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## "THE HOLY FATHER APPOINTS YOU BISHOP..."

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It will be one year on October 20 that the Holy Father appointed me bishop of Edmundston. Once again I want to thank the Lord for all the kindnesses he has shown me during the course of the year; and I also thank you, dear people of the Edmundston diocese, for your many kindnesses on my behalf as well as for your prayers. I shall long remember those moments I experienced at the Apostolic Nunciature in Ottawa when Archbishop Carlo Curis told me the news: "The Holy Father appoints you bishop of the Edmundston diocese: do you accept, Father?" Long moments of silent prayer followed, mixed with questioning and fear. "Who am I, to accept such a charge today?" Long moments of astonishment and reflection, before consenting. Through the words of John Paul II I heard the will of God for me and the Church of Edmundston expressed. "With God's grace, I accept."

### 1995-1996 CONFIRMATIONS

Following requests made since last spring regarding the celebration of Confirmation, I consulted all the pastors [...] with the exception of those in the Southern Victoria deanery where the youth are confirmed in grade 9 or 10, around the age of 15-17. The reason of the consultation in the other four deaneries was to find whether they looked favourably on moving the celebration of Confirmation to grade six.

To confirm in grade six would imply that the children would have gone through the grade five programme, "Alive in the Spirit." This would allow the bishop to spread the Confirmation tour throughout the year and not only in April and May, and to prolong the pastoral visits he would like to undertake in each parish. This would also allow the different parishes to organise Confirmation preparation teams and see to their training. Throughout Canada, the bishops are at this time pursuing their reflection on the link which exists between Confirmation and the sacraments of Baptism and Eucharist.

Nearly all those consulted recommended that we not proceed with confirmation of fifth graders this year but that we do so during 1995-1996. With the assent of the Diocesan Office of Pastoral Ministry and of the Episcopal Council, I hereby announce that there will be no confirmations for children in 1994-1995, but that they will be held beginning in October or November, 1995. Let us all together - students, parents, teachers, and pastors - prepare to live this great sacrament of the Spirit in the Christian community.

### RETREAT AND MISSION

The priests of our diocese have just completed a three-day retreat at the Diocesan Centre, three fruitful days during which Father Gilles Ouellet, C.J.M., director of the Renewal Centre in Laval [Québec] led us along the path of the inner life. The same grace will be accorded to the faithful of St. Patrick, Tilley, and Aroostook: the Great Mission, animated by Sister Teri O'Brien, S.M., will be held in these parishes from October 21 to October 30. My prayers and those of the entire diocese accompany them. May this period of prayer and reflection help everyone involved discover their baptismal vocation.

## "FACE OF TENDERNESS"

I recently attended the Annual Congress of the New Brunswick Catholic Health Association as well as the workshop held by the religious of the diocese, on the topic of euthanasia. A Senate committee is now at work throughout Canada looking into eventual modifications to be made to legislation on euthanasia and assisted suicide. We must more than ever respectfully and clearly affirm our option for life. Since in Holland doctors are no longer prosecuted for helping persons commit suicide, a report prepared by the Attorney General states that in 1990 some 1900 patients would have died without having given their expressed permission. "Not surprising that with 40 % of Dutch doctors admitting having practised involuntary euthanasia, a number of senior citizens refuse hospitalisation or even to consult a physician" (Brief of the N.B. Knights of Columbus). May the following prayer of Gilles Bulliard call us to tenderness: "Lord Jesus, during your life on earth yours was the face of the Father's tenderness for us here on earth. Now that you have made yourself invisible, it is up to us, your disciples, to show them your luminous face. As you send us to the sick, we pray: Abide in us, Lord Jesus, let us lose ourselves in you; Let your presence show itself through us, and teach us to be a smile of your goodness which, deep down, they want to encounter. Always inspire with the attitude to adopt, the words to speak, and the silences to observe. Then shall we be for them a path that leads to you."

## PRIESTS' SENATE [PRESBYTERAL COUNCIL]

The Priests' held its first meeting for the 1994-1995 year on September 15. Its work deals mostly with the life and ministry of the priests. Father Renaud Côté was elected chairman of the council, and Father Normand Godbout, his substitute. A number of committees were formed: Fr. Rino Thériault heads the Priests' Spiritual and Intellectual Life committee; he shall add other members to help him supervise the priests' ongoing formation and their spiritual renewal, especially through the annual retreat and formation sessions. This year, the priests' retreat was held on October 11, 12, and 13, at the Diocesan Centre, and it was facilitated by Father Gilles Ouellet, C.J.M., on the topic of the inner life. A session on the new *Catechism of the Catholic Church* is in the planning stage.

Father Napoléon Michaud is chairman of the priests' material and social life; with other confreres he will work on a proposal regarding the priests' salaries for 1995 and the diocese's mutual aid fund [for priests]. Father Alfred Irving will pay close attention to those priests who are sick or retired, stressing the fact that it is important that the local parish priest is the first and foremost person - with the bishop - to look into the situation of the sick or retired priest. Father Gaëtan Côté will continue to look after formation programmes for the training of seminarians - an important concern which must be promoted. The next meeting of the Priests' Senate is scheduled for November 17. On December 28, all the priests will join together for the traditional Christmas get-together.

+ François Thibodeau

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Bishop of Edmundston

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