
UNFORGETTABLE MOMENTS



Do you ever wish that you could relive certain events from the past? Past family holiday gatherings, for example, when the whole family was once again together, along with cherished friends? How wonderful it was to get together once again, to share memories and a good meal. Just think back to your New Year's Day family gathering: we were well aware that we would not be having our grandparents among us for much longer but still, what a grand day it was, for the whole family! Think also of those more ordinary circumstances in life when it is good to meet together for a meal, and to take time to be together. And what about that visit to a dear one at the hospital, and how you would have liked to visit longer than allowed...

THE MAJOR HISTORICAL EVENT

That's how it was with Jesus' first disciples. As witnesses to all that had taken place from the time of Jesus' baptism in the Jordan River to his Resurrection, they were all drawn into this extraordinary event. The one whom they had seen die on the cross had emerged victorious from the tomb. Never had there been such an event in the whole of human history, and Jesus' resurrection was a pledge that his disciples too would one day experience such a rising again. This had to be celebrated! This had to be proclaimed to the whole world.

AN INDISPENSABLE REVALUING

Sunday is the Day of the Lord, and the way we keep it is an indication of the strength of our faith as members of the one Christian community. We must together rediscover the full import of the Lord's Day and celebrate it together as a community: it is meant to be a holiday; it is a peerless, happy day, the day that the Lord has made! I encourage you to give Sunday back its value as a privileged time for the family to get together, to share together, to renew themselves, celebrate, and pray together.

PRECIOUS MOMENTS

It is important that together we find the means the best suited to mark the Day of the Lord. If we the baptised and confirmed do not consider Sunday for what it is - the Day of the Lord - who will? It can be that without our realising it we lose all sense of what Sunday is for a Christian, and that it become for us a day like any other. It is true that every day is holy in itself, that every day has been sanctified because of Jesus coming among us. By coming to us, Jesus gave an infinite value to all human life and to each moment of our existence, to each day, each week, each year. But each disciple and each community must acknowledge and act on the fact of the greatness of each day, but especially of the day consecrated to the Lord: Sunday. Before discussing how we can keep the Lord's Day, it was important for us to explain the reason for keeping Sunday. To commemorate the Lord's Day is to recall first and foremost the central event in the history of humankind, the resurrection of Jesus, and to proclaim the reality of our own resurrection.

RESURRECTION!

In a world that is increasingly secularised, in a world that has become more and more pluralistic, it is not easy to profess Jesus' and our own resurrection and, for example, when one attends a wake or when there is

question of life after life, it is not always possible to have lengthy discussions on the subject; we often judge that it is "better" to be discreet and to manifest one's love and concern by being silent. Human respect or absence of proselytism? For some, there is nothing after death, but for all who believe in Christ, life is not destroyed but transformed, and when our earthly life on earth is over, we already have an everlasting dwelling place in heaven. This is the profession of faith that we make at Christian funerals.

THE ABCs OF REVALUING

I believe that if we want to truly re-value the Day of the Lord, we must return to the original meaning of Sunday as the event of the death and resurrection of Jesus. Let us try to imagine what that first Sunday must have been like for Mary Magdalene, for Peter and John, for Thomas, for the apostles, for Mary, and for the disciples. It was such a phenomenal event that thereafter, every first day of the week or "eighth day" the small community of believers would gather together to keep the memory alive.

TRADITION CONTINUES

It is practically unbelievable that after twenty centuries we still continue to remember this event. Again last Sunday, courageous Christians met together to celebrate the Lord's Day, despite being persecuted. Again last Sunday, millions of Christians of all confessions gathered to keep memory of the Risen Christ, since the future of humankind depends on this. Again last Sunday, in each of the 33 parishes in our diocese, thousands of believers gathered together to celebrate the Living Christ and to look for his coming again. This is the expression of Christian faith. Despite all the changes we have gone through in our country and in the Church itself, these past years, the chief and indispensable element of our faith remains the same: Jesus is the same yesterday, today, and forever. He has died, he is risen, and with him we, too, shall rise again. This is our faith.

EPISCOPAL ORDINATION

This evening, in the presence of the archbishops and bishops of the Atlantic Region and from elsewhere in Canada, we shall be celebrating the episcopal ordination of Msgr. Ernest Léger as fourth archbishop of Moncton. The celebration will be presided by Archbishop Emeritus Donat Chiasson, assisted by Bishops J. Edward Troy and André Richard, in the presence of the Apostolic Nuncio. The homily I shall give will have as topic the bishop's mission as a prophet of love, using as reference the liturgy's three biblical readings as well as in reference to the questions asked the new bishop and the actions of the ceremonial: interrogation of the bishop-elect, litany of the saints, laying on of hands, and prayer of consecration. On behalf of myself and of the entire Diocese of Edmundston, I extend my best wishes to the new archbishop of Moncton. The archdiocese, which was erected February 22, 1936, comprises 169,000 people, of which 85,623 are Catholics. There are 52 parishes, 67 priests, 30 religious brothers, and 271 sisters. The first three archbishops were Arthur Melanson (1936-1942), Norbert Robichaud (1942-1972), and Donat Chiasson (1972-1995). Have a good week!

+ François Thibodeau

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Bishop of Edmundston

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