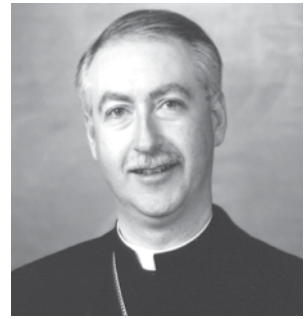


OUR NEW THEME: LOVE ONE ANOTHER



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The theme for 2007-2008 is *Love One Another*. National President Lorette Noble based this choice upon the encyclical letter of His Holiness, Pope Benedict XVI, entitled *Deus Caritas Est* (God is Love). He reminds the church that the two-fold and supreme command to love both God and neighbour is the heart of the gospel and the guiding life principle of all who live by it.

In the Holy Father's message to Canadian bishops during their recent *ad limina* visits to Rome, and through them to the people of Canada, the essence of his encyclical letter is reiterated. His direction provides a very helpful context in which to develop the new theme, *Love One Another*.

The Holy Father's message is comprised of four segments. In the segment delivered to the bishops of Quebec (May 11, 2006), he focused upon the centrality of the Eucharist in the life of faith and witness, and called Catholics to a renewal of the practice of Eucharistic Adoration. Participation in the mass is an encounter of loving communion with the Lord, which is prolonged and deepened in prayer before the Blessed Sacrament. Truly and effectively to *Love One Another*, we must first be transformed and nourished by the love of God revealed in Christ. Therefore, we would do well to consider how we place the Eucharist at the centre of our journey together.

In the address given to the bishops of the Atlantic region (May 20, 2006), His Holiness turned to the challenge of parish reconfiguration, which is touching almost all of us. This reality is keenly felt by many League members, as they strive to respond to parish amalgamations, closures and clusterings. Pope Benedict XVI teaches that the key to success in this delicate task is prayer. Prayer roots us in Christ and awakens us to our fundamental call to holiness and evangelization. This leads to an appreciation that all of our deliberations must aim at furthering the mission of the church. When change is necessary for the sake of giving people access to the Eucharist so that faith can be nourished and the gospel proclaimed, such adjustment, even when painful, must be given priority over individual desires. Our call to *Love One Another* in this situation means that we think not in terms of "winners and losers" as one parish closes and another remains open, but in the category of "brothers and sisters united in Christ," who are seeking to be together in the church in new ways that foster growth in

holiness and participation in mission.

The worrisome split between gospel and culture in Canadian society is at the centre of the Holy Father's discourse to the bishops of Ontario (September 8, 2006). Experienced as the absence of any talk of God in the public sphere, it arises out of the alienation from God's love that characterizes the lives of many people today. What is urgently needed, he says, is a renewed proclamation of the gospel, which he strikingly describes as "the challenge to make God visible in the human face of Jesus." For this to happen, Christian communities must themselves be seized by the conviction that God loves us. As we develop the theme, we could ask "In our relationships with sisters in the League, do we truly make visible the love of God in the human face of Jesus?" That face is revealed whenever we surrender ourselves to the service of others and engage in acts of kindness and care. It is masked by selfishness, the failure to welcome another and harmful words or actions.

Finally, in his speech to the bishops of the western provinces and northern territories (October 9, 2006), the Holy Father spoke of the need for conversion and reconciliation, celebrated especially in the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Many people today, who have lost the sense of sin, have hearts that are governed by pride. However, the love of the Father, says Pope Benedict XVI, triumphs over all human pride and draws the believer into ever deeper communion with the divine. To *Love One Another* as Christ would have us do, we must acknowledge our need for mercy and have frequent recourse to the confessional. It also means that we must be always ready to forgive and seek forgiveness from one another.

Woven throughout all four sections of this one message to Canada is the Holy Father's gratitude to the priests and the consecrated women and men who give generously of themselves for the service of the people of God. He calls on us to honour the great gifts of the ministerial priesthood and the consecrated life in the midst of the church, and to pray and work for an increase in vocations to these ways of life and ministry. As we live out the theme, let us continue to show particular appreciation to the priests and religious who serve as spiritual advisors.

Love One Another. This is the command of Christ, and His vicar on earth has given very helpful direction for our obedient response. †

