



From A Bishop's Journal (779)

The Table of the Lord and of the Church

On Sunday, October 26, in the parish church in Clair, I had the privilege of conferring the ministry of acolyte to our seminarian Jean-François Pelletier who is presently doing his pastoral internship in the parishes of Connors, Saint-François, and Clair. In one of the prayers in the ritual are the words: “Make your life worthy of your service at the table of the Lord and of his Church.”

For the Service of Prayer

Saint John Mary Vianney, the holy Curé of Ars said the following in one of his catechetical teachings: “Man has a beautiful function, that of praying and loving... you pray and you love: this is man’s happiness on earth.” Nevertheless, so many people say that they have problems praying, or even that they have stopped praying altogether. Then there is a song that says and repeats: *Il est difficile d’aimer*, “It is difficult to love.” The Curé of Ars also said: “Prayer is nothing more than union with God. When one’s heart is pure and united to God, we feel a soothing balm in us, a holy intoxication, a blinding light. In this intimate union, God and the soul are like two pieces of wax that have melted together and can no longer be separated. This union of God with His small creature is beautiful, it is happiness that we cannot understand or describe.” Well, Jean-François is given today a function that is basic to all human life, to every Christian community, and to all the Church, the task of helping the people to pray and to love. Without prayer, the baptised would not show himself to be faithful to his vocation as a disciple of Christ; without prayer, a community would no longer be a community of faith and love; and without prayer, the Church would no longer be a sacrament, a sign of Christ ceaselessly offering his prayer to the glory of his Father and for the salvation of humankind.

A Pleasing Incense

The Curé of Ars said: “We had deserved not to pray, but God in His kindness has allowed us to speak to Him. Our prayer is incense that He is pleased to receive. My children you have a small heart, but prayer enlarges it and enables you to love God. Prayer is a foretaste of heaven, a bit of paradise. It never leaves us without fragrance. It is honey that flows into the soul, to soften everything. Sorrow melts away before a well made prayer, like snow in the sun. Prayer makes time

go by agreeably fast, so that we do not feel its duration... We see some people who are lost in prayer like fish in water, because they are totally given over to God. There is no in-between, in the heart. Oh, how I love these souls! Saint Francis of Assisi and Saint Colette saw Our Lord and spoke to him as we do to one another, while we come to church again and again without knowing what we are doing there and what we want to pray for. However, when we visit someone, we know why we are going... There are some who seem to say to the Lord: 'I just want to tell you two words and then get rid of you...' I often think that when we come to worship our Lord, we would often get what we want if only we asked for it with lively faith and a pure heart."

At Your Service

Jean-François, who I called to be an acolyte on October 9, has been chosen for the service of community prayer and of the Eucharist. He will then take part in a special way, in the ministry of the Church, the ministry of prayer and of the Eucharist, in order to help build up the Body of Christ. Following all his predecessors, Pope Benedict XVI calls the Eucharist the sacrament of love... Jean-François will not be on unemployment, as he exercises the ministry of acolyte: he himself shall learn how to pray and how to love more deeply; he will have to give the people of God a living example of prayer and love. It is in this way that Jean-François is called to build up the body of Christ. It is in the gathering of the faithful that one form of the Lord's presence is realised, since, as the Lord himself says, wherever two or three are gathered in his name, he is there among them. In uniting his prayer to that of the Son, the Church offers itself to the Father and receives the source of life, thus becoming body of Christ. Jean-François will then have in the Church a demanding and special ministry, not only for his pastoral internship but throughout his life as future priest and priest, and in such a way that the faithful be formed in prayer and participate in a more active and conscious way, in the common celebration of the living God.

The Same Body of Christ

It is the same body of Christ that Jean-François will serve when he helps the priests and deacons give communion to the faithful, including the sick. Through this service of the Eucharist he contributes to the Church's growth and unity as he makes the bread that is broken and shared with the multitude available to more people. As he identifies more completely with the deepest meaning of his ministry, uniting himself intimately to the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, he will make of his own life a spiritual offering that is pleasing to God. Let us often remember that we form one body with our brothers and sisters, as we share the one bread together let us therefore have real love for the Body of Christ that is the people of God, especially the poor and the sick, as we carry out the commandment that the Lord gave his disciples as he offered them his body and blood: "Love one another as I have loved you."

A Special Prayer

I ask you to pray for all those the Lord has chosen to work in his Gospel vineyard; Let us pray for Jean-François to have the strength to faithfully serve the Church. "God of mercy, through your only Son you entrusted the bread of life to the Church. Bless Jean-François who has been chosen in his service. Grant that he may be faithful in the service of your altar and in giving to others the bread of

life; may he grow always in faith and love, and so build up your Church.” I congratulate Jean-François for this new step he has made towards the priesthood. I thank everyone, especially the communities of Clair, Connors, and Saint-François, and his formators at the Grand Séminaire de Québec, for all they do to give our Church priests formed according to the heart of Jesus.

+ François Thibodeau

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