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## "I BELIEVE IN THE CHURCH."

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Where does the Spirit blow? The Creed answers this question when it states: "I believe in one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church." The Church asserts that in her and through her the Spirit of Jesus continues to act in history. The Church believes that she is the place and even the sacrament, that is, the sign and instrument, of the action of the Holy Spirit. To express the indispensable bonds that must exist between the Church and Jesus Christ, I believe that the words of Pope Paul VI during the Second Vatican Council, can nourish our reflection. The Pope stated that "If Jesus Christ is not her riches, then the Church is pathetic. She is barren, if the Spirit of Jesus does not develop in her. Her edifice is shaky if Jesus Christ is not the architect and if, from the living stones with which she is built, his Spirit is not the bond. She is without beauty if she does not reflect the unique beauty of Christ's face and if she is not the Tree whose roots are the Passion of Jesus Christ. The science she takes pride in is false, and false also the wisdom which adorns her, if these do not find their fullness in Jesus Christ. She maintains us in the shadow of death, if her light is not 'illuminated light' from Jesus Christ. Her entire doctrine is a lie if she does not proclaim the Truth that is Jesus Christ. All her glory is vanity if she does not place it within the humility of Jesus Christ. Even her name is a stranger to us, it does not immediately conjure up for us the only Name given to man [and woman] for their salvation. She is nothing to us if she is not the sacrament, the effective sign of Jesus Christ."

### A CHURCH-AS-COMMUNION

In the course of these reflections it will be easier for you to understand certain dimensions of the marvel of the Church-as-communion, of the marvel of the Church as People of God: a profound union which joins each baptised person to Jesus himself, Christ and Lord, Son of the Living God. Each child of God is bound to the Holy Trinity: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. In the bond of charity, all baptised persons are linked to one another to form the People of God, a sign of God's love for humankind. This Church-as-communion is also composed of and served by ordained ministers whom the Lord has chosen for himself and who are in living communion with the successor of Peter: the bishops, priests, and deacons. The structures within this Church are at the service of her mission, at the service of communion, brotherhood, and welcoming of one another. This same Church-as-communion proclaims the Good News from which she was born: she is 'servant' of the men and women of today, especially of the poor and suffering; her liturgical and sacramental life is supremely important: it is the expression of her unity, her vitality, her life.

### A SHARING TO PURSUE

Calling to mind a few facets of our Church gives rise to an invitation: my greatest desire would be that we deepen our knowledge of the Church throughout this jubilee year, in sharing groups, religious education, associations and organisations, and in the different parish committees. If preaching, retreats, conferences, and talks had the mystery of the Church as topic, how all of this would be beneficial to our diocesan Church of Edmundston. I would go so far as to encourage - even within our Sunday celebrations - the careful and systematic presentation and clarification of the teaching of the Catholic Church on the mystery of the Church. I strongly encourage this teaching in a special way during the three great periods of the liturgical year: Advent (November 27-December 24, 1994), Lent (March 1-April 15, 1995), Easter Time (April 16-June 4, 1995). I am certain that the liturgical texts will be most appropriate for such an undertaking: "The Edmundston Diocese Church, Place of Our Hope," "The Edmundston Diocese Church, Place of Our Faith," "The Edmundston Diocese Church, Place of our Love."

## **A MARVEL TO CELEBRATE IN HOPE AND IN FAITH**

In this manner the Advent period will help us better understand and celebrate the Church as the pre-eminent place of our Christian hope. The Advent themes and sub-themes all bear on hope, this year. "In hope, we raise our heads" (First Sunday), "Let us follow the guide" (Second Sunday), "Let us share the peace" (Third Sunday), "Let us welcome the Lord" (Fourth Sunday), "Let us celebrate!" (Christmas). May what we profess in the Eucharistic Prayer for Mass Meetings become a certainty for all humankind: "Make of your Church a place of truth and liberty, of justice and peace, so that all men and women may have reason to keep on hoping." During Lent 1995, we could together look at the topic of the beautiful risk of our faith: may these days of reflection and solidarity help us to better follow Jesus (First Sunday), to grow in the faith (Second Sunday), to act today (Third Sunday), to welcome his joy (Fourth Sunday), and to open to the future (Fifth Sunday).

## **ON A DAILY BASIS: LOVE**

Thus nourished by the Word of God during the course of Advent and Lent, we shall be all the more ready to experience together the Paschal Season as a special time given us to grow in love. Following the example of the first believers, we are called upon to have but one heart (Second Sunday of Easter), to lovingly shepherd the flock (Third Sunday), to be evangelisers of mutual love to the ends of the earth (Fourth Sunday), to live the new commandment of mutual love (Fifth Sunday), to spread this love in the midst of the difficulties and differences of today (Sixth Sunday), and to be witnesses moved by the Spirit (Ascension). In this way, the liturgy will help us discover the marvel that is our Edmundston Diocese Church.

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