



Archbishop of Montreal

Homily

Sunday, May 17, 2020

Sixth Sunday of Easter – Year A (bilingual homily)

What has God done in your soul?

What has God done in your soul since the start of the pandemic?

Because whether you recognize it or not, he has done something in it. God has been with you throughout and He remains with you.

In a mysterious way, this pandemic, from the perspective of the Christian liturgy, coincides with Lent and Easter—a time of conversion, of renewal of faith, of greater openness to Jesus Christ. This pandemic has seen difficult times and hardships, but it has also been a time of coming closer to Jesus Christ, a time during which we have learned to become more attached to Jesus Christ.

You may have received testimonials via Zoom, email, and telephone, from people who, throughout the pandemic, have become more rooted in their faith. Perhaps also from those for whom the life of prayer has become more deeply integrated into their daily lives. Fruits have been borne from this pandemic for all believers.

Now, by discovering or rediscovering that God is present in our life, by rediscovering the activity of Jesus Christ in us, how should we respond?

One answer is to want to love the Lord more. But another possible answer, too, a natural answer, is to want to make known the One who takes care of us. When we seek a doctor to take care of us, when we become afflicted with sickness, and a doctor has healed us, then, if we meet someone who has the same illness, we will tell them about this doctor who helped us so much.

Jesus Christ is just such a doctor: the doctor of souls. Discovering to what extent Jesus Christ takes care of our souls also fills us with the desire to make the name of Jesus Christ known, to bear witness to His salvation.

A verse from today's psalm, the Psalmist says: "I will tell the Lord the good that you have done in my soul."

Witness the good that God does in us, through us. And since we exist in body and soul, it testifies to the good He does in our personal life—our bodies, our souls, our flesh.

After Lent, we begun the Easter season, somewhat as it was for the disciples during the time after Christ's death and Passion on the Cross. It was a joyful time when Jesus appeared to them to prepare them for Pentecost.

In a similar way, we are also on the way to Pentecost. Somewhat surprisingly, we could say that the Apostles also experienced confinement! Because after the Ascension, which we will celebrate next week, the Apostles, moreover, were in confinement. They were in confinement in the Upper Room.

And Mary was with them. They prayed with Mary while waiting for the Holy Spirit, for the gift of the Holy Spirit to begin a new phase of the mission, to which the whole Church is sent. (18.55) In this vein, perhaps, we could see how our prayer helps us evolve, transforms us.

Perhaps we could so prepare for this Pentecost that, coincidentally, almost everywhere in the world, coincides with the beginning or initial implementation of deconfinement.

Perhaps as followers, as missionary disciples, we could learn again, relearn to be deconfined! To come out of ourselves! Come out of our churches! To come out of the Church, to be in the world to proclaim the name of Jesus Christ, proclaim the salvation of Jesus Christ, proclaim the good that Jesus Christ does in our souls, our personal lives and our families when we open our hearts to Him.

I ask that on the eve of Pentecost you make a Novena to the Holy Spirit, to ask the Holy Spirit, the gift of the Father and of the Son, to come into us, so that He comes to us to renew His breath, our missionary spirit, our missionary zeal. To renew our fervour to make known the name of God, the name of Jesus Christ in the world, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, guided by the Holy Spirit.

Next Friday will be nine days before the feast of Pentecost. I therefore invite you during its preparation to make a Novena before Pentecost. An easy way is to pray the Rosary every day in May. Pope Francis himself, on the occasion of this pandemic, invites us to pray the Rosary each day in May to invoke the protection of Mary, Mother of the Church.

More specifically, we could make a Novena to the Holy Spirit to help make us witnesses to Jesus Christ in our family, our society, in the world in which we live. If you need assistance, there are resources for praying the Rosary in your parish and in your diocese. Seek and discover these tools daily throughout May for yourself but also for the cause of evangelization

By praying for the cause of evangelization, as Pope Francis invites us to do, we experience anew the spirit of evangelization, a new proclamation of the Joy of the Gospel.

We can pray for each and every one of us, because in order to evangelize others, we first have to evangelize ourselves! We have to evangelize ourselves in order to be able to evangelize to others. This is the message that Paul VI left the church in his important apostolic exhortation about evangelization.

Before evangelizing the world, the Church must evangelize itself. For this reason, let us lift up our prayer to ask the Lord to guide us on a path of conversion, because the first step to evangelize is to ever increase our own conversion. Therefore, let us ask him to guide us on a path of personal, family, and spiritual conversion.

To convert is to open our heart to Jesus Christ, so that our whole soul dwells in His holiness, letting us be transformed by His holiness.

Let us benefit from this Novena to the Holy Spirit to ask for a new grounding in Jesus Christ, a new life of Jesus Christ in us, which would fill us with a missionary zeal and renew our capacity to bear witness to the name of Jesus.

In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, I invite you to pray for an intention that is particularly close to my heart, which is to pray with all fervor for the reopening of church doors. We know that the doors of the church were closed, but the Church is not closed. And even though the doors of churches are closed, the doors to our hearts are not closed. Pray that church doors will soon reopen and also that we learn again to keep them open all day long, if possible!

Even before the pandemic, the church doors were open but usually only during celebrations, but not throughout the whole day! Therefore, someone seeking closeness with God who came knocking at the door of a church would find it closed, unable to enter, having to return home to pray.

Perhaps we can, then, relearn not only to reopen the doors of churches, but also to keep them open throughout the day! We need to rediscover the meaning present in their being open all day! They had been open before the pandemic, but they could be open more often. The project of keeping our church doors open all day will be an integral part of our future.

Pope Francis has often talked about his sorrow at seeing church doors closed shut, not open to welcome those who were looking for comfort from God.

When someone comes to a church, it is probably someone who is already active in their faith, but maybe it is someone who is maybe far from it but nevertheless seeks to meet God, to pray, to talk with someone so that they may journey deeper in their faith.

During this Novena to the Holy Spirit, I invite you to pray the Rosary each day to become more committed to personal conversion. Pray to renew our courage to bear witness to the name of Jesus in a world that often does not want to hear from God, in a world that is so often closed in on itself, with God as the last taboo of which we cannot speak in the public square. But in a world where human beings are the same as always, as yesterday and as tomorrow, we are made for God, loved by God. We are His priority.

Have the courage, therefore, to name Jesus Christ in the public square, and believe in the Holy Spirit that touches us from the bottom of our hearts, that which is in our hearts. Let us pray for our own greater conversion, for an evangelical, missionary spirit. Let us pray that the doors of our churches be open all day!

From this perspective, we know that we have saints in heaven to whom to pray. In Canada, we have many to whom to pray, who care about and pray for us.

Why not invoke these Canadian saints in heaven so that they may help us, through their intercession, to give us the same breath of the service of evangelization that motivated them, that it may dwell also in us?

For this reason, we will pray together the Litany of the Saints, with specific attention to the names of Canadian saints. As you know, there are fourteen canonized Canadian saints, including ten Blessed and eleven Venerable ones. In this Litany of the Saints we will therefore invoke all the saints in heaven, especially the saints of Canada.

Somehow through this pandemic, we went through it together! As a humanity, brothers and sisters in humanity; as Christians, brothers and sisters in Christ; as Catholics, members of the Catholic Church, of the Body of Christ. We've taken the time to pray, maybe taken the time to say to God our sorrow, taken the time to reach out to others who might be alone or

And so maybe we can be thinking ahead and prepare ourselves for the feast of the Pentecost. A Novena are nine days of prayer starting this coming Friday, nine days of prayer to renew our openness to the Holy Spirit. Because the Holy Spirit is the gift, the supreme gift of the Father and the Son. The Father and the Son give us the Holy Spirit who is life, who is unity, who unites us with Jesus Christ, who unites us between each other through Jesus Christ. Who unites us to the Father through the grace of Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit is a spirit of unity, is a spirit of Mission, who gives us the courage, the strength to proclaim the name of Jesus Christ in the public square where we know it is not easy! I call this the last 'taboo'. On the public square, you cannot name Jesus Christ. You cannot say the name of God. It's the last taboo.

We learn. Maybe we need courage. The courage to say the name of God, to say the name of Jesus Christ. Not only in our personal life, in our own community, but also in the public square. And this doesn't come from itself.

The Apostles experienced the consequences of the Passion and Resurrection of Jesus Christ. They met Jesus Christ personally as a group of disciples, but they were afraid, they were hiding in their homes. And Jesus Christ invited them to pray, waiting for the gift of the Holy Spirit. And Mary was with them, praying for the gift of the Holy Spirit.

And so, that's what we can do! We can take the time, more consciously, more intentionally, to pray for the gift of the Holy Spirit, to pray for the renewal of the gift of the Holy Spirit with a Novena, with Mary. Pray with Mary to be more open to the gift of the Holy Spirit. A spirit of mission that will bring us to be more forthright in naming Jesus Christ! More forthright in keeping the doors of our churches open all day long! Not only for the times of celebrations, which are very important! But it is not enough. It is not enough. We need to learn to be open all day long. All year long.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "+ Christian Lépine". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

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