
FINDING OR RECLAIMING ONE'S PLACE IN THE CHURCH



A very important pastoral session took place at the Diocesan Centre, February 4, 5, and 6. This session will affect the future of our diocese as well as the pastoral readjustments that will have to be made in the coming months and years. The February session was like an inauguration of an important period of reflection to be carried on throughout the diocese. The suggestions made at the session shall be considered at both deanery and parish levels, and they shall be reconsidered at the Diocesan Council on Pastoral Ministry. A first and all-important step is to become aware of who we are as Christians, as baptised and confirmed people, and as a Christian community.

A WONDERFUL WORK

In one of the Sunday prefaces we read that « through his cross and resurrection he freed us from sin and death and called us to the glory that has made us a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a people set apart. » [*Preface for Sundays in Ordinary Time, I*] We are not just anybody, not just anything; we do not need to be triumphalistic about it, but we have cause to rejoice.

THE BODY OF CHRIST

Saint Paul says that we are not only the People of God, the Temple of the Holy Spirit, but he asserts that we are the Body of Christ and that each one of us is a member of that body. This is quite a claim, quite a revelation, to be *the Body of Christ*. A few years back the singer John Littleton wrote a song about this: « *I seek the face, the face of the Lord; I seek his image in the depths of your hearts. You are the Body of Christ, you are the Blood of Christ, you are the love of Christ: so, what have you done to him?* »

MYSTERY OF COMMUNION

You know that we must show great reverence to the Eucharist, the Blessed Sacrament, the consecrated Bread. You all know the words spoken by the priest or minister of communion, when you come to communion, « *The Body of Christ,* » and your answer « *Amen.* » The consecrated bread is the Body of Christ, and Saint Paul tells us that we, too, are the Body of Christ. As you can observe, it is a great mystery that unites us to Christ Jesus. We are members of Christ's Body, we are the Body of Christ. When the community is gathered, we can proclaim "We are the Body of Christ." And if we cannot recognise him in our brothers and sisters it will be hard for us to recognise him in the consecrated bread, because they are two manifestations of Christ, two mysteries of communion.

HAND, HEART, AND HEAD

A few years ago at a pastoral ministry session the facilitator had asked us: Since we were all members of the Body of Christ, to which part of the body would we like to most identify? Some identified with the hands of Jesus, so much did they aspire to continue the service of Jesus. Others identified with 'the feet,' since their desire was to reach out to others. Still others identified themselves with the heart, their desire to love as Jesus

did being uppermost in degree of importance, to them. As for me, I too was drawn to the heart, my reason being that the pastor must love as Jesus loved. But then I remembered that the priest, the bishop are configured to the person of Jesus as Head of the Church, and the head must be constantly connected to the heart if it is to live. As Head of Jesus it meant that with my ears I have to listen to all my brothers and sisters, as Jesus himself did. It also meant that I must look at people and events with the eyes of Jesus, and to proclaim the good news of Jesus with my mouth.

I HAVE FOUND MY PLACE

Saint Theresa of the Child Jesus spoke of her long search: « *I considered the mystical Body of Christ I could not see myself in any of the members described by Saint Paul, or rather, I wanted to see myself in all of them. Charity gave me a key to my vocation. I then understood that if the Church has a body composed of different members, the most necessary and noble of them all was not missing; I understood that the Church had a heart and that this heart was ablaze with love. I understood that love alone was the power behind the members of the Church, and that is love were to die out the Apostles would not preach the Gospel and the Martyrs would refuse to shed their blood... I understood that love included every vocation, that love was everything, that it embraced all times and places; in a word, that love is eternal. And so, in an excess of delicious love I cried out: 'O Jesus my love... my vocation is love. Yes, I have found my place in the Church and this place, O my God, it is you who have given it to me... Within the Church my mother, I shall be the heart... and in this way I shall be everything... and in this way my wish will come true. »*

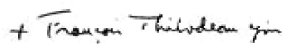
REALISING ONE'S DREAM

If on the occasion of our reflection on the future of our diocese each one could discover his or her place in the Church, it would be terrific: we would be looking to a bright future. Discovering both personally and as a community what we are through our baptism is the first step in the process of pastoral readjustments.

UPPER MADAWASKA DEANERY

As a follow-up to the February session, the fourth deanery meeting will be held in the Upper Madawaska deanery. Members of the parish pastoral councils, liturgy committees, economic affairs committees, and parish committees of the Baker Brook, Clair, Connors, Lac-Baker, Saint-François and Saint-Hilaire parishes are convened to a meeting to be held in the Clair Golden Age Club on Saturday, April 18, from 9:00 A.M. to 4:00 P.M. The topic of the meeting will be the meaning of mission in restructuring. Father Roger Dionne, V.G., and Sister Claudette Ruest, S.M., will be the facilitators.

Have a good week!



+ François Thibodeau
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