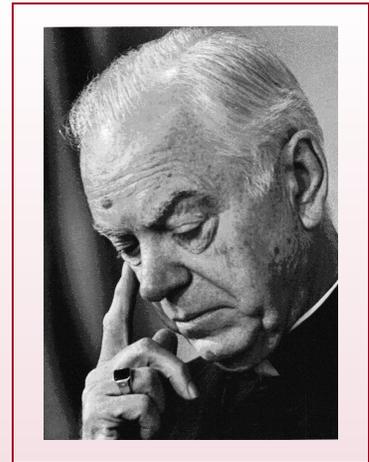


Prophets of a Future Not Our Own

First presented by Cardinal Dearden in 1979—Quoted by Pope Francis in 2015**

It helps, now and then,
to step back and take the long view.
The kingdom is not only beyond our efforts,
it is even beyond our vision.
We accomplish in our lifetime
only a tiny fraction of the magnificent enterprise
that is God's work.
Nothing we do is complete,
which is another way of saying
that the kingdom always lies beyond us.
No statement says all that could be said.
No prayer fully expresses our faith.
No confession brings perfection.
No pastoral visit brings wholeness.
No program accomplishes the Church's mission.
No set of goals and objectives includes everything.
This is what we are about.
We plant the seeds that one day will grow.
We water seeds already planted,
knowing that they hold future promise.
We lay foundations that will need further development.
We provide yeast that produces effects far beyond our capabilities.
We cannot do everything,
and there is a sense of liberation in realizing that.
This enables us to do something,
and to do it very well.
It may be incomplete,
but it is a beginning,
a step along the way,
an opportunity for the Lord's grace to enter and do the rest.
We may never see the end results,
but that is the difference between the master builder and the worker.
We are workers, not master builders, ministers, not messiahs.
We are prophets of a future not our own. Amen.



John Francis Dearden

Oct. 15, 1907—Aug. 1, 1988
Archbishop of Detroit,
1958—1980,
Council Father,
NCCB President,
Architect of “Call to Action”

Photos by Tony Spina—
courtesy of
The Michigan Catholic

** *Written for Cardinal Dearden by then-Father Ken Untener on the occasion of the Mass for Deceased Priests, October 25, 1979. Pope Francis quoted this reflection in his remarks to the Roman Curia on Dec. 21, 2015.*

*Excerpts are from the **Cardinal Dearden Legacy Project** directed by Judy M. Holmes. Its purpose is to publish a book of the cardinal's major speeches and writings as well as assessments of his wisdom, vision, accomplishments, leadership and legacy. For more information on the project, visit: www.johncardinaldearden.com or e-mail: judymholmes@comcast.net