



From A Bishop's Journal (670)

Canadian Bishops' Annual Meeting

Canada's Catholic bishops met in Cornwall, Ontario from October 16 to 20 for their annual meeting. Over 80 bishops were present. There were over 30 items on the agenda; I would like to draw your attention to four of them: the President's report, the 2008 International Eucharistic Congress, Cardinal M^cCarrick's conference, and the 40th anniversary of Development and Peace.

An Impressive Evaluation

When we look at everything that took place during the 2005-2006 pastoral year, we can say that there has been no lazying around, at the diocesan, regional conference, episcopal commission, and conference services levels. We only have to think of the work occasioned by the World Synod on the Eucharist, the restructuring of the Canadian northern dioceses, and the bishops' involvement on the national and international scenes: the redefinition of marriage, the law on euthanasia and assisted suicide, the message to facilitate immigration and the protection of refugees, preparing for the *ad limina* visits, meetings with the Holy Father and his close collaborators, the defence of human rights, and interventions on the wars in the Middle East, the Sudan, Irak, and Afghanistan. The Conference president, Archbishop André Gaumond echoed Benedict XVI, reminding us that the Church's relation with the world lies in rekindling the spiritual forces without which justice can neither assert itself nor develop.

2008 Eucharistic Congress

Cardinal Marc Ouellet and his collaborators introduced a basic theological document for the 49th International Eucharistic Congress which will be held from June 15 to 22, 2008. The Holy Eucharist is a gift of God, it is the memorial of the paschal mystery, the new covenant. The Eucharist builds the Church, the sacrament of salvation. The Eucharist is the life of Christ in us. It is given to us to build peace through justice and charity. We must be witnesses of the Eucharist in the midst of the world, hence the call to holiness to all the baptised, in the family, the consecrated life, and society.

Cardinal Ouellet's Visit

Cardinal Marc Ouellet, archbishop of Québec and Primate of Canada, has confirmed to me that, unless there are unforeseen circumstances, he will come to Edmundston on Thursday, May 3, 2007. He will be joining the priests of the diocese at the Diocesan Centre during their annual retreat,

around the theme of the Eucharist. The priests of the Bathurst and Moncton dioceses are invited to attend. On the evening of May 3, the Cardinal will preside the mass in the cathedral at Edmundston. All the faithful are invited to attend. No cardinal has visited our diocese in over forty years! Coming shortly after the close of the World Synod on the Eucharist, it will be good to thank the Lord for leaving us so many signs of his presence among us. "I am with you always, to the end of time." The presence of the Eucharistic Christ can change the way we view our world today and our personal and community history. During the Eucharistic celebrations held in Cornwall, we could sense that the Eucharist is really the source and the summit of the life of the Church, the source and the summit of our episcopal ministry.

The Church's Social Doctrine

We were privileged to have among us the archbishop emeritus of Washington, D.C., Cardinal Theodore M^cCarrick, chairman of the United States Episcopal Commission on questions dealing with political commitment, human rights, and life in the Church. How can a Catholic be faithful to the Church's teaching and respond to the many expectations of his constituency composed of believers or unbelievers, Christians, Jews, Moslems, and others? For Cardinal McCarrick, every bishop's first pastoral duty is to listen to the men and women involved in politics. Take time to listen to them and dialogue with them. Several among them are Catholic but have not attended non-confessional institutions. A number of organisations have disappeared, and the Church is hardly present in the media, any more. We must take the time to listen and to explain the main points of the Church's teaching, especially regarding the right to life and human rights (housing, food, education, environment, etc.). We must weigh with them the consequences of certain decisions, whether it be about war in the Middle East, questions of the national debt, or air pollution. Cardinal M^cCarrick noted that Pope Benedict XVI stresses the Church's three fundamental ministries: proclaiming the Word, celebrating the sacraments, and exercising charity.

Development and Peace

The year 2007 will mark the 40th anniversary of the founding of the Canadian Catholic Organisation of Development and Peace, by the Canadian bishops. Every diocese and parish will have the opportunity to recall that our faith calls us to respond to the needs of our most dispossessed brothers and sisters, and to transform the structures and policies that victimize so many. It will also be an opportunity to recall the teachings of Paul VI, John Paul II, and Benedict XVI. We must give thanks together for the great generosity of the Catholics in our milieus, and rekindle this movement of faith and justice.

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