

“Yes, Lord! We will be those builders.”

**Address of Fr. Thomas Rosica, C.S.B.
Youth Summit
in Preparation for the International Eucharistic Congress 2008
Quebec City Friday May 18, 2007**

Your Eminence Cardinal Tomko,
Your Eminence Cardinal Ouellet,
Your Excellencies, Brother Priests,
Dear Young Friends,

What a great privilege to be with you this evening and look out into this huge crowd of over 1000 young adults- from throughout Canada and elsewhere! You have traveled long, far and wide to come back home to Quebec City, to the mother Church of North America and of Canada... to return to the birthplace of our Catholic Christian faith. Quelle immense joie de vous voir rassemblés ici ce soir!

For the past four years, the young people of Canada have made pilgrimage to this holy ground of Quebec for the “montées” or “youth summits”... following the paths forged by World Youth Days. Each year your cries, songs and desires have been “We journey;” “We seek your face;” “Here we are, Lord.” This year, you have come here on the eve of the International Eucharistic Congress that will take place one year from now. Tonight our song and desire is much more than “Here I am, Lord! Here we are, Lord!” Tonight we cry out: “We have come to do your will.” We do... we are doing... we will do... we wish to do... the will of God in our lives and in our church.

In your name I wish to thank Cardinal Marc Ouellet, the great pastor and shepherd of the mother Church of Canada for making what was unthinkable even five years ago for young people in our country, a magnificent reality today.

Five years ago this coming July 27, many of you were gathered together with over 600,000 young people from the entire world on a former military base in Toronto. It was the great Vigil of World Youth Day 2002... an unforgettable moment in the life of the universal Church. In Toronto at World Youth Day, we renewed our baptismal promises to walk as children

of the light, to become salt and light for our times. With candles in our hands, and a hushed silence that set over that magnificent, biblical scene, we heard the words of an old, infirm man dressed in white who spoke to us and to humanity. The Servant of God Pope John Paul II said on that memorable summer night five years ago:

*“Dear Friends, spontaneously in your hearts, in the enthusiasm of your young years you know the answer, and you are saying it through your presence here this evening: **Christ alone is the cornerstone on which it is possible solidly to build one’s existence.** Only Christ – known, contemplated and loved – is the faithful friend who never lets us down, who becomes our traveling companion, and whose words warm our hearts (cf. Lk 24:13-35).*

*...The aspiration that humanity nurtures, amid countless injustices and sufferings, is the hope of a new civilization marked by freedom and peace. **But for such an undertaking, a new generation of builders is needed.** Moved not by fear or violence but by the urgency of genuine love, they must learn to build, brick by brick, the city of God within the city of man.*

Allow me, dear young people, to consign this hope of mine to you: you must be those "builders"! You are the men and women of tomorrow. The future is in your hearts and in your hands. God is entrusting to you the task, at once difficult and uplifting, of working with him in the building of the civilization of love.”

Tonight, five years later, that new generation of builders has left the “employment office” that was World Youth Day 2002 in Downsview Park and you have journeyed to Quebec City, the new construction site for the future of the Church in Canada. And guess what: you are all hired for the job! If Toronto was the place of renewing our baptismal promises, Quebec City is the place where we take our Confirmation seriously- of going out in to the world and making a difference, of becoming a doer of the word and a witness to all we have seen and heard. There is much work ahead for the shakers and movers, the builders and doers of God’s great project in our country.

Let me outline for you the job description and some of the duties, risks and challenges that await you in this massive construction project for the Kingdom of God and the Church in Canada. And I will sum them up with these key words: **Jesus, the Eucharist, life, marriage, families, the saints and gratitude.**

1) First of all you must get to know and love the master builder: Jesus Christ. You cannot be fully converted to Christ if you do not pray; and you will not pray unless you schedule a regular time and a place for prayer. You will not be good builders and doers unless you have a smaller Christian community that supports you and encourages you to grow in the Lord. This small community is often the parish. You will work better if you work with at least one other person, a co-builder or co-worker who shares the vision and has seen the plans. Christ sent his followers out two by two... to change the world. You can't do it alone.

Never forget this truth: to be a successful builder, good worker and "doer" on this construction site, you must first be a lover and imitator of the Master builder. Jesus does not want us to be admirers. He wants us to be lovers and imitators. In one of the verses of the beautiful hymn "God's Gift" for next year's Eucharistic Congress, we sing:

*Before returning to the Father, Christ proved his boundless love.
The master was a humble teacher, who served on bended knee.
Washing the feet of his disciples, Christ gave the great command:
What I have done you must do also,
Now serve with love and care. Now serve with love and care.*

2) What holds this building project together is the mortar of love and charity that is found in the Eucharist. Without Jesus, present in the Eucharist, our efforts will flounder and fail. The Eucharist holds the whole structure together. That is why it is so important that a Eucharistic Congress follows the magnificent project of World Youth Day 2002 in our country. World Youth Day 2002 laid the foundation. The Eucharist will hold us together and allow us to build for the future. The Eucharist changes our lives and gives us the vision, strength and energy to accomplish the huge and seemingly impossible task of building a civilization of love marked by freedom and peace.

The Church celebrates the Eucharistic mystery every day, administers the sacraments, proclaims the word of life—the Word of God, and commits herself to the causes of justice and charity. And this Evangelization bears fruit: it gives light and joy, it gives the path of life to many people; many others live, often unknowingly, of the light and the warmth that radiate from this permanent Evangelization, this constant presence and care of the Church. You are the agents of the Church in bringing about this new Evangelization.

Christianity, Catholicism, the Sacraments, especially the Eucharist, are not courses, things, ideas, passing fancies, symbols- **they are a living person and his name is Jesus.** We do not ask: “What is the Eucharist?”. Rather, we ask: “Who is the Eucharist.” The Eucharist is Jesus. Theology alone, trendy programs and new age, politically correct jargon will not save us. Jesus will. And His word, found in the Sacred Scriptures, and alive in the Sacraments, especially the Eucharist, gives us life, meaning, purpose and direction. It is the blueprint for our life and work.

3) The builders on this awesome project must be lovers of life. If we don't love life, how can we build for the future? Never lose sight of the atrocities against the unborn, the untold and too-seldom spoken of pain and lingering anguish experienced by those who have been involved in abortions. Nor can we ignore the other great challenge faced by humanity today--the serious question of mercy killing, or euthanasia, no longer found in abstract cases and theories. It concerns ordinary people and is debated not only in Parliament but also around dinner tables, in classrooms, in the public square. This issue strikes to the very core of who we are and what we believe. True compassion leads to sharing another's pain, not killing the person whose suffering we cannot bear. Become a lover and doer of life.

4) The foundation of society is the family. And the foundation of the family is marriage. The Catechism of the Catholic Church, states: "The vocation to marriage is written in the very nature of man and woman." The Bishops of Canada uphold the exclusive union of a man and a woman as central to marriage, and thus cannot accept the civil redefinition as the union of any two persons. Many other Canadians from all religious traditions as well as those who hold no religious faith share this conviction. This is not some antiquated teaching or remnant of the past. It is the living foundation for the present and the future of humanity.

As the keystone of society, the family is the most favorable environment in which to welcome children. If you are considering the Sacrament of Marriage, remember that awesome responsibility that is entrusted to you for the future of humanity. Do not say “I do” cheaply or without much thought, prayer and reflection. We need young adults to say their “I do” with joy, conviction, faith and hope. You are our future and our hope. Without married people, we cannot build the future of society and the Church.

From solid families will come forth vocations to serve the church. We cannot forget the words that Pope John Paul II spoke to us in Toronto at the conclusion of World Youth Day 2002:

“...if, in the depths of your hearts, you feel the same call to the priesthood or consecrated life, do not be afraid to follow Christ on the royal road of the Cross! At difficult moments in the Church's life, the pursuit of holiness becomes even more urgent. And holiness is not a question of age; it is a matter of living in the Holy Spirit, just as Kateri Tekakwitha did here in America and so many other young people have done.”

5) When you think you are alone, and that the road is too difficult or the brick work is too demanding, take courage from the lives and witnesses of the holy ones who labored here long before we arrived on the scene. No saint ever wrote the consumer's "Guide to Happiness." As we learn more about the saints we find that they pursued questions not unlike our own: What is the meaning and purpose of life? Why do so many of our hopes and plans end in sadness, disappointment and seeming defeat? Where can we find true peace? How can we feel more truly alive?

The saints do not teach us how to avoid suffering. What they do show us is that only along the path of holiness that we can comprehend a type of happiness for which suffering is no necessary obstacle. There is a meaning or truth at the heart of life which suffering is powerless to destroy.

Quebec is holy ground for Canada and for North America. You know the names of the holy one – the Canadian or North American Martyrs: Jean de Brebeuf; Noel Chabanel; Anthony Daniel; Charles Garnier; Issac Jogues; Gabriel Lalemant; Rene Goupil; Jean de Lalande; the spiritual giants of this very city: Marie Guyart, known to us as Blessed Marie de l'Incarnation;

Blessed Bishop François de Laval; Blessed Catherine de Saint-Augustin; Blessed Dina Bélanger. Quebec was built by these heroes and heroines who were not just hearers of the Word but remarkable, untiring doers of God's word. Tonight their legacy is passed on to each of you in this church.

Think of our own former Governor General George Vanier and his wife Pauline, whose cause for beatification is now underway in Ottawa and in Rome. Their "I do" was spoken day after day after day in the most public and challenging of circumstances. Their married love, their lives, fidelity and courage inspire us.

There are also other names known and loved by us: the young Blessed Pier Giorgio Frassati whose influence is being felt across this entire country with so many Frassati Houses being established. Then there is universally loved apostle of charity known as Teresa of Calcutta who captivated the hearts and minds of millions of people across the face of the earth. In prayer and adoration of Jesus in the Eucharist, Blessed Teresa discovered the essential truth which underlies the church's social teaching and her religious and humanitarian work in every age and in every part of the world: Jesus Christ has wished to identify himself with every person- especially the poor, the sick and the needy. "You did it to me" Mother Teresa would repeat over and over again. A message ever ancient and ever new.

Tonight I cannot help but offer to you one more great model and holy friend for us in the person of Karol Józef Wojtyła, born 87 years ago today, May 18, in Wadowice a small city 50 kilometers from Krakow in Poland. He was the only Pope that most of you knew in your lifetime. John Paul II enjoyed an incredible popularity with young Catholics. He truly made us discover our youthfulness, generosity and joy as he invited us to become salt and light in a world, a society and a culture that has often lost the flavor of the Gospel and the light of Christ. This young boy from Wadowice would become a priest of Krakow, the Bishop of Rome, a giant and a hero for our time, and a witness to truth, hope and peace for the ages. Your presence here tonight is a living tribute to him and his outreach to young people.

The Saints and blesseds remind us that on this path to heaven, we are never finished; we are only and always on the way. When we think of holiness in these terms – as a kind of direction, rather than a destination – we have a sense that what unites us with the saints, our fellow travelers, is much deeper than all that sets us apart.

6) Finally, there is an essential quality or virtue needed for being a builder and doer of this new civilization. And that quality is gratitude. This is the gift for which we must pray each day. The very word for the Eucharist means "thanksgiving." And thanksgiving is a way of expressing gratitude to God. Gratitude is a very positive virtue that has positive thoughts associated with it, and above all, positive emotions. It's the emotion of thankfulness for what other people, or God, have given to you. It brings peace, and it brings a kind of quiet joy.

The Eucharist is about Thanksgiving. It makes sense that Jesus would have asked us to do something that was not only wise and spiritually sound, but psychologically good for us too. When you are thankful for things that are present in your lives, once you realize that we've been given things, and given them gratis, things change. When you realize the things that you have, that you've been given, and you are filled with gratitude, it puts anger, bitterness and resentment aside. Gratitude and love are very closely related. Gratitude moves you toward love, and since God is love, as Pope Benedict has reminded us so often, then gratitude at the very deepest level moves us toward God.

Dear young friends: something new is happening in the Church and in Canada, especially in the lives of young people who are part of this new generation of builders- the John Paul II Generation. Deep in this cold, Canadian winter, a new springtime of the human spirit is dawning. It is beginning here in Québec, in the very place where the faith was born nearly 400 years ago. Take courage, take heart, rise up and hold your heads high. You are not alone. The Eucharist will nourish and strengthen you along the journey. The saints and holy ones of Québec will give you hope and courage to reclaim our magnificent Catholic, Christian heritage.

You have not come to Quebec this weekend to sit around and wait for something to do. The Eucharistic Congress 2008 is but the pretext of this great mission entrusted to you. You have come to this blessed city to let the Lord know that you have accepted the job offer and that you are ready and willing to take up the challenge. Look around you in this church! What incredible joy and hope is here! You are not alone in this awesome task of building a new civilization. With deep gratitude the Church in Canada can cry out tonight with one voice: "Lord, this is the generation that has longed to see your face." Here is the new generation of builders! They are ready and willing to take up the challenge. Allez-y! Merci beaucoup!