



Heart to Heart

January 27, 2023 (#493)

THANK YOU TO THE PRIESTS, DEACONS, CHANCERY COLLEAGUES, LAY PASTORAL WORKERS, MEMBERS OF RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES, AND PARISHIONERS throughout the Diocese who celebrated Masses and participated in a Spiritual Bouquet of prayers offered for my intention on the 25th anniversary of my Ordination as a Bishop. I was buoyed up by the generosity of your prayerful and practical support!

On January 2nd, the actual date of the anniversary, I celebrated a Mass of Thanksgiving at the Cathedral Basilica of Christ the King with a few friends and co-workers, followed by a festive meal, in McNally Hall. At the Mass, a letter from Pope Francis was read aloud by Cardinal Arthur Roche, (a long-time friend and surprise visitor), in which the Holy Father imparted an Apostolic Blessing to me, to the clergy and faithful of the Diocese of Hamilton, and to my relatives. The Pope concluded the letter requesting that we pray for him and his ministry. I am grateful to the Holy Father for his kind words, and I assure him of our prayers for him and his Petrine ministry.

Some excerpts from my homily at the Mass of Thanksgiving:

“I was ordained bishop on the feast day of St. Basil the Great and St. Gregory, Bishops and Doctors of the Church. It was a Friday that year, and the ordination took place at St. Joseph Parish in Ottawa, where I had served as Pastor for three short years. The next day, about 14 family members and friends and I flew on a chartered plane from Ottawa directly to Labrador City. There I was installed as Bishop of the Diocese of Labrador City-Schefferville at the Cathedral of Our Lady of Perpetual Help on the Sunday, Solemnity of the Epiphany – hence the presence of the Epiphany star on my Coat-of-Arms and my pastoral staff/crozier.”

“I can say that over the past 25 years, I have felt the love of the Lord and his many blessings in very profound ways. I have wondered how – unworthy as I am – this happened to me! It is not for nothing that when the Bishop prays for himself in the Eucharistic prayer, instead of saying his name as do others who preside at Masses within the boundaries of the Diocese, he uses the words *‘and me your unworthy servant’*. These words mean something – one truly feels *‘unworthy’*. The Jesus Prayer comes easily and quickly to mind every time I begin a time of prayer: *‘Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the living God, have mercy on me, a sinner!’*”

“Jesus calls. How do we *hear* that call? Often, it is communicated through those who know and love us. We are made aware of gifts, talents, and interests that are ours – maybe not unique to us, but are ours. When I was an Oblate, the community was in the process of discerning service in Labrador. I felt strongly drawn there. I read as much as I could find about Bishop Lionel Scheffer, the first Bishop of Labrador. I was inspired by his missionary story – never expecting that I would succeed him one day – as the fifth Bishop of Labrador.”

“And certainly, I never expected to be called from Newfoundland and Labrador to be the Bishop of Hamilton. But, coincidentally, I was visiting the Oblate priests serving at Our Lady of Lourdes Parish when they suggested I join them for the Dedication of the Cathedral of Christ the King which took place on November 21, 1982. I was present when Bishop Paul Reding anointed the walls of this Cathedral – the only time I had ever been present for such a ceremony.

Our Lady of the Annunciation, pray for us!

Ex corde, +*Douglas*, OMI