CENTRE D'ANIMATION

# FRANÇOIS-DE-LAVAL

Fondateur d'une Église

aux dimensions de l'Amérique

**Bulletin number 15** **Winter 2004**

When the time came to prepare this bulletin, which aims at making the spirituality of François de Laval better known, the search for a theme surfaced. Something new and fresh was needed. But what? Were all subjects and approaches exhausted? Then, in thinking about the year of the Rosary coming to its end, it seemed fitting to take the time to see how Mary or the Marian devotion was present in the life of François de Laval.

Therefore this bulletin, published at the closing of 2003, wants to conclude in its own special way the year of the Rosary by calling to mind the Marian devotion of François de Laval. This particular year has allowed for diverse initiatives to be taken throughout the world. One such initiative was that of John Paul II, as he added the luminous mysteries to the Rosary. These mysteries go deeper into Jesus' baptism, the wedding feast of Cana, the proclamation of the Kingdom of God and the call to conversion, the Transfiguration of the Lord and the institution of the Eucharist. A special focus on Mary remains with the start of this new year as well. I received a calendar from Quebec's Historical Society which stated that the year 2004 marks the 150th anniversary of the recognition of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception of 1854. When you turn to the month of June, you will be reminded of two major events concerning the devotion built around Mary, the mother of God; these events being Quebec's first Marian Congress which took place June 14th, 1929, and the festivities of 1954 that accompanied the Marian year celebrations. A far-reaching Marian Congress held by the archdiocese of Quebec from June 9th-13th marked these particular celebrations. Some of you reading these lines more than likely remember this event. In the historical calendar, Father Armand Gagné speaks of the event, and remembers how "the City of Quebec erected a statue of about one meter in height, found at the corner of the façade and the east wall of the City Hall, especially for the occasion. Today, amidst the winter scene of snow and bare trees, one can still see the statue with its arms stretched out towards *la Côte de la Fabrique*.

In reading this bulletin, you will note, through the words of Jacques Lemieux, vice-postulator, that the Marian devotion is firmly rooted in the history of our country, as François de Laval greatly promoted the devotion. Furthermore, Mrs. Marie-France Cossette speaks of a few major events that took place in the past months, such as the Blessing of the crypt, and the various animations that took place at the cathedral on the life and spirituality of François de Laval. For my part, I propose some avenues that you may take in order to deepen the Marian spirituality in your own life, in connection with the spirituality of François de Laval.

Similar to beacons in your life that guide your daily journey towards Christ, you'll also find twelve spiritual thoughts that permeated the daily life of François de Laval. These thoughts come from his writings.

Finally, your thoughts and suggestions on this bulletin are always welcome. They will surely enrich our own reflections and will in turn favour yours. Enjoy.

Sister Doris Lamontagne, p.f.m.
Director of the François-de-Laval Animation Center

## FRANÇOIS DE LAVAL, A BISHOP DEVOTED TO MARY

Blessed François de Laval always demonstrated a very vibrant devotion towards the Virgin Mary, and his numerous initiatives as well as the many events that marked his life bear ample witness of his devotion.

It is especially with regards to her Immaculate Conception that Mgr de Laval venerated the Mother of Jesus. He was consecrated bishop on December 8, 1958, in the chapel of the Blessed Virgin in the *Saint Germain-des-Près* abbey in Paris. Therefore, he became the first pastor of the New Church on the feast day of the Immaculate Conception at a place where Mary is honored. In 1666, with great solemnity, he consecrated his cathedral of Quebec to the Immaculate Virgin. During the previous year, he had made a vow to celebrate a mass once a month in honor of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and to fast on the Eve of the Immaculate Conception feast day. The Jesuits had introduced this pious tradition in the colony. Mgr. de Laval wanted to invite all the priests of his Seminary to follow, like him, this example. Since that time, the community of priests of the Seminary of Quebec has renewed this same vow each year. Like the founder of their community, these priests ask the Blessed Virgin to protect our entire land, to ensure that the Christian faith may always remain with those who already know The Good News of Salvation, and to enlighten the spirit of those who have not yet been taught the evangelical message.

It was first from his family, as we would safely assume, that François de Laval inherited this great devotion to the Blessed Virgin. She was also, without a doubt, very much alive throughout the diocese of *Chartres*, from where Mgr. de Laval originated. Being a student of the Jesuits at *Laflèche* College, the young François de Laval met spiritual masters who guided him in the wake of the spiritual revival that was then taking place in France. His filial love for the Mother of Jesus could easily grow in such a climate of intense spirituality.

Byzantine art often portrays the Virgin as *she who indicates the right path.* This is certainly the message of the Immaculate Conception as has been understood by the devout since the very beginning. François de Laval, by the exceptional fervor that he holds for the Immaculate Mary, invites us to rediscover this teaching for ourselves by trying to continually deepen our understanding of it. It is hard to believe that we shall ever truly understand, like He does, that she, who allowed for the indescribable union of God and humanity by the Incarnation of the Word, can also bring an ever-increasing desire of intimacy with God to life in us, a desire that calls us to never again live but for Him.

Jacques Lemieux, priest
Vice-postulator for the cause of François de Laval

### Formula of Vow - 1665[1]

Sweet Jesus, Saviour of the World, though our sins must distance us from you, we have a desire to honor you and your Holy Mother, and are pushed by this desire to see ourselves in the faithful relationship which you desire of your faithful servants, to make you acknowledged and worshipped by the habitants of this land. You see us bow at your feet, where we promise and make vows, as we do the same at the feet of the Blessed Virgin, your Mother. (...) All in order to receive from your kindness and mercy, O Blessed Mother, by his intercession and his merits, the conservation of this country and the conversion of all who live here. Receive, therefore, O Holy and Sacred Queen of Angels and men, under your holy protection, this population that we present to you by the hands of your glorious Spouse and of your faithful servants, Saint Ignatius and all the Guardian Angels and protectors of this place, to offer them to your beloved Son. May it please him to keep and protect them, give the knowledge of his Holy Name to those who are not yet aware of it, and to all, the perseverance in His holy grace and His holy love.

[1] Altera nova positio, p. 218-219.

### *Avenues of Reflection…*

In the Pope's Apostolic letter on the year of the Rosary, he invited us **to contemplate Christ with Mary**. This invitation stayed with me. When I consulted the dictionary, I noted that the meaning of contemplate was to ***look at or consider in a calm, reflective manner***, so in order to reach a true, soulful communion with God.

François de Laval said that *it is the Kingdom of God that fills his heart and his whole being*. He also invited us to have only the interests of God in mind. Don't his words remind us of the daily exercise of finding the presence of God in all things? To cultivate this devotion to God, to oneself, and to others, François de Laval remains a source of inspiration even today. Through both the joyous times and through those that proved to be more difficult, François de Laval drew his strength and trust from the heart of God and, like Mary, he was attentive to the Holy Spirit. He looked to the Gospel passage, where Jesus calls us to pay attention, as a beacon: "*Therefore take heed how you hear*"[2]. Later in the same Gospel, Jesus also calls us to be aware of the true brothers and sisters of Christ: **"***My mother and My brothers are these who hear the word of God and do it.***"**[3] In his writings, François de Laval often prays for Mary's intercession so that the Will of God may be made known to him.

When you think about it, while praying the Rosary, doesn't the Hail Mary itself call us to contemplate the blessed Son through his mother: *blessed is the fruit of thy womb Jesus?*

Sister Doris Lamontagne, pfm

### *The Blessing of the Crypt*

In 2003, following an agreement made with *la Fabrique Notre-Dame de Quebec*, the Seminary of Quebec proceeded with the extension of the crypt that is located under the *Notre-Dame de Quebec* cathedral.

The official inauguration of the extension took place on the evening of November 4th in the presence of approximately fifty invited guests, including architect Émile Gilbert, who created the design of the extension of the crypt, and artist Lucienne Cornet, who created the magnificent bronze[4] doors found at the end of the crypt. Cardinal Ouellet performed the solemn blessing.

The word blessing when translated into French is *benediction*, a word that comes from the Latin *benedicere*, to speak well of something or someone. The Word of God is active and alive. When God speaks, He acts. When the Word of God says something good about someone, this word produces fruit. When man, in his liberty, speaks and sings praises onto God, he is transformed, answering to Him who wants only good for man for all eternity.[5] So there is the Christian meaning of the word *benediction*.

The blessing given by the priest at the end of each mass, *in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit*, was performed in a rather significant manner by Mgr. Marc Ouellet. Before a contemplative assembly, the new funeral recesses were sprinkled with holy water. This symbolic action marked the sacred nature of the crypt that, with the coming years, will welcome priests of the Seminary. After a short celebration of the Word, those present also received a blessing from our new cardinal.

This touching event, which was celebrated this past month, reminds us of our own mortal condition. Yet it also reminds us, we who are believers, of the hope of Eternal Life, which is promised by Him who wants nothing but good for His people, forever and ever.

Marie-France Cossette

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[2] Lc 8,18
[3] Lc 8,21

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[4] On the occasion of Mgr. Marc Ouellet's nomination as cardinal, he presented a picture of this door with an invitation from John Paul II, "Open all doors to Christ", as the caption.
Other image: the cardinal's coat of arms
[5] (Gn 24,27 – Ps 28,6)

### *François de Laval in good company!*

On Saturday, November 22, 18 people gathered at the François de Laval animation center to unveil an important part of our religious history. Some people, who were already passionate about history and religious culture, had a good bit of knowledge on the 17th century and on the indisputably bold character of François de Laval. These already well-informed people enriched the presentation with several developments, pertinent questions and comments. The visit of the cathedral, which included visits of the small St. Louis chapel, the crypt and the tomb of Blessed François de Laval, led to much wonder and many surprising discoveries.

This dynamic activity, which was first held last spring, seems to have answered a longing to discover the beginnings of our history and the foundation on which rests our cultural and religious identity.

A very pleasant atmosphere enveloped this activity, and at its end everyone agreed that François de Laval did indeed play a pioneering role in the Church and in Quebec society.

All it takes is a quick glance at the institutions and monuments that seem to gravitate around the cathedral to understand the ever-present influence of this great man whom we have nicknamed the "*father of the Canadian Church.*"

### *More than a tradition ...*

Once again this year, Raynald Goulet, the Secondary 1 religious education teacher at *le Petit Séminaire de Quebec*, wanted his students to get to know the founder of their school, Mgr. François de Laval.

The reason why Mr. Goulet made this educational activity a tradition was due to the students' growing interest in the subject, as he mentioned at the beginning of the presentation. They were curious to know about this renowned individual, who was a man filled with a particular care and concern for the education of children. They also wanted to know about his time, and most of all about his message of perseverance, faith, values, and God's promise to provide.

Therefore, it was a great pleasure in November to welcome 220 curious and attentive teenagers to the cathedral. After the presentation, they left filled with enthusiasm and a desire to return once again to visit the crypt, which is situated under the cathedral and is where the successors of François de Laval rest, as well as several priests from the Seminary of Quebec.

**For all groups interested in participating in an activity, feel free to contact us !**

**For more information, visit our website:**
**www.francoisdelaval.org**

**Would you like to receive the bulletin by email ? Do you have any comments or suggestions ?**

**Contact us at:**
**cfl@patrimoine-religieux.com**

***" Pray diligently to the Blessed Mother, to her Holy Spouse, to all the Holy Angels and Blessed Saints, that they may grant me the grace to desire for nothing but the accomplishment of this divine and amiable will.***

*François de Laval*

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On the 6th of every month, at the Notre-Dame de Québec Cathedral, a mass is celebrated for all the prayer intentions confided to the intercession of François de Laval, the Blessed.

Please join us and forward us your prayer intentions

*François de Laval, Quebec's first bishop*

It is through patience that the seed of the Word of God bears fruit.

*François de Laval, Quebec's first bishop*

It is as a result of our gentleness, patience and kindness that we are truly loved.

*François de Laval, Quebec's first bishop*

All that the hand of God performs serves us, though the result may not be immediately evident.

*François de Laval, Quebec's first bishop*

We must place all of our trust and strength in Our God, in his Blessed Mother and all his Holy Family.

*François de Laval, Quebec's first bishop*

All of our human ingenuity and acts performed in haste do not rise above God's greatness.

*François de Laval, Quebec's first bishop*

A long time ago, God gave me the grace to see all that happens to me in this life as a result of his Will.

*François de Laval, Quebec's first bishop*

Let nothing in our lives or in our moral conduct contradict what we say.

*François de Laval, Quebec's first bishop*

A nasty word, an impatient act or an unwelcoming face can often, in one moment, destroy all that we have built up.

*François de Laval, Quebec's first bishop*

The Kingdom of God is found within our soul, which is our center and our all.

*François de Laval, Quebec's first bishop*

The Lord gives me the grace to go before the Blessed Sacrament to make an offering of all my desires as a sacrifice to Him.

*François de Laval, Quebec's first bishop*

It is just that we live solely by a complete surrender of everything within us and around us.

*François de Laval, Quebec's first bishop*

I pray to Our Lord and to His Blessed Mother that the entire land may acknowledge His grace and that the interests of God shall be their sole interest for all time.