



## **From A Bishop's Journal (609)**

### **For More Lively Communities**

**B**etween September 12 and 17 I and the diocesan coordinator of pastoral ministry, shall visit each of the five pastoral zones of the diocese, to take part in the launching of the 2005-2006 pastoral year. Since our priority is “Building Lively Christian Communities Vitalised by Youth,” I shall stress four specific points: communion, formation, celebration, and transformation. These shall connect us to the first Christian communities that were “dedicated to the apostles’ instruction and the communal life, to the breaking of bread and the prayers” (Ac. 2:42).

#### **Communion**

If we truly want our Christian communities to be alive, the priority must be that every baptised person live the great commandment of charity to the fullest. “By this will they know that you are my disciples, by the love that you have for one another” (Jn. 13:35). This is the basis of all Christian renewal, and the family is the basic cell of such a love. We know that countless couples and families are plagued with problems, but we must also recognise that there can be no community without the love that comes from couples and families. We experience this every day: The man or woman who finds rejuvenating love in his or her milieu is full of vitality at work, at play, and in the community. The same holds for the child who is part of a loving network of family and friends. The adult, whether celibate or married, religious or priest who can no longer discover the roots of love in his or her own family, has difficulty in finding happiness, peace, and growth, something is lacking which cannot be easily compensated. The need to live in communion with one another is rooted in the couple and the family. This does not mean that couples and families who have experienced failures can no longer love and pass on that love: the struggle for love becomes difficult to the point of asking God to help us love one another as He loves us and, if possible, to love them as strongly as He does.

#### **Formation**

It takes an entire lifetime to become more and more a “disciple of Jesus.” It is important to remain in constant contact with Jesus through prayer, reflection, Bible and spiritual reading, brotherly sharing, the systematic study of theology, etc. To be ignorant of Holy Scripture is to be ignorant of Jesus himself. Aware that the weekly Sunday homily was not sufficient in giving a complete Christian formation, my predecessor Bishop Gerard Dionne established the School of Faith in both the French and English sectors of the diocese. For twenty years now, the School of Faith gives to those attending those vital elements to grow in the faith. The same can be said of the [French]

Mess'AJE Bible study sessions, to help one better understand the Bible, and the pastoral training sessions offered by the diocesan pastoral services throughout the year. We must point out, here, the wonderful work of the [French] School of Pastoral Formation which prepares pastoral agents for our Church. I would add that Christians as a whole have a wonderful tool available to them: the Catechism of the Catholic Church.

## **Celebration**

For our communities to be more and more vibrant they must often and regularly renew themselves at the celebrations which are held in their milieus. So much the better, if these celebrations are alive and comforting! Sometimes work will need to be done by all, to make these celebrations more significant. The aim of the liturgical reform aimed at the full and active participation of the entire community. If there is only twenty percent of the community taking part in the Sunday celebrations, the risk is great that it will always be the same people performing the same functions. The greatly desired participation of the great majority of the baptised would make our assemblies even more alive. Just as love in the Church is continuously renewed in the family, the same is true of community prayer. Liturgical prayer feeds on personal prayer. The prayer time done "in secret" – where the Father sees us – in one's room, in one's hospital room or even at work, finds its fulfilment in the prayer of the entire community. "Wherever two or three are gathered in my name, I am there in their midst" (Mt. 18:20).

## **Transformation**

It would be surprising that people who love one another deeply, who find spiritual nourishment in the Word of God, and who join together in the community's celebrations, not be "contagious. To others, as they daily transform according to the Gospel, their economic, social, cultural, and political environments. We have inherited the beliefs of giants in the faith and in holiness. We received love as a heritage, so we must make it grow and develop even more. There is no end to our making an inventory of everything our forebears have left us, especially in the organisation of society, education, and health services. There must be room for everyone, in our "contagious hearts," for children and teens, adults and elderly, the handicapped and the sick, the poor, the prisoners, the abused, and the rejects of society. Vibrant communities must be faithful to all those with whom Jesus identified himself: the hungry, the thirsty, the merciful, the peacemakers and the seekers after justice.

## **A Wish**

May the 2005-2006 pastoral year propel us ever forward! The challenges are not lacking. May every person, every organisation, every committee, and every community choose one of the four points mentioned, and work at advancing further. As a result, our communities will come out all the stronger.

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