

Funeral Homily for Bishop Colin Campbell
January 23, 2012; St. Ninian Cathedral

A bishop's motto is one of the ways that a bishop expresses elements of his spirituality as well as his identity, especially in relationship with the people he is called to serve. Bishop Campbell's motto, *Tutore te Christe*, translated "You O Christ are the teacher", is an appropriate key for us to use to enter into the heart and life and ministry of Bishop Colin Campbell. Today's Gospel (Mark 10:17-30) passage of the young man who runs up to Jesus and asks about eternal life provides the basis of our reflection.

This Gospel passage shows us clearly how much Jesus as the Good Teacher, was concerned with the expectations and hopes of this young man, and desired to meet him personally and to engage him in conversation. Christ interrupted his journey to stop and answer the young man's question. He gave his full attention to this youth who was moved with an ardent desire to speak to the "good Teacher" and to learn from him how to journey through life. Jesus opens the heart of the young man and reminds him that obedience to the Ten Commandments is necessary in order to "inherit eternal life". The Commandments are essential points of reference if we are to live in love, to distinguish clearly between good and evil, and to build a life plan that is solid and enduring.

I believe this encounter with the Lord as the Good Teacher helps us to appreciate the meaning of Bishop Campbell's motto and his life and ministry. Each one of us, including Colin Campbell, is looked on by the Good Teacher and we are loved deeply. In the midst of this gaze of love, we know our whole being is embraced by our Saviour and Teacher, who knows the hopes and longings of our hearts and who wants to assist us in attaining these deep longings. It is those longings that are expressed by the psalmist of today's liturgy who says: "I long for you O Lord"; the same longings that emerge from our hearts in the silent moments of our lives.

This gaze of love gave Bishop Campbell a deep understanding of the faith that led him to do so much to promote in others an understanding of the teachings of the Church. It was this encounter that motivated him to do this, an encounter of love described by St. John who states: "This is the Love I mean, not our love for God but God's love for us."

His life was founded on a loving relationship with Christ the teacher and this was highlighted in the letter I received from Archbishop Pierre André Fournier, representing the Quebec Assembly of Catholic Bishops: "Bishop Campbell founded his life on the rock of the faith and the love of the Lord." His ministry was focused on Christ as the one who teaches and the One who is the content of the teaching. Bishops, priests, and lay people acknowledged that Bishop Campbell had encouraged them in their response to the Lord. Archbishop Prendergast, Archbishop of Ottawa, expressed his affection for Bishop Campbell and acknowledged the encouragement that he received from him. He described him as a "daunting character to a younger person, but behind the blustery verbal exchanges, one could discern a zealous priest who encouraged priests junior to him in age" (Letter of Condolences, January 20, 2012).

His love relationship with the Teacher urged him on to focus much of his life on teaching. One of his brother bishops noted that "He loved to teach and was very good at it." Furthermore, his motto

captured this dimension well for he continually learned from Christ and attempted to teach as Our Lord had done. While he had many occasions to teach, he especially appreciated the opportunity to offer a catechesis at the World Youth Day in Rome in 2000. He had a tremendous desire to faithfully teach Christian beliefs in the midst of great change in the church and in the world. He saw his role as a teacher of Christian faith and tradition as being of primary importance in his ministry as Bishop. He encouraged people to study *The Catechism of the Catholic Church* when it was presented in the early 1990s. Through talks, parish missions and writing, he attempted to make the Catechism available as widely as possible as a means of understanding the Catholic Faith. He also supported the availability of formal programs of adult faith formation for the people of the Diocese.

As one whose life was focused on Christ the teacher, Bishop Campbell reflected and prepared his homily for Sunday, wanting to make sure that the faith of the people was richly nourished. He also taught in a variety of ways, so that people might be assisted to live out their faith in the midst of challenging times. His relationship with Christ the Teacher also inspired him as he served as Chancellor and Chairman of the Board of Governors of Saint Francis Xavier University for many years. He took an active part in the work of the Board, respected the long relationship between the University and the Diocese and tried to maintain a positive presence of the church within the life of the St. FX family.

Since the bishop's functions of teaching, sanctifying and governing are intimately interconnected, Bishop Campbell oversaw major developments in the administration of the Diocese, including a broadening of the participation of lay people in the active management of diocesan affairs through their membership on the Diocesan Business and Finance Committee. He encouraged the formation of Finance Committees in all parishes of the Diocese to involve competent, experienced parishioners in implementing good stewardship practices. As Bishop he was instrumental in the transition to a new Diocesan Pastoral Center in Sydney and in the construction of a new Chancery Office and residence in Antigonish.

Bishop Campbell initiated pastoral planning studies and meetings to prepare parishioners and clergy to respond in a proactive manner to the pastoral realities of today. Particularly pressing were the impact of the declining population in the Diocese along with fewer clergy and religious to serve the people. Here again he encouraged the active involvement of the laity in the mission of the church. He encouraged parishioners to work along with their Pastors, to develop creative ways to meet the pastoral needs of the parishes and the Diocese, a process that is taking on new impetus in our diocese today.

Even in the midst of his sickness and weakness, he was a teacher. While experiencing serious illness for many of his years in office, the Bishop faced these setbacks with deep trust and patience in God. He showed exceptional determination and courage in carrying on his ministry zealously, in spite of the challenges presented by his poor health.

The Gospel story focuses on a moment of shock and sadness in the young man's heart. This aspect of the Gospel challenges us to ask ourselves "What makes us sad as we think of this Gospel story and the relationship that Jesus invites us to have?" While each of us has our own personal response to that "one thing that is lacking", Bishop Campbell acknowledged the sadness of experiencing

people not responding to the call that Jesus gives. He also acknowledged with sadness any mistakes of his own ministry. When he retired in 2002, he stated: “I apologize for any mistakes that were made in my leadership. I want to apologize to anyone whom I offended by thought, word, deed or omission.”

Almost twenty five years ago, in March 1987, Bishop Campbell proudly stood in this cathedral, where he had been baptized and where he had just been ordained a bishop and reflected on his motto, *Tutore te Christe*. He acknowledged that teaching was an important part of his life and that it was a key to the renewal of the Church. He emphasized that teaching would be the first priority of his personal ministry and the first priority of his leadership. In this, he acknowledged that the parish priest has an important role in the renewal of the faith community, especially through the life of prayer. He ordained at least twenty of the priests that now serve in the priestly ministry of our diocese and his sanctifying ministry included thousands of young people whom he initiated in the faith through the Sacrament of Confirmation.

He recognized the importance of promoting the unity of the Christian Churches and his honorary doctorate from the Atlantic School of Theology in 1983 is a statement of his personal commitment to ecumenical unity, a unity that we long for especially during this Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. During this Week, we acknowledge a particular longing that Christ has placed on our hearts, especially as we reflect on our relationships with our brothers and sisters who follow Jesus Christ.

Like the young person in today’s Gospel, each of us longs to know how do we inherit eternal life. How is it ever possible to enter into this gift? This longing is especially true as we face the daily difficulties of our lives and our faith, often with a lack of clear vision and of real possibilities for our future. Yet, the encounter with Christ the Teacher gives us courage and strength when we feel powerless in the face of current crises. Despite these difficulties, we do not let ourselves be discouraged, but are buoyed up as we cultivate our heart’s desire for fellowship, justice and peace. Our encounter with Christ helps us to seek and find sound reasons for life and hope and can help us bring real hope to the world. By nurturing this hope, with a deep faith in the Lord’s love, we can face serenely the paths of our lives and carry out our responsibilities. Then, by being joined to Christ the Teacher and Saviour, in his paschal mystery, we are able to enter into eternal life.

Today we complete the circle of life for Colin Campbell. He was baptized in this cathedral in 1931 and began a life of faith which was nurtured by Christ the Teacher. He was ordained a bishop here in 1987 and united himself to take on the ministry of Christ the teacher. And today we celebrate his funeral with the awareness that he has completed his earthly journey and we pray that he enjoys a face to face experience with Christ our Teacher and Saviour. May the celebration of this Eucharist remind us of how Bishop Campbell depended on this source of strength for his ministry and inspire us to open our lives to Christ the Teacher. And may we enter ever more deeply into the Lord’s death and resurrection and so be welcomed to the Supper of the Lamb.