



*Most Reverend A.F. Tonnos D.D.*

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**December 2009**

**Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ of Hamilton Diocese:**

**On this great Feast of the Holy Family, I am pleased to announce the start of the Diocesan Year of the Family; a time to rejoice in the relationships that are most profound in our lives. Jesus was born into a family and it was there that he spent his first thirty years. This is a great reminder that families are foundational to our world.**

**The theme of this year is Family Matters: Loving, Living, Learning .....Growing in Faith. It is within family that we first experience God's love through the love of parents. It is there that we learn what it means to give and forgive, to work together for a common purpose, and to share both joys and sorrows. The precious gift of faith given to us at baptism is nurtured in Christian families that help us to grow into mature disciples of the Lord.**

**In our world today, many challenges and pressures impact family life. People face a host of issues that can deprive families of the love and harmony that should be theirs. Often, these challenges are not easily overcome, but firm faith and a clear vision of God's plan for family life can help spouses, parents and children to aspire to ever-deeper charity among themselves.**

**Pope Benedict XVI, in his recent address to families, reminded us that, by following the example of Jesus, Mary and Joseph, "we come to appreciate even more fully the sacredness of the family, which in God's plan is based on the lifelong fidelity of a man and a woman consecrated by the marriage covenant and accepting of God's gift of new life." Pope Benedict also told the children present: "to let the example of Jesus guide you, not only in showing respect for your parents, but also helping them to discover more fully the love which gives our lives their deepest meaning."**

In this coming year, the Catholic community in the Diocese of Hamilton will strive to promote the value of family life and to help all people to live their familial vocation with gratitude and devotion. Be assured that, in the joys and struggles, the highs and lows, the opportunities and challenges of family life, the Church is always present to support you. We hope that through the various activities and events of this year, especially the Family Conference in October 2010, families in our diocese will be encouraged and strengthened. While the pressures on today's families are numerous, the faithfulness with which so many fulfill their responsibilities is an example that gives inspiration and hope to all. For all those families who face additional struggles and challenges, be assured that our support and prayers are with you.

Let us look especially to the model of Jesus, Mary and Joseph in their family life. May the love, devotion, faith and trust in God that they exemplify be a beacon to us in this year, dedicated to enriching the lives of all families in the Diocese of Hamilton.

Yours sincerely in Christ,

A.F. Tonnos

**BISHOP OF HAMILTON**