
HOW IS THE DIOCESE FINANCIALLY ORGANISED?



I have been asked to write on the diocese's financial organisation: I gladly do so, even though it may at times seem complicated. One of the obligations contracted by a bishop when taking over the government of a diocese is to administer like a father the Church's goods and properties. The *Directory of Bishops in Their Pastoral Ministry* recommends that the bishop form the faithful, through appropriate measures, to a sense of participation and collaboration, even regarding the temporal goods needed by the Church to carry out her objectives so that all, according to their possibilities, act co-responsibly as regards the economic support of the Church community, its works and gifts, or as regards the preservation, expansion, and healthy administration of the community's goods and property. Charity must be the soul of this administration. The *Directory* has several calls to prudence, simplicity, and collegiality.

LEGAL RECOGNITION

The new *Code of Canon Law*, published in 1983, constitutes the Church's principal legislation. Since parishes have no legal status in New Brunswick, it is the Corporations of Roman Catholic Bishops that legally own all the goods and properties of all the dioceses and parishes. In the diocese of Edmundston as in those of Moncton, Bathurst, and Saint John, it is the Roman Catholic Bishop who administers the totality of Church goods and property. In order to carry out this task, the bishop delegates his responsibilities to the head of the parish or some other diocesan institution.

DIOCESAN ORGANISATION

So as to comply with the Church's new legislation and respond to the new needs in our milieu, upon my arrival in the diocese I consulted the diocese as a whole regarding the person who would be the most apt to be appointed diocesan bursar. In June, 1994, I appointed Father Napoléon Michaud to a three-year term as diocesan bursar. Between times I modified the mandate of the Diocesan Council for Economic Affairs which was more oriented towards the administration of the Diocesan Centre: it henceforth looks after the totality of the diocese's economic affairs. Besides that, in March, 1994, I established a committee to study the pastoral and financial situation of the diocese and to report to me in the months to follow. In the spring of 1994 I also announced that as of January 1, 1996, each parish was to have a parish pastoral council and a parish committee for economic affairs. In June, 1994, a first document on this topic was sent to parish heads, and in the fall of 1994, the diocesan bursar made a first visit to all the diocesan deaneries.

PROVISIONAL REPORT

On February 1, 1995, the study committee chaired by Mr. Carmel Caouette, tabled its provisional recommendations. After meeting with the diocesan councils, I immediately set about applying several of their recommendations. For instance, there is now a moratorium on all new constructions: supplementary reasons must now be given, to motivate any new construction. Repair projects exceeding \$15,000.00 must have the prior approval of the bishop, before being undertaken. The creation of parish economic affairs committees is not

optional: each parish has been given a provisional constitution in which the committee's aims, nature, spirit, mandate and term of office of officers, and other modalities of operation are stated. Each year, the committee reports to the parish as a whole.

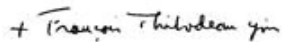
TRANSPARENCY AND COLLEGIALITY

The ultimate aim of all these undertakings is to ensure the healthy administration of the goods and property of the diocesan community as a whole, a transparent and collegial administration at every level. Each parish committee must render account of its administration to the parish, and each parish must render account to the Diocesan Council for Economic Affairs. It seems to me that these are simple and ordinary measures which protect both the administrators as a whole and the entire population.

GRATITUDE

I wish to express my profound gratitude to all who are looking after the administration of the property and goods of the parish community and of the diocese as a whole: the pastors, pastoral agents, accountants, secretaries, councillors, administrators. In these difficult economic times, it behooves all of us together to administer with both prudence and vigilance. The Pastoral Directory comments: *"Once priority has been given to justice, the general rules regarding administration will be the moral principle, the principle of communion, the principle of sharing, and the principle of the good father."*

Have a good week!



+ François Thibodeau, C.J.M.
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