



Let us put out into the deep !

Pastoral Letter from
Bishop Claude Lamoureux





Credit : Alfred Cassidy

PRAYER

Gracious Father,

We give thanks to you for your servant, Bishop François-Xavier Ross, the first bishop of the Diocese of Gaspé, a pastor with a generous heart and a tireless builder of the Gaspé Peninsula. You gave him a broad and confident perspective. Where many saw isolation and fragility, he recognized communities called to grow in faith.

Following his example, teach us to look to the future, beyond our present difficulties, with the confidence of those who know that your Holy Spirit always guides the ship of your Church.

If it is your will, and for the good of your Church, we ask you, Lord, to glorify your servant François-Xavier on this earth. Grant our diocesan Church the courage and wisdom to discern new paths, as he did, and the joy of bearing witness to Christ in the midst of our world.

May his example continue to inspire our diocesan Church, so that it may remain missionary, fraternal, and bold.

We ask this of you through Jesus Christ, our Savior.

Amen



10th Bishop of the Diocese of Gaspé



Beloved brothers and sisters,

Through this interactive pastoral letter, allow me to initiate a reflection with you on what sets us apart today in the world: our identity, our spirituality, our faith, our journey together, and our witness. At the end of each topic discussed, I will ask a question to help you continue your reflection individually or in a group, using the “conversation in the Spirit” method proposed by the synodal process.

Our diocesan Church is going through a period marked by a mix of vulnerability and promise, anxiety and hope. Yet it is precisely in these situations that God speaks with particular clarity. The history of the People of God teaches us that it is often during times of vulnerability and wandering that the Lord prepares new beginnings. In His own way, the Holy Spirit speaks and acts within His Church.

The people of the Gaspé Peninsula and the Magdalen Islands are well acquainted with the rhythms of the sea : the tides, headwinds, calm days, and sudden storms. Fishermen know that sometimes they have to wait a long time before casting their nets in the right spot. Sailors know the power of headwinds, but they also know that no voyage is possible without confidence. The Church is no stranger to these movements. It moves forward through history like a boat entrusted not to human power, but to the faithfulness of Christ. It is not the destination, but the means of the journey.

Like the disciples on the shore of Lake Gennesaret, we have sometimes fished all night without catching anything. And yet, Christ's words remain: *“Put out into deep water and let down your nets for a catch.”* (Lk 5:4))

Let us rediscover our baptismal identity

The first step we must take to revitalize our mission in today's world is to return to our roots and rediscover who we are under God's eyes. Too often, our commitment to the Church is viewed through the categories of our society: we speak of volunteer work, community involvement, or services rendered. Although these terms have their value, they are insufficient to describe the Christian vocation.

A volunteer gives their time freely to a cause they consider worthwhile. The baptized person responds to a call received from God. The difference is immense. Saint Paul expresses this forcefully: *“You are the Body of Christ, and each of you is a part*

of it.” (1 Cor 12:27) Through baptism, we do not become external collaborators in a religious work. We become daughters and sons in the Son, filled with the Holy Spirit, called to participate in the very work of Christ. Every ministry, every responsibility, and every service in the Church finds its source in this baptismal grace. The Second Vatican Council affirmed this clearly in *Lumen Gentium*: the entire People of God participates in the mission of Christ.

We face a great challenge. How can we awaken and nurture a baptismal consciousness? How can we help our sisters and brothers commit themselves to the mission entrusted to us by Christ? The late Pope Francis reminded us that every baptized person is a “missionary disciple.” This does not refer to a spiritual elite, but to the entire Church. Pope Leo XIV builds on this insight by inviting the particular Churches to form communities capable of combining fidelity with missionary boldness, where every baptized person fully assumes the responsibility received at baptism.

This conviction profoundly transforms the way we serve. We work to collaborate in the mission that Christ entrusts to his entire Church. Our commitments are not merely tasks to be accomplished; they become a response to a call received from God. A Church that rediscovers its baptismal identity becomes a community where each person discovers that their vocation is unique, where charisms are recognized, and where shared responsibility arises from grace rather than from necessity alone.

To continue our reflection on this topic, let us ask ourselves: **How might we help the baptized members of our Church rediscover their baptismal identity?**

Let us cultivate a true spiritual life

Our society is often labeled as “de-christianized.” Yet pastoral encounters reveal a more nuanced reality. Many people continue to search for meaning. They readily speak of spirituality, silence, and inner life. They do not necessarily reject God; they sometimes struggle to recognize His face. This observation compels us to examine our consciences.

Have we sometimes given the impression that the most important thing was to maintain structures rather than to lead people toward a personal encounter with Jesus Christ? As St. Francis of Assisi, whose 800th anniversary of his death (1226–2026) that we are celebrating this year, reminded us, “The Church is beautiful when she lets Christ shine through rather than herself.”

Our era thus reveals a striking paradox. Many of our contemporaries say they feel a genuine thirst for spirituality, while at the same time distancing themselves from religious institutions. This reality cannot be ignored or simply lamented. It is here that the Church is called to its most essential mission: to lead people to a personal encounter with Jesus Christ. “*Come and see.*” (Jn 1:39)

The Christian faith does not arise primarily from intellectual or institutional adherence. As Benedict XVI reminded us, it arises from a personal encounter with Christ. In this sense, it is important to clearly distinguish the spiritual life from mere institutional membership. The institution remains necessary: it transmits the faith, celebrates the sacraments, guarantees communion, and ensures the continuity of the apostolic mission. However, it is never an end in itself. It is at the service of the encounter with God.

Our primary pastoral responsibility, therefore, is to help everyone cultivate a genuine inner life: a love of prayer, silence, listening to the Word of God, participation in the sacraments, spiritual discernment, and openness to the work of the Holy Spirit.

Our communities will become more fruitful if they first become schools of prayer, places where we learn to listen to the Word of God, to celebrate the Eucharist with fervor, to savor silence, to discover the power of forgiveness, to discern the call of the Holy Spirit, to become familiar with the various spiritual currents that have shaped the life of the Church throughout the centuries, and above all, to care for the poorest with compassion.

To continue our reflection on this topic, let us ask ourselves: **How can ~~might~~ we help people deepen their spiritual lives?**

Let us make passing on the faith a priority

Perhaps the greatest challenge facing our Church is not primarily a lack of financial resources or a decline in the number of priests. It is an intergenerational challenge. The fundamental challenge is that of passing on the faith. St. Paul already asked the question: *“How can they believe in one they have not heard?”* (Rom 10:14) We are faced with a responsibility that weighs heavily upon us.

We realistically acknowledge that a significant rift has developed between the generations. Many families no longer have the words to speak about God. Many children grow up without discovering the Bible stories, without learning to pray, and without regularly experiencing Christian community. Grandparents often grieve over this breakdown in the passing down of the faith. We cannot simply stop at acknowledging this reality. From now on, all our pastoral creativity must be focused on this priority.

This situation calls for a genuine missionary conversion and great pastoral creativity. We must devise new approaches: accompany parents, support grandparents in their role as witnesses, offer flexible and welcoming programs, make judicious use of digital resources, develop small faith communities, renew intergenerational catechesis, and foster concrete experiences of encounter with Christ.

Every baptized person thus becomes a bearer of the faith. The transmission of the faith is not the sole responsibility of priests or catechists; it is the responsibility of the entire Christian community. The transmission of the faith can no longer rely solely on traditional catechetical programs. It must become a comprehensive ecclesial culture within which we are invited to explore new paths.

To continue our reflection on this topic, let us ask ourselves: **How can we become more actively involved in passing on the faith in order to help people encounter Christ in a tangible way?**

Let us continue together on the path of synodality

In recent years, the Holy Spirit has been inviting the entire Church to embark on a journey that is, in reality, a return to the deepest roots of our faith. As Cardinal Mario Grech reminds us, the synodal journey *“aims to foster a culture of listening, discernment, and shared responsibility that, over time, transforms the Church from within. “It is a process that does not fear diversity, but welcomes it as the place where the truth of the Gospel can resonate in new and unexpected ways.”*

Our Diocese of Gaspé has resolutely set out on the synodal path. Listening is its most tangible and visible fruit. This listening

is an act of faith. We believe that the Holy Spirit continues to act throughout the People of God. That is why every person deserves to be listened to.

This conviction transforms the way we live together. In a synodal Church, no one is merely a spectator. No one owns the mission. No one can say, “The Church is made up of other people.” Everyone becomes responsible because everyone has received the anointing of baptism.

Thus, the bishop, priests, consecrated persons, permanent deacons, pastoral workers, community leaders, catechists, visitors to the sick, parents, grandparents, and young people, all are called to actively participate in the mission. Our future will depend above all on the ability of every baptized person to recognize that they themselves are sent.

The synodal process also invites us to learn communal discernment. We are often tempted to rush to find solutions or to replicate models from the past. Discernment requires more patience. It involves prayer, silence, fraternal dialogue, mutual listening, and an inner openness to embracing unexpected paths.

In short, discernment consists of seeking first the Kingdom and the will of God by listening to what the Spirit has to say to our Church. Ideally, our meetings should begin with listening to and sharing God’s Word. Our decisions should be preceded by a genuine time of prayer. Our discussions should always be conducted in a spirit of fraternal love, even when opinions differ. For communion is the work of the Spirit, who harmonizes differences within unity.

I therefore wish to encourage all the active members of our diocese to continue with confidence on the synodal journey we have already begun. This journey leads us toward the Church described in the Acts of the Apostles, where all devoted themselves to fellowship, the breaking of bread, the apostles’ teaching, and prayer (Acts 2:42).

To continue our reflection on this topic, let us ask ourselves: **How can we listen to one another more effectively? How can we further foster communal discernment?**

Let us bear witness with courage in a secular society

We live in a society where indifference, atheism, diverse spiritual movements, and remnants of the Christian Church coexist. Our traditional cultural and religious points of reference have undergone profound changes. This reality should neither discourage us nor lead us to feel nostalgic for a bygone era.

We no longer live in a Christian culture. We live in a culture of proposals. Christian witness therefore becomes essential. As Paul VI reminded us in *Evangelii Nuntiandi*: “*Contemporary people are more willing to listen to witnesses than to teachers.*”

In a pluralistic society like ours, many will be touched by a humble, joyful, welcoming community that stands with the poor, cares for those who are lonely, is concerned for the environment, is present for the sick, is committed to the dignity of every human person, and respects the freedom of each individual. Personal witness thus becomes irreplaceable.

The neighbor who forgives, the couple who remain faithful, the young person who peacefully lives out their faith, the grandparent who prays with their grandchildren, the person committed to serving the poorest: these are the true missionaries of our time. The Gospel is never imposed. It shines forth. Our diocese is called to become a Church that is visible through its charity, credible through its consistency, and radiant through the quality of its witness. In this way, Christ will continue

to reach the men and women of our time.

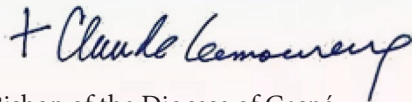
At this moment in our history, we are not called to preserve the remnants of a bygone past, but to welcome with confidence the ever-new breath of the Holy Spirit. Following the example of our first bishop, François-Xavier Ross, who built with unwavering confidence under often precarious conditions, we are called not to mourn what is no longer, but to build with courage what the Spirit is already preparing. Facing the immensity of the gulf, the generations that came before us learned that the horizon is always vaster than the eye can see. So it is with Christian hope: it urges us to look beyond present difficulties, certain that Christ always goes before his Church on the path of mission.

To continue our reflection on this topic, let us ask ourselves: **How can we, both individually and collectively, help our Church to be bolder in its witness?**

In closing, I would like to share with you my conviction, dear beloved sisters and brothers, that the present and future of our diocesan Church depend on our personal and communal willingness to rediscover the grace of our baptism, to nourish ourselves with a true spiritual life, to become artisans in the transmission of the faith, and to dare to bear witness with courage and boldness, drawing strength from this great revelation that the Apostle Saint John reminds us of: *“God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to judge the world, but so that the world might be saved through him”* (Jn 3:16–17). Then our Church, even if more modest, will shine more brightly.

Supported and guided by the Holy Spirit, let us walk together in the footsteps of Christ, who sends us – even today – to cast our nets with confidence into the hearts of our brothers and sisters, whose horizons are even vaster than the immensity of our own gulf. May the Risen Christ continue to sustain us with his grace as we share a common resolve to set out into the deep.

With all my pastoral friendship,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "Claude Lévesque". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a cross-like symbol at the beginning.

Bishop of the Diocese of Gaspé

October 2026

Baptisés en Jésus

♩ = 104

Mi Si/ré# Si Do#m Fa#7/la# Si /la#

R. Bap - ti - sés en Jé - sus, nous croy - ons en lui,

Mi/sol# Si /la Sol#m Mi/sol# La La/fa# Si /ré#

pro - cla - mons no - tre foi. Bap - ti - sés en Jé - sus nous vi -

Sol#m /si Do#m /si Fa#m /la Mi/si Si7 Mi

vons de sa vie, sa vie de Res - sus - ci - té.

Mim Si Mim Lam/do Si Mim/sol /mi

1. Re - gar - de Jé - sus au se - cret du dé - sert, as - tu com -
 2. Re - gar - de Jé - sus au som - met du Tha - bor, as - tu com -
 3. Re - gar - de Jé - sus au puits de Sa - ma - rie, as - tu com -
 4. Re - gar - de Jé - sus près de l'a - veu - gle - né, as - tu com -
 5. Re - gar - de Jé - sus res - sus - ci - tant les morts, as - tu com -

Lam/do Si Lam /do Mim/si Si

pris son a - mour? Lui, té - moin fi - dè - le, il
 pris son a - mour? Lui, le Fils du Pè - re, il
 pris son a - mour? Lui, la sour - ce vi - ve, il
 pris son a - mour? Lui, no - tre lu - miè - re, il
 pris son a - mour? Lui, notre es - pé - ran - ce, il

Lam /do Mim/si Si /la Mim/sol /mi

vit pour nous l'é - preu - ve; il vient nous raf - fer -
 nous pro - met la gloi - re; il vient trans - fi - gu -
 cherche un cœur de pau - vre; il vient nous ré - vé -
 chas - se les té - nè - bres; il vient nous li - bé -
 vit en nous sa Pâ - que; il vient nous re - don -

Si/ré# Mim Lam/do Si Lam Lam/do Mim/si Lam/do Si4 - 3

mir dans le com - bat, oui, sa Pa - role est no - tre for - ce!
 rer notre au - jour - d'hui, no - tre re - gard n'est plus le mê - me!
 ler le don de Dieu, nous pui - sons à la sour - ce mê - me!
 rer de tout pé - ché, oui, nous mar - chons dans la lu - miè - re!
 ner un cœur nou - veau, nous re - vi - vons dans l'Es - prit Saint!