



### **From A Bishop's Journal (618)**

#### **A Tribute to Father Rino Albert (1921-2005)**

In extending our most fraternal condolences to Father Rino Albert's relatives and friends I want to express deep gratitude to the Lord for everything Father Rino accomplished in the Edmundston diocesan Church as a whole, especially as secretary to Bishop Marie-Antoine Roy, O.F.M., chancellor of Bishop J.-Romeo Gagnon, vicar capitular, chaplain at the Hotel Dieu Hospital in Edmundston, pastor of the parishes of Saint-Georges, in Grand Falls, Saint-Basile, and Notre-Dame-du-Sacré-Cœur in Edmundston, and chaplain at the Villa Des Jardins in Edmundston.

#### **At the Heart of the Family**

In re-reading the vocation account of Father Rino Albert what struck me were the many statements bearing directly on the Beatitudes: "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be consoled." Father Rino wrote: "It was self-denial which first marked my childhood and youth: orphaned at the age of 3, following my father's death at the age of 29, along with his 15-year-old college-student brother, in a farmhouse fire at Baker Brook." This tragedy would hound him throughout his life. He had affection and admiration for his mother Yvonne, a woman of steadfast courage who would sing at morning mass in the parish church. Father Rino never doubted that he owed his priestly vocation to his mother. A climate of prayer steeped the entire family atmosphere: "My mother's side [of the family] counted eight priests, and my father's side had two, one of whom was a missionary in Bengal. I felt drawn to that."

#### **Hymn to Charity**

Father Rino, as bishop of Edmundston I want to tell you once again all the admiration and friendship I have for you. Looking at your life, I am convinced that charity was "prime", everywhere. You knew how to urge others to charity, and you had but one desire: to live in mutual love, serenity, kindness, and understanding. Saint Paul's hymn you adopted as your own: "Love is patient, love is kind; love is not jealous. It does not put on airs. It is not snobbish. Love is never rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not prone to anger, neither does it brood over injuries. Love does not rejoice in what is wrong, but rejoices with the truth. There is no limit to love's forbearance, to its trust, its hope, its power to endure. Love never fails." Like the good father in a family, he saw to it that in his parish or where he lived, human relations were cordial and fraternal. It would hurt him to know that some people held useless grudges. He knew how to soothe hurts of the day, some of which were often accidental,

passing wounds or long-festering hurts. He wanted people to talk to one another, that they live in an atmosphere of good understanding and real love. He suffered from knowing about persisting misunderstandings; he tried to understand and reconcile the parties involved. He knew about human weakness and how to forgive it. He appreciated the piety of his parishioners and their edifying listening to the Word of God, in church as well as in religious and lay associations. He was always serious about religious education at every level, and held it as the most precious of his ministries. These ministries he considered as services which diocesan authority asked him in response to God's call, for his own happiness according to the Word, "There is more joy in giving than in receiving." And he added: "If I was able to realise this, it was due to the kindness and the mercy of God."

### **Spiritual Testament**

In his testament we discover the same modesty Father Rino always exhibited. He wrote: "I have tried to do the will of my Father in heaven, and it is in Him that I have found peace. To those I may have offended, I ask forgiveness. I have strived to banish all hatred, anger, and unkind words. On the other hand, I have felt loved and have been happy and felt welcome by all – parishioners, relatives, friends, confreres, benefactors – despite my human failings. I thank them all for their friendship, their confidence in me, and their understanding."

### **United with His Brother-Priests and His Bishop**

"A being of communion." This he was with his parishioners and the residents whose life he shared. But he was all the more so with the bishops he has always served as best he could, and with his priest confreres which he always appreciated and loved. He could not understand being accused one day of loving his bishop too much. This was attacking what was the most intimate and the strongest point in him. He knew that he had been ordained a priest in order to bear the burden of the diocese and of evangelisation with his bishop and the presbyterium. Without the bishop, his life and activities had no meaning. He knew the importance of the conciliar document on the ministry and the life of priests, and it was there that he found the basic motivation for his apostolic action: "Thus Christ sent the apostles as he himself had been sent by the Father, and then through the apostles made their successors, the bishops, sharers in his consecration and mission. The function of the bishops' ministry was handed over in a subordinate degree to priests so that they might be appointed in the order of the priesthood and be coworkers with the episcopal order for the proper fulfilment of the apostolic mission that had been entrusted to it by Christ."<sup>1</sup> And the document continues: "Inasmuch as it is connected with the episcopal order, the priestly office shares in the authority by which Christ himself builds up, sanctifies, and rules His Body. Since in their own measure priests participate in the office of the apostles, God gives them the grace to be ministers of Christ Jesus among the people. They shoulder the sacred task of the gospel, so that the offering of the people can be made acceptable through the sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit."<sup>2</sup>

### **Pastoral Charity**

Father Rino was fond of quoting Saint Ignatius, bishop of Antioch: "Let there be nothing in you to divide you: be united with your bishop and those who preside at reflecting and teaching eternal life."

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<sup>1</sup> Austin Flannery, O.P. Gen. Ed., *Vatican II Council: the Basic Sixteen Documents... in Inclusive Language*, Northport, NY: Costello Publishing Co., 1996, p. 319.

<sup>2</sup> Walter M. Abbott, S.J., Gen. Ed. *The Documents of Vatican II*. New York: Corpus Books, 1966, p. 535.

Work together at forming one temple of God around one altar, in the one Jesus Christ. Be attached to your bishop so that God, too, may be attached to you. Work together, and do battle together. Persevere in harmony and in common prayer..." We must live the great commandment of charity, to love one another as Christ loved us. Let us pray for this pastoral charity for every one of us, so that like Father Rino, we, too, may share in life everlasting.

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