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## A TRIBUTE TO MONSIGNOR URBAIN LANG, P.H.

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On Friday, May 8, the local population paid a stirring tribute to Monsignor Urbain Lang on the occasion of the sixtieth anniversary of his ordination. On the occasion I was honoured to give the homily as an expression of my gratitude to him.

### CONCERN FOR THE SICK

It is really a happy coincidence that Monsignor Lang's 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of ordination coincides with the feast of Blessed Catherine de St-Augustin, since for many years now Msgr. Lang has continuously devoted himself to the sick and the elderly. I dare say that Catherine de St-Augustin and Msgr. Lang have several things in common, both regarding their selflessness and their apostolate and prayer life, and this, even if their times were so different from one another. One of the oldest paintings in New France is the one found in the Hotel Dieu of Québec and attributed to the famous Brother Luke. It represents a religious hospitaller tending a patient who happens to be Jesus himself. *I was sick and you visited me.* May Blessed Catherine help us discover Jesus in the midst of our world, especially among the suffering and the sick; may she be with us on our visits to the sick, may she help us take the time to visit them, journey with them, and pray with them just as Monsignor Lang does. In this way we, too, shall continue to reveal the infinite love of Jesus and carry out a real priestly action.

### A YEARNING FOR THE ABSOLUTE

Let us turn often to Blessed Catherine de St-Augustin. She can now inspire us more than ever before. Her yearning for the Absolute strikes a chord within us, her life of prayer and selfless devotion, her sense of mission, her zeal for the salvation of humankind, and her search for God's least desires can help us grow daily in holiness. She was one of the first in our country to promote devotion to the heart of Mary. A prophet of the heart like the Virgin Mary, Catherine de St-Augustin never tired of contemplating the marvels which God wrought in her, in the Church, and in the world.

### MISSIONARY ZEAL

God desires the salvation of all humankind; He desires the salvation of the Jews as well as of the pagans. He makes no difference among humans, but whatever their race, He welcomes all who worship Him and do what is right. It was Catherine de St-Augustin's desire to win to Jesus her North American brothers and sisters that has made her one of the founders of the Canadian Church. As early as the age of 15 she made a vow to live and suffer in Canada if God called her there. On May 4, 1648, she made her solemn profession in Nantes, France, and left for Canada on the 27<sup>th</sup> of that month. She was only 16 years old. Arriving in Québec August 19, she applied herself to learning the local Indian languages, and looked after and brought comfort to the sick. In the spring of 1649 she adopted as her model Father John de Brébeuf, newly-martyred by the Iroquois. From 1654 to 1658 she served as bursar, director general of the hospital, and mistress of novices. She was only 36 when she died at Québec in 1668. As long as there are Catherines such as her in the Church, there will be life there, too. Catherine can really inspire those who are still young at heart, those who have a 'heart of flesh,' those who are rooted in the love of Jesus and Mary.

## **A NEW ERA**

The words of John Paul II in his encyclical on the mission of Christ the Redeemer will then be fulfilled in our diocese: *The Church has never had as much opportunity as it does now to bring the Gospel to all people, to all humankind, through personal witness and sharing. I see arising a new dawning of a new missionary era that will become a radiant day bearing much fruit, if every Christian responds with generosity to the calls and challenges of our time. The whole Church is invited to live more intensely the mystery of Christ by sharing with gratitude in the task of salvation. The missionary is prompted by zeal for the salvation of souls, something inspired by the charity of Christ and composed of attention to others, welcoming, availability, and interest in the problems of others. It is a sign of God's love for the world.*

## **CONSTANT AVAILABILITY**

While describing a few of the traits of Catherine de St-Augustin I had constantly in mind what Monsignor Lang has been and still is for the Edmundston diocesan Church. On behalf of this very Church as well as in my own name, I want to express my deepest gratitude to him for his constant zeal for the Church, for humankind, for the suffering, and for the zeal that has always been a hallmark of his ministry, these last sixty years, for his availability, his compassion, his welcoming of others, and his life of prayer. Shortly after his ordination, May 8, 1938, in the Cathedral in Chatham, he accepted *with open heart and willingly*, according to a saying he had often heard repeated Holy Hearts Seminary in Halifax, to become curate at Assumption Parish in Grand Falls, where he remained eight years. After serving as chaplain at St-Basile from 1946 to 1950, he became the founding pastor of Notre-Dame-du-Rosaire Parish in Connors. In 1954 he was appointed pastor of St-Thomas-d'Aquin Parish at Baker Lake. After fourteen years of ministry there he was appointed pastor of St-Michel Parish, Drummond, where he remained twenty years. In 1987 he was appointed honorary prelate of His Holiness Pope John Paul II, with the title of Monsignor. In 1988 he became chaplain of the Grand Falls General Hospital and the Grand Falls Manor, a ministry he has been exercising for some ten years, now.

## **A SINCERE HOPE**

Monsignor Lang sometimes reminds me that we were both ordained May 8; how I would like to have, like him - if one day I reach sixty years of ordination - the beautiful qualities with which the Lord has graced him: patience, kindness, enthusiasm, his sense of the Church, selfless devotion, compassion. These are precious gifts, and he continues to give me a marvellous example. My prayer is that Monsignor Lang continue his priestly ministry for many more years. May the Lord continue to bless him with health and stamina to continue his work. May he continue to be, for the Church and especially to our young people, a daily inspiration and this, throughout the year: an inspiration to love more so as to give ourselves more, as Jesus did.

## **DIOCESAN EUCHARISTIC CONGRESS**

I want to remind you of the diocesan Eucharistic Congress that is to take place at Clair, June 12, 13, and 14; the theme is *Eucharist and Family... A Heritage to Rediscover*. I hope that as many of you as possible will attend. May the Congress prayer be on your lips and in your hearts: *Lord Jesus, before giving your Body and Blood to humankind, you prayed that all your disciples would be one. May we, at this Eucharistic Congress to prepare for the new millennium, discover the wonderful legacy you gave us in this wonderful sacrament of Love as well as in our own families. May our family meals and Sunday worship help us grow in unity and always remind us that your love is from age to age. Amen.*

Have a good week!

+ François Thibodeau

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Bishop of Edmundston

« From A Bishop's Journal » (229) (10 June 1998)