



From A Bishop's Journal (613)

For the Kingdom of God (10)

I would like to conclude these excerpts from my Pentecost pastoral letter with these testimonies from people of our beloved Church of the Edmundston Diocese.

A Well-Filled Life

“I thank my Creator for having guided me in my life's choice. I have had a fulfilling life and career. My faith in God and in Mary has been and always shall be my ‘daily vitamin’. If you only knew how often I have felt the presence of the Lord or Mary, close to me...” – Lisa

Fidelity and Love

“Today, as nearly always in our society, celibacy is rather viewed as a state of life which does not produce anything extraordinary. However, every lifestyle, whether marriage or celibacy, is a call from God. Everyone is free to answer the call. I do not believe that a person's value is measured by that person's choice of lifestyle. What matters is fidelity to the choice, and the love which flows from it. As a celibate teacher, I believe that I have served society by forming my students as best I could, at the spiritual, health, educational, and instructional levels. I also had more time to devote to my work, since I did not have a family to look after. This allowed me to give myself fully to my teaching profession. I think that my life has been fulfilling. I have also given much time and energy to our Church because, since the age of ten I have always been in the parish choir, in various roles. I am certain that I have been useful to society, and that my life is meaningful. My work has brought me much satisfaction and I have always been happy in this my chosen state of life. There will always certainly be calls to celibacy. Even today, many lay people are joining new communities and commit themselves through vows of chastity.” – Jeannine

For Love of Him

In the nineteenth century Cardinal John Henry Newman (1801-1890) wrote the following, about celibacy: “There is a form of celibacy advised by the philosophers, attested to by those in religious education, of a sad, haughty and repulsive nature, the kind represented and exalted in the pages of pagan authors or the teaching of false religions, and that only serves to harden the heart. Among the

philosophers of Antiquity there were those who were led to praise a nearly Christian form of asceticism and renunciation. Among the false religions there were those which really observed celibacy under the pretext that it was higher than the common life of man. I do not know whether making celibacy its own end is more melancholy or more deadening, melancholy by its unshared desolation, or deadening by the pride and self-worth on which it is based. In the Gospels it is not marriage but virginity that has pride of place because of the Kingdom of Christ and the Kingdom of heaven, and because its luminaries, as behoves such a kingdom, neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like the angels. To have a virgin soul is to love nothing on earth more than loving God, or except for love of Him. The soul is virginal that always seeks its Beloved who is in heaven, and that sees Him in everything lovable on earth, and in return loving its friends most tenderly, but in their rightful place, as gifts from Him, loving Jesus alone, and willing to lose everything in order to keep him” (*Histoire des saints et de la sainteté chrétienne* “[History of the Saints and of Christian Holiness”], Hachette X, p. 72. Trans. LG).

In the Measure of Love

I gratefully thank all those who have collaborated in the writing of this pastoral letter, especially those who have given a personal testimony. I conclude this letter with an excerpt from Bishop Gerard Dionne’s recent book, *Je suis votre frère* [“I am Your Brother”], page 104 ff (on celibacy): “Without being a sacrament, celibacy for the Lord totally conserves its value of witness and liberation. It is a gift of heaven made to the Church, and we must not risk depreciating it or losing it. Celibacy is not chosen only by members of religious communities, but also by a multitude of people who remain single, not always as a form of witness but for reasons of some political, social, or family commitment. If it is well integrated, this form of celibacy, too, is a sign to be appreciated accordingly, also.” Bishop Dionne then quotes Pope John Paul II: “Christian perfection finds its measure in charity, not in abstinence. No word of Christ furnishes an argument proving the inferiority of marriage or the superiority of virginity or celibacy. Marriage and abstinence are not opposed to one another, nor do they divide into two camps, with the perfect on one side, who practice abstinence, and the imperfect, less perfect than the first, who marry.”

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