

*Bishop Jodoin's Homely for the
4th Sunday of Easter – May 3rd, 2020
in the Saint-Pierre-aux-Liens church in Caraquet
(Broadcasted on the radio at 94,1 fm CKLE CJVA
and Live on the Diocese of Bathurst Facebook page)*

Three years ago, during my Ad Limina visit to Rome, I found myself in St. Peters' Basilica with a deacon from Halifax who asked me, « Why is it that everyone comes to ask you all sorts of things? ». Well, as you may know, in Rome, we are recognized by our clothing. People immediately see if we are priests, bishops, or brothers of sisters from such and such religious order. And if they need something, they spontaneously come to us. I think this is very good; it is a sign that they see us as people of service who are happy to meet their needs.

People ask us all kinds of mundane, day-to-day things like, "Where are the washrooms?" Where is the Souvenir shop? Where is this or that monument? Other times, it is to ask for a bit of money or to ask that we bless an object; to confer with us regarding their suffering; or to live the Sacrament of Reconciliation. And as I was chatting with the deacon, a young man in his 20s approach us and asked, in Spanish, "Padre, obispo, I have a good friend in Columbia who is very sick and is fighting to get better. Could you bless him and give him a message of hope!" I answered, "Of course, what is his name?" He replied, "Jaurès!" I continued, "Then I will pray for him." But at that moment, the young man said, "No, no, I wish for you to speak with him personally." I replied, " I wish I could, but we are in Rome, not in Columbia." He then explained to me, "I will film you here in the basilica with my phone, you will give him your message of hope and then you will bless him. I will then send the video to him in his village in Columbia, and every time he needs strength to continue to struggle against his illness, he will be able to re-watch the video and feel that God is with him." We thus proceeded to make the video, in the middle of St. Peter's Basilica, on a Sunday afternoon.

This young man was adamant that I speak directly to his friend, so that he may hear my voice, but it was so that through my voice, his friend hear the voice of the Lord, our good shepherd, addressing him personally. This young man had was right to insist on making the video because we are beings of flesh who perceive our reality through our senses. Through my voice, his sick friend would indeed recognize the

Lord's voice close to him, with him during his battle against his disease. For the Lord is the good shepherd who takes care and heals, who unites and guides us, who protects and defends us. He reminded us himself in this morning's Gospel, "The sheep listen to the voice of their shepherd, and the shepherd those of his sheep. He calls his sheep by name and they follow because they know his voice."

I never forgot this young Columbian and his friend Jaurès. It is for moments such as those that I said you to the Lord when he called upon me to become a priest, and now a Bishop at the service of his Church.

Today, we celebrate the Sunday of prayers for the vocations. The vocation to become priest, deacon, religious brother or sister, monk, consecrated layperson.

From the beginning of his public ministry, Jesus felt the importance and the need to surround himself with apostles with whom to share his life with intimately, to love dearly and to educate. Because they too would be called upon to become shepherds to his people. Now that He is with his Father, Christ continues to reach us through witnesses, by his Word being proclaimed, by the Sacraments and by all those who fulfill ministries of the Church. The Lords continues ceaselessly to call, to touch the hearts of the young and the old alike, so that they accept to gives their lives to the service of His People. There is no age limit.

Personally, I was 5 years old, in my grandmother's garden, when my uncle, a Jesuit, asked me what I wanted to be when I grew up, and I answered, "A priest". The call was there, present... difficult to explains, but very much there. A call that grew further in the care of my family who practiced their faith, with a grandmother who took me to church with her and thought me prayers while I sat on her lap. I was also surrounded by aunts and uncles who were members of various religious orders (Franciscans, Jesuits, Sisters of Charity or "Gray Nuns", from Nicolet, St-Joseph and St-Hyacinthe, Sisters of the Presentation of Mary), and also by Brothers of the Blessed Sacrament Fathers and of Jesuits who were among my teachers. All individuals who were happy to have given their life to God. And in turn, I said year to God's call and now find myself here, serving among you.

Others like myself also said yes to God one day. The Acadian region in rich with those many men and women who gave themselves, body and soul, to the Lord as priests, brothers, sisters, missionaries; all with their different missions. You most

certainly must have some within your family tree. They were present in every parish. And their family praised God for their presence. We are fortunate now to have young priests and sisters, missionaries from Africa, but also consecrated lay people from Brazil with us. Individual who have also said yes to God, to be at the service of his Church and currently at the service of our parishes. We even have a young seminarian for our Diocese, Mano. Being from Tahiti, he spent a study year in the Saint-Pierre parish in Lamèque, after which, he felt the call to continue his vocational studies with us.

I am certain that even today, the Lord continues to call young people, within our parishes and our families, to give their life to God and offer their services to his Church. We must be persistent in prayer, and supportive of those young people who hear God's call within their hearts. For it is through them that the Lord will call us by name to be in communion with Him, our Good Shepherd, the door for the sheep, this door which will guide us to freedom and will give us life, a life of abundance. Let us continue to pray for vocations, because we all need them. AMEN