



From A Bishop's Journal (735)

**Family- and Parish-Based Catechesis on Peace (1)
“Turn These Stones into Bread”**

Just as I have realized it since my Episcopal ordination, the Lenten season remains for me a time of wonder, of thanksgiving, and of petition. During the years 1996-2000, I had the grace of visiting each one of our Christian communities, and I have of this an unforgettable souvenir. In the summer of 2000 I published a report titled *Keep in Mind the Memory of Jesus*, on the twenty-two visits effected. Since then I have published each Lent a catechetical reflection according to the different directions of family- and parish-based catechetics. I give thanks to the Lord for everything that is going on with the parents and children: each one of these directions arouses my wonder and calls me to action. It is such a happy thing to experience within the Church setting all of these catecheses telling us of the marvels of God.

Three-Year Programme

However, the “marvels of God” are so close to us that they incite us to rediscover them week after week. It is my intention therefore, not only this Lent but also these coming two years to deepen the liturgical texts of Years A, B, and C under the angle of peace. The whole development of every human and of all humankind being the new name of peace, we shall attempt to get a better grasp of each liturgical text of the Lenten Sundays. Peace being the basic and integral respect of every human and divine right, we shall let ourselves be directed day after day, to this ever-desired peace.

The Temptations of Jesus

Whatever the liturgical time, the first Sunday of every Lent tells of the “temptations” of Jesus, temptations to which every human being is exposed throughout life. And the cunning tempter expresses himself so well that we could easily agree with him, today. What leader would fail to approve a universal programme of worldly riches, a distribution of goods without boundaries or frontiers? What leader would agree to limit his socio-economic powers, and even his international prestige? What leader would set restrictions to his personal glory and that of his party? The tempter is rich of centuries-old experience. Often under new guises, he offers to the people today projects that are developmental in name only and that really infringes on every true programme of peace. “Being, power, and appearance” are not constitutive elements for a lasting universal peace: Jesus was able to see under it all the traps set for him, and to face them with clear-sightedness and courage.

“If I Have no Love...”

In his Hymn to Love which we find in his first letter to the Corinthians, the Apostle Paul has the same thing: “If I speak with human tongues and angelic as well, but do not have love, I am a noisy gong, a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and, with full knowledge, comprehend all mysteries, if I have faith great enough to move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give everything I have to feed the poor and hand over my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing.”

Share Lent

As we undergo a new Lenten period, as we are probably working on an extraordinary programme of international cooperation, at a time when we want to answer once again the call of the Canadian Bishops’ who founded in 1967 the outstanding Canadian Catholic Organisation of Development and Peace, the directives of Jesus and Paul cannot leave us indifferent. If at the basis of our “generosity” – however great it may be – there is no love, justice, truth, and liberty, every attempt at development is bound to fail.

Inhuman Tons of Food

To Jesus’ refusal to change stones into bread, we can find similar attitudes in the people who refuse all foreign aid, despite their crying needs. This attitude can scandalize us to the point that we refuse to have anything further to do with them. That attitude may be exceptionally shocking, but the human being, however poor he may be, cannot exchange his human dignity for an offer of food. Jesus himself, hungry and exhausted after forty days of fasting, did not let himself be vanquished by the tempter: “Man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.” Every gift that is stripped of its human and divine flavour is bound to failure. The widow at Sarepta who had only a few drops of oil and a bit of flour to give to the prophet witnessed her gift being transformed into an inexhaustible source of food. The same happened to the woman who had but a few coins to give God: the value of her gift surpassed all of the prestigious and ostentatious gifts offered. When the time comes, Jesus will feed the crowds in the desert, and he shall continue doing so throughout the centuries, in the sacrament of the Eucharist.

“He Alone You Are to Worship...”

It is good to say, at the beginning of Lent, that to bring peace we must be able to respect the rights of God. Under pretext of exaggerated secularism, the very existence of God is denied, in some places. There are so many voices proclaiming the death of God. How, then, love God with all one’s heart, all one’s strength, and all one’s mind? Jesus’ answer to the tempter is always timely: “You shall worship God alone.” And if man’s worship is not directed to the true God, every attempt at peace is futile. “If I have no love, I am nothing.” Lent can therefore be an exceptional time for respecting God and mankind. We have so much work to do! How can we really satisfy suffering humanity that is so close to us, and how can we worship in spirit and in truth a God who is hidden among us, and to whom we owe our being and our life?

Humankind in Distress

Our world would have every reason to despair. Our world also has every reason to hope. Jesus who resisted all false glory knew that he was “the Father’s beloved Son”: he had heard His voice at the

Jordan. May we, during this Lent, see ourselves as the beloved “sons and daughters” of the Father. Through baptism we are united to Jesus and to all our brothers and sisters on earth. And for us and for them we pray: “Give us this day our daily bread.” The outburst of love that brings us to the Father also brings us to our neighbour. Have a good Lent!

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