

---

## OUR DIOCESAN SEMINARY



---

On August 4, 1995 we were given to experience an emotion- and hope-filled day in the life of the Edmundston diocese Church. We were very much aware of sowing for a most important harvest regarding the future of our Church. More than 250 people: bishops, priests, seminarians, religious, pastoral agents, as well as a great number of lay people took part in the event. At the outset, I petitioned the Lord in the following terms: "Lord look upon the Edmundston Diocese Church that has set up a new seminary, so that through your help future ministers of Christ, gathered in unity, be formed by a communion of life and the study of doctrine to carry out the task of ministry." A song by Robert Lebel describes the priest's mission throughout the ages: *"We bear a treasure in jars of clay, clay of our bodies, treasure of the Gospel. Treasure of faith and hope whose splendour surprises us; treasure of life and of presence which infinitely surpasses us. Treasure for a searching world that no longer knows how to go deeply to the very roots of its being for a rebirth and to find you. Treasure opening up to the heart of the poor as soon as your voices is heard. But is our voice, one among so many, enough of an echo of yours?"*

### A SIGN OF HOPE

Exactly one hundred years ago - in September, 1895 - the Eudist Fathers opened a seminary in the Atlantic Region, Holy Heart of Mary Seminary in Halifax: Archbishop Plourde, Bishop Dionne and several others of our priests made their spiritual experience there. In 1895, the seminary had a personnel of three priests, six novices and three secular clergy candidates among whom was Bishop Edouard LeBlanc, the first Acadian bishop. Bishop Cornelius O'Brien, archbishop of Halifax, spoke on October 18 words considered prophetic: *"Doubtless this seminary looks no bigger than a mustard seed, but in time it will grow into a tall and vigorous tree which will spread its branches not only over Nova Scotia but over the entire Maritime Provinces."* And then he addressed the future priests in this way: *"You must imbue yourselves here in an apostolic spirit. And what is the apostolic spirit? It is a spirit of personal denial, the priest must totally deny himself. His life is to die [to himself] because a good priest is a martyr, [a martyrdom] not of a few hours but of a lifetime. My friends, you must be convinced that in entering the ecclesiastical and priestly life you are not seeking your own interests or your own ease but the sole glory of God and the sole good of souls."* And he added, *"Any priest who does not share these sentiments is on the wrong road."*

### A SCHOOL OF HOLINESS

By quoting from Archbishop O'Brien, I am not insinuating that among our first seminarians is a future bishop! If one or the other is called to the priesthood and later on to the episcopate, the Lord will give all that is needed to discern his will. I am not insinuating that one or the other will end up a martyr... But I wish them to be true witnesses of Jesus the priest and shepherd. Language habits can change from one era to another, but it is certain that a seminary must first and foremost be a school of holiness, a school where one learns to become more and more a disciple of Jesus to such a degree that Jesus becomes, for the future priests and their formation team, spirit of their spirits, heart of their hearts, life of their lives. Nor am I insinuating that our diocesan seminary will have a bearing on all the Atlantic provinces, like Holy heart Seminary did in forming over a thousand priests for the Maritime Provinces, Newfoundland and even the United States, among all of whom were over fifteen bishops. our seminary is a very humble one, but if the Lord wants to use it like he did with the one that opened in Paris in 1990, may the will of the Lord be accomplished in all things, and may the seminary produce its fruit - 10 %, 30 %, and 100 %.

## AN ENERGETIC TEAM

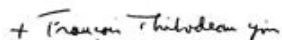
After having gone through appropriate consultation, I am grateful to and proud of the most energetic Seminary team which I have appointed to a three-year term: Father Michel Bouffard, a Marist priest, is the seminary superior and pastor of Notre-Dame-du-Sacré-Coeur Parish: for seven years he worked at setting up *Agapè*, a formation centre for young people; Father Jeff Doucette who has accepted to join this mission to his tasks as assistant pastor at the cathedral and diocesan vocation director: with the collaboration of all, he not only wants to expand the seminary, but to double it! And we are lucky to have the fine collaboration of Sister Bertille Beaulieu, R.S.H.J.: her knowledge of university curricula and her spiritual and pedagogical experience will be an invaluable aid.

I want to thank God with you for the action we took, on August 4: it was a community gesture. I am not alone in having decided to establish a seminary; all the priests gave their assent at the meeting we had in Ste-Anne-de-la-Pocatière, last year; all the diocesan councils agreed, too, and comments received tell me that we are on the right path. It is important to have an address, a place to stay. It is important to have a formation team; it is important to have young dynamic and idealistic people. We shall see, during the course of the year, whether we can go further, whether we can eventually offer theology courses: we have no lack of resources, in our milieu.

## SPLENDID SOLIDARITY

I thank you for the solidarity you show, regarding the seminary, the seminarians, and the future of our Church. We are very much aware of the necessity and indispensable priestly continuation: in our diocese, there are presently 16 available diocesan priests in full-time parish ministry, while there are 33 parishes. Thanks to the generous collaboration of religious in parishes and even at the seminary, we place all our trust in Divine Providence: several miracles, several great things have occurred this year allowing us to inaugurate and bless the diocesan seminary. We must continue to pray the Master to send workers to his harvest so that we may always have many and holy priests in coming years... The entire Edmundston Diocese Church must be concerned, when we talk of the future of the seminary. Since it is the opening and blessing of our seminary, let us open our beings to Jesus, that he truly be the soul of that house. May he send the Holy Spirit to form our future priests in the manner of the Apostles as well as in the manner of all those zealous and dynamic priests who were so many among us, holy priests filled to overflowing with apostolic zeal, who gave their all to Jesus. May the Spirit himself answer our prayer so that we may truly do everything we can for the greater glory of God and the salvation of all our brothers and sisters.

Have a good week!



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

« From A Bishop's Journal » (084) (06 September 1995)