
“SUCCESS NOURISHES HOPE”



This was the dynamic theme chosen by the Université de Moncton's Edmundston Campus graduates, for their graduation on May 14. I had the pleasure of celebrating the Eucharist with them. What follows are excerpts from the homily I gave.

“OPEN THE DOORS!”

When I got their invitation the words of Pope John Paul II immediately came to mind: “Open the doors to the Lord our God; do not be afraid. Open, open wide the doors, open, open! To the power of his salvation, open wide the borders of countries, the economic and political systems, the immense areas of culture, civilisation, and development.” This invitation was repeated by Pope Benedict XVI: “Do not be afraid of Christ! He takes away nothing and gives everything. Whoever surrenders to him receives one hundredfold. Yes, open wide the door to Christ, and you shall find the true life.”

A HYMN TO HOPE

Last November I published a book [in French] called *In the Lord's Garden, Let us Sow Hope*. You can easily understand that when I saw the motto of the graduating class, I knew that we were on the same wave length. “Success Nourishes Hope.” The happy results achieved from year to year have led these graduates to their celebration today. They only need to look back at the long road taken, at everything they had to learn, whether physical, psychological, intellectual, or moral, and we realize that their success is not foreign to their hope. The same holds true in all domains. We only need ask the parents how their life as a couple and family have unfolded, and we realise there, too, that it was an accumulation of minor successes that brought them where they are today, on this happy occasion. There is a beautiful song by Édith Butler, *L'hymne à l'espoir* [“Hymn to Hope”], an invitation to hope: “One day, one day, perhaps, we shall be real friends, / I already see that light is slowly opening the darkness of the night, / one day, one day, perhaps, the universe shall be one country; / I already see the celebration being prepared, on the side of life. / Hope at our window, hope that one day, perhaps, the sun shall rise on the side of freedom. / One day well beyond our sorrow, we shall let hatred go away with the rain; / one day we shall no longer be nostalgic; / time stops in my head, on the side of forgetfulness. / One day, one day, perhaps, no more soldiers and no more storms, / we shall no longer play courage by the side of fear. / One day when we have broken our chains, I shall tell you from my heart how much I love you. / One day, the whole world shall be one country, / I can already see the day for celebrating life, coming to us. / Hope at our windows, hope that perhaps one day the sun shall rise on the side of freedom.”

ADVERSITY, TOO, NOURISHES HOPE

We must never doubt that success nourishes hope. However, I would like to say that unsuccess, too, can nourish hope. We must not hide the fact that life is sometimes difficult, painful, and that the sun's rays are not always as numerous as the cloudy, dull days. Hope is often nourished at the table of adversity. Such was the case of a burn victim from a boat accident, who wrote *Par le hublot de la nuit* [“Through the Porthole of Night”]. His whole body was one open sore. He nevertheless found the strength and determination to continue living, the hope of living days of going beyond himself and of accomplishing the near-impossible. Allow me to tell them once again the reasons for always hoping, for never despairing of themselves, or of life. They have everything in them to achieve the happiness they seek, and God Himself has placed in them this infinite yearning for happiness. With life they have received all they need to be happy, on condition that they be close collaborators with life.

WONDERFUL GIFTS

When they were baptised and then confirmed, they were given the greatest of all gifts, the gift of faith, gift of the Holy Spirit. The life that is in them can only bring hope in the future. They were given outstanding gifts, gifts of wisdom and knowledge, and gifts of strength, and these gifts are theirs forever. They are gifts that can lead them to ever greater joys and more fulfilling happiness. If Saint Paul could so readily state that nothing can separate us from the love of God, neither death nor life, nor heat, nor cold, nor day, nor night, nor hunger, nor thirst, we can affirm the same thing and with the same conviction, that nothing can lessen or break the hope that is in us, because it is a hope that finds its rest in God. It is truly God who is our hope. Neither hell, nor fear, nor peril, nor failure, nor danger, nor pain nor tears, nor present nor past, nor angels nor powers can lessen or break our hope. If God is for us, who then can be against us? Who can condemn those whom God has saved through His kindness? The Holy Spirit constantly rekindles our hope, and he is the origin and end of our hope. He shall be with us always, with his power and vitality.

HOPE'S CHALLENGES

One of the liturgical hymns tells us a great secret: "If hope has made you walk further than fear could, your eyes shall be lifted up and you shall be able to hold on until the daylight of God. If anger has you cry out for justice for all, your heart will be wounded, and then you shall be able to fight for the oppressed. If misery has made you search in the dark recesses of hunger, your heart shall be open and then you shall be able to give the bread of poverty. If suffering has made you shed tears of blood, your eyes shall be washed, and then you shall be able to pray with your crucified brother. If abundance has made you beg for a bit of friendship, your hands outstretched, you shall then be able to burn the silver of your prisons. If weakness has made you fall by the roadside, you shall know how to hold out your hands, and you shall be able to dance to the tune of forgiveness. If sadness has made you doubt, on the night of abandonment, you shall know how to carry your cross and you shall be able to die in the footsteps of the God-Man. If hope has made you walk further than your fear has, your eyes shall be lifted up and you shall be able to hold on until the daylight of God." And with Calixte Duguay we can sing: "It is always good to experience an adventure together by betting on the youth of the country, to build the future to the size of all the dreams of the people here. It tempts us to cry out to the world a song of hope for humankind, at the University."

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