
HAPPY EASTER!



Lent 1995 will come to an end in a few hours: in this jubilee year, it will have been for our beloved Church a privileged time of prayer and sharing, of renewal and fellowship. It will have been a time of grace where the Lord will have taken risks with each and everyone of us: Who are we that he would associate us so closely with his mission of spreading the Good News? Who are we to pursue together a mission of love towards our families, our fellow workers, our schoolmates and college classmates? Who are we that he should confide to our care the building up of a better world of justice and peace? Yes, they are truly great risks that the Lord has taken with us, but the profound reason for this is that he loves us to distraction. *His love is truly from age to age!*

And there will have been a mutual response. In our living faith towards the Lord, we too shall have taken risks: We have followed Jesus; thanks to God, we have grown in faith, we have acted accordingly, and we have lovingly accepted his joy. With him we have looked at the future. More than liturgical themes for the Sundays of Lent this year, they are profound realities to which we have been called to respond throughout the season.

LET US NOT BE AFRAID: LET US RISK!

Thanks to everything that has been experienced in the course of our Diocese's fifty years - especially at the time of the Diocesan Synod - and thanks to the eager collaboration of many in the diocese, I was able to announce on April 23 projects that open us to the future. At this 1995 Easter, the Risen Christ once again says, "Do not be afraid! I am with you always!" If there are roads or times of hopelessness, the Risen Jesus meets us just as he did at Emmaus, and his words enkindle our lives. "Were not our hearts burning within us when he was opening the scriptures to us and sharing the bread with us?"

The forming of a parish pastoral council can be a real challenge but it is truly a beautiful one where brothers and sisters can join forces in the building up of a vibrant Christian community with a future. A parish that would refuse to build in harmony such a pastoral council would have a grave responsibility on its shoulders: this serious omission could have most unhappy consequences in the near future, especially with our lack of priests. The next few months will therefore be important for every parish forming a real PPC: a simple and flexible structure with members working in solidarity with their pastor. With the setting up of a PPC, a finance committee will quickly follow. I am sure of this: in each parish there will be people to support their pastor in the administration of the parish's goods.

GOOD NEWS FOR EASTER: THE EDMUNDSTON SEMINARY

The School of Faith [French Sector] will pursue its task of Scripture training; a pastoral training programme will be forming men and women who aspire to become pastoral agents: these are risks that we are taking together for the cause of the Gospel of the Risen One. It is the same regarding the opening of the Diocesan Seminary in Edmundston. To respond to new needs, in order to contribute in giving pastors to the 60,000 people forming our Diocese, we are together taking risks for the cause of Christ the Good Shepherd.

There are a number of resources in our milieu, to respond to the young and not-so-young who would like to become priests: the Spiritual Resource Centre, the Pastoral Formation Service, the School of Faith, the St-Louis-Maillet University Centre, etc. The Seminary team will, with each candidate, study which will be the best way to go in

preparing for eventual priestly ordination. We shall remain in close contact with the other seminaries throughout Canada, whether they be in Québec, Montreal, or Ottawa. But the fact of having a seminary in Edmundston will allow us to experience right here at home major stages in the formation process: vocation discernment, spiritual accompaniment, training in personal and community prayer, academic studies leading to a B.A. degree with a major in religious studies, pastoral work in our own milieu, etc.

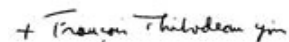
The opening of the Edmundston Seminary at the actual rectory of Notre-Dame-du-Sacré-Coeur Parish will take place on Friday, August 4, feast of St. John Vianney, patron saint of priests. I want to thank all the Sacré-Coeur parishioners for the enthusiastic response they gave to this important project. You are and shall remain an important part of this new seminary: you will carry it in your prayer and in mutual aid, in union with all in the diocese.

If the seminary period is most important for solid theological studies, candidates to the priesthood nonetheless feel the need for a period of maturing and discernment, a period for deepening their Christian experience. They need a place for meeting and sharing together as future priests, they need a place for individual, personalised accompaniment. One of the general objectives of the seminary will be to allow the one who is open to the possibility of becoming a priest to be given the tools for better discerning what it is that the Lord expects of him, and to gradually acquire what is need, in his training as a future priest.

"LORD, WHAT DO YOU WANT ME TO DO?"

At a time where an intense pastoral vocational activity will be experienced, in the next few weeks with the launching of the *Called by Name* vocation programme, I would like to repeat the beautiful words of the priest-poet Robert Lebel: "Lord, what do you want me to do? All I want is to live in you and for you. I don't have much to offer you except my one desire to give you the entire space. For a long time you have been fashioning me between rebellions and bright days. See, I surrender myself, O God my God into your hands of love. From now on, may you be the place where I let my heart be loved. May I not seek elsewhere what can come only from your grace. May my entire life be yours, along with its winters and summers, because I have no other will than to live according to your will. You who have helped me learn of you in the experiences of hope and of night, I would so much want that others too find once again your fire smouldering under their ashes. May my tenderness be offered to those who are dying of waiting, may it reveal your coming to those who suffer without understanding. Lord, what do you want me to do?"

I wish you a Happy Easter, and I pray the Risen Christ to grant you his choicest blessings. "Queen of Heaven, rejoice, because the Lord is truly risen!"



+ François Thibodeau, C.J.M.
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