



## **From A Bishop's Journal (710)**

### **“A Great Sign Appeared in the Sky”**

**F**ollowing the September 11, 2001 terrorist break-out all over the world I asked the people of the diocese of Edmundston to pray more fervently for peace in the world. I especially asked the people of the parish of Notre-Dame-de-la-Paix of Saint-Martin-de-Restigouche to pray that we all be graced with the gift of peace. The Virgin Mary assumed into heaven can be, for us of the third millennium, a sign of this peace we pray for daily. Virgin of the Assumption, direct our gaze to Him who wants to give us peace.

#### **“Peace on Earth”**

On Christmas night, Mary was one of the first to hear the heavenly hymn of the angels: “Peace on earth, good will to men.” Mary, who kept everything in her heart, never forgot this hymn of peace which glorifies God and warms the human heart. Throughout all the difficulties of her Son’s life, Mary never forgot the endless joy that had been promised. Even at the foot of the cross and despite the many persecutions of the Church of her Son, she maintained in her whole being the divine promise that only God could accomplish.

#### **Rejoice, O Gracious One**

It is not surprising that the Church, in the liturgy in her honour, beaks out in thanksgiving: “Rejoice, O gracious one! Emmanuel has found a place in your shining home. Through you, glory has broken out for the salvation of our race. Ark of the covenant, rejoice! On you rests the presence of God hidden in the cloud. Through you, light shines on the path through the desert where man travels. Faithful Virgin, rejoice! In the shadows where God calls you, your faith shines so brightly that you reflect on our crosses the peace of Christ and his light. Queen of angels, rejoice! Already the Church in you contemplates the transfigured creation: Give us the joy of sharing in the exaltation of your praise.”

#### **A Singular Mission**

The Fathers of Vatican Council II probably wrote the most beautiful words we can read on the life and mission of the Virgin Mary. In the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, the Council Fathers wrote the following: “The predestination of the Virgin Mary as Mother of God was associated with the incarnation of the divine word: in the designs of divine Providence she was the gracious mother

of the divine Redeemer here on earth, and above all others and in a singular way the generous associate and humble handmaid of the Lord. She conceived, gave birth to, and nourished Christ, she presented him to the Father in the temple, shared his sufferings as he died on the cross. Thus, in a very special way she cooperated by her obedience, faith, hope and burning charity in the work of the Saviour in restoring supernatural life to souls. For this reason she is a mother to us in the order of grace.”

### **Unaccomplished Mission**

The conciliar Fathers continue: “The motherhood of Mary in the order of grace continues without interruption from the consent which she loyally gave at the Annunciation and which she sustained without wavering beneath the cross, until the eternal consummation of all the elect. Taken up to heaven, she did not lay aside this saving office but by her manifold intercession continues to procure for us the gifts of eternal salvation. By her motherly love she cares for her Son’s sisters and brothers who still journey on earth surrounded by dangers and difficulties, until they are led into their blessed home. Therefore the blessed Virgin is invoked in the Church under the titles of advocate, helper, benefactress, and mediatrix. This, however, is understood in such a way that it neither takes away anything from, nor adds anything to, the dignity and efficacy of Christ the one Mediator. No creature can ever be counted along with the Incarnate Word and Redeemer.”

### **“*Sub Tuum Praesidium*”**

So many times at home, in the minor and major seminary, and in my priestly and bishop’s life I have recited this centuries-old prayer of the Church, the *Sub tuum*, in which we profess our undying trust in the Virgin Mary: “In the shadow of your mercy we take refuge, Holy Mother of God. Do not reject our prayers when we are troubled, but deliver us always from danger, glorious and blessed Virgin.” Couldn’t this prayer be a daily sign to us, when we hear of war and countless deaths?

### **A Living Monstrance**

To show the bond existing between the Virgin Mary and Jesus in the Eucharist we have given her the title of “monstrance” [“bearer of the host”]. Words, however, are too poor to describe these exceptional bonds between Jesus in the Eucharist and the Virgin Mary. In these times of renewal of Eucharistic worship, it is important to give its proper place in our lives to the great mystery of faith which is not at all foreign to the feast of the Assumption, because Jesus himself revealed that whoever eats his flesh and drinks his blood would have eternal life and would be raised up on the last day. The glorification which the Virgin Mary has already experienced through her Assumption is also promised to us, in the Eucharistic mystery. Mary is not just a simple monstrance, an instrument to show us Jesus: it for her entire life, yesterday and today, that she gives us her Son, Jesus.

### **“*Pange Lingua...*”**

The popular and celebrated hymn that we used to sing on Corpus Christi or at Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament gives us a glimpse of this mystery of our faith: “Let us celebrate the divine mystery of the Body that reigns in glory, the mystery of the precious Blood. It was to redeem the world and lead us to victory that our king offers them to God. He gives himself, he is born for us from

an immaculate Virgin, and lives with man. He scatters his word on earth, and his stay among us is crowned with a miracle of light. To celebrate Easter night in observance of the Law, he took his place at table with his brothers; at the end of the ritual meal, with his hands he gave himself as nourishment to the Twelve. Word made flesh, by his words he makes his flesh true bread and his blood true drink. If nothing appears to our senses, faith alone is enough to reassure the sincere heart. Let us kneel and worship such a great mystery. May the old Covenant give place to the new, and let faith take us where the senses cannot go.”

### **Signs on Earth**

The sign of Mary’s Assumption into heaven is wonderful. Wonderful shall we always be, through the charity that binds us together, the hope that stimulates us, the trust we have in the future, and the faith that reveals to us such great wonders. “Whoever eats my body and drinks my blood,” says Jesus the Son of Mary, “has eternal life, and I shall raise him up on the last day.”

*+ François Thibodeau*

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