

Deepest Gratitude to Our Volunteers!

On Sunday, November 11, on the occasion of the Mass of thanksgiving for the volunteers, Father Denis Thivierge spoke in these words, drawing his inspiration from the day's readings.

"Now he is God, not of the dead, but of the living; for to him all men are in fact alive."

We Christians believe that death is not the last word. God did not create us in order then to allow us to disappear. Jesus Himself will give us proof of this through His resurrection from the dead.

Some would like proofs of this resurrection of Jesus. No preacher will ever be able to provide proofs, but all priests will tell you that faith is based, first of all, on the word of Christ's Apostles, which they went so far as to sign with their martyrdom. Faith rests on the word given and taught still today by so many witnesses who do not merely deliver nice sermons, but who really live what they preach.

Resurrection is at the very center of faith. We can believe in God, in the value of Jesus' teaching, in the excellence of the Gospel morals, but if we do not believe that Christ is risen and that we are called to share in His eternal life, then the preaching of priests is useless, as is the faith of the faithful. The Sadducees believed in God, but since they did not believe in eternal life, it was as though their faith did not change their life... Unfortunately, many Christians live in the same way, that is to say, as though the spiritual life had no influence on their everyday life.

Jesus presents His Father to us as being "the God of the living". And this God of the living is no stranger to our lives: Adam in the Garden of Eden spoke to Him without fear, as though talking to a friend. Moses spoke to the people of Israel of a God who talked with him in the burning bush and who continued to talk with him, to dictate to him His will for His people. Essentially, Moses was referring to a God who is bound in with the destiny of His people.

God continues to talk to each one of us, and it is in the manner in which we are open to this bond of the word that makes of us men alive forever. God is close to each one of us; He listens to us, is always prepared to welcome us, ready to answer us. He is attentive to each one's prayer. It is not only Adam, Moses and a few saints who were able to converse with Him. Everyone can be received for a hearing in His presence at every hour of the day or night.

Our God is a God of the living, not only of those living in Heaven, but also of all those who live off His life through baptism and the state of grace. Already on this earth, we can benefit from the resurrection of Christ, for our baptism has us participate in an intimate life with God.

Eternal life is not only what there will be after death, for it already begins here on this earth. Eternal life is already a dimension of our present existence. "Eternal life is this," said Jesus, "to know you, the only true God, and him whom you have sent, Jesus Christ" (Jn 17:3). No Christian is permitted to spurn "life on

earth" to the benefit of a "celestial life". If we so desire it, our life on earth can already be celestial. The only thing that is different, as Saint John tells us, is the manifestation of our condition as children of God.

We do not have the right to spurn life on earth; however, in order to preserve eternal possessions and thus participate in God's life, it is permissible to spurn certain aspects of life on earth, as Maccabees' sons demonstrated so well, as they were martyred because of their fidelity to God. That is to say that death is considered to be nothing when it is in the perspective of resurrection.

Our passage from this earthly life to the celestial life should take place a little more every day. The Kingdom of God is in us and all about us. We must make this Kingdom ever more visible and accessible through our words and our attitudes.

Good has a tendency to spread, Saint Thomas Aquinas teaches us. A little like the flower that does not keep for itself its wonderful scent and splendid colors, or the sun keeping its warmth and light for itself, the Christian is urged to not keep for himself his faith and spiritual heritage. Furthermore, if for me faith is the most precious thing there is and I have experienced this, what will I not do so that others may benefit from it as well? "Give gratuitously what you have received gratuitously," Jesus tells us.

Many people in the Work have understood this and have hoped that others might experience in their turn the tremendous happiness they have in their hearts after having felt the love of God. This is manifested first of all through prayer. And then occasions always come up to allow them to bear witness to the hope there is in their hearts.

The parents who are members of the Work have transmitted this inestimable treasure of the faith to their children. And still others, having understood the richness of faith and the benefits of *Life of Love* have given of their time and their means so that as many people as possible may profit from it.

Today, we wish to underline the valuable contribution of all the volunteers in Mary's Work. Yes, what would this Work be without the work of volunteers? In fact, what would the Church of Christ have become without the gratuitous devotedness of its members? There is our foundress who, from the very beginning, set an example for us by working gratuitously in her small kitchen. And then there are the priests who give of themselves unstintingly.

There are secretaries who listen, who read and who reply to thousands of people until late at night. We can recall the wonderful and lengthy preparation required for ceremonies. So many people would deserve to be mentioned when we think of volunteer work within the Army of Mary that we always run the risk of forgetting some. Let us think of the sacristans, the altar servers, the organists, the choir members, those who faithfully see to the upkeep inside and outside, the grounds and flowerbeds, or the members of the Service and Order Unit, to those who look after the audiovisual components; those who teach catechism, without forgetting the support

given the elderly, all the workshops, those in the kitchens, etc. It is important to publicly say thank-you at least once a year, for the contribution of our volunteers allows the Work to hold its own and to develop.

Let us recall all the apostolic voyages to Jamaica and Italy in order to renovate and support the works of the Sons and Daughters of Mary. We could also bring to mind all the renovation work done in our residences in Canada, the snow removal, the preparing of our meeting halls, and I am thinking here particularly of Montreal and Montmagny when we had our large gatherings there. The real richness of the Army of Mary is our volunteers! (cf. booklet no. 12) For no one lives off our Works (cf. *Le Royaume*, March 1986) and no one can claim to do so either. It is also as a result of that that the Army of Mary has been able to offer substantial donations to the Holy Father, to the Church, to the poor, the lepers, the more destitute (cf. booklet no. 5). And today, we can say that without the volunteer work of our members, there would simply not be the chapel Spiri-Maria. Those who gave of themselves the most in the Work have never received a salary. Nor have they allowed themselves to take a meal at the expense of the Work, and every day, we can see that God provides for everything (cf. *Le Royaume*, May 2002). Let us remember that it is God who calls and who guides us; it is God who inspires the good deeds of the volunteers which benefit all of us (cf. *Le Royaume*, July 1997).

And all of this is done in a spirit of gratitude for all the blessings received from God and, furthermore, a great joy flows from this (cf. *Le Royaume*, November 2002). As a consequence, today's Mass has been offered for the intentions of all our volunteers.

Father Denis Thivierge



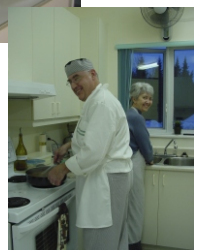
Fr. Denis Thivierge



Every year, a group of volunteers undertake the task of spring cleaning in the chapel of Spiri-Maria.



Rosa Lunch members—The volunteers who make and sell the sandwiches and beverages during our days of prayer.



Gilles Neault and Pierrette Roy in the kitchen at Spiri Maria Pietro.