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## GRATITUDE TO THE RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES

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On the occasion of the Golden Anniversary of the Diocese of Edmundston, allow me to address a message of gratitude, on my behalf and that of the Diocese of Edmundston, to the religious communities that worked in our midst and still continue to do so, albeit in different forms. The Diocese of Edmundston would not be what it is today, were it not for the presence, then and now, of religious communities.

According to documents consulted, I must first honour the Sisters of Charity and the Holy Cross Fathers. As a matter of fact the Sisters of Charity of the Immaculate Conception operated an academy in St-Basile from 1857 to 1873. Mention is also made of a Holy Cross Father who was the resident pastor of St-Basile from 1869 to 1871, with another member of the same congregation residing at St-François, during the same period.

The Religious Hospitallers of St-Joseph arrived in 1873. What paths they have trod since the founding of the Hotel Dieu at St-Basile and the operating of the Académie du Madawaska to the opening of the Edmundston, St-Quentin, Grand Falls, and Perth hospitals, as well as the opening of the first Catholic orphanage in the Maritimes, the first boarding school, the « little college » of Msgr. Dugal, of kindergardens, and of the Académie Maillet. Hospitallers Sisters, you have pointed out a priority: Whatever the legislative body, wherever the sick person is, life must be respected as well as the dignity of every suffering person.

Daughters of Wisdom, you were in Edmundston to open a convent and school as early as 1905, in response to a request made by Fr. Louis-Côme D'Amours. Ninety years after the event you are still at work in our midst, especially with the handicapped, in pastoral ministry and in community services. A heartfelt Thank You for all that you are, St. Louis de Montfort [founder Of the Order] must be proud of you!

Filles de Marie de l'Assomption [Assumption Sisters], you have been among us since 1924. You have taught in the schools of St-Quentin, St-Jacques, Kedgwick, St-André, Grand Falls, Edmundston, and Baker Lake. You also served at the Diocesan Centre, at the Retreat House, and in the diocesan services. You took on an important mission to the handicapped and the elderly, at Red Rapids, Green River, Mont Assomption [Grand Falls], and the Grand Falls Manor; you were involved in pastoral ministry in Plaster Rock and you are carrying on a like ministry in St-Martin and St-Jean-Baptiste, at Notre-Dame-de-Lourdes and Notre-Dame-des-Sept-Douleurs. Your presence is most appreciated at the diocesan Spirituality Centre, at the Foi et Sérénité Centre in St-Quentin, at Parrainage Tiers-Monde, at St. Paul School and at the Villa Desjardins. Thank You very much.

The founding of the Sisters of Notre-Dame du Sacré-Coeur dates from 1924, yet that very year you were already working in Grand Falls, at the request of Fr. Thomas Albert. Your foundress Mother Marie-Anne (Suzanne Cyr, 1850-1941) [former Sister of Charity] was a native of St-Basile; at the age of 73 she founded the congregation at Memramcook. To this very day the Sisters continue in the field of education and in pastoral ministry. Thank you very much.

Thank You to all the Franciscans who worked not only in Baker Brook and the surrounding area, but also throughout the Southern Victoria Deanery. Thank You for having given Edmundston its first bishop, Bishop Marie-Antoine Roy. Thank You to the more than 100 Eudists confrères who taught at the Université St-Louis

and who worked in the local institutions and in parish ministry. Thank You to confrères of today who minister in St-Léonard and Kedgwick. At the Centre St-Louis-Maillet, at the Centre Sérénité, at St-Éloi, and in diocesan services. My gratitude goes to the Oblate Fathers who ministered the Retreat House. My gratitude also goes to the members of the Voluntas Dei Institute, founded in 1958, who maintained a major seminary at Red Rapids and who are still ministering in six parishes in the Southern Victoria Deanery. Thank You to the Brothers of Christian Instruction who taught at St-Basile and at St-Léonard-Parent. Thank You to the Oblate Missionaries of Mary Immaculate, founded [in Grand Falls] by Fr. Louis-Marie Parent, O.M.I., in 1952; to the Brothers of the Sacred Heart who taught at the high school in Edmundston during the 1950s; to the Petites Soeurs de la Ste-Famille [Sisters of the Holy Family], to the Servantes de Notre-Dame, Reine du Clergé [Mary Queen of the Clergy Sisters], who all worked among us, some at the Collège St-Louis, and others at the Diocesan Centre. Thank You to the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception who worked in Perth and Edmundston, to the Sisters of the Love of God who taught in Green River, and to the Auxiliaires Rurales, who taught in St-François. The Servants of the Most Blessed Sacrament have been in Edmundston since 1948. By your presence among us, your prayer and adoration, you remind us of the Lord's admonition to « Keep awake and pray. » Thank you for your daily witness.

Gratitude to the Marist Sisters. St-Léonard-Parent is like their mother house in the diocese of Edmundston. In 1952, Msgr. W.J. Conway gave them the charge of the Mont Ste-Marie Orphanage, and still today, despite their smaller number, they are still involved in teaching, in parish and diocesan pastoral ministry, in caring for the elderly at the Foyer Ste-Anne. Thank you for being to us a reminder of Mary's presence to her son Jesus. Thank You to the Sisters of the Congrégation Notre Dame, founded by St. Marguerite Bourgeoys; they have been working in our midst, especially at Baker Brook and Kedgwick. A special Thank You to the Ursuline Sisters, spiritual daughters of Mère Marie de l'Incarnation, who had had a convent-boarding school in St-Léonard; a monument in their honour, sculpted by Mr. Albert Deveau, reminds our people of the gratitude owed these Sisters. A special Thank You to the Sisters of the Child Jesus of Chauffailles: our chancellor, Sister Berthe Lavoie, R.E.J., is a disciple of Mother Reine Antier, the foundress. Fraternal gratitude to the Sisters of Charity of Montréal who operated a home in Baker Brook and who now direct the Foyer Notre-Dame at St-Léonard; Saint Marguerite D'Youville must greatly appreciate the work you are accomplishing in our Church.

This has been a quick remembrance of the religious congregations in our Diocese. They were our benefactors, and we are their heirs. Their discrete ministry to children, youth, young adults, priests and future priests, the sick and handicapped, as well as to the entire Christian community must be pursued with the same intensity, the same boldness, and according to their way of doing, though with new modalities. Their respective spirituality - Franciscan, Ignatian, or French - has marked our Church for ever and has marked for us the path of fellowship and of mission. « ... Full of gratitude for the years gone by, and with pride in our ancestors in the faith. Living the joy of the present moment, we move towards the future in hope. Tomorrow once more the light of God's love will shine on all our brothers and sisters! » (Jubilee Prayer).

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