
As ONE SOWS



I - As ONE SOWS

II - MAGNIFICAT

III - THE GARDEN OF SUFFERING

IV - GARDEN OF YOUTH, GARDEN OF ELDERS

V - IN THE DEANERIES

VI - HOMECOMING AND RECONCILIATION

VII - A GARDEN TO CARE FOR

10 December 1995

Closing of the Diocesan Jubilee Year

Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

As ONE SOWS

I cannot find words strong enough to thank all those who made the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of the Diocese of Edmundston festivities the success they were. May the following excerpts from the homily given at the festivities' closing be received as an expression of the gratitude of the Edmundston diocesan Church.

MAGNIFICAT

Our hearts are filled with gratitude today, our souls exult with joy! Throughout this diocesan jubilee year we have in some manner experienced the marvels which God was pleased to work among us. During this wonderful year we have witnessed the Lord's goodness throughout our diocese, in the Southern Victoria, Grand Falls, Restigouche, Upper Madawaska, and Edmundston Deaneries. During the year we put in a beautiful garden which has produced several plants, fruits, and flowers, making it such a marvellous place. The Holy Spirit is truly at work, and Jesus hopes that we shall bear fruit in abundance.

The readings we have just heard recall the wonderful work that is being carried out in our beloved Church of Edmundston: the Holy Spirit is at work in our midst; he favours us with his most magnificent gifts. A powerful wind coming down to us from Pentecost, from the Second Vatican Council, and from the Edmundston Diocesan Synod, has risen in our diocesan Church, and today we are proclaiming these marvels of the Lord.

As we meditate the Word of God like the Virgin Mary, let us contemplate this garden which only strives to grow among us. Adopting the words of Robert Lebel, let us think about what has been sown and planted, these last months; let us look at the growing plants, and at the ripening harvest.

*As one puts in a garden in the spring,
As one sows the seed in the month of May,
Let us each day deposit in the heart of the Gardener
The work of our hands and our desire to love:
And may God ever be at the heart of our homes
Like a chorus of love at the heart of our songs.*

THE GARDEN OF SUFFERING

Who will tell about all that has been done during these months of festivities ? Prayers to God, and countless brothers and sisters generously offering up their pain and suffering for the good of the Church. When one thinks about « apostolate », one thinks especially about activity, a pastoral project, but in the Church itself it is necessary to find the irreplaceable seeds of suffering. Intimately united with Jesus, with his passion and cross, the sick have a share in the salvation of all humankind; they complete in their own flesh what is lacking in the sufferings of Christ. Brothers and sisters sorely tried by illness, on behalf of the Edmundston diocesan Church I thank you for this beautiful garden you are tending.

*As one picks the fruit at harvest-time,
As we are dazzled by the butterfly taking flight,
Let us dare glean true life at the heart of our passions,
In order to hear its cry and to give it a name.
As one picks the fruit at harvest-time.*

GARDEN OF YOUTH, GARDEN OF ELDERS

Who will be able to talk about everything that youth and elders have invented and come up with to celebrate our diocese's fifty years? The artists were there, facilitating memorable celebrations. Artists from both sides of the river got together to help us discover our sacred treasures. The Madawaska Museum hosted an exceptional exhibit of sacred art. Throughout the year young people of the Southern Victoria and Restigouche deaneries kept in touch with each other in order to get to know and appreciate one another better. Young people of Grand Falls, Edmundston, and Upper Madawaska got together for an unforgettable youth rally, twenty-four hours of fellowship, learning, and celebration. Scouts and Guides held a diocesan session in the same vein. Our celebrations have incited our youth to carry on the gardening. Our elders were not forgotten, they were part of every celebration, and it was as a group that they acknowledged the great mystery of the Church yesterday, today, and tomorrow.

*As the fire continues through time
By proudly relaying the torch,
Let us carry the love of God to the hearts of our children
That his sunlight glow in their eyes
As fire passed on.*

IN THE DEANERIES

The great event was celebrated in every parish with prayer, mass, and several community suppers. Each event was very significant. In each parish the fiftieth anniversary was marked by special prayers and eucharistic celebrations. In March the Edmundston Deanery revived devotions to Saint Joseph, and in June the Grand Falls Deanery celebrated Corpus Christi Sunday in great pomp as young and elderly celebrated the great mystery of the Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. At the end of June, the Southern Victoria Deanery celebrated the Holy Spirit who vivifies the Church in a remarkable way: over thirty youth coming from the eight deanery parishes gathered together for the sacrament of Confirmation. What a celebration! The opportunity was also taken to honour the faith of parents and grandparents. I will not soon forget these moments I lived with feeling and in gratitude. The Church is really like a beautiful family. The Restigouche, amidst the beautiful fall colours adorning its forests, celebrated the faithfulness of their elders, while the Upper Madawaska opened the treasures of its heritage in an outstanding pilgrimage. And the summer's activities saw the gathering of bishops, priests, and religious who hail from our diocese or who ministered here. The summer also witnessed the opening of our diocesan seminary and acknowledged the input of our married couples, baptised, and confirmed; our song of gratitude resounded:

*As one brings wood to the fire
To dispel the cold and bring us together,
Let us bring joy to our neighbourhoods.
May our cities light up with the force of our faith!
As one brings wood...*

HEMCOMING AND RECONCILIATION

Our festivities will have been beautiful opportunities for homecoming celebrations. Many congresses were held in our diocese: the Eudist North American Congress, the congress of the Atlantic Catechetical Office, the congress of the Catholic Health Association of New Brunswick, the Charismatic Congress, etc. These were important events for our Church and its Christians. Besides, in my pastoral letter on the Church of Edmundston, I voiced the hope that this jubilee year would be an occasion for forgiveness and reconciliation, and I dare believe that in the midst of our activities this dimension would always be present, to help us receive God's forgiveness and to welcome a sister or brother with whom we have been alienated. Our Church is the Church of Jesus where there is room for everyone.

*As one embraces a returning child,
Showing joy in the welcome,
Let us finally forget the false blames and daily censures
Caused by love searching awkwardly for expression,
As one embraces a returning child.*

A Garden to Care for

Our festivities will shortly be things of the past, but you know how I would like to have the feast renewed year after year. Who could stop us? We have hardly put in our garden, and much care will be needed to tend it. Jesus is the vine, and we are its branches. His gifts are innumerable, but it is always the same Spirit who gives the Church most wonderful gifts. Let us have the Holy Spirit abide in us, the Spirit of wisdom and discernment, of counsel and power, of knowledge and of fear of the Lord. As on the first Pentecost, a mighty wind has arisen over our Church. Let us continue to conscientiously work for the benefit of our communities, let us have a daily concern for each of its members.

*As one offers a flower simply out of love,
As hearts are carved on the birch bark of day,
Let us dress in bright colours the celebrations and homecomings,
The moments of happiness that to us are so short,
As one offers a flower.*

May these moments be for us today both thanksgiving and petition, may Jesus be the Great Gardener who once more gives us his Spirit. He came that we may have life and life to the full. He wants us to bear much fruit and fruit that remains. He makes his dwelling-place among us. May the dawn of the new millennium give us a heart ready to recognise, praise, and bless him constantly. Let us journey together to the year 2000, together let us walk to further meeting-places of faith, hope, and charity.

+ François Thibodeau

+ François Thibodeau, c.j.m.
Bishop of Edmundston