



From A Bishop's Journal (625)

Happy and Holy New Year 2006!

As we come to the year's closing I want to pray with the Church: "Creator Lord, you have given us the care of the world. We thank you for the progress made, and we ask your forgiveness for our cowardice. You gave us co-workers: for the help given and received, we thank you; for the ill-will towards others, and the jealousies, forgive us. You gave us brothers and sisters: for the love they have shown us, we thank you; for our lack of love, forgive us. You have made us meet strangers: for the friendships developed, we thank you; for our indifference, forgive us. Look with kindness on those who suffered a violent death or who died in loneliness: welcome them into your eternal rest." May this prayer help us better understand the year gone by, and open us with confidence to the year 2006.

Year of the Eucharist

Together with all our brothers and sisters on earth, we tried to live fully the year which the late Pope John Paul II had proposed as one during which we should strive to better discover the great mystery of our faith and to better appreciate the presence of Jesus in the Eucharist, in the midst of the Church, and at the heart of our lives. A great number of activities were held throughout our religious and parish communities. No one will know all the hours of adoration, contemplation, and petition made by the faithful in quiet recollection in a chapel or a church, in quiet solitude and wonder. We must continue to discern, in the consecrated bread and wine, the energising presence of the Risen Christ who gave up his body and blood for us and for humankind.

Year of Gratitude

My family wanted to celebrate my forty years as a priest, but the small, quiet celebration planned quickly evolved into a major family and parish affair, on July 2, 2005. Several of our diocesan collaborators joined the family in gratitude and rejoicing. I want to borrow the words of the hymn of gratitude and praise which Saint John Eudes composed in honour of the Hearts of Jesus and Mary, for their countless benefits: "My soul glorifies the admirable Heart of Jesus and Mary, my spirit bounds for joy for this great Heart which is given to me... Yes, Jesus and Mary have given me their Heart, that I may live in their love alone. This kindest of Hearts has done wonders for me, he chose me to be his from my mother's womb. The depth of my misery called for the depth of his mercy. This most kind Heart has always surrounded me with his sweetest blessings; he has kept me in the folds of his wings and has watched me as the apple of his eye. He chose me as his priest, and put his words in my mouth. He made me die, he made me live, he guided me along all my paths. He has saved me in all my trials. Oh Heart filled with love, source of all good, countless benefits have come

from you. Praise be to you! To you be love and glory! May every tongue praise you, and every heart cherish you. May your glory break forth in mercy, in the wonders of your love. Be eternally blessed, praised, and glorified for your mighty works!"

Satisfaction

Last spring I held a consultation with the fifteen parish pastoral teams on the degree of satisfaction there was regarding the pastoral readjustments that have been taking place since 1999. I was happy to see that the most notable element in these teams had been the establishment of the pastoral team itself: the team's structure, its mode of functioning, and the regularity of its meetings contributed to unify the parishes to which the team ministers, which it coordinates, and administers. With this, not only is catechetics a priority in all these pastoral zones, but more specifically family-based catechetics is marked by its vitality and by the interest it has raised. Besides, joining together and sharing different pastoral services are an aid to initiating readjustments between the different parishes by pastoral teams or councils. In most zones, this *rapprochement* of services offered is noted through catechetics, baptism and marriage preparation, visits to the sick, and liturgical celebrations at the high points of the year. In pastoral activity, concern for youth and families is stressed, as well as commitment of the faithful.

Expectations

A major preoccupation has to do with volunteers: there is a ceaseless chorus about finding new volunteers, especially among our young people. The formation of new pastoral agents is often brought up. It is indispensable to the success of family-based catechetics. Youth ministry also needs to be developed in all its dimensions. To make our Christian communities more lively, we must develop baptism preparation and sick ministry, at the pastoral zone and unit levels. By taking account of the pastoral and financial resources of our communities, by taking into account the spiritual and pastoral needs of their respective milieus, the pastoral teams and councils keep three words in mind: prudence, patience, and time. While looking at situations lucidly and realistically, we aim at five-year programmes, to develop certain procedures for change: service, support, mentoring, listening, animation, formation, renewal, resource persons, and material support are all key words to express the expectations regarding the diocesan services. One expectation often resurfaces: that training and formation sessions be offered in the different zones, because of distances to be travelled.

Always under Construction!

The year 2005 will not have allowed much respite, in the pastoral area! We keep in mind the words of Pope Benedict XVI, at the inauguration of his papal ministry: "The Church is young and vibrant!" We must continue to love it and keep it always more vibrant, and energised by its youth. Happy and Holy New Year 2006!

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