



From A Bishop's Journal (660)

"See How They Are Happy"

It was a great day in Edmundston, Sunday, August 6 as we celebrated the "Foire Brayonne" festival Mass. We welcomed the "Ark of the New Covenant" at the door of the cathedral. This Ark is a symbol of the 2008 International Eucharistic Congress which will take place in Québec City. On this same August 6 I had the joy of conferring the ministry of reader to our seminarian Jean-François Pelletier. What follows is an extract of the homily I gave, on the theme, "See how they are happy!"

A Wonderful Directive

On this feast of the Transfiguration of Jesus, the liturgy gives us such a beautiful Gospel passage! We could well exclaim with Peter: "Lord, how good it is for us to be here!" And this wonderful statement from the Father: "This is my Son, my beloved. Listen to him." It is also such a great promise made to us his disciples, that we, too, shall be transfigured, one day. We already share through baptism in the great mystery of the Resurrection. The day will come when our own bodies will be transfigured like Christ's was. We who believe in Christ's resurrection know that we, too, are promised the same glory. This, my brothers and sisters, is a great joy for us, the source of our happiness. It was this joy, this happiness that came over the Apostles who witnessed the Transfiguration. "I would like the people who see how you live exclaim: 'See how they love one another, see how they are happy!'" (Robert Lebel)

Source of Contagion

In the Church's first communities it was this joy, this happiness that became a "source of contagion." By getting closer to Jesus, by being close to him and living at the same rhythm as Jesus, the Apostles experienced deeply the bonds of life and joy that united Jesus to his Father. What made Jesus' joy was to be always in the presence of his Father who is full of goodness and kindness, a merciful and understanding Father, a Father ever watchful over all humans, that they may have life, and life to the full. This was what the Apostles were able to see in the transfigured face of Jesus. It was a glimpse at the intense life that was unfolding in the heart of Jesus. The Father repeats the words spoken at His Son's baptism: "This is my Son, my beloved." It is such a joy to share this closeness with Jesus, the intimate life of the Blessed Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Bearerers of Joy

It is certainly the joy expressed that is the strongest force of attraction in our lives. Governments could well spend more and more fabulous sums to promote tourism, but if the visitors do not come across happy people, these fabulous sums serve no purpose. When the Foire Brayonne is promoted and we see the “Brayon” people happy, full of life and fellowship, we all get caught up in the wish to join in such an event and to meet these people. Isn’t it happiness that motivates us, in life? Isn’t it happiness that we look for, day after day? I would like to ask you to be bearers of happiness in your own milieu. And the best way to share this joy is to listen to the Father’s declaration: “This is my Son, my beloved. Listen to him.” There is no surer way to happiness than this. Jesus who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life has shown us the way of the Beatitudes. By following Jesus closely along the way of kindness and compassion, of justice and truth, and by being peacemakers more and more, we shall experience lasting happiness, a joy that no one can take from us. By building communities of life and friendship and by helping make them more beautiful and attractive, we shall deserve to be called sons and daughters of God.

Serving the Word

It is this happiness that inhabits today the heart of our seminarian Jean-François Pelletier who has asked to be instituted reader. Proclaiming the Word of the Lord, you know, can be done in many different ways, from simple dialogue to a common search of the Gospel requirements, from catechesis which aims at nourishing the faith to sacramental initiation with parents and children, from the proclamation of Jesus to those who do not know him, to proclamation of the Word in the liturgical assembly. Bishops, priests, and deacons, are the first people responsible for this proclamation of the Word, but they need other Christians to help them exercise this responsibility. Dear Jean-François, I give to your care today this service of faith which is rooted in the Word of God. May our brothers and sisters, thanks to you, get a better understanding of the Father and of Jesus, the one He sent, and attain everlasting life.

Being Taught by the Word

By passing on the Word of God to others, receive it yourself, Jean-François, and let the Holy Spirit teach you; meditate the Word with care so that you may daily receive joy and strength. In this way, your entire life will testify to the fact that Jesus Christ is our Saviour. He is truly the one whom the Father urges us to listen to. Let us pray God our Father for Jean-François whom He calls to the service of His Word. “Lord God, source of all goodness and light, you sent your only Son, the Word of life, to reveal to mankind the mystery of your love. Bless Jean-François who has been chosen for the ministry of reader. Grant that as he meditates constantly on your word he may grow in its wisdom and faithfully proclaim it to your people. ‘Jean-François, take this book of holy Scripture and be faithful in handing on the word of God, so that it may grow strong in the hearts of His people.’”

+ François Thibodeau ym

+ François Thibodeau, C.J.M.
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