
THREE CHEERS FOR WYD 2002!



The seventeenth World Youth Day celebrations will take place July 18 to 28, first in the different dioceses of Canada, then in the city of Toronto. In answer to the Holy Father's invitation, thousands and thousands of young people have become deeply involved in this Church-wide event. However, this celebration is not only for young people but concerns the entire Church. It is an invitation to us all to reflect on the reality of Jesus, salt of the earth and light of the world, and consider how, as his followers, we must continue his mission. The call of Jesus has urged young and old to take to the road, to the highways and byways. Strong from the Word of God and enriched by his love, they will share together their happiness to believe in him. As messengers of the Gospel – the Good News – they proclaim peace to their brothers and sisters throughout the world. A Happy 2002 WYD!

A STIMULATING THEME

Ever since the theme of the World Youth Day was officially announced by the Holy Father on Palm Sunday, 2001, we have had the opportunity a number of times to reflect on the meaning of « You are the salt of the earth; you are the light of the world. » Looking back at history we realise that Jesus was the first Salt of the earth and Light of the world. Throughout history, we also have the disciples of Jesus who were truly salt of the earth and light of the world. Saint John, the apostle and evangelist, calls us to look on Jesus himself as salt of the earth and light of the world. Before teaching us, Jesus applied to his own life what he planned to tell us: he was poor, kind, compassionate, merciful, a peacemaker. It was by living out the Beatitudes that he was first and foremost salt of the earth and light of the world.

LIGHT OF THE WORLD

Robert Lebel rightfully proclaims, in his song: « The One that we have seen with our own eyes, the One that we have touched and felt with our own hands, the One that we have heard with our own ears, the One that in the depths of our hearts we have met: He is the One who we proclaim to you... His splendour is on all, for He shines upon the world: The light of the world, the salt of the earth, we scatter the darkness when love becomes our way. The light of the world, Christ is our light. We shine with his brightness, the reflection of his light from day to day! »

During the first two millennia, several of Jesus' disciples lived this reality. Sadly, however, others were not faithful to this dignity, nor to the mission. The long line of saints who fully lived the Beatitudes proclaimed by Jesus are a cause of marvel. Among them, several have become familiar to us. Some are holy "patrons" who watch over us in a special way. I feel very privileged to be called "François", Who doesn't know Francis of Assisi or Francis de Sales? They lived in poverty, compassion, kindness, and mercy. They thirsted for justice; they were peacemakers. If you travel through Québec you will come across the names of many saints who were salt of the earth and light of the world. There was even a saying, once, that Québec was like paradise, with all of its saints!

WE MUST BE SALT OF THE EARTH

Throughout the two thousand years of Christianity, these saints carried out Jesus' mission, and it is this same mission that we, in the third millennium, are urged to pursue. We are called to be salt of the earth and light of the world, the saints of the new millennium. Let us recognise that we are as well equipped as our forebears. We have everything we need, to carry out our mission. We have what is needed to give the world the flavour it seeks and to bring it light. With God's grace, we are able to be the saints of the third millennium. Through baptism and confirmation, we became what we proclaim: salt of the earth and light of the world. The divine life given to us at baptism and the wonderful gifts of the Holy Spirit enable us to undertake the extraordinary, inspiring mission we have been given.

GIFTS FOR THE MISSION

We received the gift of wisdom for the heart to recognise the presence of God, to have a preference for God and all that concerns Him, and for us to share this penchant with our brothers and sisters. We received the gift of understanding to enable us to understand the Word of God and apply it to our daily living, and to pass it on to others. We received the gift of counsel to help us discern what to do to be true Christians, but we received this gift, too, to share it with others, to counsel others correctly regarding the will of God today, in the midst of the world. We were given the gift of filial affection to help us love God and our neighbour: this love must be really contagious! We received the gift of strength to help us make decisions with courage, and to overcome obstacles on the way. The gift of worship and praise was given to us to enable us to trustingly acknowledge God, to pray to Him in childlike confidence, and to glorify Him for all His wonders. Yes! We are fully equipped, and we have everything we need, to be salt of the earth and light of the world!

« So many feel that they have yet to find the meaning of their lives, their value and their worth; if we just walked along with hearts made kind... And listened to their tales and sought to ease their hurt; perhaps they'd hearken to the news we bear, and in the broken bread, come to know true love and care! The light of the world, the salt of the earth, we scatter the darkness when love becomes our way. The light of the world, Christ is our light. We shine with his brightness, the reflection of his light from day to day! »

« COME, SPIRIT! »

« Salt is worthless if it is flat, no better than the light hid under the bushel basket! Come, Spirit! Move our lukewarmness, raise in us those wonderful gestures... Then our lives will taste of truth, of justice, of love! Then, we shall be able to sing! Light of the world! »

+ François Thibodeau

+ François Thibodeau
Bishop of Edmundston

« From A Bishop's Journal » (446) (24 July 2002)