



From A Bishop's Journal (732)

What if We Had a Eucharistic Congress in Each of Our Pastoral Units...?

In my weekly journal I have often taken up the theme of the Eucharist, like the long article in November titled *How to Prepare for the Québec International Eucharistic Congress*, and what I wrote in the article on Father Gilbert's ordination, *The Priest, a Lover of the Eucharist*, in my Christmas article, *Jesus Has Taste, He Visits Us!* or about the fourteenth anniversary of my episcopal ordination when I promised to pray without cease. I believe that these are all elements of life that can motivate us to live ever more deeply our eucharistic commitment. All of these elements, as well as those that I shall publish in the coming months, are to be the basis of my *Pastoral Letter for Pentecost 2008*. In the next three weeks I want to look at the following topics with you: *A Eucharistic Congress in Every Pastoral Unit – Is It Possible?* *Keeping the Lord's Day Holy*, and *Preparing for First Communion*.

A Eucharistic Congress in Every Pastoral Unit – Is It Possible?

Faced with the fact that more and more people in the diocese tell me that they shall not be able to attend the 49th International Eucharistic Congress in Québec City, from June 15 to 22 this year, because of the cost involved, the distance, and the accommodations, I feel that it is important for us to reflect together, at the pastoral unit level, on the possibility of holding a eucharistic congress tailored to local dimensions: Small is beautiful! It is sometimes in the most uncomplicated things that we have deep experiences. Without undue nostalgia, I look back at the five eucharistic congresses that were held in our diocese, in preparation for the Jubilee of the year 2000: in the Restigouche in 1996, on the theme of "Do this in memory of me," in Southern Victoria in 1997, on "The Eucharist at the heart of our mission," in the Upper Madawaska zone in 1998, on "Eucharist and Family: A heritage to discover," in the Grand Falls zone in 1999, on the theme of "Eucharist and Christian Communities," and in the Edmundston zone in 2000, on the theme "Enlivened by the Spirit and nourished by the Eucharist, the Church is renewed!" The simple listing of the congress themes reminds us of the richness of these gatherings. It would be so very important and good to return to them at the parish level, to prepare for the International Eucharistic Congress. In this way everyone in the diocese of Edmundston could take part, at the personal and community levels, in this grand undertaking of the Church.

Different Models

Each pastoral unit, through its pastoral team, liturgy committee and other volunteers, could organise the parish congress. Since several units are composed of three – and four – parishes, periods of prayer and adoration could be set for a 24-hour period in each parish. They would not be 40-hour devotions, but 24-hour ones! So much the better if it were possible to hold the 40-hour devotions, it would be terrific! Since there are 32 parishes in our diocese and there are only 22 weeks remaining before the International Congress, it would be good to notify the Diocesan Centre (735-5578, extension 224) regarding when your pastoral unit plans to hold this special event.

Many Resources

It has been wonderful to see how, in the last months many books, teaching aids and songs have been developed in the four corners of the world, for the Québec international Eucharistic Congress. You will find many resources for prayer and praise on the Congress website, www.cei2008.ca/.

Memory of the Heart

Following my pastoral visits of 1995-2000 and the five eucharistic congresses, I published *Keep in Mind the Memory of Jesus*. At the conclusion of each of the congresses solemn commitments were made by the faithful. So, it might be important to renew them. For example, in the Restigouche I had asked my brothers and sisters to read the word of God fifteen minutes per week and to take part in the Sunday Eucharist. To the people of Southern Victoria I had asked something similar: daily prayer, Gospel sharing, as well as religious education of children and adults. To the people of Upper Madawaska I had asked them to make of their Sunday gathering a special event not only as a Christian community but also as a human family. To the people of Grand Falls I had insisted on the richness of the Word of God and of the Eucharist: It is together that we form the Body of Christ, and we are charged with proclaiming the greatness of every Eucharist. I had reminded the people of Edmundston of the need to recognise the marvellous gifts given to us at baptism and confirmation: an acknowledgement of the grace of every Sunday, of every Eucharist, of the gift of the Word of God, and of the gift of the Spirit of God.

Song of Freedom

As we ponder the meaning of the great mission of Jesus and the deep meaning of every holy year, we can recollect the song I had composed for you in all simplicity, for the year 2000: “Sound the trumpet! Beam with joy! Free all captives! Beam with joy! Wipe out debts! Respect the earth! This is the Great Jubilee!” Yes, this very day the prophecy is being accomplished. “I have freed you, says the Lord. In return, free your neighbour, and you shall change the world!” Lord, make me a channel of your peace! “I have forgiven you, says the Lord. In return, forgive those who have hurt you, and you shall change the world!” Lord, make me a channel of your joy. “I have satisfied your hunger, says the Lord. In return, give rest to the earth, and you shall change the world!” “From age to age you shall celebrate the Lord’s sacred Jubilee, says the Lord, and you shall change the world!” Lord, make

me a channel of your love! “The Spirit of God is upon me, says the Lord. Glorify the Saviour, to proclaim his peace. And we shall change the world!” Lord, make me a channel of your kindness!” I wish you a good Eucharistic Congress!

+ François Thibodeau *gm*

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