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Homily given by Archbishop Emeritas Martin Currie at Mass of Thanksgiving and Farewell
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Today's Gospel tells us of the efforts of Jesus as He went about evangelizing from town to town proclaiming the Good News of the Kingdom, providing counsel, healing many trying to give direction for their growth and development.

Today, twenty centuries later, the work of evangelizing and pastoring continues. Times have changed; many of today's challenges and problems are new ones, which we didn't even think of 50 years ago. However, in the final analysis the mission of the Church today is the same as it was for Jesus, the first apostles and Paul and his Disciples. Twenty centuries ago, it was Jerusalem, Antioch, Rome etc.

Today for me, personally at least, in these past eighteen years as bishop, it has been Grand Falls, Carbonear, St. John's, CBS, Marystown, Placentia.

Eighteen years ago, I was consecrated bishop in Grand Falls - 11 years ago, I came to St. John's -50 years ago, I was ordained a priest in Sheet Harbour. Please don't be alarmed, I don't intend to review all that has happened since my ordination and consecration.

When I was consecrated 18 years ago, I'm afraid I thought I was God's gift to the Church. It probably was even worse 50 years ago when I was ordained a priest. Like most young people I thought I had all the answers. All I needed was the opportunity to show people things that should be done. But a wise old priest said to me in my first years of priesthood: "Put your hand in the water bucket and pull it out. See if you can find the hole left behind. In some cases that's how much you will be missed."

I understand much better now what he meant, because in these past intervening years, I have matured. I now realize, in a way I didn't before, that the human condition is very complex and at times paradoxical. While there is surely a wonderful clarity about our Catholic faith, just how that is lived-out each day in our secularized, consumer-oriented society is not always so clear.

So, I have learned to be a little more realistic, a little more humble in terms of my ability to set things right, to provide answers to the challenges and problems of daily life.

In the final analysis, it is not so much our human efforts that are responsible for the good things in life as it is God's Grace. So, we should not pretend that everything depends on us. Rather we should see ourselves as instruments in the Lord's hands. I know that my best efforts often produce little or nothing, while at other times, in spite of my blundering, things turn out well. I am sure that you have experienced this also.

We simply have to place our trust in the Lord. And why shouldn't we? As John tells us in the first Reading: God's Spirit is in us and it has conquered the spirit of the anti-Christ.

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There is a final lesson I have learned, though admittedly, not perfect. The only way we can become an authentic community of faith, one totally committed to the Lord is to follow God's commandments and do what pleases Him. We read in the first Reading, "And this is His commandment that we should believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ and love one another just as He has commanded us". As John again says: "This is how all will know you for my disciples: your love for one another".

Such love can be demanding. It requires patience, compassion, a willingness to forgive, a willingness to give and sacrifice - even when what we offer is rejected or not appreciated. It also requires a certain toughness at times, a willingness to be honest, to correct when it might be easier to look the other way.

But love is never vindictive, mean spirited. It never loses heart or abandons. Such love in practice is not always understood, or appreciated.

It is criticized at times for weakness. But in the end only God prevails. Only love brings about lasting results because it is only through human love that God's love can make all things new again.

This evening as I reflect on the years I have spent in the Lord's service, I am deeply grateful for the love He as showered on me through the many people who have been so much a part of my life. In a very special way, I thank you the priests, religious and the people of the Archdiocese who received me with such openness and warmth over eleven years ago.

You have shown me in so many ways that you do love and support me. You took me at my word when I first presented myself that I would do what I could to build on the wonderful Catholic tradition established by the bishops, religious, and faithful, who have served here for the past 234 years.

As I thank you for all that you have done for me and the Church of St. John's, I invite you to continue to journey with the new bishop to build a community of vibrant faith over which the Risen Lord truly presides: a community which continues in our present time the life and ministry of the members who have gone before us.

It is a community in which all members in virtue of their baptism witness to Jesus' saving deeds before all the world and work for the coming of the Kingdom that He proclaimed. It is a community where members: laity, religious, priests and bishops understand and accept their uniquely different but complementary and necessary responsibilities and roles, working together for the good of all.

It is a community where faith in Jesus is more compelling than any human consideration, one which honours truly more than idle speculation and bias; a community in which respect for persons rules over pettiness, unfairness and mean spiritedness - promoting instead dialogue, reconciliation and unity. A community in which Jesus' love and healing power are tangibly evident each day. Together, with God's Grace, try to work together to make the vision come true. This is the best gift you could give me on my departure.

God's continued blessings on all of you,
+ Martin