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## FINE AND BENEFICIAL MEETING

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To begin with, my thanks go to those who kept us in their prayers, from May 9 to 12, during the priests' meeting that we had in Sainte-Anne-de-la-Pocatière. In the name of all the priests I express my heartfelt gratitude; it was a most marvellous and beneficial meeting. All of our parish priests were there, and even our retired priests. There were 47 of us, diocesan and religious priests praying together, fellowshiping, sharing together on our mission of shepherds after the heart of God. We lived together extraordinary times of great hope, charity, and faith. Together we look at what could be accomplished in vocation ministry, in order to ensure a future to our Church. "The gifts which God has made to our Church are many," as St. Paul affirms to the Ephesians. "The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers..." [4:11].

As successor to the Apostles I have the joy of working with pastors which the Lord has given this Church. And I witness to the fact that their desire is to pursue with the Lord their prayer ministry, their ministry of proclaiming the Word, their pastoral ministry generously and faithfully. Our meeting did not bear on appointments: this will happen generally in mid-June. Since a priest can be replaced only by another priest, we studied together how to ensure the training of future priests in our diocese, and we discussed on the feasibility of establishing a major seminary in the Maritimes - and why not in Edmundston? I offer this to your prayerful consideration: the future and youthfulness of our diocese depend on it.

We also discussed pastoral redistribution: taking into consideration the number and health of our priests, how can we serve the 60,000 people of our diocese to the best of our abilities? For more than 25 years - especially with Vatican Council II - the Church recommends that priests in a given area be formed into pastoral teams. In order to promote a quality lifestyle and avoid isolation, in order to promote also a life of faith and common prayer, in order to better foster team ministry, I hope that such teams be formed on a voluntary basis throughout our diocese. In this pastoral redistribution, there is no question of closing parishes: quite the opposite! The pastoral team, the ministerial team will be there to promote more fellowship, a greater missionary spirit, and a deeper sense of commitment to our Christian communities. Once again I thank you for the prayers you have offered for your priests and for me, your bishop. We truly had our sights on the future, fully trusting in the power of the Holy Spirit. I am convinced that this meeting we had together will continue to bear more and more fruit.

Wednesday, May 18, the priest gathered together once more - this time at the Diocesan Centre in Edmundston - to follow up on the Pocatière meeting and to detail certain recommendations to the bishop regarding the distribution of priests in the diocese. My admiration for and gratitude to these priests for their generosity in ministry and their availability. I am convinced of this: Our Church is lucky to have such priests. I wish I could alleviate the work of some of them, to allow them to take some well-deserved time off.

### PASTORAL LETTER

As you have learned from your priests, I published my first pastoral letter to the Church of Edmundston on the occasion of Pentecost Sunday. This first Letter is divided into five major points: the inestimable value of each person in this diocese of Edmundston, the importance of the family, the holiness of God, the Day of the Lord, and the future of our Church. [...] I shall come back to these points, later.

## **VARIED ACTIVITIES**

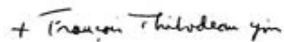
With the coming of spring the entire diocese is buzzing with activities. I received a number of invitations to attend one or of these fairs, expos or seminars that were taking place. All these activities point out the commitment of our citizens in the midst of their communities, and I bless the Lord for this. Everything is alive. Especially because of the many Confirmations and visits to schools I was unable to accept all of these kindly invitations, but be assured that it wasn't for lack of interest on my part. "The joy and hope, the grief and anguish of the people of our time, especially of those who are poor or afflicted in any way, are the joy and hope, the grief and anguish of the followers of Christ as well. Nothing that is genuinely human fails to find an echo in their hearts," such is the teaching of the Second Vatican Council [*The Church in the Modern World*, 1], and I want to experience this daily, with you, with the Christian communities.

## **FATHER JEFF'S ORDINATION**

On Saturday May 21, in Assumption Church [Grand Falls], I had the joy of ordaining to the priesthood our friend Jeff Doucette, son of Gabe and Lily Doucette of Plaster Rock. Jeff has been interning at Assumption Parish for more than two years. This ordination is a special grace for the Church as a whole. I want to thank Jeff for having responded to the calling of the Lord with such generosity, determination, and courage. I hope that he experience much happiness in his life and priestly ministry. During our meeting [at La Pocatière] it was good to anticipate together such an event which is the bearer of so much hope. My pressing wish is that following Jeff's example, a number of our youth answer the Lord's calling as enthusiastically and eagerly as Jeff has done.

## **PRAYER DAYS**

Even if the summer season is upon us, the first Thursday of each month will nonetheless be dedicated to prayer. Even during summer holidays the day of prayer shall be maintained: summer vacations are an ideal time for prayer, praise, and wonder. The period affords us more free time than usual: why not use it for prayer. June 2, July 7, and August 4 shall be days of prayer, and I invite you to the Diocesan Centre to spend them with me. The programme is always very simple: concelebrated Mass at 8:30 A.M. followed by morning prayer, silent adoration, suggested readings from the Vatican II documents, possibility for receiving the sacrament of reconciliation, soup or juice for lunch, and liturgy of the Word at 1:00 P.M. Welcome one and all! Together we are setting up a prayer network, something indispensable to our Church living.



+ François Thibodeau, C.J.M.  
Bishop of Edmundston

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