
GIFT, MYSTERY AND STRUGGLE



I want to express my heartfelt thanks to all those who prayed for me and offered me their best wishes on my birthday, July 27.

A GIFT

I with you consider life to be God's wonderful gift to us, and I want to view life as such all my living days, especially in difficult times. Who are we, to be so loved by God? Even the psalmist is awe struck as he contemplates the human being: *O Lord, our Sovereign, how majestic is your name in all the earth!.. What are human beings that you are mindful of them, mortals that you care for them?* (Ps. 8) And again: *For it was you who formed my inward parts; you knit me together in my mother's womb... Wonderful are your works!* (Ps. 139)

A MYSTERY

Life is too short for us to express all our gratitude to God. And when we consider the precious gift of the divine life given to us at baptism, our gratitude increases. Saint Paul says it this way: *And it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in my flesh I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me.* (Gal. 2:20)

A STRUGGLE

Life is also an endless struggle, a struggle for life. And it is right that it is thus, otherwise all we would do would be to consume or else endure. In both the vegetable and animal worlds the struggle for survival is part and parcel of all living things. This is at times a heavy and even desperate burden to bear: struggle against poverty, unemployment, illness, trials of all kinds. *Cast all your anxiety on [the Lord], because he cares for you* (1 P. 5:7), are encouraging words in difficult times.

A SONG

I composed a new song for you, dear people of the diocese, on the occasion of the coming new millennium. My hope is that the words of this song will be a constant incentive to live the Gospel. The deepest wish I could express on my birthday was to love Jesus, Christ and Saviour more and more and to have him loved by all those committed to my pastoral care. Jesus has done so much to make us happy; he invites us to take the road of the Beatitudes and to abide in a kingdom of happiness.

LET US JOIN IN THE STRUGGLE OF GOD

Let us join in the struggle of God
With eyes fixed on Jesus Christ;
Let us learn the Way to Life
In the power of the Spirit.

1. There is Jesus, living in simplicity,
In solidarity with the most needy.
His word: "Forward, you poor in heart!
You have great value in the eyes of the Father."

2. There is Jesus, meek and humble in heart.
To the crowds with no leaders he shows his compassion.
To them he says: "Forward, all you non-violent people!
Be as innocent as doves and as cunning as serpents."

3. There is Jesus, help of the afflicted,
Recovery of the sick, liberator of the poor.
To them he says: "Forward, all you who are crushed!
Come to me, you who are burdened and in need of rest."

4. There is Jesus, the friend of justice.
To every human being he brings freedom.
To them he says: "Forward, honest people!
Because justice is the road to the Father."

5. There is Jesus, the merciful.
Let us learn from him the meaning of compassion.
And his words are: "Forward, you merciful!
You resemble the Father, and you shall reign!"

6. There is Jesus: he gives his life for all.
In him is righteousness and truth.
And his words are: "Forward, you pure in heart!
You shall see God. I am the Way, the Life."

7. There he is, Jesus the source of peace,
Peace promised to people of good will.
To them he says: "Forward, you peacemakers!
Because you are all children of God."

8. There he is, Jesus the victim of hatred.
Tortured, flogged, put to death, crucified.
And his words are: "Forward, you persecuted!
The gift of your life is the proof of love."

+ François Thibodeau

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Bishop of Edmundston

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