

June 2008

This June edition concludes the offerings for the 2007-2008 school year. Featured this month are an Interim editorial on Quebec society, the 49th International Eucharistic Congress and a human rights complaint with a twist.

The school year is drawing to a close and we wish all educators a well-deserved period of relaxation and refreshing adventures away from the classrooms. We look forward to the fall and the excitement of a new beginning. Look for our curriculum materials on the upcoming American election in November and the commemoration of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in December. Once again *The Interim* will also be co-sponsoring the Father Ted Colleton Scholarship program. Look for details on this scholarship in September and bring it to the attention of the relevant departments in your school or directly to the attention of interested students.

We welcome feedback and collaboration. We would love to publish materials submitted by practicing teachers and home schoolers.

The International Eucharistic Congress

A Eucharistic Congress is a gathering to which a local church invites the other churches of the same region or of the same nation or of the whole world. The tradition arose in 1879 and has continued to the present time, having taken place in many cities and nations around the globe. Eucharistic Congresses are primarily Catholic manifestations but they can have an ecumenical and inter-religious dimension.

As stated on the websites devoted to such events, “the centre of every Eucharistic Congress is the celebration of the Eucharist, the source and summit of the whole Christian life”. The celebration of the word of God and talks on the theme of the Congresses can contribute to examining the various aspects of the Eucharistic Mystery. The possibility of praying in common and of adoring the Blessed Sacrament in designated churches contributes to interiorizing these themes. Eucharistic processions can help to express a public and ritual dimension of the faith in the Eucharist, which is celebrated, reflected upon and re-affirmed during the Congress.

The 49th Eucharistic Congress slated for Quebec City has



the following theme: “*The Eucharist, God’s Gift for the Life of the World*”.

In the foundation document explaining the context and theme of the Congress, several important points are made as to the history of the locale, the faith component of the people who settled the land, and of course the changes that have overtaken not only Quebec society but all of the modern world.

This Congress will offer an intense time to pray, reflect on, and celebrate the gift of the holy Eucharist. The Quebec conference coincides with the 400th anniversary of the foundation of the first French city in North America, which would become in the 17th century an important entry point for missionary activity on the entire continent.

... The city of Quebec, with its motto, “God’s gift: make it count,” stands at the heart of the history of a people whose motto proclaims “I remember.” This motto reminds us of the mandate that Jesus gave to his apostles at the Last Supper: “Do this in memory of me.”

... [it] is particularly important today to remember God’s gift, for, in the midst of remarkable technological progress, notably in the area of communication, our world experiences a deep interior emptiness that it perceives as an absence of God. Fascinated by its own creative capacities, contemporary humanity tends to forget its Creator and set itself up as the sole master of its own destiny.

This temptation to put ourselves in God’s place does not silence the longing for the infinite that inhabits our depths and the authentic values that we strive to develop, even if they do risk leading us astray. The value we place on freedom, our longing for equality, the ideal of solidarity, our access to unrestricted communications, our technological abilities and the protection of the environment are unquestionably admirable values that are a credit to our world and bring forth fruits of justice and brotherhood.

... forgetting the Creator risks closing human beings in on themselves, in a self-centredness that results in an inability to love and make lasting commitments, and increasingly frustrates the universal longing for love and freedom. For human beings, created in God’s image and

for communion with God, “cannot fully find [themselves] except through a sincere gift of [themselves].” [1] The fulfillment of the human person comes about by this self-gift that signifies openness to the other, welcome and respect for life.

But today human beings are constantly pushing back the limits of our mastery over the transmission and end of life. Unchecked, this power over life and death, although technologically possible, threatens humanity itself. For, in the strong words of Pope John Paul II, a “culture of death” has taken over many secularized societies. The death of God in the culture leads almost inevitably to the death of human beings. We see this, not only in currents of nihilistic thought, but above all in the conflictual and broken relationships that are multiplying at all levels of human experience, disrupting marriage and the family, multiplying ethnic and social conflicts, and increasing the gulf between the rich and the huge majority who are the poor.

Despite our keener consciousness of human dignity and human rights, we are witnessing the multiplication of violations of these rights almost everywhere on the planet: the accumulation of weapons of mass destruction, which make a lie of all talk of peace; a growing concentration of material goods in the hands of a few, which enables the sure spread of globalization, while, to our shame, the fundamental needs of masses of the poor are ignored. World peace is undermined by injustice and misery, and terrorism becomes the weapon of choice of the desperate.

On the religious level, people today no longer are willing to submit themselves to an authority that dictates their conduct. They must cope with widespread access to many different beliefs and the growing difficulty of banding on to new generations the heritage that they have received from their own religious tradition. The Christian faith is no exception to this pattern, and is even more affected by it because its transmission relies on revelation that reason alone cannot measure. Jealous of their hard-won freedom, human beings construct their own spirituality without any reference to religion, thus sometimes giving in to the excessively individualistic tendencies of contemporary democratic cultures.

The holy Eucharist contains the essential elements of a Christian response to the tragedy of a humanism that has lost its constitutive point of reference to the God who is creator and redeemer.



The Eucharist remembers God’s saving action. As the memorial of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, it brings to the world the gospel of Christ’s definitive peace, for which we always hope in the present life. In celebrating the holy Eucharist in the name of all humanity redeemed by Jesus Christ, the Church welcomes the gift that God promised us: “But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name,

will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you” (John 14.26). God definitively remembers the divine covenant with humanity and gives the divine self as food for eternal life: “He remembers his love” sings the Virgin Mary in her Magnificat (Luke 1.54).

http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pont_committees/eucharist-congr/index.htm

http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pont_committees/eucharist-congr/documents/rc_committ_euchar_doc_20070913_49a-testo-base_en.html

Questions

1. What is the purpose of a Eucharistic Congress?
2. What is the theme of the Congress being held in Quebec this June?
3. Find out how many are expected to attend the Congress.
4. Find out what special preparations have been made to make it a successful celebration of faith.
5. What historical celebration coincides with the 49th Eucharistic Congress?
6. Will it be a wake-up call to Quebec society?
7. In the “foundational document” setting out the context in which the Congress is being held, what points are made about modern society?
8. What are the serious problems which modern societies face? Are they material or spiritual in nature?
9. *The holy Eucharist contains the essential elements of a Christian response to the tragedy of a humanism that has lost its constitutive point of reference to the God who is creator and redeemer.* Meditate on the statement and relate it to the purpose of the Congress.
10. One aim of such Congresses is to publicly manifest the faith. How does one publicly express one’s faith? How difficult is it to publicly express one’s faith?
11. Keep a journal to record how the event is covered in the various media in Canada. Assess the coverage and draw conclusions about the openness of media to reporting on religion and faith matters.

Raising Lower Canada

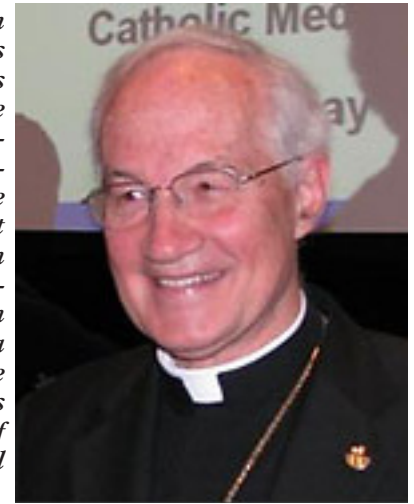
Paul Tuns, *The Interim* June 2008

June marks the 400th Anniversary of the founding of Quebec. It is an impressive milestone but the achievement is marked by ambiguity. Indeed, the celebration begs the question: can it really be said that Quebec has endured this long?

During the 1960s, Quebec went from being the most religious province in Canada to the most secular. In what became known as “The Quiet Revolution,” the Catholic Church was not merely separated from the State, but was divorced. However, because religion was such a vital part of the identity and the history of the province, in losing its faith, Quebec lost itself in the process. The Quiet Revolution was the only revolution in history that didn’t begin anything new; rather, Quebec, as a recognizable entity, merely ceased to exist.



In 1950, William Faulkner said, in his Nobel address, Man “is immortal, not because he alone among creatures has an inexhaustible voice, but because he has a soul, a spirit capable of compassion and sacrifice and endurance.” If man lives on by virtue of his soul, a nation lives on, in the same way, through its children. The children of a nation are both its soul and its future.



It is little wonder, then, that the secularization of Quebec produced a desire for the “separation” of Quebec. Severed from its history, unmoored from its morals, haunted by its memory, Quebec became an exile in its own land. But seceding from Canada will not solve these problems, for the true separation of Quebec has already occurred. Indeed, the Quiet revolution separated Quebec from itself.

A separated Quebec would be a new national body. But it would be a body without a soul. In fact, the longing for a new beginning, after 400 years of a unique and dramatic history, indicates a restlessness which no political end can fulfill. As Cardinal Marc Ouellet said in an open letter to the Catholics of Quebec, the province’s “search for spirituality is languishing.”

All of the goals which separatism seeks can be achieved through a renewed appreciation by Quebec of its heritage. As the French version of our national anthem announces, “our story is an epic.” But that story -- *histoire*, in French -- remains incomplete without living faith which animated Quebec for so many centuries.

Thus, there is a way forward, but it leads through the past; to cure the malaise of Quebec, it is necessary to recognize the sickness as amnesia. And it is equally important to recognize this sickness as a symptom of the culture of death. In the words of Cardinal Ouellet, Quebec’s “spiritual void ... is the fruit of the spirit of the world which, by wanting to eliminate God, suggests, in a thousand ways, that we become our own God.”

Quebec’s wounds will not be healed by separation, but by healing the separation which has already occurred. Quebec does not need to become a new nation, but, rather, it needs to celebrate its culture by sharing it with new children. A culture walks on its feet; true patriotism lies in the patrimony of faith and the propagation of the family.

Cardinal Ouellet writes, “a just and enlightened exam of our past would help, I think, recognize our limits but also nourish Quebecers’ pride and confidence in their future.” We share the Cardinal’s confidence in the future of Quebec, a future that is guaranteed by the new generation which will inherit an epic history, a valour steeped in faith. We hope that the motto of la belle province will take on a new meaning as it enters its 5th century: “Je me souviens,” – I remember.

Questions

1. Some people are saying that there is little hoopla associated with the 4th Centenary of the founding of Quebec. Why would that be so? What does the editorial mean by “the achievement is marked by ambiguity”?
2. Wasn’t the founding of Quebec also the beginning of Canada? Should the anniversary not be marked also by Canadians generally?
3. What was the Quiet Revolution? In what sense has the Quiet Revolution been a disaster for Quebec?
4. Did the secularization of Quebec lead to demands for “separation” from Canada?
5. If Quebec were to separate what would be lost that has not already been lost?
6. What does the editorial call for in place of separation for Quebecers to achieve their goals? Do you agree?
7. Why is Quebec today the most anti-clerical part of Canada?
8. What is the amnesia that the province suffers from?
9. How is the culture of death manifested in Quebec?
10. What is the fertility rate for the province?
11. Does Quebec have a future given its procreative problems?
12. Find out how many of the children who are born are born out of wedlock.
13. How can Quebec’s motto be a true source of renewed hope?



“Reluctance to procreate, to spawn life, compromises Quebec’s future.... We need a serious dialogue on values and our Christian stance to once again give faith and hope to Quebec’s soul.” Cardinal Ouellet’s incisive diagnosis links Quebec’s spiritual crisis to its demographic collapse. A nation with no memory has no future, and a nation with no faith has no hope.

Hamilton RTL files complaint

Tony Gosgnach, *The Interim*, June 2008

Following in the footsteps of several Canadian university campuses that have attempted to squelch the pro-life point of view, the city of Hamilton earlier this year removed pro-life advertisements from its bus shelters, claiming they were “inappropriate” and “controversial.” But now, the Hamilton Right to Life organization is fighting back.

The local pro-life group has filed a complaint with the Ontario Human Rights Commission, naming the city, transit director Don Hull, general manager of public works Scott Stewart and Councillor Brian McHattie for allegedly violating its Charter right to free expression by pulling the benign ads, which featured the image of a pregnant woman and the question, “Abortion. Have we gone too far?”

It was Hull who had made the decision to remove the ads this past January, after two of them had been defaced with pro-abortion graffiti and three complaints had been received from the public.

“We don’t think it’s appropriate for that medium to be used for controversial community messaging,” Hull told the media at the time. He was supported by City Councillor Brian McHattie, who said: “For me personally, it definitely was offensive.”

A subsequent debate in the pages of the city’s daily newspaper saw 70 of 92 respondents say the city should not have removed the advertisements. But the city stuck to its guns and failed to put the advertisements back. Then, a firm handling advertisements for city buses called off a contract to run them on transit vehicles.

That set the stage for the filing of the complaint on March 26. It was formulated by Peter Bousby, a lawyer and the secretary for Hamilton Right to Life.

“It’s outrageous, in a free and democratic society, for one or two people on city council who probably, let’s face it, have an opposing viewpoint on the whole pro-life issue, to figure they have the right to simply take down the signs,” he said. “We weren’t even contacted ... Hamilton Right to Life wasn’t even offered a courtesy call.”

Bousby said Hamilton Right to Life decided to pursue a human rights complaint, rather than a lawsuit or small claims court action – despite the poor reputation human rights commissions have come to have – because the former avenue “has a wider net. It’s got a greater message for society as a whole ... What we wanted to do is widen the scope and importance of this particular issue, because we’re dealing with the rights of the unborn or, in our opinion, the rights the unborn should have.”

Indeed, if the intent of pro-abortion city representatives was to suppress the pro-life point of view, the tactic may well have backfired. The issue and the advertisement have received prominent exposure in local media, far more than would have been the case had the ads simply remained in bus shelters.

“We have received good publicity about this and many

people have commented about seeing the (newspaper) articles,” said Hamilton Right to Life president Ted Slaman.

“The fight has already shown fruit,” said Bousby. “Let’s face it, it’s free advertising. And who knows, maybe there’s a young girl out there who has unbearable pressure put on her to have an abortion by a disgruntled boyfriend or whatever. Maybe this type of advertising is the extra support she needs to get the resolve, stand true and have the baby.”

The next step in the complaint process is a mediation attempt, before the matter moves to the investigative stage and a possible tribunal hearing.

“If the city council wants to reverse its decision, that would be excellent,” said Bousby. “If not, it’s going to be a long process, but we will, in the words of Saint Paul, fight the good fight. All the city of Hamilton has to do is back down, admit what they did was anti-democratic and simply put the posters up for eight weeks ... We’d also like a written apology, quite frankly ... (and) we’re

asking for a total sum of one dollar – one Canadian dollar – in general damages.”

For their part, city personnel are not commenting on the human rights action, saying they have not seen the text of the complaint and have referred the matter to the city’s legal department.

Bousby said Hamilton Right to Life is fighting back “because the unborn deserve it.” He asked for prayer for the success of the effort, because “it’s an unbelievable travesty in my mind to have no law on the books regulating abortion. It’s outrageous and a sad commentary on our society.”



9 months.
The length of time an
abortion is allowed in Canada.

abortion.
Have we gone too far?

www.AbortionInCanada.ca

Questions

1. What ad did the Hamilton RTL group run on the city transit system?
2. Why was the ad removed? What reasons were cited by city officials? Were they in the right?
3. Does the event raise serious issues? What are they??
4. Why is the Hamilton RTL taking the case to the human rights commission?
5. How has the dispute affected the abortion debate in Hamilton?
6. Was the ad effective as a means of raising awareness of the abortion issue? Is the ad information truthful? Is there any problem? What could a pro-choice person find offensive or objectionable?
7. Is this episode part of a larger concern involving freedom of expression and discrimination against pro-life groups or is it an isolated and unfortunate instance? Are there other examples? (see the Michael Coren article in the Sunday, June 1 *Toronto Sun*)
8. What can be done to ensure fairness of news coverage and fairness in accessing advertising space?