



Homily by  
His Eminence, Cardinal  
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**CELEBRATION OF THE WORD**  
*Pavillon de la Jeunesse, Quebec City, February 28, 2014*

***“Celebrating the Joy of the Gospel!”***

Dear brothers and sisters,

When we look closely at the person of Jesus Christ and let him look into our own eyes, we become *fascinated* by the profound beauty and immense tenderness we are contemplating: that of the Face of God *illuminated* for us and our own faces becoming *illuminated* by his gaze.

During the thirty-three years of his life among us, Jesus enabled every person he met – and who so wished – to be cleansed, regenerated and restored to life by the incredible Love of God made so tangible, so visible, so accessible by his presence.

Christ Jesus had only one mission in mind: to proclaim and to make possible :

To proclaim and to make it possible for human beings who were *closed in* on themselves to be looked upon by the eyes of God ; for everyone *weighed down by daily burdens and happenings* to have the privilege of being raised up by the very hand of God ; for every person who was *broken, sad and suffering* to know the happiness of being acknowledged and welcomed by the tenderness of God ; for every person *in despair* to awaken to the joy of new life in the resurrection of Christ ; for every human to be able at last to name and to see the Face of infinite and unconditional Love : Jesus, the Father, the Holy Spirit.

Jesus, however, did not act in the manner of modern super heroes. He was especially not a “lone hero” bending over a miserable world to save it through magical power. None of that in

him ! I will tell you once again the story of the three Gospel passages proclaimed tonight (*Jn* 1:1-5,9-12; *Jn* 3:14-19; *Lk* 15:1-7), showing the links among them, as: the parable of the lost sheep found again:

Once upon a time, Jesus the Christ came to dwell among us, walking the roads of men and women. He carried with him the “light” of the Love of the Father. He sought only one thing, to enable those who might be experiencing some inner darkness – overwhelmed by discouragement, wounded by a lack of love, crushed by rejection, or beset by fear – to discover that they did not belong to a world of death ! He taught them that they were made for the freedom they had stopped hoping for, that they did not belong to whatever had long disfigured them, but that they were made for Beauty, Truth and Light !

*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God (...). The Word was the true Light that shines for everyone who comes into the world* (cf. *Jn* 1). Noting that all men and women at some time in their lives feel astray and lost in a desert within, Jesus – because he is the ultimate Lover – came down to find us and offered to bear our suffering.

How did he do so ? He took our suffering upon himself, he let himself be pierced through and through by the pain of men and women. He bore their suffering thoroughly so that those in pain might see themselves in him. He therefore chose – because that is the way of Love – to go astray with all lost sheep, those 99 left in the desert of inner wounds: the desert of our lack of love and faith, the desert of our unenlightened choices, the desert of our reflexes and tendencies too often turned towards self-interests, the desert of our many forms of death.

Then those who still bear the stripes of the evils they endured, those who bear the nail marks of words and actions that tore at their bodies and souls, those who bear the stabs of words and actions that pierced their hearts and sides can see in Jesus crucified the God who made himself like them !

It was in the desert of the hunger and thirst for life, in the very desert of death, that he revealed – on a certain Friday afternoon, known henceforth as *Good Friday* – that no one among us belongs to the desert, no one among us was meant to live there, and no one among us is condemned to remain there.

Why ? Because : *God so loved the world that he gave his only Son so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life* (*Jn* 3:16). The cross and the paschal candle, carried in procession here a few moments ago, highlight this Word: *As Moses lifted up the bronze serpent in the desert, so must the Son of man be lifted up so that everyone who believes may have eternal life in him* (*Jn* 3:14). And so we find ourselves contemplating the Face of God which becomes illuminated for us, as our own faces become illuminated by his gaze. We let ourselves be transfigured, and find life in abundance.

Having finally “found” them, Jesus the Lamb that was slain likewise becomes the Good Shepherd who sets the lost sheep on his shoulders (having raised them upon the cross and in his Resurrection). He then enters the Father’s house with all the sheep, in the tremendous joy of Easter mornings, to celebrate with all the Saints already in heavenly joy, in the joy of the Resurrection !

That is the great evangelical joy we are celebrating together tonight! That is the joy we can taste every time we let the Lord touch us in our wounds and lift us onto his shoulders as the “Good Shepherd” – in Reconciliation, in Eucharist, in a fraternal Christian community – to lead us out of our deserts! That is when we savor the joy of Easter, the joy of living the Resurrection ! Through Him, with Him and in Him we can finally come home and discover our identity as true sons and daughters of God. He is “*the Way, the Truth and the Life.*”

When Christ left his apostles and all his disciples, he commissioned them to continue what he had begun. For this purpose, he filled them with his Spirit, the Holy Spirit. For 2000 years, the breath of Pentecost, the breath of the Risen One has made the Church the sacrament of the holiness of God. Even though its history, both ancient and more recent, shows that the Church has not always been up to that holiness, it nevertheless walks forward with the world. These years have not been easy, but they prompt us to focus once again on Jesus Christ, to become his disciples by letting ourselves be converted and sent forth.

We, the baptized in the Church, yearn from the depths of our beings to communicate the *faith* that turns us towards God and humanity. We yearn to revive the *hope* that enables us to believe in a present and a future filled with the Love of God. We long to exercise *charity*, a gift we receive so that all human beings may meet the Love of God on their way – so that all humans may personally know that they do not belong to what disfigures ; so that with the baptized, all humans may delight in the joy of heaven on earth; so that no human being may feel lost forever but know that every one is promised life in abundance, eternal Life.

My friends, that is the joy of the Gospel when it is shared ! That is the mission entrusted to us by the Lord. Pope Francis invites us to live our mission courageously in the midst of human realities. He reminds us that “*Jesus wants us to touch human misery, the suffering flesh of others. He hopes that we will stop looking for those personal or communal niches that shelter us from the maelstrom of human misfortune*” (*Evangelii Gaudium*, No. 270).

I, Gérald Cyprien, your pastor, your archbishop, and now Cardinal of the Church of Christ, wish with all my heart that the Church of Quebec may become more and more that community of baptized persons which lets itself be restored, renewed by the light of the Risen One, and which becomes engaged in the great mission to announce the joy of the Gospel to the world. Pope Francis reminds us that “*All have the right to receive the Gospel. Christians have the duty to proclaim it without excluding anyone (...). The Church does not grow by proselytizing but ‘by attraction’*” (*Evangelii Gaudium*, No. 15). And so I tell you tonight, let us become attractive! Let us be radiant with Easter joy !

My very dear brothers and sisters, do you want to join me in continuing to build the Church of Christ so that Life, the true Life, the one that comes from God, may renew our Quebec society in depth ? We have come a long way together following the four objectives I proposed to you three years ago, when I inaugurated my ministry as Archbishop of Quebec. Do you remember ?

Here they are again :

1. Let us keep our eyes focused on Jesus the Good Shepherd. He walks before us.
2. Let us be men and women of the Word of God, the Word of Life which gathers us and sends us forth.
3. Let us take the road of the New Evangelization by becoming missionary disciples.
4. Let us witness to our faith and our hope, in everyday life, in our Christian communities, and in the very midst of human realities.

Now, I want to emphasize two other special matters. First of all, I have chosen to dedicate my Cardinalate to the family. Our families are greatly in need of support, presence, assistance and hope. The Church cannot be healthy, society will not be healthy if the basic family cell is not healthy. The family is the cradle of life and of all vocations. The family is our future, for each and every one of us. May the Lord enable me, along with you, to better serve and accompany all the families of our Diocese.

My second emphasis will be on vocations. I am convinced that the Lord continues to call men and women to give their lives in service to the Gospel, in service to the mission of the Church, in service to humanity. All vocations are important, however different they may be. At present, our Church has a great need for priests, pastors to serve this portion of the People of God entrusted to us.

Together, we must do all we can to encourage priestly vocations, to accompany young people in their discernment, and to support them as they discover God's call and respond to it. The *Petit Séminaire Diocésain de Québec* is a ministry called to continue supporting youths and families throughout the Diocese. Pray for that great undertaking. Our *Grand Séminaire de Québec*, with its 350 years of existence, and the *Redemptoris Mater* International Seminary have the important responsibility to form the missionary pastors whom our Church needs for the coming decades. Let us keep those teams of leaders and seminarians in our hearts and prayers.

We must also implore the Lord to give us vocations for women and men in all the older and newer forms of consecrated life, in order that we may together be able to evangelize and share the joy of the Gospel.

(In English) Tonight, we celebrate the Joy of the Gospel, the Joy of God's infinite love for humanity. This is why he sent his only Son Jesus Christ to our world: to open for all of us the door to Life, abundant Life, eternal Life. Let us rejoice in his living presence in our midst. May we be disciples of Jesus Christ and missionaries in a world that needs his Light and Truth. That is our mission!

(In Spanish) Gathered to celebrate the Joy of the Gospel, we acknowledge that true joy comes from God. It is a gift that he offers us and pours out upon our lives when we open our hearts to Jesus Christ the Savior. By renewing us with the strength and freshness of the Gospel, may the Lord make of each of us and our Church a community of missionary disciples. That is what the world expects of us. It is our mission to share that new life which leads to joy.

I would like to end with a prayer :

Blessed Virgin Mary, Star of the new Evangelization, Patron of our Diocese, help us to be radiant with the service of an ardent, generous faith, with justice and love for the poor through the witness of our communion, in order that the joy of the Gospel may reach to the ends of the earth and that no periphery may be deprived of his Light.

Mother of the living Gospel, source of joy for the lowly, pray for us.

Amen. Alleluia !