



## From A Bishop's Journal (683)

### Relearning Prayer

**T**he day of my episcopal ordination, January 9, 1994, I promised to discharge to the end of my life the office entrusted to me by the apostles, especially to pray for the people of God without cease, and to carry out my priestly function as bishop. Now that I am constrained for the coming weeks to take an extended medical leave, it will do me good to dedicate more time to prayer for the people of God. It shall be one of the better ways of discharging my pastoral mission. However, how can I do this, so that my prayer really be the prayer of Jesus, and that it be truly apostolic?

### Wonderful Models of Charity

The liturgy reminds us that the Lord places on our paths men, women, and children to show us the road to holiness. The Preface of the Saints has these words: "You renew the Church in every age by raising up men and women outstanding in holiness, living witnesses of your unchanging love. They inspire us by their heroic lives, and help us by their constant prayers to be the living sign of your saving power." So many wonderful examples of charity are offered to our emulation. We think of the Abbé Pierre who laboured ceaselessly for housing for the poor, of Mother Teresa who dedicated her life to the dying and the oppressed, and of Frederic Ozanam who, through his St. Vincent de Paul Conferences, spent his life in service to the poorest of the poor of his time. Closer to home, there are so many saints and blessed to stimulate our charity and make it more imaginative. We think of Saint Marguerite Bourgeoys who taught the Native children, and Saint Marguerite d'Youville who was all things to all people, with the wounded, the sick, and the elderly; we can remember, here, the Religious Hospitallers of St. Joseph who came to our region in 1873 for the education and care of the local population. Such wonderful charity! Such holiness!

### Wonderful Models of Prayer

Archbishop Anthony G. Meagher of Kingston died January 14. He was only 66, and had been appointed bishop in 1997. He was one of the bishops charged with preparing the 2002 World Youth Day in Toronto. It was at the end of the celebration that he was told he had an incurable cancer. Despite this most serious illness he continued as bishop for another five years. I am sure that the words of the WYD official song were with him for many months: "The One that we have seen with our own eyes, the One that we have touched and felt with our own hands, the One that we have heard

with our own ears, the One that in the depths of our hearts we have met: He is the One we proclaim to you; his splendour is on all, for he shines upon the world. So many in our world drift into sleep, while others only know a darkness without end. Let brothers rise to call them from the deep! Let sisters take their hands to heal and be their friends. Together, let us stand against the storm and in the heart of night be the watchers of the morn. The light of the world, the salt of the earth; we scatter the darkness when love becomes our way. The light of the world, Christ is our light. We shine with his brightness, the reflection of his light from day to day!"

### **Models of Prayer in Our Midst**

If there are any who have doubts about the presence of prayerful men, women and children in our midst, all they need to do is visit the hospital, the manor, or convalescent homes... I myself have witnessed this. So many times they pray, "Your will be done." So often they pray, "Pray for us now and at the hour of death." I am most edified by these people of faith and prayer. I remember that in 1983-1984, I saw Bishop Fernand Lacroix in all his humanity and deep faith, after his return from the Mayo Clinic, where he had gone to be operated for an aneurism. I was with his family and friends; he was extremely tired, and very pale, with a voice hardly a whisper. It was the first time I saw him cry, and cry abundantly. He was back home and was courageously accepting his cross. Who knows: his acceptance of the cross was perhaps the source of his spiritual influence. I also remember Bishop Arsène Richard (1935-1989) of Bathurst. After only one year as bishop, he was stricken with cancer. He called his illness his ministry of suffering. He followed his people step by step from his sickbed. Not being able to do so himself, in 1988 he mandated all his pastors to give confirmation to the children in their parishes on the same day, that is, Pentecost Sunday. Like any believer, a bishop is a man of God, a man of flesh and faith.

### **Jesus' Secret**

Anyone who has read and pondered *The Story of a Soul* by St. Theresa of the Child Jesus knows how much she loved her divine Jesus and how generously she offered herself for all those she recommended to God, especially the priests, the missionaries, the families, without forgetting those in prison or condemned to death. She offered her whole life as an act of love. She never stopped saying that her life was one of love. Along the same lines there is Blessed Charles de Foucauld, and his prayer: "My God, I abandon myself to you. Do with me what you please. Whatever you do, I thank you, I am ready for everything and I accept everything as long as your will is done in me and in all your creatures. I want nothing more, my God. I place my soul into your hands, I surrender my soul to you, my God, with all the love in my heart, because I love you and because it is a need of love to offer myself, to place myself unreservedly into your hands, in absolute confidence, because you are my Father."

### **Prayer of Jesus**

The Gospels have given us a few of Jesus' own prayers, prayers of admiration, of wonder, of petition... The Church continues the prayer of Christ. There is an intimate bond between the prayer of Christ and that of humankind, because it is in Christ and him alone that human religion finds its saving value and achieves its goal, as the spiritual masters remind us. The prayer of the Christian

shares in the prayer of the only Son to his Father. During his life on earth, Jesus prayed, and now he continues doing so without interruption throughout his Church and all its members, in the name and for the salvation of humankind. "Lord, teach us to pray!"

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