

Encountering the Living Presence of Jesus: Bishop Bryan sees 10th Anniversary as a Journey of Missionary Discipleship

- Kyla B. Predy || Photo Credit: Linden S. Predy



His Holiness, Pope Francis greets Most Rev. Bryan Bayda, C.Ss.R., at their ad limina visit in 2017 at the Vatican.

Saskatoon, SK -- On Saturday, June 23rd 2018, our Eparchy will be celebrating the **10th Anniversary of the Episcopal Ordination of His Excellency Bishop Bryan Bayda, CSsR**. The evening will include an Episcopal Divine Liturgy at 5:00 (Ukrainian Catholic Cathedral of St. George, Saskatoon), cocktails at 6:30 and a Banquet at 7:00 (St. George's Cathedral church auditorium). Information on where to get your tickets will be included at the bottom of this article.

In honour of this occasion, I was granted the opportunity to interview His Excellency about his time in office. We had a rich conversation. While Bishop Bryan spoke about his experience in the office, he emphasised the importance of encountering the living Jesus to his ministry. Particularly, it is through encountering the presence of God that his vocation of Bishop and missionary discipleship can be lived out.

We began the interview by discussing when he had first heard that he would be made a Bishop. The seat of the Bishop was something Bishop Bryan never expected to be a part of his vocation story. When he discovered the news, he felt "some disbelief, panic... spiritual soberness, and then resign." His episcopal ordination took place on the 27th of June 2008, in Saskatoon, at the Ukrainian Catholic Cathedral of St. George.

Bishop Bryan shared what he has found most difficult since his episcopal ordination. “I thought there would be a... a routine throughout the year of busy moments and slower, and less stressful times, but to my surprise there has been steady pressure. The image I have is of a water dam that may through different seasons be full or partially empty, yet the water that streams from the dam is constant. The pressure is constant.”



Even through this pressure, Bishop Bryan expressed gratitude for his time in the Eparchial office. During the last ten years “many in the Eparchy have come to be moved by the Holy Spirit: to have an Eparchial Appeal, a forum on Stewardship, to re-evaluate the decisions we have to make as an Eparchy for the next ten to fifteen years,” Bishop Bryan explained. “I think the Holy Spirit has been preparing the people for change, for which I just happen to be in the office at the time of.”

Much has changed for Bishop Bryan. He spoke of the “awesome responsibility of, you know, shepherding spiritually.” Since becoming the Bishop he has had to alter his approach to answering questions asked of him, whether they were spiritual, catechetical, or pastoral. As priest, he would answer from where his head and heart were. Now Bishop Bryan reminds himself that people may and will perceive his answers as a “*well thought-out, deliberate saying, teaching pronouncement [or even as an] expression of faith.*” In both the need to speak mindfully of his role, and with constant fidelity to the Church, Bishop Bryan appreciates the importance of prayer to speaking with spiritual disposition.

Towards the end of our interview, His Excellency spoke of his vision as Bishop for the next ten years.



My vision is to personally be more constantly aware of God's presence. Secondly, I would hope that people would focus on God's presence in their lives. When we're aware of God's presence, discipleship and decision making is more fruitful. Together, I want to grow with the faithful in being better missionary disciples through stewardship of our Eparchy, outreach to other peoples, and recognising God's presence in them, in their lives, in their struggles, and in their joys. – Bishop Bryan

As the Bishop spoke about the encountering of God's presence, he turned to the gospel story of the woman at the well. He explained how the message of the woman at the well models his desire for the Eparchy. When the woman at the well encountered Jesus, He told her "everything she had ever done." Instead of shaming her with her history, Jesus redeemed her story so that she could go to the village and share her life without humiliation. Bishop Bryan explained that when we encounter the living Jesus, "Your joy and your embarrassment will become worthy stories."

The story of the woman at the well shows the power of encountering the living presence of Jesus – of God. "I want to meet the person she met," said Bishop Bryan, "that's what happens."

Bishop Bryan referenced one of St. Pope John Paul II's apostolic exhortations (Ecclesia in America) as being influential in this understanding. In it, St. Pope John Paul II explained that encountering Jesus is the "the way to Conversion, Communion and Solidarity." Bishop Bryan expressed his desire to "see people reflect together on how God has been present in their lives. Then they would be encouraged to share the significance of His presence for them with others."



Encountering Jesus is experiencing redemption. Bishop Bryan explained that when Jesus encountered the cross, something which was very ugly, “He transformed the cross into a redemptive gift to us.” And when we truly experience this redemption, we will not keep this precious treasure to ourselves. We go out into the world and share our encounter with Jesus, just like the woman at the well. Bishop Bryan emphasised the importance of encountering Jesus to the Christian life. It is through that encounter that “we become missionary disciples.” Praying for true encounter with God is therefore fundamental to living this call.

Bishop Bryan explained when he was reflecting on what his motto would be, after much prayer he chose “You Will be My Witnesses” (Acts 1:8). “The Apostolic letter *Amoris Laetitia* (The Joy of Loving) captures so many elements of my prayer as I chose my motto. That document affirms my discernment in 2008.”



Don't forget to purchase your ticket to attend the 10th Anniversary Banquet Celebration for Bishop Bryan 's Episcopal Ordination.

Tickets prices:
 Adults - \$35; Youth, (9-21) - \$25; and Children under 8 - \$10.

In Saskatoon tickets can be purchased at the AGEMI Office – 214 Ave. M South 306-653-0138 or at the parishes of:
 St. George's; Ss. Peter & Paul; and Dormition;
 or in Regina at the parishes of St. Basils' and St. Athanasius.



“Listen, put it into your heart, my youngest son, that what frightened you, what afflicted you is nothing; do not let it disturb your face, your heart; do not fear this sickness or any other sickness, nor any sharp or hurtful thing. Am I not here, I who have the honour to be your mother? Are you not in my shadow and under my protection? Am I not the source of your joy? Are you not in the hollow of my mantle, in the crossing of my arms? Do you need anything more? (Words of the Theotokos to San Juan and all of us)