



From A Bishop's Journal (770)

Meeting Jesus on My Path

On September 30 and October 1 of this year there took place in our diocese the official launching of the new 2008-2009 pastoral year, under the theme, “Meeting Jesus on My Path.” Members of pastoral teams, PPCs or their representatives, and diocesan services personnel responded generously to the invitation to attend the session. Our resource person was Bishop Claude Champagne, O.M.I., a missiologist, Auxiliary Bishop of Halifax, and representing the Francophone bishops of Canada at Development and Peace.

The Oblates in Our Region

In welcoming Bishop Champagne to the Diocesan Centre, I said: “Dear Bishop Champagne, you are at home, here with us, in a house built by the Oblate Fathers and inhabited by them for close to 25 years. We still find in the house features that are reminiscent of the Oblates: the statue of Our Lady of the Cape, and the “Salon des Oblats” where we have photos of the venerated Father Victor Lelièvre who preached the first closed retreat here September 3, 1946, after Bishop Marie-Antoine Roy, O.F.M. decided, on April 21 of that year to inaugurate the ministry of closed retreats. For 25 years, that is, from 1946 to 1971, 57 Oblates ministered in the diocese, reaching over 80,000 persons: 70% from the Diocese of Edmundston, 25% from the Diocese of Rimouski, and 5% from the Portland Diocese. But something or someone is lacking, here: there have been no Oblates in the Diocese of Edmundston for 37 years. However, there are two Oblates who are natives of the Diocese, Father Guy Cyr of Saint-Hilaire and Father Yoland Ouellet of Saint-Basile. It seems that it would be well if, in one of your future trips, you were to bring us back – for lack of live Oblates – an icon of Saint Eugene de Mazenod, your holy founder,”

Session Facilitators

We could ask what all these people came here to do. A simple answer is: “To meet Jesus on our path.” These were intensive and decisive encounters with Jesus, with an Oblate twist, a simple and effective method filled with confidence and transparency where the Oblates “facilitated” the people’s encounter with Jesus. According to the Oblate motto *Pauperes evangelizantur* – “He has sent me to preach the Good News to the poor” – Bishop de Mazenod gave his Oblates a full programme: to

work seriously at becoming saints, to walk courageously in the footsteps of so many apostles who left behind many examples of virtue in the exercise of their ministry, in total self-denial, having only the glory of God in mind, renewing themselves in the spirit of their vocation in total confidence, and labouring for the glory of God. For us who are on the threshold of a new priority that will unfold over a period of five years, the objective is the same: Meeting Jesus on our path. Like our forebears, we, too, need “facilitators,” as we don’t know beforehand the outcome of our encounter with Jesus Christ. With the guidance of the Spirit, the Apostles had experiences of all kinds. Even our good friend Saint Peter did not believe that meeting Jesus of Nazareth would lead him to Rome, nor our good friend Paul: the encounter at Damascus was but a prelude to unforeseen events in his life. Even our good Mother Mary who at the Annunciation had a first contact with her Son Jesus, knew nothing of the disturbances along the journey that was to take her from Nazareth to Golgotha, and thence to the glory of heaven. Like the Oblates of yesteryear, Bishop Champagne will lighten our journey by being our boarding agent!

Good News of the Reign of God

On the Canadian Catholic Bishops’ website are extensive excerpts of Bishop Champagne’s conference on the presence of the Kingdom of God: www.cccb.ca/site/content/view/2527/1214/lang.eng The Reign of God is the goal of Jesus’ mission. He is the first evangelizer, and the reign is already active in himself: in his extraordinary life of prayer, his welcoming and re-integration of all the marginalised of his society, a service of love offered to all, a wonderful message of pardon and mercy, and ministry of healing and exorcism. In Jesus we have the beginning of the final transformation of the world, of victory over evil; with Jesus, we can now have an optimistic view of history. Despite the difficulties of the present time and the forces of evil, final victory is a certainty, and it is for every disciple an act of confidence as we struggle against defeatism and loss of hope. With him a new springtime begins for the world. We live in the midst of this kingdom that has already been inaugurated. We must firmly believe in the power of the Risen One and in the Spirit he sent to work now in our world; he goes always before us. We must acknowledge the basic values of happiness, freedom, and authenticity in our people. The final goal of our mission is to help build the community of the Reign of life and holiness, of justice and peace, as willed by Jesus.

Basic Questions

Together in workshops, the participants were asked to answer these basic questions: “Who is Jesus, for me? Where do I really meet Jesus? Where would I like to meet Jesus? What kind of commitment would I want to make to him? What do we do in our milieu, for evangelization? What could be done in terms of the new evangelization? Everyone present, and every group answered these questions. These will be taken up again in further meetings of the parish pastoral units.

In the Name of Jesus. Amen.

All the participants, convinced that they are called to spread the Word of God, to heal the sick and support the weak, to heal the broken-hearted and to go where they are called, to be strong in trials

and to give without expectation of reward, commit themselves to this agenda “In the name of Jesus. Amen.” Their closing prayer is: “Give us the strength to be untiring workers in your harvest. Give us the strength of your Holy Spirit, give us the strength to spread the Good News with faith, hope, and love.”

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10-15-08