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## **“YOU HAVE SEDUCED ME, O LORD, AND YOU HAVE PREVAILED!”**

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For the ninth consecutive year I have published a pastoral letter for Pentecost, but this time the letter is a collective effort. Its topic – vocations – is of major pastoral import. I hope that our diocese will carefully consider the Lord’s invitations to ordained ministries, religious life, and Christian marriage. This year I have invited our priests to share their spiritual itinerary with us; in 2003 I would like to publish the vocation journeys of our religious brothers and sisters, and in 2004, Christian couples will write about their vocation call.

### **TELLING OF THE WONDERS OF THE LORD**

The feast of Pentecost is an extremely important event in the life of the Church. As in the first days of the Christian community, Jesus’ disciples still marvel today at what the Spirit does, in the world we live in. The Acts of the Apostles tell us that “They began talking about the *Mirabilia Dei*, the wonders of God (Cf. Acts 2:4). One verb very often used in Holy Scripture is the verb “to tell,” “to tell about”. Just as the Chosen People loved to retell the wonderful story of their liberation by God, in the same way the early Christians quickly picked up the cue: they could not praise the Lord often enough. In the very beginning, John’s Gospel tells us of the call of the first disciples who confirm that “We have seen the Lord!” (Cf. Jn. 1:41) In this way and thanks to the Holy Spirit, new disciples were added to the fledgling community.

### **AN INVITATION TO AWE**

In presenting to you the vocation accounts of baptised people called to the ordained ministry, it is a pressing invitation I send you to acknowledge the marvels which the Spirit is still working among us. By witnessing to the “wonder”, the “marvel” we feel, others, too, will feel gratitude for all the gifts given to our Church. A prayer will come from our hearts: “Continue to send us many good workers for your harvest.” Then the words of St. Paul to the Ephesians (4:15-16) will be fulfilled: “Let us profess the truth in love and grow to the full maturity of Christ the head. Through him the whole body grows, and with the proper functioning of the members joined firmly together by each supporting ligament, builds itself up in love.” I wholeheartedly thank all the priests who have helped prepare this pastoral letter. May their witness be for the greater glory of God! May the Spirit pursue his wonderful work among us! And may the mysterious and unexpected calls continue for many years to come!

### **BISHOP DIONNE: “FAMILIAR COMPANY”**

*Along my vocation journey I want to mention first of all the influence of my family. I had the chance of growing up in a devout Catholic environment. My parents’ example was certainly a determining factor in the blossoming of my vocation. While still very young I developed the habit of attending daily Mass with my father. In grade 7 I became an altar server. Two of my brothers attended seminary, one became a priest and the other had to stop his studies due to health problems. A priest uncle, mother’s brother, was our benefactor during our seminary years. A cousin was a missionary priest. The company of priests was familiar to me. A second factor determining my vocation was doubtless the admiration I had for the parish priest of Ville-Dégelis, the parish of my youth. He celebrated Mass in such a way that he made us appreciate and love serving at the altar and at liturgical celebrations. Without his ever forcing us, without even alluding to the question of vocation, it*

seemed that we were drawn to imitate him. The Sisters who taught me also influenced my choice of vocation. My prayers and theirs converged.

### **BEING A PRIEST BEFORE BECOMING ONE**

*I did my classics studies in a seminary for adult vocations where everything was geared to the priesthood. The seminary's founder was still living when I arrived as a student. He used to repeat often, "One must be a priest before becoming one." This was a call to live out our vocation as if we were already priests. As we grow we are tempted by different life options, and I felt drawn to medicine, for a while; still, deep down my first option remained the priesthood, but the care of the sick attracted me very much. When the time came for a final decision, the first option was the normal course for me to take. My spiritual director told me that if I desired the priesthood it was because I was following my dreams and capacities. He even said that if I decided otherwise, the idea of the priesthood would come back to me again, later. So, I followed what seemed to be meant for me, and I have never for a moment regretted it. I have been truly happy with my choice of vocation. And I am still happy!*

### **MSGR. URBAIN LANG: MY VOCATION TO THE PRIESTHOOD**

*It is hard to find the specific cause of my vocation. Basically, though, my family was devoutly Christian. My mother was raised a Catholic by my Protestant grandmother, Annie Douglas, who was herself baptised January 6, 1910, my mother being then a little over 21 years of age. My grandmother had the utmost respect for religion. As a seminarian, I wore a cassock as was the custom, in those days, in the 1930s and 40s. My grandmother showed me special respect. She died suddenly February 9, 1938, three months short of my ordination. We lived close to the church, in Clair. I began serving Mass at the age of 8. At 11, my parents enrolled me in the convent school in St-Basile, where they boarded boys. There, we had the opportunity of meeting our pastor, Mgr. Louis-Napoléon Dugal, two or three times a week. In 1927 I left to study at the Collège Ste-Anne-de-la-Pocatière, directed by Québec diocesan priests. I stayed there seven years, doing my classics studies. Then in 1934 I began to study theology at the Eudist Fathers' Holy Heart Seminary. The influence of all these people, beginning in my childhood, doubtlessly contributed to the growth of my priestly vocation. There would surely be a lot more to write about, but what I have just written partly explains how I became a priest.*

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