
« ANXIOUS BUT NOT HOPELESS »



At the beginning of a new pastoral year, many concerns can rise to the surface: Can we count on new collaborators? How much headway will we be able to make together, in the coming year? Will mutual trust really exist, among us? Will we finish the year together? Will there be sufficient funds? How will our pastoral activity be interpreted, especially regarding the priorities set? Etc... It could be a healthy sign to ask these questions, but there is a whole chasm separating anxiety from hopelessness, an abyss that should not be bridged.

A KEEN AWARENESS OF ONE'S MISSION

When we think about and meditate on what Saint Paul had to suffer for the cause of the Gospel, nothing should keep us from the ministry given to us by the Church. In his second letter to the Corinthians, Paul describes what he had to suffer from his own people and from strangers. He writes: « Five times I have received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I received a stoning. Three times I was shipwrecked; for a night and a day I was adrift at sea; on frequent journeys, in danger from rivers, danger from bandits, danger from my own people, danger from Gentiles, danger in the city, danger in the wilderness, danger at sea, danger from false brothers and sisters; in toil and hardship, through many a sleepless night, hungry and thirsty, often without food, cold and naked. And, besides other things, I am under daily pressure because of my anxiety for all the churches. » It is good to recall what our predecessors experienced in accepting that task given to them by the Lord himself or by the Church. Despite all the trials he had to endure, St. Paul did not yield: he fought the good fight to the end, laying down his life in the cause of Christ. We, too, must have his keen apostolic awareness of our mission.

PASTORAL MISSION

Filled with this strength from heaven, a strength given to us at baptism, confirmation, or ordination, we must be ready to take on the world's new challenges so that the Church may be announced, proclaimed, and welcomed. What are we ready to undergo, to physically and morally suffer so that our countrymen recognise the God of Jesus Christ, so that our countrymen fully realise that the love of God is from age to age? I cannot say whether the level of atheism in our midst has grown or not, whether the number of people and groups that are indifferent to our message and action is greater or smaller, this can be part of the difficulties we encounter. People can feel some mental fatigue from all the changes that have occurred in our world, these past thirty years: this, too, is part of the difficulties encountered. Other types of fatigue are felt, brought on by the non-participation of certain people, the buildup of criticism and misunderstandings, the questioning of fundamental truths. Difficulties can also arise from within: We can be apprehensive about our not measuring up to the task at hand. But should we despair for all that? Of course not. The mission we have been given leads us to the belief that nothing can separate us from Love and the proclamation of that Love.

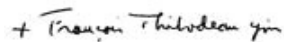
THERE'S WORK AHEAD!

Each of our thirty-three parishes now has a parish pastoral council. This is the basic structure for collegiality and coresponsibility. All through last year, when I introduced the parish pastoral council to their local Christian communities, I reaffirmed that along with the pastor or pastoral agent in charge, it constituted the eyes, ears,

hands and heart of Jesus the Good Shepherd. In order to respond to new pastoral and spiritual needs of a community's membership, it is indispensable that each parish have such a council and that this council meet at least once a month. With the aid of the deanery presidents, the diocesan coordinator of pastoral ministry has set as a priority this year that every council will be helped to develop into a vibrant one so that the community as a whole might benefit from its initiatives and resources. Every PPC draws its importance whether in the areas of faith education, catechetics, sacramental preparation, celebrations, economic affairs, as well as in the transforming of one's milieu according to the Gospel. Much care must be given to the destitute and disadvantaged. A message of the Canadian Bishops, to be released October 17, urges us to take into greater account all of our impoverished brothers and sisters: the young, women, native people, refugees.

PARTICIPATION OF DIOCESAN OFFICES

I rejoice in the fact that in coming to the aid of the parishes and deaneries I can count on competent and attentive people who desire to live and bear the Gospel message in the political, economic, and educational sectors, and even to foreign lands. Offices, committees, and services that are there to respond to the needs of the people. It is in this line that on September 7 the *Centre de Spiritualité* undertook a new series of the *Spiritual Exercises* of St. Ignatius. On September 14, the *École de la Foi* will begin its twelfth year of faith education with a new programme, the courses being given once a month, usually on the second Saturday of the month: this year the concentration will be on the writings of St. John. The pastoral formation service, in its second year, will continue with the training of much needed pastoral agents; courses will resume September 28. Through its animation and renewal activities, the youth ministry office, the mission office, the catechetical and vocation offices will continue to help the parishes and different groups of the diocese. With help from the diocesan councils, the offices will continue to contribute to making our Church a more vibrant one, a more fraternal and missionary one. « You are ours, beloved Church, you remind us of peace and freedom; you will forever remain a beautiful project, a rendez-vous of love. »



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