
LENT 1994!



Far from being a time of sadness, Lent is a true moment of unforgettable encounter with oneself, with one's neighbour, and with one's God. Forty days are given to us to help us discern the extent we allow the Covenant which God never ceases to offer us in Jesus, to inform our lives. If we could better understand to what extent God the Father loves us, we would never cease giving thanks for this Love which is from age to age. In our personal and communal prayer, in our gestures of support and solidarity, and in our moments of penitence and petition, may we be able to discover the Father's kindly face reflected in our brothers and sisters.

BACK TO MY ROOTS

I returned to my home parish of Saint-Odilon in Québec's Beauce County, last Sunday, and I was also able to meet my confreres in Charlesbourg [Québec City]. With my family and co-parishioners I gave thanks to God for the episcopal ordination which associates me closely with the very mission of Jesus the Good Shepherd and Guide of the people of God. The friends who came on January 9 want to return to Edmundston, so appreciative are they of the warm welcome they received; and those who were unable to come don't want to miss the next opportunity to visit the beautiful Madawaska region. I suggested that they come during the Foire Brayonne [Edmundston Fair] which will be held from the 27th to the 31st of July. Some are even contemplating coming by canoe from either the head of the Saint John River or Frontier Lake which borders the beautiful Appalachian and Beauce regions.

AMAZING RENEWAL

At the day of prayer which was held at the Diocesan Centre on February 3, some fifty persons joined with me in prayer. Some fifteen priests and as many sisters devoted these five hours to reflection, adoration, and petition. "Where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there in their midst," says the Lord. I know that several people, either in parishes or in their religious communities, shared that time of prayer, and in one parish prayer was held at the church from 8:30 A.M. to 1:30 P.M.: there also some fifty people gathered together in prayer. It is the responsibility of the entire people of God to offer this service of praise and petition. The idea is growing that since there are some thirty days in each month and that there are thirty-two parishes, there should be constant prayer in the diocese, each parish assuming one day a month. We'll come back to this, later!

INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY

Development and Peace once again extends its hand, during this period of brotherhood and solidarity. In asserting by our word and action that we are created in the image and likeness of God we recognise that same dignity in our brothers and sisters of the Third World. Every situation of oppression, of humiliation and exploitation really constitutes an injury to God our Saviour and Liberator. If we desire happiness for all the families on earth, here is a work of justice that has been given to us. By focusing on "People First," we will not hesitate to help all those who bear the burden of the day. We shall act in such a way that these people find reason to hope again, and that our Church truly become a place of justice and of peace, of love and of freedom. May we continue to earnestly support the Development and Peace projects in Third World countries.

Let us participate in the Solidarity Suppers and other forms of solidarity. I congratulate you for your great generosity, in past years, and I pray that from day to day new bonds be created between our brothers and sisters here and abroad: they are the "beloved of God." By our actions and sharing, we proclaim that the love of God is from age to age, as well as from person to person and people to people!

CONTACTS CONTINUE!

I bless the Lord for the meeting I had on February 9 at the Cité des Jeunes in Edmundston on Wednesday, where I was able to get in touch with a number of young people, teachers, and personnel of the student services. I found there a terrific quality of relationship: politeness and courteousness, respect for others, a desire to know better so as to better serve, in the world of tomorrow. On June 24 I shall meet some 300 of these students at the cathedral, on the occasion of their graduation.

On February 12 and 13, I gladly visit the Christian communities of Notre-Dame-des-Sept-Douleurs [Edmundston] and [Assumption] Grand Falls; these visits are always for me an opportunity for getting to know one another better and for growing in faith and hope. I also visited the Marist Sisters in Edmundston: they are twelve in the diocese, working in the teaching profession, in pastoral ministry, with youth, and with the elderly.

Have a fruitful Lent!

+ François Thibodeau

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