**Message from the Apostolic Nuncio, H.E. Mgr. Luigi Bonazzi**

Your Excellencies, Reverend Sisters and Fathers, brothers and sisters in Christ:

It is a pleasure to be here with you today to honour the legacy, which is still very much alive, of our dear Sisters and women of great faith and ardent charity who, each according to their charism, have had a profound impact on the history of the Church in Manitoba.

Several months ago, we marked the end of the Year of Consecrated Life declared by Pope Francis, who sends his warmest greetings. He has asked me to convey his gratitude, esteem, blessings and prayers, and also asks that you pray for him. As St. Teresa D’Avila once said, with great conviction: “What would become of the world if there were no Religious in it?” (VC, 105), our dear Pope Francis now states, with no less certainty, “What would the Church be without nuns?”[[1]](#footnote-1) The works of love and corporal and spiritual mercy performed here in Manitoba by so many women religious from 51 congregations are proof and an eloquent testimony to that assertion.

When we consider the part played by women religious in the growth and development of the Catholic church across Canada, and especially in the West, we cannot help but be moved by their legacy. Their involvement with regional First Nations communities, the waves of pioneers from around the world who came to settle in these plains and forests, and the subsequent generations over the past 172 years, has made God as Love (1 John: 16) visible, familiar and loved. That is how our beloved nuns built the Church and humanized the world.

Countless students, seniors, the sick and dying, orphans, people with physical or mental development disorders, as well as many poor, homeless, at-risk youth, newcomers, and others suffering from a host of difficulties, have found in our beloved Sisters a welcoming heart, healing hands, and a prayer to accompany them and entrust them to God’s Providence.

In the name of the Holy Father, the whole Church, and the Church of Canada, I congratulate and thank those congregations of women religious for their extraordinary legacy.

It is now up to all of us to gratefully receive that legacy of faith and love showcased in the monument and its interpretive panels that we unveil today, and to confidently carry it forward.

1. Taken from the address by His Holiness Pope Francis at the gathering of participants at the Jubilee for Consecrated Life on February 1, 2016. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)