


Dear friends,

I greet you with a picture of the beautiful maple tree in front of my window. It colors my life at the end of October.



Have you heard of the "missionary turning" in the

Church of Quebec? A little mischievous and tired of hearing about parish mergers, church sales, celebrations of the Word in place of masses, some of my friends (in a play of words in French) speak of the "missionary torment". Based on my own story, here are some personal reactions to that reality.

First, let me situate myself. Indeed, I am part of the generation of missionaries who went abroad... Gone to Cuba in 1965, gone to Sudan in 1986, then gone to Kenya in 2009. Real missionaries were going abroad! I have tried my best to witness to Christ and the gospel in those countries. Now I'm back. With some pain, of course. Nevertheless, I am not considering it a torment, and I pray the Lord with these words from the Breviary: "You have sowed in us the beautiful turning point where everything in the world is only grace".

While living here, I keep links with the mission abroad. A few weeks ago, in the Philippines, I laid hands on a young confrere who will still be going abroad. Juvanne will go to Honduras. I also welcomed the engagement of a young woman, Rhea, who will go for Kenya. Myself I am no longer leaving but my Missionary Society still sends Philipinos, Kenyans, Brazilians, Hondurans...



As for you in Quebec, your turning point or shift is different. For example, people of my native parish welcome a Central African priest; that of my sister, a Nigerian priest. It sounds like what used to be called the reverse mission. In a word, the mission is here. What we have to decide is whether we experience this reality as a torment or as a turning point.

Moreover, this challenge is not limited to Christian communities. Far from it! If our missionaries don't go to foreign lands, by contrast the foreigners come to us! Thus, the missionary challenge does not disappear; rather it is in our streets and at our doorsteps. This is true in Canada; it is true all over the world. This reality is reflected in the sculpture "Angels Unaware" recently unveiled in St. Peter's Square in Rome.



I add the biblical text that inspired the Canadian artist and explains the wings that we see above the migrants: "Do not forget hospitality to strangers, for it is thanks to it that some, without their knowledge, housed angels" (Hebr 13:2)

<https://www.vaticannews.va/en/pope/news/2019-09/pope-francis-world-day-migrants-refugees-sculpture.html>

As we conclude this Extraordinary Missionary Month, proclaimed as such by Pope Francis, I dare say that it is now easy to be a missionary to the whole world. There is no need to leave; the whole world is here!

Let me skip Halloween and wish you a happy All Saints' Day.

And take the time to visit our website: <https://www.smelaval.org/welcome.html>

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