

**Homily by Bishop Paul-André Durocher
Given during his induction as
Archbishop of Gatineau
November 30th, 2011 in the Cathedral of Gatineau.**

Note: the pronounced text primes.

It has been almost 15 years now that the Apostolic Nuncio of the time, Msgr. Carlo Curis, summoned me to his office to tell me that Pope John Paul II had named me the auxiliary bishop of Sault-Ste.-Marie, the diocese neighbouring the one where I was serving as priest, i.e. the diocese of Timmins.

An old tradition dictates that a bishop must give himself a motto, usually taken from the Bible. For many days, I scrutinized the Old and New Testaments, locating my favourite passages, but unfortunately none that truly described me, and would call me to surpass myself. It was actually in a Paschal homily given by Saint Augustine, great bishop from the 4th century AD, and which constantly kept coming back to me, that I found it. I had read this homily for the first time when, as a new seminarian, I had started to pray the Liturgy of the Hours, (which used to be called the Breviary). It appears as one of the readings to be given on the last day of Ordinary Times, the eve of the First Sunday of Advent.

In it, Saint Augustine makes references to the Alleluia that the Christian community had started singing again on Easter morning. He compares the singing of his community to that of the saints in Heaven. He proposes a somewhat playful comparison: in Heaven, the saints relax by singing Alleluia; on Earth, we must sing Alleluia while walking, like pilgrims.

We must sing to encourage ourselves on our journey, to support each other, to lift our hearts while the strain demanded might make us want to give up and go home. And this is how he concludes his homily, with a hard-hitting call: *Canta et ambula* – Sing and walk!

Me who had just devoted five years of my life to learning classical chant, oratorio and opera, me who had just abandoned a career that could have been promising, I found in these words the confirmation of my discernment. I would not stop singing, but my singing would take on

another sense: it would accompany my involvement on the path of presbyteral service towards which I felt called; it would represent the liturgical dimension of Christian life, (a great joy for the Lord), that can only find its true meaning when it is encased in the commitment to favour the Kingdom of justice, peace and joy that Jesus-Christ came to proclaim.

The calling to the episcopate gave new meaning to these words by Augustine. Yes, from now on, I will sing and walk with a whole community. First, for five years, it was with the people of God in Sault-Ste.-Marie; then, for ten years, it was with the people of God in Alexandria-Cornwall.

Now, it is with you, people of God in Gatineau, that I am invited to sing and walk. And believe me, I answer this invitation with eagerness and joy. And I fully intend, if God allows me, to sing and walk with you for many years, as long as I have the strength!

But tonight, another phrase by Saint Augustine is speaking to me. It is more philosophical than the one I chose as my motto, and it gives much to think about. In his Confessions, Saint Augustine was reflecting on this great mystery that is time, and he wrote these somewhat surprising words: « Neither the past, nor the future exist! And it is improper to say that there are three times: past, present, future. It is more precise to say that there are three times: a present concerning the past, a present concerning the present, and a present concerning the future. »

In other words, neither the past, nor the future exist in themselves. There is only the present moment, rich of its past, and open on its future. Which brings me to consider the moment that we're living here tonight not as an isolated ceremony, independent of our pasts and our futures, but as a moment that gathers the fruits of the past, and already bears in it an orientation for the future.

There are numerous pasts that are meeting here tonight. Certainly, there is mine: my pathway as a young Christian, as a priest, and as a bishop. You know, I arrive to you rich with a rather long life experience. I'm starting to get old; hopefully, that will produce a little wisdom!

But my past is linked to numerous other people who influenced me and made me who I am today. First, my family, whom I am happy to see

here tonight. My friends, also numerous at this celebration, who supported me and shaped me, each in their own way. Former teachers, former colleagues. The bishop who ordained me to the priesthood, and remains for me a model of episcopal service: Msgr. Jacques Landriault. Priests, deacons, members of the diocesan center, and faithful from the diocese of Alexandria-Cornwall. All these people represent for me the rich past that I bear in this present moment.

But there is also the past of this diocese that greets me. Rooted in the Vatican II Council, born almost 50 years ago, the archdiocese has been marked, (and in a good way), by the men who have served it in the episcopal ministry: Msgr. Paul-Émile Charbonneau; Msgr. Adolphe Proulx; and Msgr. Roger Ébacher, whom I want to salute in a very special way tonight, and thank him for his 22 years of generous and loving services! Yes, here tonight, it's the whole past of the Archdiocese of Gatineau that is like reunited and condensed in this ancient ritual of inducting a new bishop: our ancestors are watching us, the communion of saints surround us. How can we not be impressed?

Let us turn now towards what Augustine calls the « present concerning the present », the moment we are living here tonight. We have just been witness to simple, but very significant, gestures. On my entry into this church-cathedral, Father Denis Régimbald presented me with a crucifix to kiss. I would like someday to be able to say with Saint Paul: « Among you, I didn't want to know anything else but Jesus Christ, this crucified Messiah. »

After having kissed the crucifix, Father Régimbald presented me with holy water, so that I could spray some on the people at the entrance to the church. This water reminds us of baptism, source of life and pledge of hope for each and every one of us. Let us listen again to Saint Paul: « We all who have been baptized in Jesus Christ, it's in his death that we have been baptized. If, by the baptism in his death, we have been put in the tomb with him, it's so that we can live a better life. »

Having reached the altar, Msgr. Quintana, Apostolic Nuncio of Canada, saluted us and presented us with the meaning of this celebration. His presence here reminds us that the ministry of the diocesan bishop is worth nothing if it is not lived in communion with the ministry of the Bishop of Rome, successor to Peter, chief of the Apostles. Msgr. Quintana, I thank

you for your presence here tonight, and I want to assure you of my gratitude. Please transmit to our Pope, Benedict XVI, the assurance of our prayer for him, and our affection for his person and his ministry in the heart of our Church.

Msgr. Quintana then brought me over to this chair, the episcopal seat. The chair represents the place that the bishop occupies in his diocese, as first teacher, first liturgist, and first pastor of his people. But my experience has taught me that this triple task, I will exercise it most of the time away, than upon, this seat. You will find me at the Diocesan Centre, that's true; but also on the road, in the parishes, the community halls, the houses, and other meeting-places. As well as on this new medium that is the Internet, either by way of blogs, Facebook, Youtube, or the diocese's website. I can assure you that the episcopal seat will learn to travel!

Once well seated, I listened with you to the Word of God, closely linked with the liturgical celebration of this November 30th, feast of the Apostle Saint Andrew. I bear his name, but I also have the impression of bearing a bit of his spirit. The Gospel according to Saint Matthew, that we have listened together, tells us how Andrew and his brother Peter quickly answered to the invitation of Jesus: « Leaving their fishing-nets, they followed him. » Moreover, please allow me to remind you of the Gospel according to Saint John, which says that Andrew started following Jesus with another disciple. It was only later that Andrew would meet his brother Peter to tell him about Jesus, and Saint John explicitly says: « Andrew brought his brother to Jesus ».

Andrew would be named twice more in the Gospel of John. First, at the multiplication of the loaves, when he brought the boy who had the bread and the fishes to Jesus; and later, in Jerusalem, when he tells Jesus that some Greeks wanted to meet him.

It looks like Andrew is the intermediary between Jesus and the others. He's the one who leads others to Jesus, who talks to Jesus about others. He was an evangelist before any of the Gospels were written.

And with this note in mind, I would like us to contemplate the « present concerning the future ». The image of Saint Andrew, the evangelist who facilitates meeting with Jesus, is maybe an image that can help us tonight sketch our future.

I cannot but be shocked by the coincidence of the currents that are concerting themselves at this moment when I'm becoming your pastor. First, the upcoming celebration of the 50 years of the Vatican II Council. When I was a child, I prayed with our parish and our school for the success of this council. Seminarian, I studied its history, its documents and its spin-offs. Archbishop, I am called to live it with the People of God who are in Gatineau.

And Pope Benedict XVI has just invited the universal Church to celebrate in this a « Year of Faith ». In the apostolic letter announcing his project, he wrote these ardent words: « Today, a more convinced ecclesial commitment in favour of a new evangelization is needed, to rediscover the joy of believing, and regain the enthusiasm of communicating the faith! »

Furthermore, our Pope has also convened a Synod of bishops on the theme of the new evangelization that will take place next year. And us, we will begin the celebrations marking the 50th anniversary of our diocese!

Fifty years of the diocese, 50 years of the Council, Year of Faith, Synod on the new evangelization... and the figure of Saint Andrew, evangelist. Are we not invited to commit our future to the path of the new evangelization, the invitation to meet Jesus again? That is certainly what I want to do with you in the years to come.

In conclusion, I would like to share with you something confidential. When I was named a bishop 15 years ago, the sister of Msgr. Adolphe Proulx, (who had died about 10 years before), called to tell me that her family had kept his episcopal ring. She wanted to bequeath it to a new bishop who, like her brother, came from Northern Ontario, and had worked among Francophone Ontarians. It's with humility that I accepted this gift, Msgr. Proulx's episcopal ring that I'm wearing on my finger tonight. And Msgr. Proulx himself had received it from Pope Paul VI at the conclusion of the Vatican II Council in which he had participated.

This ring from the Council, received from Msgr. Proulx, is the gage of my involvement towards the diocese: to welcome the richness of the past, and celebrate it in the present, in order to discern with you the paths towards a future full of life.

We will now involve ourselves with this sacramental action that is both the source and zenith of life, and the mission of the Church: we will create the Eucharist. In doing so, the Eucharist will create us. Because we will invoke the past, by proclaiming the death of Christ; we will name our present, by celebrating his resurrection; and we will convene our future, by awaiting his coming into glory. And the Spirit who transformed the bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Jesus-Christ will transform us into a people more united in the love of the eternal Father. Let us take a moment of silence to contemplate the greatness of the mystery that we are preparing to celebrate.

† Paul-André Durocher