



From A Bishop's Journal (711)

Dare... Seek the Kingdom!

The theme of the Foire Brayonne festival in Edmundston, this year, was to be daring, to be bold. Dare... It is the same with the Christian faith: to dare recognise the Risen Lord who is here in our midst, to dare recognise his presence in our lives, among our brothers and sisters, in his Word, his Eucharist, to dare seek, first, God's kingdom of justice. Following are excerpts of the homily I delivered at the 2007 festival Mass.

Courage and Daring

It was a daring and courageous thing for Jesus to come into the world to build the Kingdom of God, a kingdom of justice and peace, a kingdom of life and holiness, a kingdom of fellowship and solidarity. And he associates us to himself in this wonderful mission of building the Kingdom of God. Robert Lebel puts it this way, in one of his songs: "Seek first the Kingdom and the justice of God. Seek first the Kingdom, and the rest will be given to you." As bishop of Edmundston I dare ask you to continue building up the Kingdom of God. We shall no longer hear these words: "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity!" But everything we shall have experienced will be an important element of the Kingdom of God. Even a glass of water given in Jesus' name will have an eternal reward. Even all the bottles of water we distribute at the Fair will take on a special flavour and have an eternal value. "Look at the birds in the sky: they neither sow nor reap, but my Father gives grain as well as honey. Seek first the Kingdom and the justice of God, and the rest will be given to you."

Daily Routine

This does not mean that henceforth everything will be easy for you, that work will no longer be routine, that very often we shall no longer think that we have worked in vain. I have even met a Sister who worked at making hosts. She said: "Is there anything more boring than making hosts? You put in flour without yeast and mix it with water, you spread the mixture, and you bake it. It's always the same gestures and the same routine. Is there anything more boring than always going through the same motions? However, when you think about what this bread is to become, everything changes and incites you to work for the Kingdom of God." I have been told that on a construction site a worker kept on complaining about the job he had been given, carrying stones. Another worker carried on joyfully, thinking about the money he was making and how it was helping the welfare of

his family. A third worker said that he was enchanted with his job as he helped build a cathedral. “Look at the flowers in the fields, they do not work, they do not spin... but your heavenly Father clothes them in the richest attire. Seek first the Kingdom of God, and all these things will be given you besides.”

A Scandal

The sacred writer known as Ecclesiastes would be very much at ease in our world today. “Here is a man who has laboured with wisdom and knowledge and skill, and to another, who has not laboured over it, he must leave his property. This also is vanity and a great misfortune. For what profit comes to a man from all the toil and anxiety of heart with which he has laboured under the sun? All his days sorrow and grief are his occupation; even at night his mind is not at rest. This also is vanity.” As we read the death notices in the newspaper or consider the overwork of people who die prematurely, we can have the same comments. And it even happens to those who work around us – even to priests and bishops – they have all kinds of plans and a thousand worries about tomorrow. However, “Why fill your barns with empty and useless treasure, hoping that they will be of use sometime, when all they will do is rust? Seek first the Kingdom and justice of God. Seek first the Kingdom, and everything else will be given to you.”

The Realities from Above

With daring and honesty, Saint Paul writes: “You have risen with Christ. Seek the realities from above where Christ is, seated at the Father’s right hand. Reach for the realities from above and not for those of the earth. In fact, you have died with Christ, and your life is hidden with him in God. When Christ your life will appear, you shall appear with him in glory.” What beautiful guidelines! We should really rejoice at all those who have followed this advice, after Saint Paul and after the saints throughout the ages. There are so many treasures in our midst, in our families, our parishes, and in our lives: saints are still in style and, I am sure, there are many more today than before. Their lives are hidden with Christ in God. There are such treasures of goodness and charity in our own milieu. So many treasures of holiness and truth can be found among the elderly and the youth, and among workers and those who serve us day after day. Robert Lebel sings: “You are worth more than the birds, and much more than the flowers. God watches over all those who love Him, and they lack nothing. Seek first the Kingdom and the justice of God, and everything else will be given to you.”

100 Years of Scouting

You, too, brothers and sisters, seek first the Kingdom and the justice of God. Your whole law can contribute to boldly building up this kingdom of peace and fellowship which your founder wanted to inaugurate 100 years ago. “The scout’s honour is in deserving trust. The scout is loyal to his country, his parents, his leaders and his subordinates. The scout is made to serve and save his neighbour. The scout is everyone’s friend and the brother of every other scout. The scout is courteous and kind. The scout sees God’s work in nature: he loves plants and animals. The scout obeys without word and does nothing half-way. The scout smiles and sings in difficulties. The scout is thrifty and takes care of what belongs to others. The scout is pure in thought, word, and deed.” Members of the great Scout family, your founder had a grand view of things. He sought in his day the realities from

above. He built solidly. He did not take for himself. He was rich for God. Brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ, let us together work at building the Kingdom, let us seek justice with boldness!

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08-22-07