OLPH’S 50TH ANNIVERSARY

OCTOBER 19, 2013

HOMILY BY BISHOP NOËL SIMARD

**The Year of Faith motivates the entire Church to ward a renewed awareness of its presence in the contemporary world and its mission among peoples and nations.**

« I will stand on the top of the hill with the staff of God in my hand », said Moses to Joshua.

After fifty years, we may say that Our Lady of Perpetual Help’s parish stands on the top of the hill as a light and a haven of love and communion for christians, for those looking for help and courage in front of adversity.

Christian communities and community membres have the mission to be light and salt to the world, to be signs of God’s love and reconciliation, to be living expression of faith, a faith which is deepened, proclaimed, announced, committed and witnessed.

Christian communities must be places where the Word of God is proclaimed and lived, where sacraments are offered, where people searching for meaning and truth are welcomed and accompanied, where those who are weary and tired find rest, healing and support, where the poor and weak are received as other Christ… Where young, teenagers and adults, families and seniors have their place and are treated with dignity.

For fifty years, OLPH, because of the commitment and the generosity of of so many people, tried to be a living community, a community of charity, faith and hope. For fifty years, because of the faithful and generous service of priests, deacons and lay persons, OLPH continues to act as God’s family and as people of God united in love and reaching out to those who are in need.

In his message for World Mission Sunday, pope Francis wrote : « Faith is a gift that one cannot keep to oneself, but it is to be shared. If we want to keep it only for ourselves, we will become isolated, sterile and sick Christians. The proclamation of the Gospel is part of being disciples of Christ and it is a constant commitment that animates the whole life of the Church ». Missionary community is « mature » when it professes faith, celebrates it with joy during the liturgy, lives charity, proclaims the Word of God enthusiastly, leaves one’s own to take it to the peripheries, especially to those who have not yet had the opportunity to know Christ.

**The strenght of our faith, at a personnal and community level, can be measured by the ability to communicate it to others, to spread and live it in charity, to witness to it before those we meet and those who share the path of life with us.**

Faith is God’s precious gift which opens our mind to know and love. He wants to enter into relationship with us and to allow us to participate in his own life in order to make our life more meaningful, better and more beautiful.

**The Year of Faith motivates the entire Church to ward a renewed awareness of its presence in the contemporary world and its mission among peoples and nations**. Missionary spirit is not only about geographical territories, but about peoples, cultures and individuals, because the « boundaries » of faith do not only cross places and human traditions, but the heart of each and every man and woman.

Mission belongs to every baptized person and every Christian community, since « the people of God is made visible and lives in communities, it is up to these to witness Christ before the Nations ». Each community is therefore challenges, and invited to make its own the mandate entrusted by Jesus to the Apostles, to be « his witnesses in Jerusalem throughout Judea and Samaria to the ends of the Earth. » (Acts 1,8).

The New Evangelization faces external obstacles, like the lack of faith, secularization, consumerism, etc. It faces also internal obstacles, like lack of fewrvour, joy, courage and hope in proclaiming the message of Christ to all and in helping the people of our time to an encounter with Jesus. It is urgent in our time to announce and to witness the goodness of the Gospel.

Always in communion with the Church, in union with the mission of the Church, and in Her name, when a preacher, a catechist or a pastor preaches the Gospel, gathers the community together, administers a sacrament, when someone proclaims the Word of God, when a choir animates liturgy, when someone helps poor and homeless, he is carrying out an ecclesial act.

Open the door of faith, rediscover the enthusiasm, of sharing the faith. Continue in what you have learned and firmly believed, in the presence of God and Christ Jesus. I solemmly urge you to proclaim the message. Be persistent whether the time is favourable or unfavourable. Convince, encourage with the utmost patience in teaching.

Continue to believe in the OLPH community and built up a living and missionary community based on the love, faith and hope in Christ Jesus.

May Our Lady of Perpetual Help protect you and the parish, and help you to continue together to live in harmony and unity so that people may say : « See how they love each other ».

AMEN