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## **PANIS ANGELICUS!**

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The following are excerpts of the homily I gave at the opening of the Fifth Diocesan Eucharistic Congress, on June 9. In the following my aim was to express in words the mission of artists to help us grow in the faith.

### **AN AMAZING LEGACY**

The songs and hymns which our forebears left us help us understand better the wonders of the Eucharist. Liturgy is an illustration of our faith, and our faith is manifested in our liturgy. All we need is to hear the hymn *Panis angelicus*, to better situate ourselves in relation to this great sacrament. "*Panis angelicus fit panis hominum, dat panis coelicus figuris terminum,*" "the bread of angels has become the bread of humankind, the bread from heaven has brought these to an end. O marvellous thing! God gives himself as food to the poor, the slave, the little one!" "*O res mirabilis! manducat Dominum pauper, servus et humilis!*"

### **TANTUM ERGO**

Then there is this other exceptional hymn which has come to us across the centuries, "*Ave, verum corpus natum de Maria Virgine,*" "Hail to you, true body born of the Virgin Mary, truly wounded and immolated on the cross for the salvation of all. When your side was pierced, water mingled with blood flowed out. Grant that by the time death calls us, we may have received you, O Jesus most gentle, O Jesus most good, O Jesus Son of Mary." To these great hymns we must also add the *Tantum ergo* and the *Lauda Sion*, hymns which marked countless generations of men and women.

### **"A MISSION OF LOVE"**

At the five Eucharistic congresses which took place in the Edmundston Diocese since 1996 in preparation and celebration of the year 2000, we retained for each of these congresses theme songs as the expression of the different aspects of this sacrament. Sister Madeleine Dubé's song *Nous voulons vivre ta mission d'amour* ("We Want to Live the Mission of Your Love") helped us realise how the Eucharist is at the very heart of our evangelisation; the song *Comme Lui* ("Like Him") by Robert Lebel focuses on the words and actions of Jesus to "Do this in memory of me." Father Yvon Samson's "*Chante avec moi*" ("*Sing with Me*") incited us to develop praise in our families and Sunday gatherings: "*Sing with me your Saviour's love, the glory of your Lord who shed his blood to save you. Sing with me your Saviour's love, the glory of your Lord, who gave up his body so you may have life.*"

### **"FOR TWO THOUSAND YEARS"**

The song by Mrs. Léola Dionne of Drummond reminds us of the community-building qualities of the Eucharist. "*Jesus, Eucharist in our history, your presence fills our hearts. May our Christian community live in love and proclaim your love and your glory.*" Referring to the Holy Father's proclamation of the year 2000, in my turn I repeated to my brothers and sisters that, enlivened by the Spirit and nourished by the Eucharist, our Church is forever renewing itself.

For two thousand years, now, the Church has been the cradle from which Mary presents Jesus the Emmanuel, God-with-us. May the Holy Eucharist shine in us; in it is our strength and our joy.

Sing out, and dance we all, moved are we by the Spirit,  
Sing out, and dance we all, nourished by the Eucharist  
Our Church forever grows and is renewed. Alleluia! Alleluia!

For two thousand years now, Jesus the Son of God is the companion of our lives.  
He is the Living One, the Faithful One, the True One. He nourishes us with the Eucharist.

For two thousand years now, the Spirit has worked wonders! Thanks to Him,  
Mary is the Mother of Jesus.  
Thanks to Him, the Church remembers Jesus the Redeemer.  
Thanks to Him, the Church is beautiful and holy.

A living faith, a strong hope, a lively charity, a strong witness:  
These are sure signs of renewal of a Church faithful to its mission.

#### MUSICAL TRADITION

In the Sacred Constitution on the Liturgy, the fathers of the Second Vatican Council stated that *"the musical tradition of the universal church is a treasure of inestimable value, greater even than that of any other art. The main reason for this pre-eminence is that, as a combination of sacred music and words, it forms a necessary or integral part of the solemn liturgy[...]. Therefore, sacred music is to be considered the more holy, the more closely connected is it with the liturgical action, whether making prayer more pleasing, promoting unity of minds, or conferring greater solemnity on the sacred rites[...]. the purpose of sacred music [...] is the glory of God and the sanctification of the faithful[...]."* [Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 112. In Austin Flannery, Gen. Ed. Vatican Council II, *The Basic Sixteen Documents... A Completely Revised Translation in Inclusive Language*. New York: Costello Publishing Company, 1996, pages 152-153]

#### SOURCE AND SUMMIT OF LIFE

Let us meditate often what Vatican Council II teaches us on the mystery of the Eucharist, source and summit of the Christian life: *"At the last supper, on the night he was betrayed, our Savior instituted the eucharistic sacrifice of his body and blood. This he did in order to perpetuate the sacrifice of the cross throughout the ages until he should come again, and so to entrust to his beloved spouse, the church, a memorial of his death and resurrection: a sacrament of love, a sign of unity, a bond of charity, a paschal banquet in which Christ is received, the mind is filled with grace, and a pledge of future glory is given to us."* [Ibid., p. 134-135]

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