

PASTORAL STATUTE ON REVALUING THE SUNDAY GATHERING
Enacted November 10, 1995 and modified December 5 2007

WHEREAS the resurrection of Jesus comprises the central element of our profession of faith;

WHEREAS the celebration of the Lord's Day by a Sunday gathering is a major element of the Christian tradition;

WHEREAS Vatican Council II focused once again on the celebration of the Day of the Lord;

WHEREAS there is actually a very real risk of trivialising Sundays;

WHEREAS revaluing the Sunday gathering implies revaluing the Day of the Lord;

WHEREAS since 1987, with the opening of the Edmundston Diocesan Synod (1987-1990), many changes have happened in our diocese: the death of 25 priests, the departure of religious communities from parishes (Franciscans and Marists), the formation of twelve pastoral teams to serve the 32 parishes of the diocese;

WHEREAS the multiplicity of celebrations contributes to the splintering of the community and to a loss of the meaning of Sunday and of belonging to the People of God;

WHEREAS social changes (businesses and recreational activities on Sunday, etc.) affect religious activities;

WHEREAS the Holy See has sanctioned the celebration of the Sunday Eucharist on Saturday evening, for exceptional needs;

WHEREAS in nearly all neighbour dioceses in New Brunswick, the United States, and Québec, Sunday celebrations begin at 4:00 P.M., Saturday afternoons;

WHEREAS the added number of celebrations contributes to the break-up of the community, the loss of the importance of Sunday and of our belonging to the People of God;

WHEREAS the Church cannot live without Sunday, and that it must be seen as a gathering and celebrating community;

WHEREAS in my pastoral letters of May 21, 1994, and June 4, 1995, I personally strongly insisted on revaluing Sundays;

WHEREAS it belongs to the bishop to enact certain general laws;

I, François Thibodeau, Bishop of Edmundston, hereby publish the present Pastoral Statute as modified, notwithstanding all other prior legislation:

1. In the Diocese of Edmundston, only those Masses that take place after 4:00 P.M. on Saturday are to be considered Sunday Masses;

2. Even if it is possible to have Sunday Masses on Saturdays from 4:00 P.M. onwards, care shall be taken to consider celebrating on Sunday, especially in those parishes that have but one Mass;
3. The extension of the Sunday worship period must not be viewed as a requirement of the priests to celebrate more Sunday Masses. Care shall be taken to ensure that the priest is not obliged to celebrate more than three Masses, any given weekend.
4. In those places where there is no priest available, a Liturgy of the Word shall be held, a Sunday liturgy in the absence of the priest, led by people who have been duly mandated by the parish pastoral team. At these Word celebrations, holy communion may be distributed.
5. The number as well as the hour of celebrations shall be periodically reviewed in each pastoral unit so as to privilege to the fullest the Sunday gathering, respond to the pastoral needs of the faithful, and take into account the situation of our priests;
6. Celebrations in places such as senior citizen's or nursing homes, or camp sites are to be held during the week, generally; nevertheless, for pastoral motives or special reasons, the celebration may be held Sundays with the express permission of the priest moderator of the pastoral unit team; the collection taken up at these celebrations are to be returned to the parish which will see to the payment of expenses incurred; care shall be exercised that these celebrations not take place to the detriment of the parish Sunday gathering;
7. Communities and institutions having their own mandated chaplain may continue to hold Sunday Mass, although care shall be taken that the celebration not take place to the detriment of the Sunday gathering.
8. Funerals and weddings are generally not to be held during the period of the week-end Sunday celebration; if they are celebrated, however, for exceptional reasons, they are to be incorporated with that day's Sunday liturgy, or else, a simply liturgy of the Word would be held.
9. Care shall be taken that Sunday celebrations be meaningful, beautiful, and accessible for participation for all, throughout the year, even during the summer season: each celebration, even during the summer, must be well prepared by the liturgy committee: fraternal welcome, appropriate singing; consistent homily, meaningful gestures, periods of silence and meditation, music, a short but consistent homily.

THIS PRESENT MODIFIED STATUTE TAKES EFFECT THE FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT 2008, that is, on February 6, 2008.

PREPARED AND PUBLISHED at Edmundston, N.B.
December 5, 2007

Ronilla Sirois, R.H.S.J.

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Chancellor

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Bishop of Edmundston