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## THE POPPY OF LOYALTY

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Remembrance Day, November 11, brings to mind all those people who have shown loyalty to our country, especially those who shed their blood in the cause of our freedom.

### GRATITUDE

I wholeheartedly join my fellow-citizens in paying a grateful tribute to these brave military people who sacrificed their lives but I also think of these men and women who, most often from the sidelines worked in different ways for our welfare. It would be hard to make a list, even impossible. I think of all of our military's immediate families, their spouses and fiances, fathers and mothers, brothers and sisters, children and grandparents... a whole network of people who loved so much that they were ready to sacrifice themselves for the sake of an ideal.

### THE MANY BLESSED

Beyond the battlefield, at the very heart of the daily grind, they are many these men and women who, surrender their lives daily out of loyalty to their own. In priest-poet Robert Lebel's own words, *«They are many, the blessed who have never made the headlines and who have not left sign or vestige behind... All those who throughout the ages have loved without fail and as best they could their brothers and their God. Those about whom no one talks, the blessed of the humble class, those who were not wonder-workers... Those who never experienced ecstasy and who have left nothing but a plot of land or a cradle. They are many, these people of nothing, these blessed of the daily grind who will not be recorded in history... Those who worked without glory to bake the bread, to earn a livelihood... Their names are carved on so many stones and sometimes in our prayers... but they rest in the heart of God. And when one of them leaves the earth to return to the Father, a star is born in the sky.»* And the author concludes: *«Eternally blessed, eternally blessed in His Kingdom.»*

### NOVEMBER

It seems to me that not only November 11 but the entire month itself could be a month of remembrance, a month of gratitude, a month reminding us of those who have gone before us and have left their mark on us, oftentimes a lot more than we could ever imagine. These dear souls have names loaded with memories. I remember my own mother who died at 44, the mother of twelve children... And my father who is a giant of the family; he died 14 years ago at the age of 81, leaving behind a splendid posterity. As I work on my family tree I express my deep gratitude to them: the twelve children they brought to life have given them 52 grandchildren and 66 great grandchildren. This is a grand bouquet of 132 flowers which I bring to the grave of my dear parents. In reading about them, by listening to the memories of those who knew them, I wish them eternal happiness in the Kingdom: at their demise, a star was born in the sky.

## **“FORWARD, YOU HONEST ONES!”**

In looking up the word 'loyalty' in the dictionary, many synonyms are suggested: dedication, commitment, integrity. These words can easily be tied in to the beatitude proclaimed by Jesus: “Happy the poor in spirit for theirs is the Kingdom of God,” or, in other words, “Forward, you honest ones!” If I recently stressed the sense of marvel as a sign of life, it seems that loyalty is its inseparable companion without which we could not live in society. Blessed are we to find on our path men and women of duty, responsibility, and fidelity. Happy are we to find in the Church these men and women who, in the cause of Christ and that of their brothers and sisters give unstintingly of what they hold the most precious: their lives. Happy are we to find such loyal souls, true to their word, and faithful to their commitment: we can rightly consider them witnesses, 'martyrs' of our time. They continue to give their lives for those they love because of their love for God and loyalty to their brothers and sisters.

## **YEAR 2000 DIOCESAN AWARD**

I have just invited our parish pastoral teams and parish councils to join in the awarding of the Bishop Marie-Antoine Prize for the year 2000; I also invite you to look closely in your own milieu to see whether there would not be a group or organisation which is life-giving to your community. I am sure that you will be able to come up with the names of people of faith, ordinary and exceptional at the same time, because of their high degree of generosity and loyalty in their daily service to others. Send your recommendations to the Diocesan Centre (60, rue Bouchard, Edmundston, E3V 3K1). At the closing of the Year 2000 Jubilee at the Cathedral, on January 7, 2001, the Award winner will be announced. Honour and glory to all you loyal and generous groups and organisations: you deserve much from our Church and our society! I thank you from the bottom of my heart.

*+ François Thibodeau*

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