
THE 2005-2006 PASTORAL YEAR



As we begin the new 2005-2006 pastoral year, I want to dedicate it in a special way to Our Lady of the Assumption, and I ask that she constantly renew in us the vitality of hope. In the Virgin Mary all of humankind's efforts find their crowning achievement. May our Christian communities continue to grow, invigorated by the youth!

AN INVIGORATING CELEBRATION

Here is how Hervé Destrès, in the monthly *Magnificat*, presents the feast of the Assumption: "Today the Church celebrates the feast of the Assumption of Mary. In a whole wrapped up in itself and choking in its own waywardness, the Church makes everything break wide open. It overturns all that is said regarding the human problem. It speaks of a woman become a mother while remaining a virgin, a carnal woman whose body is now in another world, in God's world; a woman, Mother of God, yet ordinary. What are we to understand from this? This mystery is unbearable to human reason, especially to the one whose vision is limited to the material and experimental universe. We perhaps only need to ask Mary to come visit us, as she did for her cousin Elizabeth. 'The mother of our Lord is coming to us!' She believed in the accomplishment of the words spoken to her by the angel of the Lord.' It is at our greeting that Mary will give us a share in her Magnificat."

LIVING IN COMMUNION

In this year of the Eucharist I ask the Lord Jesus to help us live in an ever deeper communion with one another. "Give us in this meal your Holy Spirit: may he dispel the causes of our divisions, establish us in a greater charity, in communion with Pope Benedict XVI, our Bishop François, the bishops and all your people. Make your Church in the world the visible sign of unity and the servant of peace." As Robert Lebel sings it so well: "My wish would be the astonished people to say, as they see us live, 'See how they love one another! See their happiness!' And they will see the features of God in all that we are, and in seeing all that we do they will know that He is with us!" Well before specifying the new pastoral restructuring, it is to a real "life in communion" that we must refer everything, whether at the level of the family, the neighbourhood, or the entire community. The restructuring will be there to support or establish this life in communion.

A LIVING CATECHESIS

These past few years, we have had to adjust to new realities. We have had the beautiful challenge of implementing evangelisation for developing family- and parish-based catechesis. I thank and congratulate all those who were wholeheartedly involved in this inescapable reality: every community comes out a winner in sowing these seeds in the hearts of our children. In fact, all the communities stand to benefit from these catechetical sharings. It is so good to repeat to those around us the marvels of the Lord.

PASTORAL TEAMS

Another reality has appeared in our Church: the setting up of fifteen parish pastoral teams to ensure the life of our Christian communities. I am most grateful to the pastors, the sisters, the pastoral agents and the many other lay people who are involved in all the indispensable tasks: May the Lord abundantly bless these Gospel workers. And when a parish pastoral team takes charge of three and even four parishes, it contributes to the formation of a pastoral unit. In this way nine pastoral units have been created, in the last year or two. These units are gradually replacing the pastoral zones or deaneries which grouped together in other ways the thirty-two parishes in our diocese. During the year we shall have to determine the best way these pastoral units can function, and the future of the pastoral zones. We shall especially have to determine which services we could pool together between parishes.

ONGOING CHRISTIAN FORMATION

Another pastoral reality is making itself felt more and more in our church life, and this is the establishment of youth ministry teams. So much progress was made, in the last few months! The “intergenerational” is one path to the future which we must subscribe to enthusiastically: grandparents, parents, children and grandchildren are invited, too, to live in communion. We urge you to take part, according to your possibilities, in one or the other pastoral sessions being offered, especially the one on October 1st. Ongoing formation to the Christian life is necessary if we are to help build the world day after day.

INDISPENSABLE RELIEF

A final word, but not the least, is the pressing invitation to find in our respective milieus people who can, on both the short and the long run, take on those responsibilities we are now ensuring in the Church. In the still recent past, when a scout leader first started, he had to find someone to take over from him a few years down the road... This is a wonderful challenge: who will there be to ensure the future of religious education, the celebration of our liturgies, the transformation of our milieus, and our prayer life? Who is there in our milieu who could become a pastor? This is an essential task we must work at. Even as bishop I must think about who, one day, could ensure this wonderful mission in the midst of our beloved Church. I wish you a good pastoral year! Be assured of my prayer and solidarity. Let us trust the future: the Holy Spirit is always ahead of us!

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