

## **“The Priesthood is a Great Grace from God”**

To whom it may concern:

Shortly before my arrival in my family at LaSalle (Montreal) for my holidays after my ordination, my parents had met with the pastor of our parish of Saint Catherine Labouré, to inform him that I would be in Montreal for a little more than a month.



Father André Viens

It was in this parish that I went to Mass before entering the Community.

I had already become acquainted with the parish priest the previous year (1992) when I was a deacon. I had gone to the rectory to make known my presence, and I had informed him of my membership in the Community of the Sons of Mary, mentioning to him that it had been born of the Army of Mary.

I remarked at that time that he knew very well all the reservations held concerning us. He remained very respectful to me, letting me know, however, that he was not open to the Army of Mary and that he would adhere to the decisions of the Archbishop of Montreal in what concerned us.

So when my parents approached him to ask if I could celebrate Holy Mass in the parish of Saint Catherine Labouré during my visit in the autumn of 1993, they already envisaged the possibility of a refusal.

The parish priest replied that the Archbishop of Montreal was not authorizing me to celebrate Mass in the parish, given that I belonged to the Community of the Sons of Mary. At best, and without my personally having requested it, the parish priest was authorizing me, upon my arrival, to celebrate, for my parents and friends, a single Mass and give the homily, this without any announcement in the parish bulletin. It's not hard to guess the reason why no announcement was given the parishioners. So, I celebrated this solemn Mass on the first Saturday of my stay with my family (end of September 1993) and I delivered the homily as promised.

Among the friends present, there were Knights of Mary, and I was very glad that some members of the Army of Mary's choir had come to provide the singing during that Mass. It was very beautiful and was for me an act of thoughtfulness on the part of our good Mother of Heaven.

The parish priest was present at the Mass, but without concelebrating. At the beginning of Mass, he emphasized to those present that the priesthood is a great grace from God. After Mass, relatives and friends gathered for a supper in the church basement. It was the happy occasion to meet again members of the family whom I had not seen for a number of years. The parish priest took that opportunity to wish me, in front of everyone, a happy and

fruitful priesthood.

For the remainder of my stay, I had permission to celebrate Mass in another parish in LaSalle, an English parish dedicated to Saint Jean de Brébeuf. The very gracious parish priest left me completely free to celebrate Mass on any day whatsoever, at the hour that suited us. I thanked the Lord and our Holy Mother Mary for the granting of that favor.

To conclude, I can say that I was neither surprised nor disappointed that the Archbishop of Montreal should be so closed to the fact of my being a Son of Mary, for, in the Work, we had long been prepared to undergo such treatment. I was convinced that the best witness I could give, under the circumstances, was to transmit my spiritual joy to those about me, letting it be seen that, on my part, there was no resentment in regard to the religious authorities in Quebec, and inviting those close to me to do likewise. The situation in that parish has not changed and neither has my interior disposition. That is what has permitted me to remain at peace with myself; I believe that we find peace through pardon, and I hope that one day, at God's hour, fruit will come from this, lasting fruit.

May God bless us and may the Lady of All Peoples, who once was Mary, watch over us!

**Father André Viens**