
GRADUATES, ONLY LOVE COUNTS!



On behalf of the Diocese of Edmundston I am pleased to offer my sincere congratulations to all our high school, community college, and university graduates. I wish you all success in your endeavours. With my congratulations I also assure them of my daily prayer. Both Church and society count on you to become all that you can be, that is, agents of progress in today's world, and signs of the presence among us of a loving God.

To LIVE BY LOVING

"To live! I want to live by loving!" These words describe the life of one of the first graduates of Université Saint-Louis, a Eudist confrere who passed away shortly after the 1984 visit to Canada of Pope John Paul II. The man was Father Camille Albert, the first graduate ordained to the priesthood, son of Mr. and Mrs. Damase Albert of Saint-Hilaire. He was a great musician, full of life and enthusiasm, full of music and love. He was only 51 when he died. I think that his vitality and zest for life make him a role model to our graduates. As he was able to commit himself fully to ministry with youth and older people, he was also capable of serious thinking and reflection. He once said: "The Eucharist celebrated in today's world always remains a source of hope for Christians. Able to share responsibility with Christ the 'body given up for the salvation of the world', Christians, too, are committed to surrendering their lives, to giving up their lives as 'bodies broken', capable of risking everything to save their brothers and the world by transforming them into a new people, and a new earth. By their communion to the body and blood of Christ, they are a pilgrim people, a people clearly focused on the future."

AN IDEAL SHARED TODAY

"To live! I want to live by loving!" I believe that this is the ideal you are seeking, dear graduates. Fully living your lives. To live by loving. It is really the kind of witnesses that the Lord wishes to find in the four corners of the world: people filled with life to the fullest, people who can communicate the flame of their love, the flame of their being. Witnesses of life, of his life, of his resurrection. And if I refer to one of the very first witnesses of Jesus it is because he possessed the same energy and vitality, the same enthusiasm, the same flame. The Apostle Paul, one of the world's greatest intellectuals, who was a Jew with the Jews, Greek with the Greeks, and Roman with Romans, a man who was well versed in the cultures of his day, wrote a particularly famous text, the "Hymn to love," in which he passes on the fruit of his life experience:

"If I speak with human tongues and angelic as well, but do not have love,

I am a noisy gong, a clanging cymbal.

If I have the gift of prophecy and, with full knowledge, comprehend all mysteries,

if I have faith enough to move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing.

If I give everything I have to feed the poor and hand over my body to be burned,

but have not love, I gain nothing.

Love is patient, love is kind, love is not jealous, it does not put on airs, it is not snobbish.

Love is never rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not prone to anger;

neither does it brood over injuries..

Love does not rejoice in what is wrong but rejoices with the truth.

There is no limit to love's forbearance, to its trust, its hope, its power to endure.

Love never fails." (1 Corinthians, 13, 1-8)

PASSIONATELY IN LOVE WITH GOD AND HUMANKIND

This was Paul's conviction, at the end of his life. Like Father Camille Albert, Université Saint-Louis' first graduate, Saint Paul was passionately in love with God, passionately in love with humankind, with a soul afire totally dedicated to an ideal, and this ideal was basically religious. For him, God was everything, and he served Him in total loyalty. His unconditional zeal was seen in a life fully dedicated to the service of the One he loved: work, fatigue, suffering, self-denial, danger of death, nothing mattered to him as long as he carried out the task which had been assigned him.

ONLY LOVE MATTERS!

Dear graduates, must we say that all the grades you have completed, all the research done, all the years you have put into your studies, all those diplomas and certificates you have collected mean nothing and are worth nothing? According to Saint Paul, where there is no love there is nothing, but where there is love, everything is possible, everything is wonderful. The bottom line is: only love matters! The search for truth is a major aspect of love. You may be surprised at what I am telling you. It is a teaching that goes against everything which is called 'success', nowadays, where efficiency and appearances are all that matter. But this is not your belief. Your years of study have helped you sort out what is basic to all human beings, what forms a human's solid foundation, one's wisdom, one's ability to love.

LASTING FRUIT!

Jesus says: "You have not chosen me. I have chosen you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last." Your fruit must be one of love, because only love remains, because at the end of it all our lives will be judged on love. Besides, Jesus gave us the commandment of love as his last will and testament, the night before he died. "I give you a new commandment: Love one another. As I have loved you, so must you love one another. This is how others will know that you are my disciples, by the love you have for one another." Love must be shown more in action than in word and feeling. But even prior to acts, there must be acknowledgement and respect of the other. Love's starting point is looking at the other in truth; we cannot do without this true form of contemplation, since all other love is based on a weak foundation. To love someone is to always expect from that person. As soon as we start judging someone, lowering our level of trust in that person, as soon as we put tags on a person or stereotype the other, we stop loving that person, who stops becoming a better person. We must dare be lovers in a world that no longer knows how to love. "To love! I want to live by loving!" "Only love matters!" This is my end-of-the-school-year message, and this is the love and trust I place in you all. Best of luck to you all!

+ François Thibodeau

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Bishop of Edmundston

