



From a Bishop's Journal (629)

Pastoral Orientation Congress for a New Evangelisation (1)

Several wonderful events have occurred in our Church, and they seriously challenge us. The outstanding event of the twentieth century was certainly Vatican Council II (1962-1965), which helped the Church repeat anew and in words adapted to our times, who it was and what the mission entrusted to it by Christ Jesus was. Twenty-two years following this Council which revolutionised not only the Church but the whole world, the diocese of Edmundston celebrated its Synod (1987-1990) which would have repercussions throughout our Church: over 250 recommendations were made by the French Sector, and 150 by the English Sector. When I came to Edmundston in January, 1994, I tried to follow up on these four hundred recommendations. The Diocesan Synod had already set the tone: we had to pursue the course of the new evangelisation advocated by His Holiness Pope John Paul II. The pastoral sessions of 1998 and 1999 stressed the pastoral restructuring necessitated by new socio-religious situations in our milieu. Two main priorities came out: the formation of pastoral teams to take charge of our Christian communities, and the setting up of family- and parish-based catechetics. We set ourselves so many challenges, then! We picked them up together, and with courage. Several other recommendations could not be realised, for lack of appropriate economic resources. This was the cause of the diocesan financial campaign which was launched in the spring of 2003, to give us means to reach these objectives, especially in the areas of catechetics, youth and family ministry, pastoral agent formation, and help to parishes. Your response to this campaign was wonderful and full of generosity and solidarity.

Welcoming Love

In the coming weeks and months, I would like to tell you over and over again: "See the wonderful love God has shown us." That is why I urge you to often and personally meditate, with those in your family, and your co-parishioners on the great love which God the Father has shown us in making us His beloved children and for giving us the fruits of the Spirit. "The love of God has been poured into our hearts thanks to the Spirit who has been given to us." That is why I ask you to often evaluate in your life the welcome we must give to the divine love that has been shown us. How can we give thanks for all these benefits? We must personally and in community discover and rediscover all these gifts of God's love. It is then only that we shall be able to respond in love for all the love shown and acknowledged. That is why, after welcoming these gifts, I invite you to make the gift of yourselves. Love for love! How can we ensure that this gift of love is passed on to our world today and to those coming after us? This is the object of the following recommendations.

Gratitude

I am most grateful to the members of the Pastoral Orientation Congress Steering Committee for the New Evangelisation, for having the courage to consider these recommendations of the Edmundston Diocesan Synod, and those in the document *Paths to the Future*. I thank them for the many hours spent in preparing for such an event. They have always had before them that our Church is there to “build vibrant communities energised by youth.” They have always kept in mind that it was because of a common faith, hope and charity that Christians here are called to pick up today’s challenges in reaching the youth and the not-so-young, families, the elderly, the sick, and the needy, so that the Good News of Jesus be once again made known, welcomed, celebrated, and proclaimed. It is because of our baptism which made us members of the People of God, the Body of Christ and Temples of the Holy Spirit, that we are called to live this evangelisation.

Priestly, Prophetic, and Royal Functions

The *Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church* tells how the people of God shares in the three functions of Christ: “The People of God share in the priestly vocation of Christ because the baptized, by regeneration and the anointing of the Holy Spirit to offer spiritual sacrifice. It shares in his prophetic office, above all in the supernatural sense of faith that belongs to the whole People, when it unfailingly adheres to the faith, and when it deepens its understanding and becomes Christ’s witness in the midst of the world. It shares in the royal office of Christ by a life in keeping with its vocation to serve with Christ, King and Lord of the universe, who made himself the servant of all, especially the poor and the suffering” (No. 155). “The mission of the Church is to proclaim and establish among all the nations the Kingdom of God inaugurated by Jesus Christ. As the universal sacrament of salvation, the Church is the sign and the instrument of reconciliation and communion of all humankind with God and with all humankind” (No. 150 and 152).

New Evangelisation

The “password” bequeathed to us by Pope John Paul II is certainly a proclamation of the new evangelisation. As we begin the year 2006, I send you on your own mission: I urge you to respond to the Love that was shown to us, and this reminds me of Robert Lebel’s song: “Love for love! To the very gift of oneself, offering oneself to the fullest, is there any more beautiful ‘I love you’? Love for love, kindness for kindness, offering oneself to the fullest, so wounded are we by that love. No, it is not enough to be consumed by love, your heart could not contain it: it is a fire that bursts out and must spread outside. To believe and want what God wants and as He wants it, and nothing more. To see him, recognise him and love him, losing everything in order to become attached to the love of Jesus!” May you have a wonderful Congress!

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