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## A SPIRIT OF WONDER AND DISCOVERY

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Fall is a terrific season for discovering the myriad beauties of our forests and mountains! I feel very lucky to have recently climbed Mount Carleton with 40-odd people of our diocese, young and not so young! What an indescribable panorama offered itself to us, after a nearly two-hour climb of the highest peak in Atlantic Canada! The tourist pamphlet told us that below us we could see one of North America's highest mountain chains. It is possible to see to million trees! « Happy the eyes that see what you are seeing! » In a moment of deep recollection I recall the holy mountains which Holy Scripture writes about: Mount Sinai where God made a covenant with His People, Mount Nebo from which Moses glimpsed the Holy land, Mount Tabor where Jesus revealed his divine nature, and the mount of Golgotha where he shed his blood for humankind. Someone remarked that one couldn't get any closer to heaven! A song of wonderment springs from our hearts to the Creator who has given us such beautiful mountains, an eloquent testimony to the glory of God. « Mountains and hills, bless the Lord! Everything growing from the earth, bless the Lord! You springs and fountains, bless the Lord! »

### HERE IS OUR GARDEN!

My bishop's coat of arms – which I have donated to the diocese, making it also the diocesan coat of arms – was meant as a hymn of wonder and praise to the Blessed Trinity, the Creator Father, the Redeemer Son, and the sanctifying Holy Spirit. Creation, given to us by God the Father, is indicated on the coat of arms by the symbol of the mountains, and signifies the duration of divine love. The Saint John River Valley, the Chaudière River Valley, the Appalachians, whether in the Restigouche or in Beauce County, are also indicated by the symbol. « God the Father works His wonders, He gives us the sky, the earth, the sun; the care of the forest He gives us, the earth and sea: these are our garden! » Ecological concern is a response to the gift given us. Throughout our diocese we can never tire of admiring all the mountains and hills around us: they proclaim the glory of God : « Father, Lord of heaven and earth, I praise you! »

### WHAT IS THAT?

Throughout life we are called to marvel at everything that is around us, especially at those we live with day to day. We must develop this spirit of discovery from a tender age. The many questions a child asks about his/her environment are good signs of the child's capacity for marvel and wonder. All the « What is that? » which the child raises are meant to be more than mere attempts at retrieving information. They also try to fathom the special meaning behind things and events and persons. Life seems to be so full of mystery, of seemingly inexplicable things and realities. A confrere dropped me a very sympathetic note regarding these so-called mysteries of life : « We are lucky when we have older brothers to whom we can ask all kinds of questions. One day, when I was ten, I asked my fifteen year-old brother: ships are big and heavy, how can they float on water? He answered: Well, I don't know. I asked him : And the planes, the big jets, they're filled with people, baggage, fuel; that's heavy! How can they fly through the air? And he answered, Oh, I don't know. I said : trains are big, filled with all kinds of merchandise : how can they roll on such small wheels along such tiny rails? And he answered : I don't know. So I asked him : It doesn't bother you for me to ask you all kinds of questions like this? And he answered, Of course not, that's how you're going to learn! » On that score, there were other questions regarding the mysteries of life, seen through the eyes of children : « Why do chickens eat pebbles? Why does the rooster jump on the hen's back, and bite its neck? Why does Uncle Felix have such a big belly? How come Aunt Tammy lost her big stomach, all of a sudden? » Sometimes embarrassing

questions, but how so very close to life! The day we stop gazing in wonder and amazement at the beauty of the dandelion, we shall then realise that we have grown old!

### **FROM WONDER TO WONDER**

From my window at the Diocesan Centre I often see a convalescent gentleman taking his walk around the building, as he regains his strength day by day. I must say that his courage and regularity amaze me : his persistence will have given him back his health. Ever since he became sick he never became discouraged. I wish him luck in getting his health back, because he believed in life and in his capacity for « bouncing back. » I am awed, also, by my colleagues who continue on despite failing health : their courage sustains everyone they meet. They themselves, in discovering new strengths, start hoping for happier days to come : it is in the midst of illness that they discover secrets and have insights into the mysteries of life.

### **AS IF HE WERE LOOKING ON THE INVISIBLE GOD**

The Letter to the Hebrews describes our forefathers' exemplary faith. When the author describes the faith of Moses, he says that Moses held fast, « as if he were looking on the invisible God » (Hb. 11:27). It seems that the spirit of discovery and wonder takes us day after day from wonder to wonder, from the visible to the invisible... On gazing at the mountains, how can one not marvel at their Creator? When listening to a friendly voice, how can one not hear the voice of the One who loves us and who speaks to our conscience? How can one not feel within the divine words burning one's heart? How can we not envy Jeremiah the prophet, as he confessed the divine mystery « You have seduced me, O Lord, and you have prevailed, you were too strong for me, and you triumphed. I said to myself, I will not mention him, I will speak in his name no more. But then it becomes like fire burning in my heart, imprisoned in my bones » (Jr. 20:7, 9). Living to one hundred would not be long enough to discover all of God's wonders around us! Each new day brings about a new marvel, we have only to discover it, otherwise, we shall end up believing that there is nothing new under the sun. A verse from scripture can help us along, here : « See, I make all things new! » (Rv. 21:5). Read the whole chapter 21 of the Book of Revelation : « Then I saw new heavens and a new earth... This is God's dwelling among men. He shall dwell with them and they shall be his people and he shall be their God who is always with them » (Rv. 21:1, 6).

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