
« LIVING WITH THE HEART » (7)



As I come to the end of my Pastoral Letter for Pentecost, 2001, *Living with the Heart*, I want to point out the great devotion St. John Eudes had for the Virgin Mary. This reminds us of the deep Marian devotion of our people. To convince ourselves of this, all we have to do is to read the Acts of the Saint Basile Marian Congress, which Msgr. Ernest Lang made it his duty to communicate to us. Entitled *Marian Witnesses in Acadia*, and appearing as No. 19 of the “Aux sources mariales de l’Église canadienne” collection (just published), we witness the people so devotedly dedicated to the Virgin Mary.

THE LIFE OF JESUS IN MARY

I want to conclude this bird’s eye view of our 2000-2001 pastoral year in the light of the spirituality of the man popes called « father, doctor and apostle of the liturgical worship of the Hearts of Jesus and Mary » – Saint John Eudes – with a prayer of his. On this fiftieth anniversary of the 1951 Saint Basile Marian Congress, and the 350th anniversary of the first Mass celebrated in the Madawaska region, it is well to recall the earnest devotion which our people have always had to the Virgin Mary, Mother of Jesus.

Oh Jesus, only Son of God and only Son of Mary, I contemplate and adore you living and reigning in your most holy Mother. St. Paul says: “You are all and do all in all things” (Eph. 1:23; 1 Cor. 12:6) [...] You are her life, her soul, her heart, her spirit, her riches. You are in her, sanctifying her on earth and glorifying her in heaven. [...] Blessed are you, Oh Jesus, for all that you are and all that you accomplish in your most holy Mother! [...] Oh Mother of Jesus, I honour and venerate your most holy and admirable life in your Son Jesus [...] which he communicates to you from moment to moment by a most particular and ineffable favour. Blessed are you, Oh holy Virgin, for all the honour you have given your beloved Son in your whole life. I offer you all my life, Oh Mother of life and grace, and I consecrate it all to the honour of your life. [...] Oh Jesus, God of my life and my heart, you have a great desire to dwell in me and make me live in you an entirely holy and heavenly life. [...] Dwell in all your fulness in my spirit, heart and soul, and accomplish there all the works you desire for your glory. [The Kingdom of Jesus, in Lectionary Proper to the Congregation of Jesus and Mary. Charlesbourg, Québec, 1989, pp. 170, 171]

HEART OF MARY

Don’t you know that [...] not only does Jesus live and remain continually in the Heart of Mary, he is himself the heart of her Heart. So, to have recourse to the Heart of Mary is to come to Jesus; to honour the Heart is to honour Jesus; praying to the Heart of Mary is praying to Jesus. This admirable heart is the prototype and model of our own hearts. [The Admirable Heart of Mary, in Lectionary... pp. 172, 173]

The Heart of the Blessed Virgin is the vessel and the faithful guardian of the marvellous mysteries of the life of our Saviour. «Mary kept all these things in her Heart» (Luke 2:19). [St. John Eudes, Devotion to the Most Holy Heart. Tr. LG]

WORDS OF LOVE

I hope that the song I composed a few months after my episcopal appointment, August 19, 1993 – at the time of the 350th anniversary of the founding of the Congregation of Jesus and Mary – reflects the importance of living with the heart, as Saint John Eudes did:

Our whole being is a gift of your grace:
May our lives be dedicated to you!
Our days, our nights are a pure offering to you:
May our lives proclaim your praise!

To live.
To live with the Heart
The mission of Jesus
In the midst of the world!

Our story is a Covenant of Life:
May each day reveal your presence!
Our tears, our joys are pure offering to you:
May our hearts be gratitude to you.

Our future is in your hands, Oh Lord:
May the Gospel transform the world!
Our plans and our struggles are pure offering to you:
May your Spirit revive our hope!

The love of God was really manifest throughout this pastoral year. « *Gratias infinitas super inenarrabilibus donis ejus* »

May the Virgin Mary and her divine Son grant us their many blessings.



+ François Thibodeau
Bishop of Edmundston

« From A Bishop's Journal » (403) (26 September 2001)