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## **“IN THE FATHER’S GARDEN LET US SOW HOPE”**

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This is the title of my second book in French of 52 pastoral messages to rekindle hope in people of all ages and every condition: priests, parents, students, young adults, the elderly, the sick, and the bereaved. All of us can use a little more hope.

### **CREATOR OF HOPE**

A more recent description of a bishop is that he is “a servant of the Gospel of Jesus Christ for the hope of the world.” According to expectations expressed to me at my episcopal ordination was the same hope that the people of the diocese wished to find in their bishop: a good shepherd who can nourish them with the Word of God, a leader who can stimulate all the Christian communities, a gatherer who can direct to Christ all the energies of the baptised, and a holy man who can remind the people of God of their mission in the midst of our world. You can see that if I had not been hopeful of accomplishing a few of these expectations, you would do well to ask God to send a new shepherd for the Church of Edmundston. Besides, hope is always followed by two other virtues, humility and patience. I count on your faithful prayers for me.

### **LIVING EXAMPLES**

When we look at the farmers in our midst we find that they are humble and patient folk. The sower who would show no concern for seeding his field properly, and putting in all the ingredients needed to fertilise the soil, and who would not want to wait for the field to grow, would risk losing his entire harvest. It very often happens that one sows, another waters, and yet another harvests, but it is God who gives life and growth. The same happens with human life. Following fertilisation of human cells, long months of pregnancy are required to bring a baby to term. After the birth, very many years are needed for the human being to reach childhood, adolescence, and maturity. Wanting to precipitate things would be playing the arrogant master of life rather than the humble, patient, and wise servant.

### **WONDERFUL VITALITY**

I owe much to Michel Trottier, one of my psychology professors at Laval University where I studied in social service. He told us, one day: “If you want to go into social work, education or pastoral work, I’ll tell you a secret. If you do not have faith, hope and charity, do not enter these professions! If you do not believe in yourself you will not believe in your neighbour, you will not believe in the world, and you will not believe in God. If you do not hope in yourself you will have no hope in your neighbour, your world, and God. If you do not love yourself you shall not love your neighbour, the world, or God.” Words of wisdom!

### **THE GARDEN OF GOD**

Let me speak once again of the greatness and beauty of the garden of God. It stretches from the deepest recesses of each human being to the immense spheres of the universe. It includes all levels of life, the psychological, cultural, political, and economic. There is nothing in the garden of God that is a stranger to the heart of man and woman today. The garden of God is my own being, my own life. I am God’s garden. God has deposited in everyone of us talents and unheard-of marvels. It is a privilege to be a garden of God, and it is also an immense responsibility: I must bloom where I have been planted. The garden of God is also my family, a garden of the utmost and indispensable importance. It is the place of my roots, the fertile soil of my continued growth from birth to death, the soil of my first loves, and of my education. It is the place where affection grows and where hope takes root. The garden of God is all my human relations, at school and leisure, at work, in the world of health, communications, economy, and politics. An immense garden with millions of possibilities. The garden of God is also my Church, my parish community, my religious community,

my diocese, and communion with my brothers and sisters the world over. A garden replete with marvels, with grace and holiness, truth and justice, but also – sad to say – with the tares and weeds sown by the enemy, and which call me to humility.

#### **BEINGS OF HOPE**

If this new book of mine can bring about more hope to some of the hopeless, I shall be the happiest of shepherds. How I wish that hope be part and parcel of our every undertaking. Just as a man and a woman who want to start a family and bring about new life need a good measure of hope, so must we hope for mutual happiness and for happiness for the child to be born. Just as one must be quickened by hope in order to begin the long course of schooling with college and university studies, so must we be quickened by hope to undertake and pursue a career. Just as we must hope that every gesture helps build a more fraternal and human society, so must we hope in Christ's resurrection and in the constant sending forth of his Spirit of strength and courage. Just as we must hope in the harmonious growth of every new human cell, so must we also hope that in moments of great separations, serious illness, and wrenching bereavement, what we suffer and what we sow in sorrow can become the source of everlasting immortality. Just as hope must be kept alive on our Good Fridays, so must we witness to the presence of the Risen One, along our Emmaus roads. "Remember Jesus Christ raised from the dead. He is our salvation and eternal glory. In him our sorrow, in him our joy. In him our hope, in him our love." I invite you to continue to join with our Church so that together we can create the most beautiful garden of all, the garden of hope.

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