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## A BEAUTIFUL MONTH OF MARCH!



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I have been told that the old folk used to say that the month of March was Thibodeau month, because it is fresh and windy! Others have said that it was the American month: gentle and windy! All of this might have been true once upon a time, but I modestly and proudly admit that today that the Thibodeaus are, according to the breton etymology of the word, "an intrepid people." I have discovered that the "Cayen" Thibodeaus of Beauce County [Québec] and those of this region have a common ancestor in Pierre Thibodeau who arrived at Port-Royal in Acadia in 1654, at the age of 23. Originally from Marans in Poitou [France], he contributed as Seigneur of Chipoudy in the development of the Annapolis Valley by building houses, mills, and chapels. His numerous progeny perpetuate the Thibodeau name. Special good wishes to the Thibodeaus of Green River and elsewhere. We have good reason to be proud of our ancestors. Next August 20, unless something unexpected comes up, I shall be attending the Thibodeau Family gathering, at Dieppe, at the time of the World Acadian Congress.

### DAY OF PRAYER

On Thursday, March 3, there shall be a day of prayer at the Diocesan Centre, from 8:30 A.M. to 1:30 P.M. February 3's generous and enthusiastic response prompts me to continue this initiative on a monthly basis. Over 50 people joined me during these hours, and about fifteen priests consecrated that day to prayer. Once more I invite all in the diocese to this indispensable Church activity. At home, at work, in church, at the Diocesan Centre, we shall be deeply joined to one another. To pray is also to let oneself be loved by God.

### ALONG THE ELECTRONIC HIGHWAY

On February 21 I attended the Edmundston Chamber of Commerce meeting. A number of other Chambers of Commerce from the region as well as other organisations involved in development and the economy had organised this luncheon to hear the honourable Minister of the Electronic Highway, Mr. Georges Corriveau, talk to us about the present and future, in this domain. Reality and imagination were united to our pride in everything which is taking place in our milieu: New Brunswick generally and the Madawaska region in particular can pride themselves in being at the forefront of these technological advances in North America. I rejoice in these extraordinary human inventions, I thank the Lord for having gathered together people of common interests, and I fondly hope that the Edmundston Diocese humbly yet boldly undertake this unprecedented journey along the new electronic highway: among the 73 dioceses of Canada, Edmundston could well be at the forefront of social communications! Imagine each parish being linked to the Diocesan Centre through a FAX machine! At this time the Vatican itself offers an similar daily service to all the dioceses in the world, the "V.I.S.: Vatican Information Service." This is a awesome international highway! A Communion-Communication-Church.

### FIRST APPOINTMENT

I thank Bishop Gérard Dionne for generously accepting the judgeship of our marriage tribunal for the next six years. His will be an important service of compassion and discernment rendered to people who are experiencing difficult marital problems. Bishop Dionne's long pastoral experience and his competency in canon law will be a precious to him. This is my very first appointment, and I am very proud of it!

Our tribunal is a branch of the Halifax Regional Tribunal. Each year, over thirty cases are heard and studied, here. In 1993, the tribunal handed down 26 annulment declarations. This urges us to review all the components of a Christian marriage: the couple's freedom and maturity, an in-depth understanding of the ends of marriage, adequate preparation, and respect of each person's dignity. Present judges at the tribunal are now Bishop Gérard Dionne, Father Jean-Marie Martin, judicial vicar, Father Gaëtan Côté, and Sister Berthe Lavoie, R.E.J., our chancellor. defenders of the Bond are Fathers Lewis Long and Jacques Thériault; the Promoter of Justice is Father Normand Godbout, the Procurator is Father Sylvio Thériault, auditors are Mrs. Jacqueline Clavette and Mrs. Jeannette Pelletier, and the Notary is Mrs. Bernadette Martin. Sister Berthe Lavoie coordinates these services in respect to those who believe that their marriage could be annulled, since not all conditions required for a sacramental marriage have been fulfilled.

#### **FRATERNAL VISITS**

"The shepherd knows his sheep and his sheep know him." It is pleasant for me to continue the parish visits. I have already visited 8 out of 32 parish communities. In visiting St.-Léonard-Parent and Saint-Basile, I was in the oldest parishes of the diocese. When I visited St.-Leonard I came across a number of friends I had met at the time of the Great Mission. When I visited Notre-Dame-du-Sacré-Coeur and Green River I met new brothers and sisters. These last few days I was pleased to visit R.A.D.O. [soup kitchen-sheltered workshop in Edmundston], meet with a number of Scout leaders, and the residents of the following senior citizens' homes: Foyer Marie Assomption, Villa des Jardins, Foyer Montfort, Foyer Notre-Dame. I also met a group of young folk dancers at the St-Louis-Maillet University Centre. Have a good week!

*+ François Thibodeau ym*

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Bishop of Edmundston

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