



From A Bishop's Journal (769)

“With the Gospel of Christ”

These words of Saint Paul to the Corinthians could very well “summarize” the Plenary Session of the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, that took place September 22 to 26, in Cornwall, Ontario. I use the word “summarize” because of the more than thirty items that were on the agenda: here I shall mention only six. These words of Saint Paul are also the episcopal motto of Bishop Pierre Morissette, newly installed (September 21, 2008) as Bishop of Saint-Jérôme, Québec. As of December, 2007, there were 12,986,805 Catholics in Canada, in 72 dioceses (8 of them belonging to the Eastern Rite); there were 137 bishops including 19 auxiliary bishops and 51 retired bishops. All week long we were over 80 bishops attending the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops (CCC).

The Word of God

For the fifteenth consecutive year I have been attending these days of fellowship, prayer, reflection, and solidarity. A full agenda – broken up by periods of celebration and sharing – allowed us to study together the episcopal ministry in Canada. The Word of God was ever present at our deliberations. Everyone of these sessions began with a liturgy of the Word, a reminder that, this year, the World Synod of Bishops (October 5-26) has “The Word of God in the Life and Mission of the Church,” as its theme. Our bishops-delegate to the Synod are Luc Bouchard of St. Paul (Alberta), Ronald Fabbro of London (Ontario), Raymond St-Gelais of Nicolet (Québec), and Terrence Prendergast of Ottawa. Two substitutes have been elected: Archbishop Anthony Mancini of Halifax, and Auxiliary Bishop Louis Dicaire of Saint-Jean-Longueuil (Québec). Each one in turn read the statement he plans on making in Rome, and this was discussed together. These bishops want to promote greater knowledge of God's Word. Among the means proposed for all the faithful to have access to the Word of God, the *lectio divina* was highlighted, along with Sunday homilies, a revision of the Lectionary, and international congresses on the Word of God. “God addresses himself to the men and women of today as to friends; He wants to be in dialogue with all humankind.”

The Eucharist

The 2008 49th International Eucharistic Congress was held in Québec City from June 15 to 22. The Congress had been supported by the bishops of Canada ever since 2001. His Eminence Cardinal

Marc Ouellet, Archbishop of Québec, and two delegates of the CCCB – Bishop Paul-André Durocher of Cornwall and Bishop Albert Legatt of Saskatoon, reported on the activities that met with such extraordinary success. It is important that the Congress now continue to bear fruit, especially in our Sunday gatherings and periods of adoration, so that the sacrament of adoration be truly seen as “the gift of God for the life of the world.” Besides, a 104-page souvenir album of *Pastorale Québec* has one hundred or so short articles about this great event. Cardinal Ouellet writes: “As we reach the end of this great adventure, I feel overwhelmed with an immense feeling of thanksgiving to God who has given us the gift of Himself by renewing our faith in the mystery of His eucharistic presence. I also have much gratitude for the universal Church for her coming to celebrate Québec’s 400th, with such an incomparable gift.”

The Native People

Relations between the Catholic Church and Canada’s native communities were a major focus of the assembly. “Our partnership with the Native People is an important segment in the history of our country’s evangelisation,” stated the CCCB president Archbishop V. James Weisgerber. Mr. Phil Fontaine, Grand Chief of the Assembly of First Nations, spoke about thirty minutes to the meeting, insisting a number of times on the necessity to reestablish bonds of communion and mutual help between the Catholic Church and the First Nations. “It is useless to look back on what caused pain in the past; we must build from what has been constructive.” Three representatives of the Native People were awarded the pontifical *Bene Merenti* medal by Canada’s Papal Nuncio, Archbishop Luigi Ventura: Mrs. Nicole O’Bomsawin of Québec, Mrs. Sherley Leon of British Columbia, and the Honourable Judge Graydon Nicholas, a Maliseet native of our diocese. Useless to say that Bishop Robert Harris of Saint John, Father Leo Grégoire, I.V.D., parish priest for a number of years at St. Ann Parish in Maliseet, and I were happy at this recognition of Mr. Nicholas which is reflected on his entire nation.

Saint Paul

At the request of Pope Benedict XVI an entire year has been dedicated to Saint Paul on the occasion of the two thousandth year of his birth. Two eminent Scripture scholars, Father Scott Lewis, S.J., of Regis College, Toronto, and Father Michel Gourgues, O.P., of the Dominican University College in Ottawa, were guest speakers. They spoke of Saint Paul as the greatest evangelist of all time.

Environment

The Episcopal Commission on Social Affairs is never out of work! Besides looking at the human rights situation, the commission drew our attention to the war in Afghanistan, to poverty, to the federal elections, and to immigration. Archbishop Emeritus Bertrand Blanchet of Rimouski tabled an impressive document: *Notre rapport à l’environnement : le besoin d’une conversion* [“Our Relationship with the Environment: Our Need for Conversion”]. The heart of the message is a call to repair the bonds between God, nature, and our brothers and sisters, and to change our lifestyle.

Human Life

Forty years after the publication of *Humanae Vitae*, the Theology Commission calls on the baptised to rediscover this prophetic document on the grave duty of transmitting human life, which makes of parents free and responsible collaborators with the Creator. “To be in this world ministers of love and life is a serious and difficult vocation.”

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