

## May 1, 2020-Friday, Third Week of Easter

### Canada's first Catholic bishop

On this day in 1647, a 24-year old seminarian who would become the first Roman Catholic bishop of Canada was ordained in France.

Born April 30, 1623, in France, the newly ordained Fr. Francois de Montmorency Laval went on to receive his degree in canon law at the Sorbonne, and then lived at the Ermitage of Caen. In 1658, the 35-year-old priest was named bishop of New France (Canada), and sailed to Quebec.

Bishop Laval soon butted heads with New France's governor over the lucrative sale of alcohol to Indians. The bishop left New France in 1662, but managed to have the governor later recalled to France. Bishop Laval returned to Quebec in 1663. He founded the Seminary of Quebec to train seminarians and to house retired priests (the seminary became Laval University in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.) But he again quarreled with the new governor. A royal agent was sent to New France to clarify that civil government's authority overrode clergy authority.

In 1674, Bishop Laval became bishop of the newly-created Diocese of Quebec (which included all French territory in North America). Despite great distances, he visited as many of his parishes as he could. He promoted the spread of the faith among the Indians and baptized the Iroquois chief. He fostered vocations and started Canada's Catholic school system.

Bishop Laval died in 1708 in Quebec. His cause for canonization was introduced in 1878; he was canonized in 2014.

*As the disciples approached the village to which they were going, Jesus gave the impression that he was going on farther. But they urged him, "Stay with us, for it is nearly evening and the day is almost over." So he went in to stay with them at table, he took bread, said the blessing, broke it, and gave it to them. With that their eyes were opened and they recognized him, but he vanished from their sight. (Luke 24:28-31)*

Those two disciples had walked that road from Jerusalem to Emmaus before. They had read the Scriptures before. They had shared meals before. But not like this. This meal was different because it was presided over by the risen Christ.

In this week's scriptural text, Luke is answering the question that must have been asked back then and has been asked ever since: "Why should I go to Mass? I can read the Scriptures, I can pray, why go to Mass?"

I *can* read the Scriptures, and I should. I *can* pray and I should. But there is something different, something unique, in the liturgy, and that something is the presence of the risen Christ.

There are different levels of presence. God is everywhere and God was everywhere for those two disciples. But there was a distinctive, more intense, more active presence of Jesus when they sat down to break bread that day. And we believe that when a sacrament is celebrated, especially the Eucharist, that is the kind of presence we experience.

The risen Lord is with me in a distinctive way at the Eucharist. His presence had a powerful effect on the two disciples when he broke bread with them that day. His presence in the Eucharist can have a powerful effect on me.

Spend some quiet time with the Lord