
Newlyweds



My congratulations and best wishes to the approximately 170 couples who will be celebrating their wedding during the course of the year. As a pledge of my love for them I wish to offer them in all simplicity the following song which I composed; the song draws its inspiration from the Nuptial Blessing, and I have titled it *Look Upon These Couples* :

Covenants of peace, covenants of joy,
May the Lord bless them today!
And may He keep both of you faithful in His love.

Oh Lord, look upon these couples,
Shower on them your blessings and your gifts.
May they be united in the same love;
May they walk together in holiness and in joy.

Oh Lord, look upon these couples,
And grant that they be promoters of life.
May happy children enliven their homes;
May they live together in holiness and peace.

Oh Lord, look upon these couples,
And give them a radiant love.
May they be witnesses to your Gospel.
May they love one another, in the simplicity of faith.

Oh Lord, look upon these couples,
And give them to seek after the Kingdom.
By opening their arms to the poor and the weak,
May they humbly live together in love.

My thanks to those Christian communities offering fervent prayer for these new couples. I am grateful to all those who were involved in preparing these couples for marriage by helping them get a better understanding of the profound and original meaning of Christian marriage, and by explaining to them the wonderful mission given to Christian couples, to illustrate by their own lives the love which the Lord has for each one of us. [...] From one generation to the next, from one family to another, the love of God really extends from age to age! May the celebration of these weddings be for all in the diocese an opportunity for taking the marriage

commitment seriously. May we always hold this great sacrament in high esteem. My best wishes and prayers accompany all these couples!

CHRISTIAN INITIATION

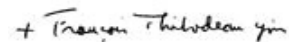
Recent [diocesan] statistics point out that in 1993 there were 719 baptisms, 791 first communions and as many celebrations of first reconciliation. Behind these figures, though, I first and foremost see persons! And they are numerous. I can imagine these young people joyfully celebrating these sacraments, and I congratulate them for the seriousness with which they prepared for these sacraments. I can imagine all the parents who devoted themselves to ensure that their children celebrated these sacraments appropriately: I heartily congratulate them. I can also imagine the teachers and catechists, the Baptism, First Penance, and Confirmation preparation teams who joined forces in order to witness to the beauty of these sacraments. A number of them have pointed out to me how, in preparing the children to experience these sacraments, they themselves rediscovered the profound meaning of each of these [sacramental] actions. A family or Church that continues to rediscover the nature and the role of the sacraments in Christian life will always overflow with vitality.

LETTERS RECEIVED

The youth preparing for Confirmation all sent me a personal letter which I received as an profound expression of their faith. Besides having kind words for me, they told me how their preparation for the sacrament was done in a climate of prayer and reflection. Judge for yourselves, by the following letter: "For a few weeks now I have been preparing for Confirmation, with my parents, my friends, and my catechist. We have prayed and reflected together and I have come to understand that being confirmed is to know that I am always God's beloved child and that I am not alone. The Holy Spirit will help me continue on the way. I learned many new things. I learned how to pray in a new way. I pray with my heart and I know that God hears me. I feel His answer in my heart even if He doesn't talk. I am now ready for the great day of my Confirmation, and i can't wait for the day." Others wrote saying that they wanted to be confirmed so as to live more like Jesus. A young person wrote: "When you confirm me, the Lord will look down on you and he will be proud of you!" Another one even sent me a tape recording of his request for Confirmation: he had composed a beautiful poem which he very simply sang on tape.

I had much joy in celebrating the sacrament of Confirmation in each parish of the diocese. It was an important event, not only for our young people but also for the Christian community as a whole. The filled churches proved that each parish felt implicated in such a sacrament. More than ever I repeat with you these words of thanksgiving: "Filled with the kindness of the Lord, we proclaim to the world: '*His love is from age to age.*' Alleluia. The Holy Spirit does marvellous deeds. He comes to change the human heart; He comes to build a new world, first fruits of the Kingdom. Alleluia."

Have a good week!



+ François Thibodeau, C.J.M.
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« From A Bishop's Journal » (020) (08 June 1994)