
“AMAZED AT SO MUCH LOVE!”



My most affectionate Easter greetings to my brothers and sisters of the Edmundston Diocese! May the Easter season revive in our hearts the hope that broke forth with Jesus' resurrection. With gratitude for the prayers you offer for your bishop, I offer you here broad excerpts of the homily I gave at the Chrism Mass.

LENT, A TRAINING PERIOD

The Lenten liturgy for 2005 has constantly invited us, the baptised in Jesus, to direct our attention to Jesus himself, to his struggle in the desert, his transfiguration on Mount Tabor, his miracles on behalf of the man born blind and Lazarus, his merciful attitude towards the woman taken in adultery, and his final journey to Jerusalem. May this Lenten period continue to help us, throughout the year, be more and more true disciples of Jesus. For my part, my Lenten prayer was a prayer of marvel. Marvel before the grandeur and the beauty of our God, marvel at the presence of Jesus, marvel at the beauty of creation and the grandeur of Christian marriage, marvel at religious life and celibacy for the sake of the Kingdom, and marvel at the priesthood. The song of Robert Lebel flowed constantly from my heart: "Amazed, filled with marvel at so much love, how can we express our joy, O Lord? You visit us every day, to draw us closer to you." Yes, Lent of 2005 was truly one of marvel and amazement, in the image of God's own amazement after He created man and woman, and saw that it was very good.

MARVEL, FROM DAY TO DAY

I invite you to marvel at all that the Lord does for us, day after day. It is today that God's Word is being fulfilled. May our prayer be one of gratitude and appreciation. Scripture says: What is man, that God should consider him, the son of man, that he should show concern? I wish that this attitude of wonder and amazement be with us throughout our lives. The Lord has done so much for us, and he continues to fill us with good things. He gave us life, and preserves it. He gave us baptism, that we may become members of his Body, temples of the Spirit, incorporated in him, living his life, being fed by his Word, members of God's people, a holy nation, a redeemed people, a royal priesthood. It was for us that he proclaimed a year of grace. The Spirit of God rests upon him; he has consecrated him with oil; he came to proclaim good news to the poor and announce freedom to prisoners. This word is fulfilled today. "Amazed, filled with marvel at so much love, how can we express our joy, O Lord? You visit us every day, to draw us closer to you."

ASSOCIATED WITH THE GOOD SHEPHERD

"After all, what are we in the eyes of God, that He should carry us on his shoulders, like the shepherd? Who are we truly, that God should take us into His kingdom, to share it with us? After all, who are we in His eyes, that He should announce it along our paths through our deserts? Who are we truly, for God to slip into our doubts and even our winter nights?" The Good Shepherd is among us. He leads us to green pastures to revive us, as Psalm 23 says. He chooses weak beings to have them share his mission and proclaim his Word, celebrate his sacraments and have his people grow in unity. He is the Good Shepherd who welcomes us at baptism and in the holy anointing, who associates us to his prophetic, priestly, and royal mission. He confirms us with holy oil, with the presence of the Spirit and his sevenfold gifts. He is the one who says to our sick brothers and sisters that he is with them and that he loves them infinitely. He is the one, too, who ordains priests and bishops he has chosen from all eternity. "Amazed, filled with marvel at so much love, how can we express our joy, O Lord? You visit us every day, to draw us closer to you."

FOR BUILDING UP THE KINGDOM

"After all, who are we in His eyes, that He should love us like a father, and like a mother, too? Who are we truly, that He should hear our prayers, our complaints, and our thanks? Who are we to Him, after all, that He should unite us to His mystery, and take us with Him?" Our beloved Saviour is truly great, for associating us so closely to building up the Kingdom where he reigns forever. It is a kingdom full of life and truth, justice, liberty, and holiness. A kingdom of prayer, gratitude and communion where we are asked to be poor, kind, compassionate, merciful, dedicated to justice, and peacemakers. "Come to me, you who labour and are heavy burdened, and I shall give you rest. Learn from me that I am meek and humble in heart." "Amazed, filled with marvel at so much love, how can we express our joy, O Lord? You visit us every day, to draw us closer to you."

LOVE IN RETURN FOR LOVE

"After all, who are we in His eyes, that He should have made us a people, that He should have chosen us? Who are we truly, in the eyes of God, for our hearts to become temples where His beloved Son could be found? Who are we in His eyes, that He should be committed to His promise to His people and give flesh to His kindness?" The mystery of the Incarnation has made the invisible God visible. God became man in our flesh. The Mystery of the Resurrection makes Christ present to us until the end of time. The mystery of the Eucharist perpetuates for us Jesus' body given for us and his blood poured out for us for the forgiveness of sins and the new and everlasting covenant. Why should God have chosen us and given us so much? This is the secret of His love. Why did God choose me and my confreres to be priests? This is the secret of His love. Since He has loved us so, we, too, must love in return! "Love in return for love, to the very gift of self! Offering oneself totally, is there any greater expression of 'I love you'? Love in return for love. Kindness in return for kindness, offering oneself totally because Love has wounded us!" May this Holy Easter draw us closer to Jesus and lead us to the Easter glory.

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