



From A Bishop's Journal (751)

A Realistic Profession of Faith

On May 18 of this year I was privileged to preside the Université de Moncton's Edmundston Campus Graduation Mass. The following are excerpts of the homily I gave, on the occasion.

Reasonable Accommodations

I first want to congratulate you for coming together to celebrate this graduation Mass in thanksgiving to God for the years you are crowning, and to offer to the Lord the years to come. This is a realistic profession of faith, a revelation of your selves. I offer you the heartfelt congratulations of the Church of Edmundston and in my own name, on this memorable day of graduation. This weekend, when the whole Church celebrates God in the unfathomable mystery of the Blessed Trinity, let us ask him to make himself known to each one of us so that we may better know, recognise and love Him above all else.

A Nagging Question

For weeks on end, last fall, we could watch on TV the debates of the Québec Commission on Reasonable Accommodations regarding culture and religion: some would do away with religion altogether, while others wanted to relegate it to the private sphere. This kind of debate probably was boring to you and you simply tuned out. However, sooner or later these questions come back to us and we must "show our true colours," as we commonly say. This is why I invite you to participate in our graduation Eucharist which is not only a courageous profession of faith, but a realistic one, despite its being low-key.

A Fiery Apostle

In his Letter to the Romans Saint Paul does not look too kindly on those who waver in giving God His due. He writes: "The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against the irreligious and perverse spirit of men who, in this perversity of theirs, hinder the truth. In fact, whatever can be known about God is clear to them; He himself made it so. Since the creation of the world, invisible realities, God's eternal power and divinity, have become visible, recognised through the things He has made. Therefore these men are inexcusable. They certainly had knowledge of God, yet they did not glorify Him as God or give Him thanks; they showed themselves to be irresponsible through speculating to no purpose, and their senseless hearts were darkened. They claimed to be wise, but turned into fools instead; they exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images representing mortal man, birds, beasts, and snakes.... These men exchanged the truth of God for a lie and worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator – blessed be He forever!" Paul then continues for a few chapters more in the same vein, until he comes to his own profession of love for God.

Profession of Love

“We know that God makes all things work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to His discernment... What shall we say after that? If God is for us, who can be against us? Is it possible that He who did not spare his own Son but handed him over for the sake of us all will not grant us all things besides? Who shall bring charges against them?... for I am certain that neither death nor life, neither angels nor principalities, neither the present nor the future, nor powers, neither height nor depth nor any other creature, will separate us from the love of God that comes to us from Christ Jesus, our Lord.”

There Is No life without Love

There is a verse in the Book of Wisdom that challenges me strongly, a verse we could recall in times of trial, suffering, and mourning: “Lord, you love all that exists, and you have no repulsion for any of your works because you would have not created what you hate. Besides, how could it have subsisted without your will? How could it have maintained existence if you had not willed it? But you spare all beings because they are yours, master and lover of life whose breath animates all creation.” This beautiful text should be inscribed in our hearts as well as on the tallest billboards.

God is interested in your studies and success

God loves you so much that He is interested in the results of your research and your papers. If it is obvious that He wishes that you all develop to the greatest degree possible, it is obvious that He desires you to develop fully. How could a father worthy of the name accept the physical, intellectual or moral under-development of his children? The greatness of every person is to be unique. God the Father wishes that each person develop his or her gifts to the fullest. In this way intellectual cultural differences should be tied to differences in gifts and not, among others, to possibilities of enriching oneself. Society as a whole must allow everyone to develop according to their gifts and talents in order to develop their God-given gifts. In the same way, the Father’s gifts to His children come with a responsibility to make them fruitful. This is an absolute requirement, and we shall answer to God for the way we have used these gifts.

A Humble Profession of Faith

I mentioned your profession of faith, when I came to celebrate this graduation Mass with you. I hope that above any ceremony you will express your admiration and thanksgiving for all that the Lord places before you every day. May you say “thank you” for all of creation around us, for the mountains, the hills and the rivers. May you be able to express in your own way your appreciation for all those who have walked by your side and are still doing so, to support and encourage you. It is important, also, that your spiritual growth be as strong as your intellectual, physical, or social development. You who have been baptised and confirmed, your mission is far from finished, in fact, it is hardly started! Share with conviction, courage, faith, and hope in building up the Kingdom of God, a Kingdom that respects the rights of men and women today, and respectful of the rights of God. May throughout your life you contribute to the task of establishing a world of justice, peace, and truth, a kingdom of life, holiness, and love.

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