



From A Bishop's Journal (755)

A Taste for the Eucharist (1)

On May 11, 2008 I published my fifteenth pastoral letter for Pentecost. This year, I want to reflect with you on the wonder day of one's First Communion, and on Eucharistic adoration. My letter is titled "A Taste for the Eucharist."

May 19, 1946

"Reaching back to my earliest memories of what I experienced in my family in Saint-Odilon, Québec, it is certainly the daily family prayer that has marked me the most, and getting ready for church, the connection between our lives of faith and our mutual relationships, but especially the taste for the Eucharist which our parents instilled in us. Our lives of faith had to be reflected in our daily behaviour. The love we had received together in the sacrament of forgiveness and in the Eucharist had to be applied to our actions and expressions of love, forgiveness, and helping one another. I remember with gratitude the day of May 19, 1946 when for the first time I received the holy Eucharist. We had to go by horse and buggy five kilometres, to the parish church, for the event. We had gotten up around five in the morning so as to be on time for the 6:15 Mass. It was such a joy to welcome into my child's heart this Jesus who wanted to come and live in me!... I invite you very simply to reach back into your own memories to your First Communion and consider what impact it has had on your lives and the lives of your families."

Already Ten Years...

I spoke those words on June 14, 1998 in the church at Clair in the Upper Madawaska, at the Third Diocesan Eucharistic Congress in preparation for the Jubilee Year 2000. The theme of the Congress was on the Eucharist, the family, and the Day of the Lord. Ten years after this extraordinary event in our Church I ask you, my dear friends, how you go about giving your children and grandchildren, your friends and neighbours, a taste for the Eucharist, and how it is good for us to experience together Eucharistic adoration. I know that it is difficult to compare learning about a sacrament with adapting oneself to a new milieu, but it appears to me that each Christian can contribute to disclosing the grandeur of the sacrament of the Eucharist through his or her behaviour, words, and silences.

Why Do This on Pentecost?

Several reasons lead me to publish today this fifteenth pastoral letter for Pentecost, but mainly because the Holy Spirit is the one who helps all people everywhere and throughout history recall “the memory of Jesus.” It is the Spirit who helps us remember everything that the Lord said and accomplished. In remembering all the actions and words of Jesus, we are drawn closer to him and our love of him deepens. By giving to the disciples of Jesus his greatest gifts – especially the gift of wisdom – the Holy Spirit gives us the “taste” for Jesus. When in return parents, pastors and educators, marked as they are by the Holy Spirit, repeat to those in their care these words and gestures of Jesus, they contribute to keeping alive the memory of our beloved Saviour. When together they contemplate Jesus in his Eucharist, they contribute to giving humankind a taste for Jesus. I thank my father and mother, my teachers and pastors for having shown me a little bit of the love that Jesus has for me and for everyone. “You are precious to me and I love you.” These words addressed to the Suffering Servant and to the Chosen People are also addressed to every person today, especially to every child who answers the call of Jesus to welcome the Bread of life.

The 49th International Eucharistic Congress

I publish this letter because in a few days we shall be celebrating the 49th International Eucharistic Congress. When we recall how the first international eucharistic congresses began, we cannot but thank the Holy Spirit for having raised in his Church – especially in France – men and women who discovered the greatness of the Eucharist and who shared with others their “taste” for adoration. We remember Émilie Tamisier (1834-1910), Father Antoine Chevrier (1826-1879), Saint Peter Julian Eymard (1811-1868), the founder of two communities, the Blessed Sacrament Fathers and the Sisters Servants of the Blessed Sacrament. A whole active spiritual current directed to the person of Christ present in the host developed in several Christian communities. In 1873, a number of French politicians even solemnly consecrated France to the Sacred Heart, before the exposed Blessed Sacrament. I was still quite young when I saw for the first time our mayor perform a similar gesture, on the feast of Christ the King. Thanks to the prayers and initiative of Émilie Tamisier; thanks to Bishop Gaspard Mermillod (1824-1891), the bishop of Lausanne and Geneva, Switzerland, and to Pope Leo XIII (1810-1903), the first international Eucharistic congress was held at Lille, France in 1881, with 360 delegates and 3,000 men in the procession! The first congress held outside Europe was in Montreal, in 1910. Like all other Eucharistic activities, national and international congresses, forty-hours devotions or days of adoration, the object of these gatherings is to give us “a taste for the Eucharist,” and it is the Holy Spirit who is at the root of such initiatives.

Through the Years

My Pentecost 2008 pastoral letter is a mark of special gratitude to all my brothers and sisters of the Church of Edmundston who through the years and seasons have been preparing with an impassioned faith and boundless generosity, our little ones to receive for the first time the beautiful sacrament of the Eucharist, and to welcome in their eager hearts the one whom Pope Saint Pius X proclaimed the Friend of children and youth. This letter is also a heartfelt thank you to my brothers and sisters, the adorers of today. My letter is therefore a thanksgiving to the Holy Spirit without whom there could be no Eucharist, in the Church. Without him we would be unable to recall the words, attitudes and

gestures of Jesus; there could be no *epiclesis* (“remembrance” or “calling to mind”), no mass, no Eucharist; and without him, today we would have no parents, educators or pastors to present this admirable sacrament to the people.

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+ François Thibodeau, C.J.M.
Bishop of Edmundston

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