

V + J

Symposium on Blessed Louis Brisson's Ministry and Spirituality

Holy Mass – Homily

September 25, 2012

My dear sisters and brothers,

We are celebrating at a very special place: the crypt of the Motherhouse. We feel very close to our beloved founders: Saint Leonie Françoise de Sales Aviat and Blessed Louis Brisson. We want to celebrate with them, and we want to leave here today renewed by their examples, their instructions and their intercessions.

I would like to invite you to consider our liturgical texts, the special liturgy that has been prepared for the Holy Mass in honor of Blessed Louis Brisson, and which we will use from now on to celebrate his Feast.

The **Collect prayer** expresses some of the main characteristics of his life and his ministry. It says that God, in His “*infinite goodness*” gave him “*the apostolic fervour of a lively faith and an ardent charity*”. His fervour was to serve the people of God and to place all his energies and gifts of the fulfillment of that purpose. It was a fervour that empowered him in all his ministries to the local church and to both religious congregations he founded. His heart and his mind were filled with zeal to evangelize, to bring Jesus to others, as the apostles did. Therefore it was an “apostolic fervour”.

His *faith* was very much alive, and found expression in his daily prayer life, his relationships with those he met, his initiatives to serve the youth, the Sisters of the Visitation Monastery, and the whole Church, founding two religious congregations. Faith was for him a source of strength, of perseverance, of courage. As we will soon begin the “Year of Faith” certainly our Blessed Founder has a lot to help us deepen our own faith. He also instructs us to serve others, helping them to keep their hearts grounded in the source of life and hope which is the heart of Jesus. An authentic faith makes a big difference in one's life.

His *charity* was an ardent one, powerful as fire. As we have our daily struggles being charitable in our relationships, he also, as a human being like ourselves, had to renew his strength to stay faithful to the practice of this Salesian virtue. Those who lived with him are witnesses to this. In a very special way, it was in the challenging relationship with the local ordinary, Bishop Cortet that charity always guided his heart, his mind and his efforts. He was not against anyone. Rather he was dedicated entirely to be faithful to the will of God, which had been expressed so clearly to him.

In the Collect prayer we are also asking also *“the grace of following in the footsteps of Christ, as joyful and courageous witnesses of his Gospel”*. It reminds us of the desire of the Good Mother who wanted the Oblates to “reprint the Gospel”. Father Brisson realizes that “A Christian society no longer exists” and that something had to be done. This truth is even clearer in our days. For us, no new society will be possible if not rooted in the true values of the Gospel. As members of the Salesian family, to reprint the Gospel and to be Jesus walking on the earth are expressions of the contribution expected from us in the Church.

In the **Scripture Reading** to the Philippians the apostle Saint Paul invites us to follow Jesus Christ, God who takes on humanity. The apostle calls us to incarnate in our hearts and our minds the same humility, love and spirit of service of Jesus Christ. This is expressed by the Salesian motto “Live Jesus”: a dynamic interior moving, which consists in emptying ourselves so that Jesus lives in us and through us in our ministries.

In the **Gospel** of John, Jesus expresses his personal desire: He wants to be the eternal life in our lives and the source of new life in the dynamic of our daily lives. His desire becomes an invitation to us, an invitation that comes from his heart: to keep and to cultivate a dynamic union of life with him. This union is for us the source of life, of energy and of perseverance in joyful fidelity to Him. This is the way toward bearing fruit.

The **Responsorial Psalm** is a prayer that reveals the happiness of a heart who lives in God and with God: *“I find my delight in your commandments, O Lord!”* God’s commandments are the expression of His eternal love for us. *“Happy are those who keep his decrees, who seek him with their whole heart”*.

May the Lord open our hearts so that, whenever we celebrate this marvelous liturgy of the Feast of our Blessed Founder, God may always renew us and enable us to be *“fervent in spirit, to serve the Lord, to rejoice in hope, to endure in affliction and to persevere in prayer”* (Rm 12: 11-12), following the example of Father Brisson.

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