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## 75<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY

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St. Joseph Parish [St.-Joseph-de-Madawaska] isn't as old as that of St.-Basile [1792] or St.-François-Xavier [St.-François-de-Madawaska - 1859], but it is celebrating its seventy-fifth anniversary, this year. The people of St. Joseph's celebrated this historic event at community renewal activities. I had the pleasure of presiding the Eucharist in the presence of a number of jubilarians: Father Laurent Nadeau who is celebrating forty years of ordination, and some 15 couples who this year are celebrating their golden or silver anniversaries. It is through these special witnesses of God's faithfulness that His love extends from age to age. In the course of these celebrations, all the parishioners were invited to a community meal. Let it be said that the love which the people of this diocese have for St. Joseph is founded on fidelity and trust, gratitude and petition: this devotion goes all the way back to the Church's roots in North America, and it is at the very origin of the Church of Edmundston, specifically through the remarkable witness of the Religious Hospitalers of St. Joseph [Hotel Dieu Sisters]. Holy Hour, mission, celebrations... diverse religious activities took place in a number of parishes, to honour such an eminent saint.

### GOOD NEWS FOR THE POOR

On Monday, March 28, I had the pleasure of celebrating, with the clergy of our Diocese, the annual Chrism Mass with the blessing of the holy oils used for the sacraments of baptism, confirmation, holy orders, and anointing of the sick. Following the example of Christ Jesus who was anointed with the Holy Spirit, all those who are to be anointed are bid to become good news to the poor in our midst.

Surely the following text, written in March by the Québec bishops and those involved in economic and community affairs, also describes what is going on in Madawaska, Restigouche, and Victoria counties: "A cruel paradox: North America, which is the richest region in the world, has the highest proportion of poor among all the more developed countries. In Canada, the rate of poverty which had been going down until the end of the 1970s, levelling off in the '80s, has been rising again since the early 1990s.

"Who are these poor? First and foremost are the single mothers. Then there are those who have less than 20 hours of work per week; these are followed by heads of families below the age of 25. Among senior citizens 65 years and older, four out of every ten still live below the poverty line, notwithstanding their old age pension. One-third of the immigrants who have come in the last ten years have been unable to settle in adequately. Besides those who have lost their jobs are numerous others who have managed to hold on to theirs but only on a part-time basis and at reduced wages. It is a painful experience, being reduced to poverty in a society where revenue still dictates consumption, social status, an impression of success, and participation in the social and cultural life" Message of the Bishops of Québec, March 1994).

I gratefully thank the people and organisations working in our region for the social and economic betterment they are bringing to our sisters and brothers who are afflicted with poverty and problems of all kinds. On Good Friday, in a walk of solidarity with all who are suffering, we shall be deeply united to you all in Jesus Christ: his Victory is our deepest hope.

## DAY OF PRAYER

Holy Week and other periods of renewal call us to pray at all times, and you have responded remarkably to this invitation: I congratulate you and thank you. Let us continue this service of prayer, praise, and petition. On the first Thursday of the month, April 7, I invite you to join me for a half-day of prayer to be held at the Diocesan Centre from 8:30 A.M. to 1:30 P.M. Following concelebrated Mass, we shall meditate together on the call to holiness which the Lord addresses to all.

## VISITS AND MEETINGS

Within a few weeks I shall have completed a preliminary visit of the diocese's Christian communities: these will have been especially grace-filled times, for me. It is a great privilege for a pastor to meet those whom the Lord has confided to his care, to pray together and fellowship together. The celebrations that were held were especially significant; the welcome has always been especially warm. The story of the major events of these parishes remind one of this text from the Acts of the Apostles: "They devoted themselves to the apostles' instruction and the communal life, to the breaking of bread and the prayers" (Acts 2:24). After a meal with the people of R.A.D.O. [sheltered workshop-kitchen in Edmundston], following dinner with the Knights of Columbus, supper with the Club Richelieu, and Mass at the Edmundston Regional Hospital for all the bereaved, I visited the parishes of St.-Hilaire and Baker Brook.

With you I want to experience this great Holy Week in the depths of my being! Happy Easter!

*+ François Thibodeau*

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Bishop of Edmundston

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