



Homily given by  
His Eminence  
**Gérald Cyprien Cardinal Lacroix**  
*Archbishop of Québec*  
*Primate of Canada*

**SOLEMN VESPERS**  
**ON THE FEAST OF OUR LADY OF MOUNT CARMEL**  
**PILGRIMAGE OF THE DIOCESE OF MANCHESTER**  
*Notre-Dame de Québec Cathedral Basilica,*  
*Québec, July 16, 2014*

**« God chose us to be holy ! »**

Très chers frères et sœurs du Diocèse de Manchester, bienvenus à Québec,  
Dear brothers and sisters from the Diocèse of Manchester, welcome to Quebec,

In his letter to the Ephesians, Paul wrote: “*God chose us in him before the world began to be holy and blameless in his sight.*” What a calling! God chose us! Before everything existed, He knew you! He loved you! He called you to share in his greatest characteristic : to be holy !

Is there a greater sign of love than to want our loved ones to share in our heritage ? Is that not one of the objectives of your pilgrimage : to touch, to see, to listen, to feel the roots of so many of your ancestors who once lived here in Quebec: traditional Family names like Tremblay, Boisvert, Bouchard, Fortier, Desjardins, Gendron, etc.

And as you journey in these coming days, you will no doubt discover that our ancestors were men and women of deep faith, deep trust in God. Like the prophet who went up Mount Carmel and was consoled and confirmed by the Lord, we too will rediscover the greatest truth : we are loved by a holy God! Furthermore, we are called by a loving God to be a holy people.

Like our ancestors who left Quebec to go and settle in a new country, they encountered difficulties and challenges. We too, in our spiritual journey, can encounter resistance and moments of doubt and weakness. We are sometimes led astray by sin, where the devil sets snares to entrap us in lie, in greed, in pride and in so many subtle and not so subtle enticements that lead us away from our purpose-driven life.

*“But when the designated time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of a woman... so that we might receive our status as adopted sons.”* Tonight’s reading to the Galatians tells us that God so loved us that He gave his only Son Jesus, the Christ, the Messiah, born of Mary, to redeem us.

Sin will not have the last word. We are a people of resurrection and God comes to us, just as we are, reminding us that He paid the high price – His Son’s death on the cross – so that we might live.

Tonight, as we take another step in this pilgrimage of faith, we are called to give thanks to God for his everlasting love. We are invited to recognize the gift of our Blessed Mother, who through her “yes” allows us to receive God’s mercy through her Son.

We are a people of faith... but God calls us through our participation to live this great call. Our response is called conversion ! Tomorrow, when you cross the Holy Door, you will see the bronze image of Jesus with his outstretched arms extended to receive you. As you enter, as you make the effort to push open the door, you can say : “Here I am Lord, poor, weak, a sinner... but I trust in you !” And as you labor to close the door, you can say “Lord, I shut the door of my heart to sin, to evil, to all that leads me away from you. I want to walk with you and follow you.”

Your pilgrimage of faith is very much in tune with what the Holy Father, Pope Francis is asking all of us to do. This is what he wrote in his Apostolic Exhortation on the *Joy of the Gospel* :

“I invite all Christians, everywhere, at this very moment, to a renewed personal encounter with Jesus Christ, or at least an openness to letting him encounter them; I ask all of you to do this unfailingly each day. No one should think that this invitation is not meant for him or her, since “no one is excluded from the joy brought by the Lord”. The Lord does not disappoint those who take this risk; whenever we take a step towards Jesus, we come to realize that he is already there, waiting for us with open arms. Now is the time to say to Jesus: “Lord, I have let myself be deceived; in a thousand ways I have shunned your love, yet here I am once more, to renew my covenant with you. I need you. Save me once again, Lord, take me once more into your redeeming embrace”. How good it feels to come back to him whenever we are lost! Let me say this once more: God never tires of forgiving us; we are the ones who tire of seeking his mercy. Christ, who told us to forgive one another “*seventy times seven*” (Mt 18:22) has given us his example: he has forgiven us seventy times seven. Time and time again he bears us on his shoulders. No one can strip us of the dignity bestowed upon us by this boundless and unfailing love. With a tenderness which never disappoints, but is always capable of restoring our joy, he makes it possible for us

to lift up our heads and to start anew. Let us not flee from the resurrection of Jesus, let us never give up, come what will. May nothing inspire more than his life, which impels us onwards !”

The Blessed Mother received the Holy Spirit to live her vocation. You too have received the gift of the Spirit at Baptism, at Confirmation, at your ordination, and on many other occasions. With the Holy Spirit, we are able to lead holy lives. May He be the great gift Mary presents to you during this pilgrimage.

As you might know, your group is one of the largest pilgrimages from outside the Province of Quebec. It touches me deeply in a very personal way that the Diocese of Manchester has heard the call to come to Quebec this year for the celebration of Notre-Dame de Québec Parish, the mother parish of all Canada and a large portion of the United States of America.

I greet wholeheartedly your bishop and my brother, Bishop Peter Libasci. Warm greetings also to Bishop Robert Mulvey, Emeritus of Providence, who joins with the Diocese of Manchester on this pilgrimage. Welcome to all the priests and seminarians who have come to Quebec. What a joy to share these moments with you. And to all of you parishioners from across the State of New Hampshire, may you all encounter during this pilgrimage new strength, a renewed heart, and courage to continue your journey in life, whatever your vocation may be.

We pray in a special way for the seminarians, who are living a time of discernment during their seminary years. May Saint François de Laval and Saint Marie de l’Incarnation, our two new saints intercede for you, that you may be filled with their missionary spirit and their apostolic zeal for the Gospel and the mission of the Church.

The presence of all of you here in Quebec in the coming days is a sign for this parish of Notre Dame de Quebec. It is a sign that from these roots, new fruits have sprouted up in so many places and especially in the Granite State, to bring forth a more vibrant Church. Your presence here at this time of history is of great support. We need your prayer, your friendship and the witness of your faith, rooted in Christ and the Gospel.

Tonight, we ask Mary, in her avocation of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, as mother of the Church and as star of the New Evangelization, that she continue to guide us to Jesus, to rediscover the love of God and to show us the road so that we may lead so many others to her Beloved Son, Jesus Christ.

And I close these humble remarks with a few lines of the Marian prayer composed by Pope Francis, that concludes his *Apostolic Exhortation* : Star of the new evangelization, help us to bear radiant witness to communion, service, ardent and generous faith, justice and love of the poor, that the joy of the Gospel may reach to the ends of the earth, illuminating even the fringes of our world. Amen.