
“IN THE GARDEN OF THE LORD, LET US ACKNOWLEDGE HIS CALLS”



Really there are many things in the Lord's garden, and it takes more than a few words or books to describe them. One has only to go back to the Book of Genesis, to discover the lushness of this garden. Then, if we continue reading the Holy Book, we come across wonderful and demanding calls, as well as responses of faith from humankind.

CULTURE OF THE MARVELLOUS

At each stage of creation we see that God is filled with marvel for His creation. On the sixth day, after creating man and woman, the Bible tells us that God saw what He had done and that it was very good. It seems to me that this "culture of the marvellous" has divine origins. It is therefore not surprising that Jesus should tell his countrymen: "Happy the eyes that see what you see! Happy the ears that hear what you hear!" These words of Jesus are well received because they make us look at anew and hear anew everything that appears in our milieu. Hadn't Jesus himself learned to marvel like his own Mother Mary had? "My soul glorifies the Lord... He has done great things for me... His love is from age to age." In this the Virgin Mary was directly touching the Jewish tradition, as she repeated the hymns and psalms transmitted from one generation to another.

CULTURE OF GRATITUDE

One day, when I was five or six, my mother sent me to the neighbour to return a gardening tool we had borrowed. When I got back, she asked me: "Did you at least thank him?" I answered, "No," and mother made me go back immediately to say "Thank you." This lesson marked me for life, and I hope that it will continue to do so always! On a number of occasions I mentioned that following a special celebration in Québec I had sent a thank you note to one of the volunteers who had dedicated his entire life to the cause of the Church. He answered me in this way: "If I had kept all the thank you letters I received over the years, there would still be a lot of space left in my desk drawer!" Do not be surprised if I publish many books, it is my way of expressing my gratitude and marvel to all those around me.

MARVELLING AS A FORM OF DISAGREEMENT

What would be the point of crying over the lack of priestly, religious, and missionary vocations, while in the Church as a whole there have never been as many priests and religious? Statistics show that on different continents there is an abundance of vocations! What would be the point of talking endlessly about the number of failed marriages and of divorces? What would be the point of repeating all the old clichés, if we are incapable of seeing and hearing the newness which the Lord calls forth in our Church and society? The diversity of ministries and the number of responses have perhaps never been greater than now. We have only to look in the different sectors of ecclesial and community life to discover the generosity, competence, and depth of those who are committed to the cause of Christ and his Church. We have only to count those engaged in family- and parish-based catechetics, in liturgical celebrations and prayer services, and in community and pastoral activities. These people are true sowers of faith, hope, and charity. And it is for this that I invite your sense of the marvellous!

WITNESSES

Rather than writing long expositions on Church and society, I and the diocesan vocation ministry team felt it was better to seek out the testimony of people who are deeply committed in Christian marriage, consecrated life, celibacy for the Kingdom of God, and the priesthood. In these areas of life and service there are people

who answered our invitation as professions of faith in the Lord, unique and wonderful professions similar to Jeremiah's "You have seduced me, O Lord, and you have prevailed." These words find an echo in the Virgin Mary's "Behold the servant of the Lord," Peter's "You know everything, Lord, and you know that I love you," Paul's "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith," as well as the profession of faith of Abraham, first of the believers.

POWER OF TESTIMONY

We shall always need teachers to lead us along the path of truth, science, and culture, but our world needs first and foremost true witnesses who can share with those around them their faith, love, and hope. These witnesses are often very close to us: parents, grandparents, educators, and parish priests can very discretely and daily be sure and wise guides to happiness, commitment, and wisdom. We only need to look, listen and love – without forgetting to thank!

WISHES

May the words of my new book evoke the pressing yet discrete call which the Lord makes to men and women today, out of love for us and the whole community. May every family become once again the fertile soil where vocations grow! May every community in our country develop a culture of vocations! Let us marvel before the God who calls to service and happiness. Let us marvel at those who have responded to this commitment to God and to us. Grateful thanks to all those who have made this new publication possible.

+ François Thibodeau

+ François Thibodeau, C.J.M.
Bishop of Edmundston

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