



### ***Commentary on Centenary Icon of the Holy Family (2015)***

The icon was designed and written by Andre J. Prevost with the Archdiocese's centenary theme "Proclaiming Christ Always", including the Holy Family with emphasis on St. Joseph as patron on the archdiocese. The design process was lengthy as the theme and centenary of the Archdiocese presented many discussion points and options between the Iconographer and Archbishop Richard Gagnon. The icon was completed in time for the May 3, 2015 Centennial Mass at the MTS Centre.

The icon is 64" x 43" and has been written on wood, and the framing, sky and haloes were covered with 24K Italian Patent Gold. The gold is the tradition symbol of God's Light.

*The background of the icon is a landscape representing Manitoba:*

- a) Upper right-hand corner:
  - a. Winnipeg and the Fork of the Assiniboine flowing into the Red.
  - b. The Archdiocese is represented with St. Mary's Cathedral centrally placed, and with only a few recognizable buildings from the famous Portage and Main to represent the city. Two other churches represent the presence of the archdiocese:
    - i. St. Vital Church (the parish site where Louis Riel attended Mass)
    - ii. St. John Brebeuf Church (Canadian martyr and contemporary architecture)
  - c. With the Forks being historically central to Winnipeg, as to the Aboriginal settlements here (going back 6000 years), there is a representation of the Oodena Celebration Circle.
  - d. The background is completed with typical Manitoba landscapes.

- b) In the Centre (above the Holy Family):
- a. The arch is from the front entrance as you enter into St. Mary's Cathedral. It, as the flooring, anchors the icon within the cathedral.
  - b. Between the arch, the landscape represents the Lake Districts of the Province.
  - c. From the Upper centre is a traditional heavenly disc with ray containing the Holy Spirit, descending upon Jesus to affirm the Incarnation and the Holy Trinity. It also points to Jesus' Baptism when 'heaven was opened, and the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him. And a voice came from the heavens, saying, "This is my beloved Son,\* with whom I am well pleased." *Matt 3: 16-17*  
It is central to the icon's act of 'proclaiming Christ always'.
- c) Upper Left-hand corner:
- a. Representation of the Western Manitoba portion of the Archdiocese, with its rolling hills and fields.
  - b. The four depicted churches are representational of the archdiocese's presence and work:
    - i. Central: Good Shepherd Church, Portage La Prairie
    - ii. Southern: St. Francois Xavier Church, St. Francois Xavier (the oldest church in the archdiocese and indeed in western Canada west of the Red River)
    - iii. Northwest: St. Viator Church, Dauphin
    - iv. West: St. Helen's Church, Shoal Lake

*The focus of the icon:*

The focus of the icon is the Holy Family, with Our Lady and St. Joseph presenting Jesus to the world, the initial proclaiming.

- a) Jesus is portrayed at the age when He spoke in the Temple and holds a scroll with the Alpha and Omega in His left hand while blessing with His right. He is wearing a white tunic and ochre/gold waistband (symbols of purity and of the heavenly).
- b) Both Our Lady and St. Joseph are portrayed wearing blue tunics, the traditional symbol of the heavenly. St. Joseph is wearing a brown himation (outer cloak garment) as Manitobans will recognize the traditional images of him in the brown, and wearing a dark blue waistband to symbolize that he is of David's lineage. Our Lady's himation is in a turquoise blue.
- c) In addition to standing in front of the cathedral's entrance arch, the Holy Family is standing on a representational flooring of the cathedral's central sanctuary floor under the altar.

*The compilation of personages:*

On either side of the Holy Family is a compilation of historical personages as well as a representation of the varied population of the Archdiocese, and from different time periods. They are all standing on a floor, which is based on the aisles and sanctuary floors of the cathedral, so that they are also within the cathedral in this icon.

a) Left side:

- a. Pope Benedict XV is portrayed as presenting the Papal Bull to Archbishop Arthur Alfred Sinnott, in the creation of the Archdiocese of Winnipeg. The Bull had his Papal seal and 1915 in Roman Numerals.
- b. Behind Pope Benedict is another row:
  - i. Archbishop Alexandre-Antonin Tache , missionary of the Oblate order and first Archbishop of the Diocese of St. Boniface which was created in 1847.
  - ii. A representative of the Métis people in traditional, historical garb of buckskin and beadwork, and sash.
  - iii. A representative of a modern office worker and of the Filipino people.

b) Right side:

- a. In the front:
  - i. A group of 3 modern children who are learning of and continuing the ongoing proclamation of Christ:
    1. A young Caucasian boy in his sport gear (Soccer was chosen as a simple form of representing sports)
    2. A young Girl as a student
    3. A young Jamaican boy in everyday wear.
  - ii. A historical depiction of a nun from the Order of Sisters of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary at the establishment of the archdiocese, and representational of all Women's Religious Orders in the Archdiocese.
- b. In the second row:
  - i. A representative of the 5 First Nations People within the Archdiocese: A woman dressed in a traditional garb of buckskin and beadwork. Aware of the 5 First Nations within Manitoba, the iconographer chose a depiction with a blend of Ojibwe and Dakota motifs.
  - ii. A representative of the different ethnic groups from Western and Eastern Europe: The iconographer intentionally chose to use more generic ornamentation for the blouse, head scarf and apron, in order to be more representative of the Archdiocese.
  - iii. A representative of the agricultural/farming community: A man depicted in earlier 1900s.
  - iv. A key emphasis for this section was to include women in the icon.

The mid-central background is a simplified representation of the open plains with an upper area in a harvest colour.