
TURNED TOWARDS THE FUTURE



While the priests and I are experiencing together an outstanding period of prayer and sharing at the Maison Notre-Dame-de-la-Paix in Ste-Anne-de-la-Pocatière [P.Q.], I want to thank you all for the earnest prayers you are addressing on our behalf to Jesus our Saviour, and to Mary, Mother of the Church. We are fully united to you all in thought and prayer.

TURNED TOWARDS THE FUTURE

Two hymns well up in me at this time, giving rise to the most beautiful concert! The first is:

Turned towards the future, we walk in your light, Son of the living God!
Turned towards the future light a people expecting the Rising Sun.

And the second is:

All the trees are not planted,
All the wheat has not been sowed:
Heirs to the furrows of history,
Let us be for today witnesses and builders.

The assurance of the presence of the Risen Jesus who unceasingly gives us his Spirit fills our heart with so much hope for the Church of Edmundston. We will zealously pursue building up the Kingdom of Jesus in the beautiful land of Madawaska, Victoria, and the Restigouche. Witnesses and builders, heirs to the furrows of history, turned towards the future: as many directions to follow, as many hopes to kindle, during these days. Thanks to God, faith makes our dreams possible, hope nourishes them, and charity fulfills them.

The calling of this meeting can remind us of important moments in the life of the people of God or of special times in the lives of Jesus' closest friends: the meetings on Sinai and Shechem, the Mount of Beatitudes, as well as the encounter on the mount of Transfiguration and in the Upper Room. Most important and beneficial meetings and encounters for intimate friends, but also for the whole people of God. Exceptional moments gushed forth for the whole of humanity, opening up untrodden paths of encounter with God, experiences of fraternal communion, and movements to authentic transformations. In hiding themselves in the Upper Room the Apostles must not have thought that the coming of the Spirit would be accompanied with all the signs we know today. May our prayer be earnest and imploring, during these days so that we may together discover the rich and glorious heritage that is ours. What Christ has given us, what our predecessors have left us, what we ourselves have sowed must continue to bear much fruit. The parable of the talents could well inspire and guide our sharings and recommendations. We shall have to continue being builders in the wake of those who came before us, building together with the religious and the lay people. The trees are certainly not all planted, the wheat has certainly not all been sowed.

MAJOR OBJECTIVES

The main purpose for these days of reflection is - as I have often said - to turn together in confidence towards the future in a spirit of co-responsibility and solidarity in the preaching of the Gospel to our brothers and sisters and in the building up of the Kingdom of Jesus in this Church of Edmundston. The theme of our prayer, reflection, and sharing will be *Priests and Shepherds according to the Heart of God*. These 65 hours or so will be a unique opportunity for us to better know our confrères and to discover their unique gifts, to deepen the implications of our mission, and together to take up the challenges made to our Church.

Anniversaries

On Thursday, May 12, we shall mark the 75th birthday of Bishop Gerard Dionne (June 19), as well as the following ordination anniversaries: Fr. Louis Daigle, our beloved senior priest (65 years' ordination), Msgr. Lionel Daigle (60 years), Fathers Etienne Dubé (50 years), Laurent Nadeau (40 years), Claude Clavet and Leo Grégoire (25 years). We also give thanks to God for the fifty years of priesthood and 30 years as bishop of Archbishop Emeritus [Ottawa] Joseph-Aurèle Plourde [originally of this diocese]. I also want to thank all those who offered me their god wishes and prayers on the occasion of my 29th anniversary as a priest, on May 8.

MEETING WITH PARLIAMENTARIANS

On Monday May 2 I had an outstanding meeting with our members of both the federal and provincial parliaments, and one of our senators. I sensed a very strong mutual respect among them, as well as a marked concern for their constituents. Going beyond all party politics, we were able to get to know one another better. We reflected together on action to be taken on behalf of the poorer members of our society. According to the Judaeo-Christian tradition, all those who govern the people must have as their first concern the plight of the poor. At the Chrism Mass, on Monday of Holy Week, I had developed in my homily this good news which we must bear to the poor of today. [...] I am certain that political commitment can certainly be a very distinctive form of exercising justice and charity, today. May this get-together be an expression of my gratitude and that of the Church of Edmundston to those who devote themselves daily to the welfare of the population.

CONFIRMATION

Most of the children preparing for Confirmation have written to me, requesting the sacrament. I received many letters full of tenderness, true professions of faith in the Holy Spirit. A young person wrote, "The Lord is going to look at you, as you confirm me, and he's going to be very proud of you..." Another wrote: "I want to be confirmed because I want to live more according to the way of Jesus." A young boy even composed and taped a song asking to be confirmed. I congratulate the parents, teachers and priests for preparing the children with love and attention, for reception of this sacrament. And in most parishes the Coming of the Spirit is celebrated with much ado: the choir is there to help us pray better, a numerous community gathers together to celebrate. Over 850 children will be confirmed, this year. I have wanted to have these confirmations in each child's home parish, in order to bring out the community aspect of the sacrament. "Be marked with the Holy Spirit, the Gift of God." What a gift, what a power in our lives.

Next week will be published the Pastoral Letter addressed to the people of the Church of Edmundston on the occasion of Pentecost 1994. Its topic is human dignity and the holiness of God.

Have a good week. A thousand blessings!

+ François Thibodeau *in*

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