



From A Bishop's Journal (647)

Joys and Sorrows in the Beloved Diocesan Church (3)

I want to continue sharing with you the joys and sorrows experienced, these past five years, so that we may all be in communion with one another.

1. The Kindness of People

One of the joys I experience and which, I am sure, many others do, is to live among basically good people. I experienced this kindness from the very day of my ordination as bishop. To those of my family who were asking where the bishop's residence was, the people were not satisfied with only giving directions on how to get there, but they would say: "Follow us, and we'll get you there." I have continuously felt this kindness during my many pastoral visits to parishes, religious communities, work places, and associations: the fellowship there is among the people, the faith-filled contacts and the great simplicity there exists among the clergy, the religious, and the laity, contacts with professionals, volunteers, and politicians, and contacts of the people of God with their bishop. What Saint Paul writes about charity, we can say about kindness: "Love is patient; love is kind. Love is not jealous, it does not put on airs, it is not snobbish. Love is never rude, it is not self-seeking. It is not prone to anger, neither does it brood over injuries. Love does not rejoice in what is wrong, but rejoices with the truth. There is no limit to love's forbearance, to its trust, its hope, its power to endure." This is the kindness I feel, first in the diocesan team: truly, the Gospel at work.

2. Preaching

A second joy that I want to mention is the quality of preaching that we have. And here we can tie this in with the daily kindnesses we experience. The constant reminder, in all simplicity, of the Word of God, the requirement of the twofold commandment of God: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and your neighbour as yourself," has fashioned the life of our people and helped them live as disciples of Jesus Christ. The Word, endlessly repeated by the priests, was also repeated in every home by parents and teachers.

3. Family-based Catechetics

A third joy of our Church has been the gradual implementation of the family- and parish-based catechetics programme. I am grateful to and admire all those who are part of one of the most

beautiful ministries there are, that of helping make each child a person who welcomes Jesus in the deepest reaches of his/her being.

4. Mass Media

A fourth joy of our Church is the participation of our media in promoting the Church's activities. The press, radio, newspapers, television, and the internet are a precious help to evangelisation.

5. The People's Piety

A fifth source of deep-felt joy is the great piety of the people, during religious celebrations. The people are pious, and very much so, very deeply so. There exists a special prayerful atmosphere, an atmosphere of recollection, and of extraordinary faith. We can find an example of this by attending the annual celebrations to the saint at Sainte-Anne-de-Madawaska and Saint Ann, at Maliseet: there is, there, an atmosphere we do not find elsewhere.

6. The People's Generosity

A sixth source of joy is the people's great generosity. We have only to think of the outstanding results of the diocese's major financial campaign: 4.1 million dollars were either given or pledged. We can also think of the Development and Peace campaigns, and of the many other such drives in our milieu. We are reminded of the thousands of dollars gathered annually for the past twenty-five years, by Parrainage Tiers-Monde [Third World Sponsorship Programme]. Then there are other drives by a number of Foundations, and the Chain of Friendship, at Christmas time.

7. Devotion to the Eucharist

A seventh source of joy is our people's devotion to the Eucharist. Our five Diocesan Eucharistic Congresses were a wonderful opportunity for us to grow together in the mystery of faith and of the Church. Still today, especially after the year consecrated to the Eucharist, there are in a few milieus hours of adoration and intensive periods of prayer. Nearly one thousand people are members of the Blessed Sacrament Association.

8. Devotion to Mary

An eighth source of joy is the strong devotion to the Virgin Mary, among our people. On the day of the consecration of Edmundston's first bishop, the Apostolic Delegate asserted that a people that has faith in Mary could not die off. So many *Aves* are prayed every day, in our diocesan Church! Most of the people do not go to sleep without first praying at least on *Hail, Mary*. And in homes, in homes for the elderly and in hospitals, many rosaries are prayed each day. The Virgin is with her people, she is always the "cause of our joy."

9. The Availability of Our Priests

A ninth source of joy is the exemplary availability of our priests. Many are those who would have been discouraged at the many changes happening in our Church and society. The priests have

responded to the challenge and have carried on their mission generously and in faith as they seek to adapt constantly to the requirements of pastoral ministry.

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