
« FAITHFUL TO HIS PROMISES »



On Saturday, October 4 of this year, a group composed of close to a million men of so-called Christian inspiration, known as the "Promise Keepers," gathered together. According to a number of reporters, this rather controversial movement seemingly denies the equality of man and woman and seeks to promote the return of the dominating husband over his wife, within the family. According to other reporters, this movement is fundamentalist, committed to honouring God and respecting His Word, to helping their neighbours in need, to keep a strict sexual morality, to promote the bonds of marriage and family, to support their Church and pastors, to break down racial and religious barriers, etc. If these million men made a public examination of their fidelity in keeping their promises as husbands and fathers could inspire us to carry out our own commitments, this mass demonstration would have certain positive aspects to it. As for me, this was an opportunity to humbly review my own commitments.

BAPTISMAL PROMISES

The very first promises made on my behalf by my godparents were those at baptism. I have often had the opportunity to renew them: to reject evil and all that leads to evil, this is a full-time programme. To remain faithful to the teaching of Christ, to his person, his Gospel and his Church, this is one's daily call to discipleship. This commitment is both a promise and a call which I have nor yet fully fathomed: Baptism is the gate to the life of faith, hope, and charity.

BOY SCOUT PROMISE

A second promise comes to mind, and that is my Boy Scout Promise: « *On my honour I will do my best to do my duty to God, the Church and my country, to help my neighbour at all times, and to obey the Scout Law.* » This is a demanding law: « *The scout makes it a point of honour to earn the trust of others; he is loyal to his country, his parents, his chiefs, and his subordinates; he is there to serve and save his neighbour, he is the friend of all and brother to every other scout. The scout is courteous and courageous; he sees the work of God in nature, he is the friend of plants and animals. He obeys without hesitation and does nothing half-heartedly. He smiles and sings in difficult times. He is thrifty and is careful with the property of others. He is pure in his thoughts, words, and actions.* » A whole life's programme, not only for youth but also for any adult who wishes to live his or her life to the full.

COMMUNITY PROMISES

On October 1, 1961 I became a member of the Congregation of Jesus and Mary, also known as the Eudist Fathers, not through the solemn profession of the vows of poverty, obedience, and chastity, but by reciting the Promise of Incorporation whereby I declared my decision to live and to die within this Congregation, to serve God and to honour Him as perfectly as I could by obeying the constitutions of the Congregation. The Eudist mission being to collaborate in the evangelisation task and to train good workers of the Gospel, I want to respect this most inspiring commitment every day. Contributing in establishing the Edmundston Diocesan Seminary and the Lay Ministry Formation Programme in both the French and English sectors of the diocese, fills me with great joy because this safeguards the ministry of evangelisation both for today and tomorrow.

PRIESTLY COMMITMENTS

After committing myself to celibacy and the celebration of the Hours (breviary), at my diaconate in 1964, on May 8 of the following year I promised Archbishop J.-Aurèle Plourde that I would live these commitments to the fullest: *« With the help of the Holy Spirit, to discharge without fail the office of priesthood in the presbyteral order as a conscientious fellow worker with the bishops in caring for the Lord's flock... to exercise the ministry of the word worthily and wisely, preaching the Gospel and explaining the Catholic faith... to celebrate the mysteries of Christ faithfully and religiously as the Church has handed them down to us, for the glory of God and the sanctification of Christ's people... to consecrate [my] life to God for the salvation of his people... to live in communion with the bishops and [my] superiors, in respect and obedience. »*

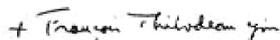
EPISCOPAL COMMITMENTS

On January 9, 1994, in the cathedral at Edmundston I made commitments that are beyond all human understanding, and which cannot be kept except with the constant support of the prayer of all the people: *« To discharge to the end of [my] life the office entrusted by the apostles... to be faithful and constant in proclaiming the Gospel of Christ... to maintain the deposit of faith, entire and incorrupt, as handed down by the apostles and professed by the Church everywhere and at all times... to build up the Church as the body of Christ and to remain united to it... faithful in [my] obedience to the successor of the apostle Peter... as a devoted father to sustain the people of God and to guide them in the way of salvation... to show kindness and compassion in the name of the Lord to the poor and to strangers and to all who are in need... as a good shepherd to seek out the sheep who stray and to gather them into the fold of the Lord... to pray for the people of God without ceasing, and to carry out the duties of one who has the fullness of the priesthood so as to afford no grounds for reproach. »*

A DAUNTLESS FAITHFULNESS

I hope that this review of the promises we are invited to make through the years of our lives never cease to stimulate us and give us the strength, boldness, and courage to live them fully. On this fourth anniversary of my appointment as bishop of Edmundston I pray the Lord to hear the prayer of His people in the Edmundston Diocese, that I fully live my freely-made commitments. It was in His great mercy that God called me to baptism, that he led me to the Eudists and that He asked me to serve as priest and bishop. Truly, all is grace.

Have a good week.



+ François Thibodeau
Bishop of Edmundston

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