



From A Bishop's Journal (761)

**A Promising Future
through the Assumption of the Virgin Mary**

The August 15 liturgy invites us to celebrate “the Assumption of the Virgin Mary, patron of the Acadians.” However, we must not forget that several other countries, including France, hold dear the feast of Mary’s Assumption. However, why is it that the Acadians chose this particular feast than any other Marian celebration?

Why the Assumption?

It wasn’t without meaning that the Acadians chose the feast of the Assumption for their national holiday. Visionaries that they are, the Acadians saw in Mary not only what was to become of the Acadian nation, but everything that would happen to the people of God on its long trek through history. After a life of indescribable sorrow and suffering, Mary was raised to the glory of the heavens. Her exile in Egypt was not in vain. She did not follow her Son Jesus to the cross in vain. It was not in vain that she followed the apostles in their difficult ministry to the Jews and the pagans. The Assumption is not a mere statue that we still see on church facades and on the grounds of our public institutions. She is a living person who was glorified in her humility and who was in solidarity with the people of God. The Acadian people have always looked on her as their beloved mother who was with them in the worst trials of the Acadian genocide, who was with them on their diaspora both American and European, who returned with them to their place of origin, and who is still there in the people’s struggle for survival. “A nation in love with Mary cannot die,” said the Apostolic Delegate at the consecration of the first bishop of Edmundston, on August 15, 1945. In this diocese of Edmundston, fully one-third of the parishes are dedicated to the Virgin Mary, and the diocese itself is dedicated to the Immaculate Conception. I hasten to add that two parishes – one Anglophone and the other Francophone – are dedicated to the Assumption of Mary. In the very heart of Acadia is the National Monument dedicated to Our Lady of the Assumption. The diocese of Moncton and its cathedral are dedicated to the Assumption, and 17 of its 52 parishes are dedicated to the Virgin Mary. Then there are the Acadian religious congregations dedicated to Mary, the Filles de Marie-de-l’Assomption and the religious of Notre-Dame-du-Sacré-Cœur; there are also the Little Sisters of the Holy Family, a congregation founded in Memramcook by Blessed Léonie Paradis. And we must not forget the religious congregations of men and women who have worked in our diocese.

When I Grow Up...

It is possible to compare the aspirations of the Acadian people to children and youth who are awestruck – even secretly – at the dignity and high-mindedness of their parents. “When I grow up I hope to have their strength of character! How I wish to have their perseverance! I so wish to have their faith and hope, their spirit of service and sense of welcome! I wish I have the same kindness!” Any comparison is awkward because it is not only children who can have admiration. Adults, too, can have the same feelings about their children and dream of all the great things for them: freedom from want and pain, freedom from oppression, always be guided by the star of life. Through her assumption, Mary stepped over the threshold of space and time and became, after the resurrected Jesus, the first woman to be so glorified, the first human being to be freed from all earthly constraints. No more sobbing and crying, no more distress and suffering, no more persecutions and adversity of all kinds, and freedom even from death. Mary who is called *Stella Maris* is like a ray of sunshine rising over the sea. Mary is the mother who draws us to her and leads us to her Son Jesus. She who experienced the human condition knows about our deepest aspirations she can lead us with loving concern along life’s often rocky road. She can even give hope and encouragement to the most tormented, desperate, and discouraged. How could Mary, who stood at the foot of the cross by her Son, not stand by her children who cry to her in distress? How could Mary, who prayed with the apostles after the resurrection of her Son Jesus, not be with us in our daily personal and community prayer?

To You, This New Pastoral Year!

For the fifteenth time in my episcopal ministry, after prayer and consultation, I have appointed or confirmed in their tasks those who hold some responsibility in the diocesan Church: over one hundred people, priest, religious, and lay people have thus been made the bishop’s special collaborators. Since 1994 the mandate given to them take effect August 15; this is both a beginning and an end, a beginning because August 15 marks their taking over their new function, but also an end because the Virgin of the Assumption shows us the fullness of all evangelisation, the glorification of each of our brothers and sisters. The Lord who has wanted us to have life in abundance shows us in Mary the fullness to which he calls us.

Meeting Jesus on the Road

A happy coincidence, the feast of the Assumption this year will mark the beginning of a new pastoral priority for the diocese of Edmundston: *Meeting Jesus on the Road*. For over 400 years, in America, since the founding of Acadia in 1604 and of Québec City in 1608, and even for more than 1000 years if we consider that the first Vikings coming to America, to Newfoundland, were Christians, the Gospels invite us to meet Jesus along the road of our lives. However, it is only in faith that such a meeting can occur. It was in faith that the Virgin Mary recognised her Son Jesus as Saviour of the world, the Emmanuel. This was revealed to her at the Annunciation: “Do not fear, Mary. You have found favour with God. You shall conceive and bear a son and give him the name Jesus. Great will be his dignity and he will be called Son of the Most High.”

“Giving Birth to Christians”

It is this same spirit of faith that I wish to all of us as we enter the new 2008-2009 pastoral year. Through the grace of God and the strength of the Holy Spirit, may we encounter Jesus at the heart of our lives and the lives of those we meet. As Saint Paul tells us, we are called by our ministry to “form” Jesus in the hearts of our brothers and sisters. What some theologians and mystics call “Giving birth to other Christians, after the example of Mary.” May the Virgin of the Assumption inspire us, all the days to come!

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