Homily For Saturday of the Fourth Week of Easter - Year I
St Peter's 8:30am Mass - May 6, 2023

(Memorial - St. Francis de Laval)

2 Timothy 4:1-5 "The time is coming when people will not put up with sound doctrine."

Psalm 96:1-10 "Tell of his salvation from day to day."

John 10:11-16 "I am the good shepherd who lays down his life for the sheep."

A Voice for Christ

Introduction

Two days ago was the feast day of Blessed Marie-Leonie Paradis, a wonderful woman who established The Little Sisters of the Holy Family in New Brunswick. Today, we honour another great French Canadian saint, Francois de Laval. He was canonized less than 10 years ago, almost four hundred years after his time as the first bishop of Quebec City, a bishop responsible for the entire French speaking Catholics of North America. Such a great pastor of souls he was that he is now called the patron of all Canadian bishops, including our own Bishop McGrattan here in Calgary comes under his patronage.

Fifteen years ago in June, I was ordained a permanent deacon, along with seven others. That very following week, my wife and I, and a good contingent from Calgary, were off to the 49th International Eucharistic Congress in Quebec City. For a week, thousands of us listened to cardinals and other leaders from all over the world talk about our Lord's profound continuing presence with us in the Eucharist. They told us that there was a revival of faith taking place in South America and Asia and all over the world, because of a renewed practice of Eucharistic adoration, the silent adoration of the consecrated host, which will be exposed again here today.

That event was also to be a revival of Catholicism in Quebec where, everywhere you go, there are signs of the tremendous faith of the French who came to this country as missionaries and as immigrants, pilgrims whose faith, under the Holy Spirit, made a home for the Saviour of the whole world in this continent. We went to beautiful churches, built to honour God. We spent time with wonderful local

hosts who were still practicing their faith. Along with 15,000 people, we attended an ordination of 12 priests, including two who were brothers. There is a tradition at an ordination where the parents assist in the first donning of the priestly vestments. The most moving moment was when we watched a mother do this for the two sons she was giving to the service of Christ's body, the Church. How beautiful that sacrifice for Jesus.

One more image that stays with me is the procession of thousands through the streets of Quebec City, with Cardinal Ouellet holding up the monstrance with the large consecrated host. Everywhere, people who had never seen anything like this came out onto their balconies to watch. As a new deacon, I remember praying that this image of Christ in their streets would awaken the ancient faith of those first missionaries, and that first faithful bishop, Francois de Laval.

St. Francois de Laval

Among many accomplishments for Christ, St. Francois began the first Catholic school system in Canada. We still have publicly and privately funded Catholic schools. Even more significantly in the highly charged cultural environment of today, he fought the sinister alcohol trade to the Indian tribes by having it outlawed within his territory, even excommunicating those involved with it. This is the kind of thing that does not get mentioned because of those who suffered in the residential schools. The issues are not as one sided as many make them out to be. We have this great legacy of Catholic faith, for which we must not be ashamed.

2 Timothy

But faith has to be reborn in every generation. It still needs to be reborn in Quebec and elsewhere. God is in charge of history. However, we do need to do our part to transmit the faith. St. Paul says as much to his protégé, Timothy, who was a leader of the church at Ephesus. He warns him with words that could be written in this very time in which we experience the assault on the Christian faith, from the culture at large and sometimes even from within. Tell me if you don't feel like St. Paul is standing at this ambo saying these words: "I solemnly urge you:

proclaim the message whether the time is favourable or unfavourable. Convince, rebuke and encourage with the utmost patience. For the time is coming when people will not put up with sound doctrine but will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own desires, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander away to myths." I don't think I am alone in considering each of these statements for myself and for us. It is clearly an unfavourable time to proclaim Christ. But Paul says we must, even so. It is clearly a time when people turn away from the truth. We know that truth is not a thing. It is a person, Jesus Christ. Church teaching, which has come to us through the ages, through Sacred Scripture, from Christ himself through the Apostles, and through the successors of the Apostles, including Bishop Laval, faithful patron of bishops, down to our own Bishop McGrattan of Calgary, and the bishops of those on our livestream from other places.

John

If you have an American source for the daily readings, you would see a Gospel passage from John Chapter 14, with Jesus making his last explanation to his disciples, of his being one with the Father. That unity with the Father is very important. Jesus IS the human face of the God of the universe.

Because of that first bishop/shepherd of Quebec, we have this Gospel passage about the Good Shepherd. When Jesus identifies himself as one with the father, he is telling us that the merciful God is not the angry, vengeful God that is sometimes portrayed. Jesus is the face of the one who gathers together those who believe in him, and even of those who wander off after other gods but are willing to repent, and so allow themselves to be carried back home on the shoulders of the Good Shepherd.

Call To Conversion

Today, the Church again invites us to consider how important it is for each Christian to stay faithful. Don't stop praying. Make your prayer a true dialogue of love. Turn off the voices of the false teachers of this world. Renew effort to discover Christ in others, and be the voice of Christ for someone who needs it.

Key Passages

Entrance Antiphon: *I will appoint a shepherd to pasture them and I, the Lord, will be their God.*

Collect: *O God, eternal shepherd of the faithful, who sent Saint Francois de Laval as bishop to extend the dominion of Christ to the people of Canada, grant through his intercession that we may strive always to keep the faith which he strove to proclaim.*

2 Timothy: *I solemnly urge you: proclaim the message whether the time is favourable or unfavourable. Convince, rebuke and encourage with the utmost patience. For the time is coming when people will not put up with sound doctrine but will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own desires, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander away to myths.*

Psalm: *Sing to the Lord, all the earth. Sing to the Lord. Bless his name. Tell of his salvation from day to day. Say among the nations, "The Lord is king! He will judge the peoples with equity."*

John: *Jesus said to the Pharisees, "I am the good shepherd, who lays down his life for the sheep. The hired hand who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. I have other sheep that do not belong to this fold. They will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd.*