



From A Bishop's Journal (339)

"Let the Spirit Burst Forth!" (1)

For the seventh time in as many years I am writing you a pastoral letter on the occasion of the great feast of Pentecost. In this Jubilee year, the feast takes on a special dimension since it coincides with our fifth Diocesan Eucharistic Congress whose theme is *Moved by the Spirit, Nourished by the Eucharist, Our Church Is Renewed*. I therefore wish to recall with you a few events of the 1999-2000 pastoral year and welcome with you what the Holy Spirit is preparing, in the days and months ahead. Some of you will recognise items that have already been mentioned.

Eyes Fixed on Jesus

On the occasion of the feast of Pentecost, last year, at the conclusion of the 1998-1999 pastoral year, I invited you to keep your "eyes fixed on Jesus" so as to better carry out the mission He has given us. I bid you recognise and welcome Jesus in your midst, to deepen the great mystery of the Church, the Body of Christ, and take assured paths in order to establish our Church of today and tomorrow on a solid footing. I once again stressed the necessity of the Sunday gathering in order to increase our faith in Christ. I mentioned the agencies recently established to help us carry out the mission of Jesus: parish pastoral councils, parish economic affairs committees, parish pastoral teams, refocusing of the priest on his particular ministry. I then called on you to profoundly experience the Jubilee Year 2000 in prayer, compassion, and reconciliation. A special message was addressed to the youth, to the elderly, and to families. In other words, I invited you to walk in the footsteps of Jesus and to join in God's struggle. Throughout the summer of 1999, I continued my meditation on what this struggle of God could be, and I have discovered that the path of the Beatitudes taught by Jesus is the royal road of this struggle.

A Daily Struggle

It was a great grace for me to discover the central place occupied by the Beatitudes in my life as a baptised Christian and a bishop. Yes, a great grace indeed... The beatitudes advocated by Jesus call one to daily struggle. It is not easy to be poor as Jesus was poor, to be compassionate as he was, to be as merciful as him, to be humble, just, and a peacemaker as he was... It is an education in living with the heart through the impulse of the Spirit: it is learning to become a disciple of Jesus. More

than a mere poem to compose, it is a direction to follow day after live-long day. On July 27, 1997, I published the following song:¹

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 leaderless crowds 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."

¹In François Thibodeau, C.J.M., Bishop of Edmundston, *"His Love Is from Age to Age."* Pastoral Messages 1994-1999. [Edmundston, N.B.]: n.p., n.d., p.139

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 your love."

May the actions and teachings of Jesus continue to inspire our conversation and activities today.

Have a good week!

+ François Thibodeau ym

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