

Bishop's Dinner Presentation

Friday May 10, 2019

by Bishop Mark Hagemoen

Greetings Brother Clergy, Brothers and Sisters in Christ of the Diocese of Saskatoon:

Over this past week, the Church in its liturgical calendar has celebrated 4 “saints” or “blesseds” :

On May 4 we celebrated Blessed Marie-Leonie Paradis. She was born in 1840 in L'Acadia, Quebec. At the age of only 17 she took vows with the Marianite Sisters, a branch of the Congregation of Holy Cross. She taught in Montreal, New York and Indiana before going on to dedicate her life to the care of priests and seminarians. In 1877, Mother Marie-Leonie was joined by 14 young Acadian women and founded the Little Sisters of the Holy Family in Memramcook, New Brunswick. For the rest of her life she worked tirelessly for others and was known for her great generosity and humility.

On May 6 we celebrated Saint Francois de Laval, who lived from 1623 to 1708. He was the first bishop of Quebec City, He founded the first seminary in Canada – the Seminary of Quebec, now called Laval University – in order to supply priest for his vast diocese, which covered much of upper North America. He was known for having great pastoral concern for both settlers and native people . He was an outstanding educator and administrator, a generous benefactors and a caring and pious man. He is the patron of the Bishops of Canada.

On May 21 we will celebrate Saint Eugene de Mazenod. He was born in France in 1782, and ordained in 1811. He amazing religious experience led him to serve the poor and the young. He was very interested in the way of the missionary, and he founded a missionary institute of priests and lay brothers in 1826, the Oblates of Mary Immaculate, whose particular charism was to minister to those who have never heard of Christ. In response to requests from bishops in North America, the congregations sent missionaries to Canada, and within 10 years they had covered all of Canada and expanded into the United States. De Mazenod became a bishop in France, and was a fervent supported of the pope – especially in matters of education and doctrine.

On May 24 we will celebrate Blessed Louis-Zephirin Moreau. He was born in Becancour, Quebec, in 1824 – the fifth of 13 children. He went to seminary, but was initially rejected for the priesthood because of poor health. However, because of a

hard-working and persistent character, he persevered and was ordained in 1846. He later became the bishop of the Diocese of Saint-Hyacinthe, where he became known as “good bishop Moreau.” He had compassion for low-income workers who faced very difficult circumstances, and helped establish the forerunners of today’s mutual help societies and credit unions. He also oversaw the foundation of several religious communities. He died in 1901, and was beatified in 1987.

Why do I take great pains to outline these special heroes of our Catholic faith?

We know there are many saints and ‘blesseds’ – those who have been beatified and whose cause is up for sainthood. The ones I have mentioned as you may have noticed are all either from Canada or have affected Canada significantly. And these are only a few of the heroic and dedicated souls who have gone before us. Indeed, many such Catholic Canadian heroes are in our midst to this day - persons who are in love with the Lord, and who are compelled to give themselves to serve God’s people in the Church and in the world. As you hear their stories, you quickly noticed that they not only served Catholics, but all others as well. When you are in love with the Lord, you also share in His task to serve, care, and love all His flock.

God is still calling men and women today. And as a church and a diocese, we must continue to call and help our youth and young adults hear and respond to God’s call. God is calling men and women in the Diocese of Saskatoon to special and meaningful vocations and ways of life whereby they serve God’s plan and live heroic lives in the Church and world of today.

However, we all know that the climate and culture has changed. Our country once was a source of missionaries. Our diocese is now served by missionaries from other parts of the world, including Africa, India, and Southeast Asia. We appreciate and need these missionaries. They serve and enrich our diocese so much. However, we also must get better at supporting young men and women to hear and respond to Jesus Christ who is calling *within our Diocese of Saskatoon*.

We need to better call and support young men in discerning priesthood; we need to better call and support young men and women in discerning religious and consecrated life; we need to better call and support young men and women in discerning the call to marriage and family; and we need to better call and support men and women to leadership and discipleship in our church and in our world of today.

Of course, we face a very different circumstances and our prevailing culture. With the greatly increased pace and frequency of life and technology – the Church too is facing a youth culture that clearly no longer is supported by a prevalent Christian culture. Our young people are bombarded with messages in a milieu that is in many ways in stark contrast of what we used to assume were common and

reliable values, such as: building strong moral character; exulting and living Gospel values; developing and living a social conscience that reflects a Christian vision.

While I certainly do not mean to scare-monger, we do need to name and admit what we face. However, our Lord is raising up young people (as He always has in every age)... who will be inspired and gifted to respond to Christ in our time and age.

As we honour the memory of the great Catholic and Canadian, Jean Vanier – who died earlier this week – and dedicated his life to showing the world what it means to be *fully human*, let us be inspired by his dedicated legacy of care for the ones on the margins because of a life dedicated to God’s vision of humanity – versus the world’s limited vision which continues to lower the bar when it comes to human achievement and flourishing.

This diocese is well served by many youth and young adult organizations: Face-to-Face Ministries; Pure Witness Ministries; Catholic Christian Outreach, NET Ministries, our Office of Youth Ministry – as well as our Colleges and faith institutes, which include St. Thomas More College, St. Peter’s College, and St. Therese School of Faith and Mission. We have many tools and supports to bring to bear on calling and enabling young people to hear God’s call to live excellent lives, and carry out the life, mission, and work of Christ today.

I would now like to introduce two that I have come to know well over the last while, who are in the 3rd year – called the ‘apostolic year’ at St Therese School of Faith and Mission I have asked them to briefly share their vocation journey, and what would be helpful to them from their church and faith communities. I introduce Rhéal and Kaitlyn

(EDITOR’S NOTE: Rhéal Chartier, of Lorette, MB, and Kaitlyn Deck, of Unity, SK, recently completed their third year at St. Therese Institute of Faith and Mission at Bruno SK. They spoke about their experience at St. Therese, and their vocation discernment, and practical ways to help such discernment.)

Frankly, as people of faith, we know that hearing and responding to the Lord is not an option if we wish to live meaningful and joy-filled lives. I now outline the elements of an expanded vocations strategy to call and support men and women in our Diocese of Saskatoon.

This strategy must address academic, spiritual, and human formation. Over the last several years – human and spiritual formation has been greatly emphasized

and expanded – as a crucial and necessary feature of comprehensive and effective education and formation for all vocations and walks of life.

- 1) In terms of the academic – we may be the most blessed Catholic community in Canada because of the relationship of our Catholic colleges – St. Thomas More and St. Peter’s College – who have a federated relationship with the University of Saskatchewan. In Saskatchewan we are able to provide an academic program that not only may prepare them for priesthood, religious life, or family life and lay leadership in the world, and also provides them a solid academic degree that they can track to many other academic and professional programs. We need to build on this feature. I am pleased to announce that I have already begun discussions about this with the President of St Thomas More College – who is both receptive and excited.

Let me quickly highlight that good education as you all know is about education of the whole human person – mind, heart, soul ... seeking truth and beauty, and the way of compassion and service. Just 2 days ago, the President of the University of British Columbia, Dr. Santo Ono, was speaking at St. Mark’s Theological College in Vancouver. He was addressing the theme a good liberal arts education as a significant and even crucial contributor to higher education today, because of its emphasis on being wise by following the way of wisdom and heart. He highlighted the motto *Tuum Est*, which is also on the UBC coat of arms. *Tuum Est* means *it is yours*. This is legitimate, all be it somewhat utilitarian. But Dr. Ono went on to share a secondary meaning: *Tuum Est* means *It is up to you!* This meaning refers to the blessing and gift of education and formation, which is to make a significant difference for good in the world. For people of faith in Our Lord Jesus Christ – *it is up to you – to us - to use, give, and offer our lives for others*. It is up to us to be absolutely open & generous with the blessings that God desires deeply to give us – precisely to bless, to share and to support and serve all Gods people... and indeed all of Creation.

- 2) In terms of human and spiritual formation – we need to hear and act on Pope Francis’s call to the *art of accompaniment* with our young people. This means that as a diocese we need to continue to bring to bear the support of our priests and religious, as well as our Catholic schools, and Catholic youth-serving organizations in providing even great supports to our young people as they move through adolescence and into their post-high school formation and discernment. This will feature the following:
 - a) Expanding our youth ministry efforts to parishes to create youth programs and experiences with the aim of deepening young people’s relationship with Jesus Christ and the Church, building personal moral character, and

providing ongoing opportunities for young people discover the God-given gifts and mission in our world.

- b) Partnering with our Catholic youth-serving organizations through programs, retreat experiences, and service projects where young people experience the remarkable opportunity and growth that happens when we love, serve, and grow as disciples
- c) Through our Vocations Office, and working with our already mentioned Catholic youth and young adult missionary communities, providing ongoing mentoring and community support – that features a comprehensive and clear approach to accompanying young people as they discern the call to priesthood, religious and consecrated life, and/or married life and lay discipleship and leadership in today’s world.

In order to do all of this, I ask you to consider the following 2 financial and material needs:

- 1) **\$30,000** A Youth and Young Adult Leadership & Vocations Support Fund to be co-managed by our Vocations and Youth Offices.

This would feature:

- a. Youth leadership and service opportunities
 - b. Vocation discernment programs and retreats for young adults
- 2) **\$40,000** Support to young men and women actively discerning a track to priesthood, consecrated/ religious life/ lay ministry leadership. We very much appreciate the new initiative by the Knights of Columbus to provide \$1000 per year to seminarians. But this is only a small part of the annual cost – which is as high as about \$25,000 per year – to educate and support a seminarian.

We also wish to provide in our own diocese an expanded undergraduate degree opportunity along with a program of spiritual & human formation to young women and men considering priesthood, religious / consecrated life, and to lay men and women thinking about roles in teaching and Catholic leadership for the future of our parishes, diocese, and for our many Catholic organizations.

The education and formation support need to come from us. Thus, I hope in the near future to be able to announce and undergraduate academic program with a corresponding human and spiritual formation strategy – that would be offered by our Diocese.