
DAY OF PRAYER



On Thursday September 8, a day of prayer (8:30 A.M.-1:30 P.M.) will mark the beginning of the 1994-1995 pastoral year. We shall pray together for the entire Church of Edmundston, without forgetting anyone. We shall also pray for our brothers and sisters who are experiencing most painful situations, in Rwanda. If you can make, come spend a few minutes at the Diocesan Centre chapel: it is a place of communion and solidarity.

PASTORAL ZONES [DEANERIES]

In the next two weeks, along with the diocesan coordinator of pastoral ministry [Sr. Claudette Ruest], I shall be visiting with the pastors and pastoral agents of the different deaneries in the diocese: the Upper Madawaska Deanery on September 12, the Edmundston Deanery on the 13, the Grand Falls deanery on the 14, the Southern Victoria Deanery on the 18, and the Restigouche Deanery on the 19.

Following a period of prayer, we shall look at the diocesan priority for 1994-1995, to see to what extent such a priority can be useful in pastoral work. Together we shall evaluate the impact of the 1991-1994 priority, *The Gospel: A Heritage To Discover and Share*. Other items will include the diocese's fiftieth anniversary and what activities to have, the constitution and formation of parish pastoral councils, and how the deanery will function, in the next few months: common services, programmes and meeting schedules, pastoral changes to be made, election of officers (president and secretary). There will be no official deanery president, this year, but Sister Claudette Ruest, the diocesan Pastoral Ministry Coordinator, will make it a priority to attend these most stimulating meetings.

This year, deanery meetings will be most important for the pastoral renewal which was hoped-for by the people of the diocese, as indicated by the responses to the questionnaire, earlier this year. Topics to be studied are many: evaluation of the 1987-1990, youth ministry, youth involvement in missionary activity, development and Peace, sacramental preparation (Baptism, Reconciliation, Confirmation), faith education, catechetics, Bible study, social and family pastoral ministry, the 1995-1998 priority, etc., without forgetting all financial aspects: council for economic affairs, budget, financing, communications.

"THE FIRE OF LOVE"

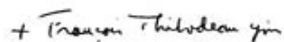
I have just received the annual report of the Church Council for Justice and Criminology (507 Bank, Ottawa, ON K2P 1Z5; Tel.: 613-563-1688). Its theme is *The Fear of Crime*. Members of the Council state that "We close the door to essential services while keeping open the most costly and useless of them: the prison doors!" The Council pursues its task of raising concern, prevention and reconciliation between criminals, victims, Christian communities, and governments. To this end, the CCJC recently inaugurated a three-year pilot project whose object is to make available the resources of different religious denominations, to look into the problems of family violence and try to find solutions. Different communities have stated their views regarding the society within which they would like to live. They have studied in greater detail certain types of violence, or some of their fears or concerns. The programme is called *The Fire of Love*. Local facilitators have noted that this project was a catalyst which has allowed parishioners to investigate different ways to develop relationships with one another, stressing respect,

honesty, and compassion. Some parishioners have stated that in their own families a greater effort is made to address others in such a way as to affirm and empower them. As soon as the different stages are complete, the coordinating committee collates the results into useable, stimulating, provocative and instructive material which could be helpful to others groups interested in breaking down the wall of silence surrounding the phenomenon of family violence which affects more than one in ten families, in Canada.

ANYWAY!

We can read the following, at the end of the report: *"People are unreasonable, illogical, and selfish: love them anyway. If you do good you will be accused of selfish motives: do it anyway. If you succeed, you will make false friends and real enemies: succeed anyway. The good you do today will be forgotten tomorrow: do it anyway. Honesty and openness make you vulnerable: be honest and open anyway. What takes you years to build can be destroyed in very little time: build anyway. People need help, but some will attack you if you try to sincerely help them: help them anyway. Give the best that you have and you will be beaten: give the best that you have anyway. If you choose to live in communion with others and make this your priority, you will be called 'old fashioned': live with others anyway. When you publicly show your faith in others, you will be dismissed as an idealist dreamer: show your faith in others anyway."* I would not be surprised to learn that such reflections were inspired by the discourse of Jesus in chapters 5-6-7 of St. Matthew's Gospel.

Have a good week!



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

« From A Bishop's Journal » (033) (07 September 1994)