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Au Revoir et Mille Mercis, Cardinal Marc Ouellet

Canada Bids Farewell to a Great Shepherd

TORONTO, JULY 4, 2010 ([Zenit.org](http://www.zenit.org)).- Here are excerpts from a reflection written by Canadian Father Thomas Rosica in response to news that the archbishop of Quebec, Cardinal Marc Ouellet, was appointed the prefect of the Congregation for Bishops. The Vatican announced the papal appointment last Wednesday.

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On June 30, 2010, Pope Benedict XVI appointed Quebec's Cardinal Marc Ouellet prefect of the Congregation for Bishops and president of the Pontifical Commission for Latin America. As of June 30, he is no longer the archbishop of Quebec City and primate of Canada but assumes his new roles in the Roman Curia. He will move to Rome at the end of the summer.

[...]

I first met the cardinal when he was a young priest at the Grand Séminaire de Montréal, almost 20 years ago. We later reconnected in 2001 when he was a newly ordained bishop in Rome and secretary of the Pontifical Council for Christian Unity and I was the national director and CEO of World Youth Day 2002. Our first major "act" was to arrange the Palm Sunday celebrations in Rome in 2001 for the Canadian delegation of young people who journeyed with me to receive the World Youth Day Cross from the Italians who hosted the previous World Youth Day in 2000. Then-Bishop Ouellet kindly agreed to celebrate Mass for us at the tomb of Peter the day after we arrived. It was a celebration that many of us will never forget. Bishop Marc Ouellet traveled to Canada for World Youth Day 2002, not as a residential bishop but a guest and a Vatican Curial leader.

One of the great blessings of World Youth Day came to us in November 2002, the day of Archbishop Ouellet's appointment to Quebec City. From the moment he "took possession" of the Archdiocese of Quebec in January 2003, we knew that something had changed ... for Quebec and for Canada. He ruffled feathers that needed to be ruffled, issued challenges to many who had become too familiar with the status quo, and issued challenges to all of us. He made mistakes along the way and admitted them, asking people to help this scholar and teacher to become a servant and shepherd.

The past seven years with Cardinal Ouellet in Canada have been moments of great blessings and abundant graces. [...] It was a blessing to journey with him on the path to the International Eucharistic Congress 2008. His visits to us at Salt and Light in Toronto, and his presence and words at the International Media Convention in Toronto in 2008, only weeks before the Eucharistic Congress, remain engraved in the memories of so many people.

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To have worked closely with him, as English language media attaché, at the October 2008 synod of bishops at the Vatican on the Word of God in the Life and Mission of the Church, was an extraordinary privilege. It was during the synod that I witnessed his leadership qualities at work in that universal assembly. His ability to synthesize the thoughts and words of ecclesial leaders from every corner of the earth was masterful.

The cardinal's departure from Canada will be a great loss for the Church in Canada but a great gift to the universal Church. He brings to his new Vatican posting a remarkable theological, pastoral and spiritual intellect, a deep understanding of the universal church, the ability to grasp complex issues and make them comprehensible to others, evangelical boldness and courage, deep spirituality and faith, and a love of human beings, especially young people. He is well known to bishops and priests throughout the world.

Each prefect brings his own gifts to the world. Cardinal Ouellet comes to the Congregation for Bishops with a very different skill set. He is a professor of theology and has worked in the formation of priests. He brings pastoral experience of a bishop of a residential see. He knows the challenges of secularism, quietism, religious indifference and atheism. He also knows the deep longings, hopes and pains of human hearts, especially the hearts of priests and bishops. He knows the complex set of qualities needed for pastors and shepherds today. He is also aware of the horizons and limitations of the Roman Curia, having worked in the Curia for several years prior to his appointment to Quebec in 2002. It will be a different playing field in the Congregation of Bishops under Cardinal Marc Ouellet.

The appointment of a North American to this critical post in the Roman Curia is another indication of Pope Benedict's desire to reform and renew the episcopacy and the presbyterate around the world. Though Cardinal Ouellet is from North America, he is not an Anglo-Saxon. This is an important factor. Cardinal Ouellet understands Anglo-Saxon North America but also is a bridge to Latin America and to Europe. Cardinal Ouellet's appointment reveals the excellent choice of a proven Church leader who will be able to respond to universal situations from a universal perspective.

Over the past five years, Pope Benedict has chosen seasoned and proven pastors and shepherds from various parts of the world who bring to the universal governance of the Church unique skills, perspectives, and new methods. The instrument of the Roman Curia is at the service of the universal Church and does not "govern at a distance." It is an important instrument that serves, coordinates, offers example, collaborates with the Holy Father and the bishops of the world. The Curia is only as effective as the seasoned shepherds who lead the various departments. The Congregation for Bishops, in particular, must embody what it strives to do: prepare shepherds and pastors to the universal church. Under the leadership of Cardinal Ouellet, I believe that the Congregation for Bishops will do great work in a very challenging time. Cardinal Ouellet will not only be occupying an office. He will also continue his ministry of teaching, guiding and governing, no longer from the historic see of Quebec, but from the See of Rome. He will govern and lead by example, as he has done in Canada.

In the midst of great progress in social matters, Canada is still strongly marked by a deep secularization shown by strong religious indifference. The real problem in Quebec has been the spiritual void created by a religious and cultural rupture, a significant loss of memory, bringing in its wake a family crisis and an education crisis, leaving citizens disoriented, unmotivated, and destabilized. Anchors have been displaced or lost. No one has tackled this indifference over the past few years more courageously, eloquently and publicly than Cardinal Marc Ouellet. Observing that "secular fundamentalists" had dominated Quebec life since the Quiet Revolution, Quebec's cardinal, argued that this was a historical rupture: "Quebec society has rested for 400 years on two pillars: French culture and the Catholic religion, which form the base that enables it to integrate other elements of its current pluralist identity."

It was Cardinal Ouellet's immediate predecessor, Archbishop Maurice Couture, who launched the idea of the International Eucharistic Congress shortly after World Youth Day 2002 in Canada. Cardinal Ouellet

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“inherited” the project and brought it to its completion. The Eucharistic Congress was a privileged opportunity for Canada to re-actualize the historic and cultural patrimony of holiness and social engagement of the Church, which draws its roots from the Eucharistic mystery.

When we think of Cardinal Ouellet, many of us will remember that blessed week in June 2008 when we caught a glimpse of a tide that is turning. Several times during that magnificent week of June 2008, Cardinal Ouellet, stated emphatically that the congress marked a “turning point”. At the lively Saturday evening prayer vigil with his devoted young people, the cardinal said the he felt as if he had been “raised from the dead.” What fitting words to describe what is afoot in Quebec: a resurrection of sorts! Cardinal Marc Ouellet was God’s instrument of resurrection at this moment in Canadian history.

If the Eucharist is gift of God for the life of the world, then Cardinal Marc Ouellet has truly been a gift of God for the life of the Church in Canada, and especially in Quebec. Merci beaucoup, Cardinal Ouellet journeying with us these past seven years.

Two expressions linger in my mind these days: “Je me souviens” (Quebec’s motto: “I remember”) and “Mane Nobiscum (the prayer of the Emmaus disciples to their Lord: “Stay with us.”)

We will not forget all that you did for the Church in Canada, and for us at Salt and Light Television. And while our first instincts would be to utter the prayer of the two on the Emmaus road, begging you to remain with us longer, we also know that by giving you to the universal Church in this way, we will be blessed in ways we never imagined.

We will remember you with hearts of gratitude and accompany you with our affection and prayers.

Au Revoir, Eminence!
Arrivederci a Roma!

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