
THE PARABLE OF THE HOURLASS



A high school religious studies teacher once asked his students to what the Church could be compared. One answered that it could be compared to a grandmother, another to a ship, yet another to a construction site or to a vast forest of different types of trees. Then Jonathan answered that the Church was like an hourglass. « *When you think that everything has disappeared, that there is nothing left and all has gone away, the Church reappears all of a sudden as if on its second breath.* » So much wisdom and hope are found in these words of a 15-year old.

NEW BUDS

On the occasion of the World Day of Prayer for Vocations that is coming up May 3, I wish that everyone would be implicated in this diocesan Church that together we form, that everyone be as a grains which form and quicken the hourglass. If the sixty thousand baptised of our diocese discovered the call which the Lord unceasingly addresses to them to carry out their vocation of love, a wonderful Church would emerge before our eyes. But it may be that we are not looking in the right place for the spring that is upon us. Just as the spring quickens under the snow, so is that renewal arises from the winter of the world. Come, acknowledge the signs of the times: the breath of the Spirit is blowing across your dead lands. Just as a secret fire smoulders in the ashes, so does the living Love sing, in the midst of a cold world. Come and learn the gestures of peace; when your hearts forgive, God is present.

NECESSARY MINISTRIES

At the February diocesan pastoral ministry session our resource person, Fr. Gilles Routhier reminded us of the Vatican Council II teaching that the Church is entirely ministerial, that each member of the Church has a special mission to carry out, with the grace of the Holy Spirit. « *Various types of ministry are necessary for the implanting and growth of the Christian community, and once these forms of service have been called forth from the body of the faithful, by the divine call, they are to be carefully fostered and nurtured by all. Among these functions are those of priests, deacons and catechists, and also that of Catholic Action. Brothers and nuns, likewise, play an indispensable role in planting and strengthening the kingdom of Christ in souls, and in the word of further extending it, both by their prayers and active work.* » [Vatican Council II, *Decree on the Church's Missionary Activity*, N°. 15. In: Austin Flannery, O.P., General Editor, *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post-Conciliar Documents. Study Edition.* Northport, NY: Costello Publishing Co., 1987. Page 831.]

A COMMITTED LAITY

« *It is necessary to have a committed laity,* » Father Routhier said, « *focusing on the lack of priests is going off in the wrong direction. Laity's main task is to witness to God in their milieu, and what is most needed in our milieus is a laity committed to Christ, a laity which, through its social action, transforms its milieu and conveys Christian values. Witness must be given by all the baptised, otherwise the Gospel remains a borderline thing, and the Church too is seen as being outside what is being lived. Through its children Church must be present among human groups. Evangelisation will be done by Christians... The Church is a vast body, it is not comprised only of its pastoral agents. What must be aimed at is that the Church nevermore depend on one person only.* »

MEETING WITNESSES

How I wish that on this Day of Prayer for Vocations each Christian community hear from their baptised people, from the laity, the religious, the pastoral agents and the priests accounts about how they have heard and have been responding to the call throughout their lives. It seems to me that this would be a way of thanking the Holy Spirit who calls forth so many varied and marvellous gifts, among us. In the midst of this holy nation that we are together, at the heart of this priestly, prophetic, and royal people that we have become, what a joy it is to acknowledge the ever-new marvels which the Lord never ceases to accomplish among us in the likes of Bishop Gérard Dionne who is celebrating fifty years as a priest, and a nun, Sister Alda Boulay, an indefatigable worker at the Diocesan Centre, who is celebrating fifty years of religious life, and friends who are celebrating 25, 40, 50 or 60 years of married life. I also wish that each parish community be able to identify possible leaders in their milieu as potential pastoral agents, religious brothers and sisters, and priests.

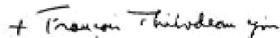
IF YOU HEAR...

The words of Robert Lebel's song come to my mind and heart: « *If in the night you hear Someone calling insistently you, maybe it is God who comes and tells you He needs your youth. And you will say, Here am I! Speak, I am listening. If you hear within a song more beautiful than all human songs, it maybe it is God who is singing through your joy a song whose theme is love. If you hear on your road like footsteps following you, maybe it is God walking in your footsteps while He calls you to follow him. If you have been forever hearing a cry more powerful than all your dreams, maybe it is God who awakens you to Love and who waits for you to get up. If you hear around you people are looking for a brother in you, maybe it is God who is speaking and who sends you to them so that they may discover the Father.* »

A TOTALLY RENEWED CHURCH

If you hear his voice and answer, if everyone hear this voice and respond to it, the day will not be far off when a totally new full hourglass will indicate a newly-renewed Church. We like for God to listen to us... but I believe that He too would like us to listen to Him... O that today you would listen to His voice. I beg you, do not close your heart to His voice. At Baptism He called you, He calls you to work at building up the Church. Through your commitment as a lay person, through your religious life, through your priesthood you will contribute in bringing about this springtime, one of the most memorable moments in the history of the Church. As shoots struggle under the frost, the Body of the Son suffers under the burden of the world. The wounds of the vine dedicate you to life: those who God trims bear much fruit. May your day of prayer for vocations bear much fruit.

Have a good week!



+ François Thibodeau
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« From A Bishop's Journal » (222) (22 April 1998)