



From a Bishop's Journal (675)

The Christian Celebration of Sunday in Expectation of the Eucharist (3)

I thank Bishop Jean Gagnon of Gaspé for allowing me to publish his pastoral letter on The Christian Celebration of Sunday in Expectation of the Eucharist. At the end of this third segment of his letter I shall add a few guidelines for our beloved Church of Edmundston.

Important Points

“ – At no time will a Sunday celebration in expectation of the Eucharist be offered for the sole reason that there is a greater lay participation in animating the parish community.

– As with the Eucharistic celebration, the celebration in expectation of the Eucharist may be celebrated from sundown (4 pm) on Saturday until Sunday evening.

Additional Remarks

Considering the number of various types of celebrations on weekends, and taking into account the age and lower number of priests as well as the experience of other brother bishops, I recommend that our priests not preside more than three Sunday Eucharistic celebrations on any given weekend.

Nobody owns the Word of God nor the liturgy of the Church. Special care should be given to the preparation of the celebration which comprises : a correct understanding of the Word of God, humility of the witnessing to the Word, clear comments, an essential integration of a prayer of praise, mention of the absent pastor as of the bishop. The community should also pray to the Lord to ask for the ministers it needs so that all its members may live adequately their vocation as disciples.

In order to give good formation and support to the team preparing the Sunday celebration in expectation of the Eucharist, it is recommended to call on persons who have a broader theological formation, namely deacons, pastoral agents, and other qualified persons. The diocesan services shall prepare more formation sessions to that end, suggest any available documentation and resources, as also provide an on-going program to help better understand the Word of God.

Conclusion

To live as a community of disciples : This is the ideal that has been pursued since the time of the early Christians. In our days which have become a missionary period, and where the Eucharist may be lacking, the faithful must be aware that the Sunday celebration in expectation of the Eucharist is a treasure in the sense that it is a true Sunday gathering of the community. It is a true liturgical action, as also a privileged moment of Christ's presence and an opportunity to discover new gifts in the community. It is a celebration in expectation of the Eucharist but not one of a lesser value. Those who are mandated to preside over a Sunday celebration in expectation of the Eucharist must therefore be aware of the dignity of their role. They must be carefully prepared and perform their service to the community with a mind and heart that is united with their pastor and the first pastor of the diocesan Church.

May the Holy Spirit be with us so that in the Church each Sunday celebration in expectation of the Eucharist may be lived in such a way that it will arouse a desire for an early Eucharistic gathering which is the highest expression of thanksgiving, of praise and of joy of the entire community of Jesus' disciples. This is my greatest wish, as I bless you with all my heart."

Pastoral Guidelines for Our Diocese

May Bishop Gagnon's pastoral letter serve as a invaluable guide for our Sunday gatherings!

Authorisation

In conformity with recommendations made at the Diocesan Pastoral Congress in March, 2006, in order to make available to the People of God the Word to light our path and rekindle our hope, and due to the scarcity of available priests or priests on call, I authorise, as bishop of Edmundston, duly formed religious and lay people to preside Sunday celebrations in expectation of the Eucharist in those places where there is a real need, that is, where it is impossible to have a Eucharistic celebration.

Guidelines

The official documents already have guidelines regarding the Sunday celebration in expectation of the Eucharist. Right now, I want to point out just a few of them. At the level of the diocesan liturgy commission, we shall endeavour to specify certain points and to answer practical questions. We can immediately state that such celebrations are not improvised. The pastoral team shall consider carefully who is to exercise this ministry, and ensure that they have been or shall be given the required formation. Regarding the unfolding of the celebration, the plans published in the book put out by the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops shall be followed.

No mass is allowed on any given Sunday in a church where mass is or will be celebrated. Care shall be taken to ensure that there is not a celebration in expectation of the Eucharist on two consecutive Sundays. Care shall be taken to carefully explain to the faithful the riches to be discovered in liturgies of the Word, and to point out the importance of the Sunday gathering. The Sunday

celebration in expectation of the Eucharist is not a “second-rate mass”. To show that the gathered community is really in expectation of the Eucharistic celebration, in the Prayers of the Faithful a petition shall be made to the Lord to send priests for his Church. And care shall be taken to carefully establish a pastoral outreach for priestly vocations.

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