



### From A Bishop's Journal (762)

#### An Incessant Hymn to Hope

**T**he feast of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary is not only a feast that is celebrated August 15, it is also a marvel that lifts the veil of certain days' dreariness, and give them a new meaning. It is a hymn to hope that has accompanied the Acadian people from the very beginning, a hymn that is still there at the heart of the lives of the most depressed.

#### « *Je me souviens* » – “I Remember”

The activities around the celebration of the four hundredth anniversary of the founding of Québec City (1608) invite us to rediscover our most vital roots, and the values that marked their daily joys and sorrows. With our ancestors, we, too, are invited to revisit our past with its riches and adversities. Doesn't the New Brunswick motto, “*Spem Reduxit*,” invite us to look back, to turn to the country of Hope. To “bring back hope” is truly one of the most wonderful tasks given to our families, our fellow-citizens, our governments, and our religious authorities. It is such a wonderful ministry, to be at the service of hope in difficult times of illness, mourning, and every other trial. In all modesty I can say that this was the service my father always rendered his family: there was no event that could break his will to live. He was an “Acadian” of intrepid faith. Besides, it was not for nothing that we were called “Cajuns” (“des cayens”): zest for life and will to survive were characteristic of the Acadian people.

#### Olympic Motto

If the mottos of New Brunswick and Québec are not sufficient to keep the flame alive in our day-to-day activities, then the motto of the Olympic Games can serve as a springboard for us to go “faster, stronger, and higher,” as we bear our torch across the country, especially in these days when the 2009 World Acadian Congress is in the offing. I am certain that the Acadian people will point out to the whole world the richness of their fellowship and courage, and the extraordinary faith that has guided them throughout their history. Acadia was born in 1604, four years before Québec City. Four years also separate the Deportation of the Acadians from the Capitulation of Québec in 1759.

#### Unbreakable Bonds

When Québec Premier Jean Charest was in Edmundston I had the privilege of being invited to say grace before the banquet in his honour. This prayer was very simple: I blessed the Lord for the ties that bind New Brunswick and Québec. Mr. Charest told me that he would never forget the hymn of thanksgiving:

“Blessed are you, Lord, for all the ties that unite Québec and New Brunswick!” As a Québec native, and called upon to carry out the episcopal charge of my predecessors, three of whom hailed from Québec, I told Mr. Charest how privileged I was to live in the diocese of Edmundston and to sow day after day the seeds of faith, hope, and love.

### **Transfiguration and Assumption**

During the novena preparatory to the feast of the Assumption I was impressed more than usual by the feast of the Transfiguration, on August 6. There is a relationship between the two feasts: both proclaim the transfiguration of our whole being, in the likeness of the risen Jesus and the glorified Virgin Mary. The promise is made to us not only as individuals but also as communities that we shall experience the hope of a world “where there will be no crying, no tears, no mourning.” We are promised happiness, an everlasting feast: yes, “happy are those who are called to his supper.”

### **“I Have a Dream”**

The year 2008 marks the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr. (January 15, 1929 – April 4, 1968). 2008 also marks the 45<sup>th</sup> year of the People’s Freedom March (August 28, 1963). Before more than 250,000 people, in Washington, Doctor King pronounced the most famous speech of his life, a speech that calls to mind the three mottos we referred to earlier, those of New Brunswick, Québec, and the Olympic Games, and the two wonders mentioned, those of the Transfiguration and the Assumption. “Let us not wallow in the valley of despair. I say to you today, my friends, so even though we face the difficulties of today and tomorrow, I still have a dream. It is a dream deeply rooted in the American dream. I dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed: ‘We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men are created equal.’

### **Mountains and Stones**

After dreaming of a new world for his children and grandchildren, Martin Luther King continued: “I have a dream that one day every valley shall be exalted, every hill and mountain shall be made low, the rough places will be made plain, and the crooked places will be made straight, and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together.. This is our hope. This is the faith that I go back to the South with. With this faith we will be able to hew out of the mountain of despair a stone of hope. With this faith we will be able to transform the jangling discords of our nation into a beautiful symphony of brotherhood. With this faith we will be able to work together, to pray together, to struggle together, to go to jail together, to stand up for freedom together, knowing that we will be free one day. This will be the day when all of God's children will be able to sing with a new meaning... ‘My country, ‘tis of thee, sweet land of liberty, of thee I sing. Land where my fathers died, land of the pilgrim's pride, from every mountainside, let freedom ring.’ And if America is to be a great nation this must become true...”

### **Freedom’s Bell**

“And when this happens, when we allow freedom to ring, when we let it ring from every village and every hamlet, from every state and every city, we will be able to speed up that day when all of God's children, black men and white men, Jews and Gentiles, Protestants and Catholics, will be able to join

hands and sing in the words of the old Negro spiritual, ‘Free at last! free at last! thank God Almighty, we are free at last!’”

### **The Gift of God Shall I Uphold**

Since many Acadians and New Brunswickers met together in Québec City to celebrate August 15, allow me to mention two other mottos that invite a sense of wonder, gratitude, and commitment: “*Don de Dieu feray valoir*” (“The Gift of God Shall I Uphold”) is the motto of the four hundred year-old city. “The Eucharist, Gift of God for the Life of the World,” was that of the 49<sup>th</sup> International Eucharistic Congress that was held in Québec City, June 15 to 22, this year. Saint Paul lists a few of the gifts that God gives His people: “the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the law-giving, the worship, and the promises; theirs were the patriarchs, and from them came the Messiah. Blessed forever be God who is over all!” (Romans 9:4-5) As we acknowledge the happiness of living in this new millennium, two hundred fifty years after the unforgettable Deportation and the Capitulation, these words of Jesus still ring in our ears: “Happy the eyes that see what you see, and the ears that hear what you hear.” I am certain of this: the Lord blesses all the peace initiatives that promote harmony between people.” Edith Butler says it so well, in her song: “Hope at our windows, hope that one day perhaps, the sun shall rise on the side of freedom.” Let us remember, and let us give hope to our world.

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