

BISHOP'S MESSAGE FOR NOVEMBER 2006

A wall of crosses. I walked into my assistant Sharon Villetard's office the other day, and there it was! – a feature wall filled with crosses of various shapes and designs. Beautiful!

Sharon had spent time over the weekend adding this new decorative touch to her workspace. That reminded me of the visit we had in our chosen daughter Cathy's home this summer in Regina. There, in her dining room, was a wall of crosses. Cathy told me that she got the idea from her friend in Texas, who told her it was quite a common practice in the southwestern U.S.A. for people to create a wall of crosses in their homes. She believed this might have its roots in Latino Catholic piety.

Is a wall of crosses the 21st century version of the home altar, the family sanctuary? Or is it simply a home décor fashion statement? A few days later in Winnipeg, while attending meetings at the ELCIC National Office, I glanced through a window into the shops of Portage Place Mall, and saw...a boutique. With a wall of crosses.

A wall of crosses. The image speaks loudly to me, a visual reminder of my own pilgrimage and the pilgrimages of those whom I serve. Jesus said: "If anyone would come after me, let them deny themselves, take up their crosses (daily), and follow me."

I can name each cross in a wall of crosses. I think of the saints and martyrs who have gone before us. I recall those individuals I know who are suffering from illnesses, whose primary relationships in marriage and family are broken, who are hurting from the sheer brokenness that people endure as they live life. I think of the congregations and clergy who are in transition, conflict or trouble. I think of the new crosses I have to learn how to bear as bishop.

Of course, I can't look at a wall of crosses without a profound remembering of the One who went the way of the Cross for all of us. At the beginning of November, the Church marks All Saints – a day to thank the Lord for surrounding us with a cloud of faithful witnesses who lived and died in faith – a day to pray that God would give us grace to follow them, as they followed Christ. At the end of November, the Church celebrates Christ the King / The Reign of Christ Sunday. Our King's coronation took place on a Cross. Our God reigns from a tree – the Cross. That is our theology - the theology of the Cross.

A wall of crosses. I'm thinking I could use one in my house. I'll have to talk to Dianne about that...

Blessings to you from a fellow cross-bearer!