



### **From A Bishop's Journal (731)**

**“Are you resolved to pray for the people of God without ceasing?”**

**W**ednesday, January 9, 2008 will mark the fourteenth anniversary of my ordination as bishop. Among the ten questions that Bishop Gerard Dionne asked me before proceeding with the ordination, there was one that stood out and still challenges me today, as we near the 49<sup>th</sup> International Eucharistic Congress to be held in Québec City, June 15 to 22: “Are you resolved to pray for the people of God without ceasing, and carry out the duties of one who has the fullness of the priesthood?” To which I fervently replied: “I am, with the help of God.”

#### **Unceasing Prayer**

Since then, and even before, I pray for all the men, women and children of the Edmundston Diocese, whether they be living or deceased. I am certain that it would be impossible for me to pray for a single moment, without the special help of the Holy Spirit. My thoughts and prayers are with all the people of the Upper Madawaska, Edmundston, Grand Falls, Southern Victoria, and Restigouche pastoral zones, while not forgetting those in my own family and my religious community. Following Saint Paul's invitation, I also carry in my heart and prayer all of the Churches, in union with all my brother bishops. Prayer is one of the most beautiful ministries that one can perform on earth. It is really not I who pray, but Jesus himself who prays in me to the Father, through the grace of the Holy Spirit which I received at baptism, confirmation, and priestly and episcopal ordination. Thanks to the communion of saints, I am not alone in carrying on this ministry, but because of the episcopal charge given to me, I feel myself to be a “very special minister of prayer” for all the people who have been given to my care. I feel in close communion with the young and old, the sick and the healthy, the workers, the poor, and the needy who raise prayers of gratitude and petition to the Lord. At eucharistic celebrations, at the liturgy of the hours and in praying the rosary, in a heart to heart dialogue with Jesus, it is good to pray that the Lord's kingdom come, that his will be done, that everyone be given his or her daily bread, that every person in the diocese live in love and forgiveness, that all be delivered from evil and trials, and that they be given everything necessary to live as disciples of Christ.

## **A Personal Prayer**

Like all the many thousands of brothers and sisters who repeat the inspired prayer of the Roman centurion in the Gospel – “Lord, I am not worthy to receive you, but only say a word and I shall be healed” – I owe it to pray that this extraordinary ministry be not only a personal, routine gesture, but one made in the spirit of Jesus, a simple, trusting prayer, in solidarity with everyone. With the psalmist I sometimes marvel at God’s creation that surrounds me: “How great is your name, O Lord our God, through all the earth!” Sometimes – even very often – I marvel at the men and women around me: “Who is man that you should show concern, and that you should care for?” “The heavens tell of the glory of God and the firmament proclaims the work of his hands.” With Jesus I say: “I bless you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, for having hidden these things from the wise and revealing them to the humble. Yes, Father, such was your good pleasure. Everything has been given to me by my Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father, just as no one knows the Father except the Son and to whomever the Son wants to reveal him.” Very often, in the depth of my silence, I tell the Lord how inept I am at praying like him, and I ask him to have mercy on me and on all those who are unable to pray, or who have lost the taste for prayer. At other times I simply say: “Lord, open my lips and my mouth shall declare your praise. May your grace be on my lips and in my heart to enable me to proclaim the Good News of salvation.” As I consider Jesus’ prayer on the evening of the first Holy Thursday, at the Last Supper, I pray him to consecrate me in the truth, in justice, in holiness and in unity, so that my whole being be totally dedicated to all those who have been given to my pastoral care, that I be the man of prayer according to his heart and according to the Church’s will.

## **A Sinner**

If Pope Saint Gregory VII complained about being unable to carry out this ministry, besieged as he was by all kinds of material and administrative questions, all the more does it happen to me more often than not, that I do not pray without ceasing. I then count on the Lord’s mercy and on the prayer of the Edmundston Church. I know that in homes, schools, and work places there are people with hearts aflame who raise up to God, throughout the day, a prayer “to the glory of God and the salvation of the world.” I join all the sick who cannot pray except by offering their pain and sufferings, their anxiety and distress. I am united to all the young lovers who share their mutual love, to the parents who offer up their joys and concerns, and to all the young people who marvel at everything that surrounds them. In other words, I share my ministry with each and everyone of you. Of course I would be totally happy if I could carry out this work perfectly, but I leave it to the Holy Spirit to pray in me for all of you and for myself, for the entire Church and the whole world.

## **Two Special Prayers**

I often pray for peace: “Help us find, O Lord, in this communion to the sacrament of unity the energy we need in order to always be untiring peacemakers in Christ.” Also, I do not forget this prayer which, on January 9, 1994 I asked the people of the diocese to pray: “Immaculate Virgin, Mother of Jesus and our Mother, you glorify the Lord for doing great things in you, and you proclaim that his love is from age to age. Since the diocese of Edmundston is consecrated especially to you, we come to you: pray for us to your Son Jesus; pray for all the peoples of the earth, pray for all those

who have been called to baptism, pray for the bishop of this diocese and all the pastors of this Church, pray also for all those who have problems or who are in need. Help us be, like you, witnesses of the love of the Lord, and to bless his name forever." May we all, especially during this eucharistic period, heed the Lord's instruction to pray without ceasing. I dare hope that I shall be able to accomplish this ministry to the greater glory of God. Happy New Year 2008!

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