



LATE FATHER EUGÈNE RAIMBAULT

1930-2019

By Baptism, all the people of God as a whole are a community of faith, called to continue in the Holy Spirit the mission of Jesus Christ. However, in this Body, not all members have the same function. As a matter of fact, the Lord has called and appointed certain members to exercise in his name the service of all the people. Such is the mission of bishops, priests and deacons.

Our colleague Eugène Raimbault, whose memory we remember today, was a priest walking in the footsteps of the Apostles. He generously responded to the Lord's call. His long training in the Scout Movement had moulded his heart. So, he could answer: "*Always ready!*"

Then, we met at the Major Seminary of St. Boniface in September 1954. During our four years of training, a solid friendship was woven between both of us. Moreover, Eugène easily invited his fellow friends to take a generous snack at his mother's home on our days off.

Our respective ministry has taken us to different and sometimes distant places. However, the bond of friendship has never been broken, because Eugène has been able to visit me several times at the very places of my ministry, either in Montreal or in Ottawa. In addition, the frequent meetings of confreres of priestly ordination fostered this fraternal friendship. On the occasion of my arrival in St. Boniface as Archbishop in Summer 2001, Eugène's evident joy was for me a source of encouragement in my new mission.

Eugène was a simple man; he was very good, very kind, very sensitive, even vulnerable. With all his human qualities, he served the Church in faith. Born into a new-Canadian family of French origin, he practiced his ministry almost continuously in English-speaking parishes. He served at the early beginning of Holy Redeemer Parish as a founder-pastor. It was not so easy for him; he had to begin again, when the roof of his new church collapsed.

Early on, he was engaged in the "Charismatic Renewal" Movement. Then, his sensitivity to the Holy Spirit gave a very special touch to his life and ministry as a priest. Congresses have taken him to different parts of the world. Specially, he had kept alive in his memory his audience with Pope Saint John Paul II, that he was very proud of. A large picture of this event accompanied him for the rest of his life wherever he lived.

His failing health prompted him to retire early at the Archbishop's Residence, where I found him, when I became Archbishop. That is to say that we lived under the same roof for eight full years.

By a mysterious destiny, which only the Divine Providence can explain, he was led out some years ago from his native province to live to different places around Quebec City. He thus got closer to his elder sister Madeleine. He lived in four different residences, where I visited him almost regularly. His attachment to Manitoba appeared always on the surface! The pictures or documents that he was showing me almost every time, gave proof that he was missing St. Boniface.

The most significant visit took place on June 6, 2018, when we celebrated at Sainte-Anne-de-Beaupré Basilica the 60th anniversary of his presbyteral life. In the Eucharistic celebration and during the following dinner, he was surrounded, among others, by his confreres of priestly ordination, Bishop Noël Delaquis, Fr. Rodrigue Bouchard, and myself.

During his stay in Quebec, Eugène's health gradually deteriorated due to an unfortunate fall and various health complications because of his age. He was well treated and received appropriate care. However, he suffered in silence and prayer. Thus, he had to « *bear the hardships for the sake of the Goods News* » (2 Tm 1, 8).

My last visit to Eugène took place on October 10, three days before he has been called back to God. Visibly at the point of death, he put on ghost of a small smile, when he saw me. So, we prayed together reciting the "*Our Father*" and the "*Hail Mary*". I then gave him my last blessing. May the Lord grant him the endless peace he reserves for his good and faithful servants.

Many thanks to Most Reverend Albert LeGatt, Archbishop of St. Boniface, for the warm invitation he extended to me today to take part in the last tribute to my colleague Eugène on Manitoba soil. Even though his mortal remains are buried in Quebec, his memory will remain very alive in Manitoba, especially in the Archdiocese of Saint Boniface, which he served with heart and hand.

+ Émilien Goulet, PSS
Archbishop Emeritus of Saint Boniface