



## **From A Bishop's Journal (681)**

### **In Deep Communion with the Sick**

**S**unday, February 11, will be the World Day of the Sick: this day was set aside to pray for the sick by the late Pope John Paul II, in 1992. Due to my actual personal situation that has put me on medical leave until Easter, I want to express my solidarity with those of my brothers and sisters who are afflicted with ill health, whether at home, in a nursing home, or in the hospital. I also want to express my gratitude and my admiration to all who care for the sick: I witnessed their concern and generosity during my stay at the Edmundston Regional Hospital, from January 3 to 16.

### **Generosity versus Wisdom**

I do not want to analyse, here, what led to my general exhaustion, but I know that the latter part of 2006 was very full: preparations for the bishops' visit to Rome, confirmations, pastoral appointments, visit to Rome (interesting but exhausting) comprising 19 visits to the Roman Dicasteries, in 32-degree temperature, the bishops' meeting in Newfoundland, the Canadian bishops' plenary meeting in Cornwall, the episcopal commission in Montreal, etc. This made my doctor to declare that the schedule did not make sense! This list was only the schedule of "extraordinary" activities: to these have to be added the "other daily activities"!... From the time I was very young I learned the famous Boy Scout Prayer: "Lord, teach me to be generous, to serve you as you deserve, to give without cost, to battle without concern for being hurt, and to give of myself without expecting any other reward than knowing that I am doing your will." And the Ash Wednesday liturgy goes even further: "Keep in mind the memory of the Lord. Do not rest!" Among the several commitments I made at my episcopal ordination, I promised to exercise my apostolic mission until death, to persevere in prayer, and to be a shepherd after the heart of God. I then set all my energy to proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus and to building up his Kingdom, for the joy of all those in my care. But was this wise?

### **Through the Days**

If it is important and necessary to have an ideal, in life, we must, like the prophet Micah says, "Do justice, love tenderly, and walk humbly in the presence of God." This well-known prayer remains true: "Lord, grant me the serenity to accept what I cannot change, the courage to change what I can, and the wisdom to know the difference." This can be my prayer, for my daily ministry.

## **A Fertile Winter**

During his pontificate, Pope John Paul II was hospitalised more than ten times. To him, these hospital stays were of an extraordinary apostolic fruitfulness. I would like my weeks of rest, which began in December, to be the same for me. A hymn from the [French] breviary comes to mind, the hymn for the feast of St. Agnes (January 21), which my confrere Father Réналd Hébert set to music: “As the spring slumbers under the snow, renewal sprouts in the winter of man. Recognise the signs of the times, the breath of the Spirit blowing over your dead lands, the Spirit of the Risen Jesus coming to us for the life of the world.” Our gardens and forests probably look lethargic, during the winter months, but without our being aware there is precious, un hoped-for energy. Nothing shows on the outside, but new life is preparing to burst out. This is how I would like to view my medical leave, as days of rest and prayer, and surely days of spiritual renewal.

## **A Time of Prayer for Your Bishop**

Whoever is appointed by the Holy Father as bishop to watch over the growth of the Church, all of the faithful must pray in a special way for him, that he do in all things the will of God, proclaim the Gospel of salvation, pass down all the graces of his ministry, and lead his people along the path of unity and peace. Besides, every liturgy has us pray for the local bishop. I thank you with all my heart for all your prayers on my behalf.

## **From the Chapel to Every Sick Person**

At the Edmundston Hospital I had the opportunity to spend a bit of time in the chapel on the fourth floor. It felt good to be there, praying to Emmanuel, the one who came to be with us. These moments of grace made me realise that each of the sick rooms was like an extension of the beautiful and dear chapel. Beyond the chapel and the room I discovered more and more the presence of Jesus in all the sick. Jesus really identified with the sick: “I was sick and you visited me.” And he, too, carried the burdens of suffering, trial, passion, and even death. This mystery of faith is truly great...

## **A Thousand Thanks!**

I want to express my heartfelt gratitude to all who have been and are still close to me through my episcopal ministry, but especially during these weeks of medical leave. I thank Bishop Gerard Dionne for doing the confirmations in the diocese, and who will preside the Chrism Mass, April 2, in Drummond. My thanks also to Fathers Roger Dionne and William Rice for accepting to take on in turn the role of vicar general. Thank you to the entire diocesan team for their generosity and competence. A thank you to the medical team that did me so much good and keeps on looking after my well-being. And thank you to my family and friends who help me with their limitless friendship and prayers. May the Virgin Mary and her divine Son grant us all their choicest blessings!

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