



From A Bishop's Journal (747)

Nearing Mother's Day

Even though we have been aggressively pursued, these past few weeks, to buy or do something for Mother's Day on May 11, my feelings for mothers are still of admiration and gratitude.

“Like the Apple of Your Eyes”

In his latest CD album *Tenir parole* (“Keeping my Word”), songwriter-priest Robert Lebel gives us a beautiful gift, the song *Comme la prunelle de tes yeux* (“Like the Apple of Your Eyes”). Every human being is loved by God. The child as well as its mother are unique, in God's eyes. “Every child deserves to be loved. Every child has a right to affection. Every child is a cherished treasure, a garden blooming with a thousand promises! Every child deserves to be loved because God inhabits his weakness. All that is needed is a kindly look, to love the child even in its awkward ways. May the apple of your eyes and the love that is in you be what is most precious... a reflection of the love of God!” It is so good to hear these words when a child is born, as well as when it is growing. And I am certain that Robert Lebel would allow me to offer these words of his song to every mother and grandmother. My mind goes back to Mother who was only 44 when she died, while Grandmother coasted on until the ripe old age of 101... Such sacred treasures! “Many people are hurt forever, in these days of violence... May your voice be a song of love, and your arms be providence! May perfume flow from your heart, a perfume with a Gospel fragrance, full of forgiveness and gentleness, infinite kindness and indescribable joy.” I wish I could sing these words to my grand-niece who has just been born, and to my grand-nephew who is expected any time now! Thank you, Robert, for this gift of your song! It is such a marvel, that the Lord guards us like the apple of his eyes!

Impressive Images

In the vocation story that I wrote in my book, *Au jardin de Dieu, reconnaissons ses appels* (“In the Garden of God, let us Acknowledge His Calls”), I recalled how I have felt the love of the Lord throughout my life, even in times of difficulty, and I often asked myself: “Is it really true that the love of God is from age to age,” especially when one loses one's mother when one is barely twelve years old? I have very few photos of my youth, but once in a while and not out of nostalgia but rather as an expression of gratitude, I have a few copies developed. This is how I chose two family pictures, one dating back to August 9, 1951, and the other, to May 9, 1965... If a picture is worth a thousand

words, then two of them must be well worth many thousands. I could have captioned the first photo “The Thibodeau family’s Good Friday.” It was taken just a few minutes before Mother’s funeral. There we are, the eleven of us surviving children, all dressed in mourning, and Father holding the baby in his arms. We were leaving for church, and it too was draped in black according to the custom of the day. A few banners hanging from the church’s columns had words to the effect that Jesus is resurrection and life, and that whoever believes in him will have life everlasting. The second photo was taken the day after my ordination to the priesthood at Saint-Odilon, Québec, my native parish. This picture could be captioned “The Thibodeau family’s Easter Day.” What a contrast between the two photos! The “Eleven” are there with Dad, along with the young brothers- and sisters-in-law. And that day just happened to be Mothers Day, 1965! The words of Robert Lebel would have been appropriate to the situation: “Tell them again that Jesus is the Life! Show them that Jesus is the Path! Place their hearts in the heart of Mary. Love them... to your final breath!” At this my first solemn Mass I asked the Lord for the gift of fidelity: fidelity to Jesus and his Church, and fidelity to all those that the Lord would entrust to my care.

A Challenging Feast

Just as we can deplore the commercialisation of Christmas, we can do the same for Mothers Day. However, I believe that while we can be “critical” of the commercial aims of all the publicity, we can thank the store managers. Religious and commercial calendars do not often strike the same note – especially in the Lenten season! Still, I believe that despite their secular and neutral trappings, commercial calendars can urge us to give light and warmth to most of the festivities publicised. We cannot ask the merchants to be 100% religious educators or liturgists, but we ourselves should bring all of our religious convictions to these celebrations. Shopping centres can guide us along terrific paths to help us explain the true marvel of Easter which is life given us to the fullest. They can show us the greatness of our fathers and mothers, encourage our admiration for them, help us awaken to the beauty of “lovers,” and marvel at each season.

Harbinger of Springtime

Just as I did last fall, I want to quote Father Benoît Lacroix, O.P. and his poetic singing the “Celebration of the Seasons” (*Célébration des saisons*): he invites us to celebrate spring. This Mothers Day, through the lives that they continue to bring forth, mothers are a constant image of what spring is about. “We announce the spring and its buds, its leaves, its gardens, its alleluias, its flowers, the overflowing of its waters, its branches and its plants. Let us celebrate spring and its promises and realisations, its youth, its risks and its follies... Let us try to learn by signs and symbols the great enchantment of spring, what it is, and what it offers us. More and better than any of the other seasons, spring and especially the month of May – however unpredictable it is – represent hope at its best, fullness at its highest point. Spring is the adolescence and youth of the seasons, the budding assurance after the great white winter. With all the birds of this country, the wrens, robins, pigeons and all the rest; with all that lives and regains life under our eyes, in the ground and under water; with all the farmers, gardeners, and landscape artists; with the mothers and housekeepers in our kitchens and store rooms who are hard at work with spring cleaning; with all the city dwellers who will go to the park to sit and relax as they greet the spring and smell the lilacs; with the handicapped at their windows or on their porches who rejoice at the song of the birds that break the

monotony of their long days; with all of creation, let us sing the praises of the season that was lost and has been found! Let us celebrate spring, the abundance of life! Let us celebrate the green spring and resurrected nature!” And during this month of May, let us celebrate Mary, our Mother.

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