
REVIVING THE GIFT



By the time you read these lines, the priests of the Edmundston Diocese [will have been] in silence and prayer on their 1995 annual retreat. I am sure that it is a great privilege to experience such days, and quite a few of our brothers and sisters in the diocese would like to have the same opportunity. They are right in desiring this, since moments like these are a precious gift to us, to renew our spiritual energy make us more solidary with one another, and review our lives and ministry as priests and pastors. Writing to his disciple Timothy, St. Paul said, "Do not neglect the gift that is in you, which was given to you through... the laying on of hands by the council of elders" (1 Tim. 4:14). I am deeply grateful to all who so generously pray for us. I have great faith in a people's prayer for their pastors. May we better appreciate the Lord's love which is from age to age, from one generation to the next. I pray that the Edmundston diocesan seminary (Renovations to the Notre-Dame-du-Sacré-Coeur rectory have already begun, for this seminary.) welcome several future priests and that the vocation programme *Called by Name* produce positive results.

CONGRATULATIONS TO THE ELECTED!

I want to offer my greetings and congratulations to all those who were elected on May 8, whether it was to a school board or to municipalities, and I assure them of my daily prayers; I sincerely hope that all those who did not win this year will nonetheless continue in their commitment to their respective communities, even if it has to be under different forms. The days we have just lived will have allowed us to bring to the fore the daily challenges that our representatives on school boards and municipalities have to face. It is normal and necessary that after having elected the people's representatives, the population continue to be vigilant regarding what is being done, and support those who have been chosen to represent us for the next few years. We must together carry on the tasks begun by our predecessors, tasks that now require new forces.

FIREWORKS!

These last few weeks, there have been so many activities going on in every area of life that it is difficult for me to take them all in. For the fourth year in a row, a team of young missionaries, accompanied by Sister Claudette Ruest and Manon Ruest-Bourgoin left on April 30 for a one-month stay in Mexico. Full of enthusiasm, these youths want to live international solidarity in the name of their faith, in a country now in the throes of an economic, social, and political crisis.

On the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of our diocese, the Atlantic Region Catechetical Directors met together at the Diocesan Centre. This is a first for them, since they generally meet in Moncton. Many challenges have to be picked up in order for catechetics to take its place among activities that are more and more parish-based. Close collaboration among catechists and parents is noticed in the diocese as a whole, and quite a few envy the situation of the Edmundston Diocese: the collaboration we regularly have on the part of teachers is altogether marvellous. A visit by Mrs. Christiane Gagnon made it clear to us how much parents want religious education for their children. Initiatives will be taken so that catechetical material - a veritable treasure for our Church and society - be made more generally available to parents.

The Femmes Chrésiennes Movement held their thirty-third annual congress at St-Jacques on April 30: I pray that the entire FCM crew let itself be pushed into the open sea by the Holy Spirit: it is a very promising movement which can give full meaning to each woman's experience by its active method of discernment and commitment. The École de la Foi [School of Faith, French Sector] had a terrific celebration, giving both former and new "students" an opportunity to meet together for sharing about the School, to celebrate the great things accomplished these last ten years, and to thank the project's instigators, Bishop Gérard Dionne, the late Fr. Robert Simard, C.J.M., Fr. Jean-Guy Lachance, C.J.M., Fr. Leo Grégoire, I.V.D., and all those who collaborated in the project throughout these years. A beautiful concert given by the St-Louis-Maillet vocal ensemble capped the festivities. Other events? A visit to the St-Hilaire correctional facility on the occasion of its change to an adult detention centre, the blessing of a monument commemorating labour victims, etc.

HONOUR TO OUR COMPATRIOTS

Week after week I send my best wishes to couples who are celebrating their fiftieth or sixtieth wedding anniversary, and they are many, this year, judging by the letters received. It is always a pleasure to congratulate these people and tell them of the gratitude of the Edmundston Diocese and to assure them of my prayers on their behalf.

Allow me to once more congratulate this year's priest-jubilarians; on May 1 an unforgettable celebration took place at Notre-Dame-de-Lourdes, on behalf of Fr. Félix Poitras. Allow me also to note that on Saturday, May 13, Sister Cécile Renault, R.H.S.J., of Perth Andover, will be granted an honorary doctorate by the Université de Moncton [for her work with battered women]; Sister is a woman who is extraordinary by her simplicity, her devotedness, and her daily commitment. If there were competition in this field I would not hesitate to say that the work which the Religious Hospitallers accomplish at Perth, St.-Quentin, and St-Basile is in the same line as the work done by Mother Teresa in Calcutta. Since 1873, the Religious Hospitallers have given of themselves on a daily basis to the suffering and the most needy in our midst.

GOSPEL OF LIFE

Pope John Paul's new encyclical *Evangelium Vitae* is a real gift to humankind. It is a vigorous and cordial invitation to members of the Catholic Church as well as to all those of goodwill in favour of every aspect of human life. The text constantly appeals to the Word of God as it is contained in the Bible. The Pope amply comments the scriptural text in such a way that the importance of human life in the world is stressed, as well as the spiritual and ultimate sense of life. Biblical references introduce each of the four chapters as well as each paragraph. The encyclical is a long, 194-page plea in favour of a culture of life: "In this situation... we are facing an enormous and dramatic clash between... the 'culture of death' and the 'culture of life'." We must develop an acute critical sense for discerning authentic values and real needs. We must create together a new culture of life (Cf. N^o. 28).

It is after having consulted and received the favourable support of the world's bishops on the content of *Evangelium Vitae* that the Pope calls on the solidarity of men and women in favour of the culture of life. According to him, the Word of God is a veritable "Gospel of life;" this Word alone can help us grasp the full meaning of all human life. "Man's life comes from God; it is his gift, his image and imprint, a sharing in his breath of life. God is therefore the sole Lord of this life..." (N^o. 39).

Have a good week!

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