

## A Letter From the Archbishop

Dear friends in Christ,

On the Solemnity of Christ the King, we Catholics in Northeast Iowa will begin a yearlong celebration of the blessings we have received since the formal establishment of the Church in this area on July 28, 1837.



The Church, however, did not start only one hundred and seventy-five years ago. Rather, the story of this local church goes back to the times of the Bible. We are Church because Jesus willed that his disciples be formed into Church by the power of the Holy Spirit. The beginning of the Church is described in *The Acts of the Apostles*. The Holy Spirit came upon the apostles and the disciples on Pentecost Sunday and formed them into the Church. Those first Christians “devoted themselves to the apostles’ instruction and the communal life, to the breaking of bread and the prayers” (Acts of the Apostles 2:42).

The first Christians remembered what Jesus had said, “Where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in their

midst” (Matthew 18:20). They remembered Jesus’ last words before he ascended into heaven, as recorded in the *Gospel according to St. Matthew*: “Go, therefore, and make disciples of all the nations. Baptize them in the name of the Father and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Teach them to carry out everything I have commanded you. And know that I am with you always, until the end of the world” (Matthew 28: 19-20).

As we were preparing to celebrate the 175th birthday of this Archdiocese, I was asked whether there would be a theme to guide us. After some reflection and prayer, my thoughts went to the figure of St. Paul, the early apostolic founder of many local churches.

St. Paul accomplished many things through his preaching, writing and missionary activities, but he always attributed his success to Christ. His goal for himself as well as for all Christians was simple: be so immersed into the mystery of Christ, that one becomes the Body of Christ. Identify so much with Christ that all are finally able to say: “It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me” (Galatians 2:20).

St. Paul had weaknesses, experienced failure, and was not perfect. Our archdiocesan history also includes mistakes, failures, and much sinfulness. We ask forgiveness from all who have been hurt because of this human sinfulness. We recognize humbly the suffering that has been caused because of arrogance and intolerance.

At the same time, we know that much good was accomplished, through the grace of God. In regard to the good — of the past, present and future — we say with St.

Paul: “It is not ourselves we preach but Christ Jesus as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus’ sake. For God who said, ‘Let light shine out of darkness,’ has shone in our hearts that we in turn might make known the glory of God shining on the face of Christ. This treasure we possess in earthen vessels, to make it clear that its surpassing power comes from God and not from us ... Continually we carry about in our bodies the dying of Jesus, so that in our bodies the life of Jesus may also be revealed” (2 Corinthians 4: 5-11).

It is fitting that the theme of our year long celebration take its inspiration from the last words of that passage written by St. Paul to the Corinthians in the first century: “... so that in our bodies the life of Jesus may also be revealed.” It is our hope as Christians that everything we do will give proofs that Jesus lives in us. Jesus is alive! We are the hands and feet, the voice and heart of Jesus, reaching out to the needy, lifting our voices in praise and thanksgiving to God.

So that is our theme: JESUS ALIVE THROUGH 175 YEARS.

I pray that all of us will take inspiration from this theme as we enter into the different observances and events of this anniversary. Let us continue to support one another. Let us pray that Christ will lead us all together into eternal life.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Most Rev. Jerome Hanus, O.S.B.  
Archbishop of Dubuque