEL TO ASSISI for a time of prayer and retreat. The noted Dominican spiritual writer, professor and speaker, Father Paul Murray, O.P., will preach the retreat, providing spiritual nourishment to wind up these blessed days. The peaceful atmosphere of Assisi will feed the soul and renew the spirit.

I WILL RETURN TO HAMILTON ON THURSDAY, refreshed, renewed, and ready to get to work! Pray for safe travel. And pray especially for Pope Francis, who always concludes his meetings with "Pray for me." This time he added, "Because I need it!" I assured him that we do – regularly! He leaves today for a pastoral visit to the Coptic Church in Egypt which has suffered great persecution. May his visit there be as reassuring as was his visit with us.

FATHER PHILIP SHERLOCK underwent open heart surgery last week at Trillium Health Centre in Mississauga, and is recovering. Please remember him in your prayers.

Our Lady of the Annunciation, pray for us!

Ex corde, *+ Douglas*, OMI