

---

## "TO LIVE JUSTLY AND IN HARMONY"

---



For years and years now - some will say since 1759, others will recall 1837, while still others will refer to Maurice Duplessis or Mr. René Lévesque - the Québec situation lies at the heart of many political and social debates. The results of the October 30 Referendum point in a certain direction, but nothing has yet been solved. In order to shed some light on this event I willingly quote extensively from the Spring 1992 common declaration of the Atlantic Bishops regarding our collective future, a few months before the referendum on the Canadian Constitution; the document is titled *To Live Justly and in Harmony*. *"We call on the faithful to be sensitive to the needs and concerns of others. Just as we would like that our own concerns be taken seriously and considered with respect by our fellow citizens from other provinces or regions, we too must be ready to respect the expectations of others. We especially call on the Atlantic Region Canadians to be understanding of the unique character of Québec society and of the normal desire of its people to exist and develop within the framework of its own cultural patrimony. As Atlantic Canadians, we are proud of our own cultures and we would not like to see them threatened; we understand those who have the same feelings."* And the bishops added: *"The history of Atlantic Canada is one of ethnic, religious, and linguistic minorities. We understand particularly well the need to truly respect minorities. History and experience teach us that readiness to respect minority rights is the capstone of the democratic character of our society."*

### A TIME FOR CONCERTED EFFORT

Allow me to once again quote from the Atlantic Bishops' document: *"We are at the heart of a real debate regarding our collective future. A time of crisis can make us see what is truly important. It can be a special occasion to grow and reconcile with one another. But in order to benefit from the occasion, it is together and not isolated from one another that we must search for solutions. We are convinced that a concerted and courageous effort will bear fruit. Canadians are used to solving serious problems in a peaceful way. We can be proud to share a history largely marked by mutual comprehension and respect for one another. It is in such a tradition of cooperation that we can progress in solving the actual problems and reach decisions that are fair to everyone."*

### A TIME OF HOPE

Jesus proclaimed that the first and greatest commandment is to love God with all that is in us. But he added that the second commandment is to love one's neighbour as oneself. This is not a purely abstract notion. In practice, it means that we must listen to others in order to understand them and reach decisions that are based not only on our own interests but on the needs and concerns of others. As Christians, we must apply these same principles in our relations with our closest neighbours. Some people believe that we are living in a period of crisis: We can make of it a time of hope. The truth spoken with prudence, heard with respect in an active search for harmony, opens up endless possibilities. We can also make of it a time of justice. By laying aside any consideration that is purely superficial and selfish, we shall be able to recognise more clearly the needs of others in our society and in this way render reconciliation more accessible. Meeting together in hope and moved by a common desire for justice, the different groups of Canadians will find a new occasion to raise up a society that truly recognises the primacy of God in the wonderful diversity, and the equal dignity of the members of the People of God." May these words of the Atlantic Bishops, spoken in the spring of 1992, inspire us to live peacefully but actively in the wake of the historical Referendum.

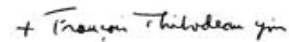
## TO THE PARISH OF CLAIR

We have experienced something rare, in our diocese: a retired archbishop pastored in Clair from August 15 to November 5... My heartfelt thanks to Archbishop Joseph-Aurèle Plourde, 80 years old, former Archbishop of Ottawa, for the extraordinary devotion he steadily displayed in the parish neighbouring his own birthplace. He was a "Shepherd after the Heart of Heart," attentive to each person, a gatherer of people into a community, bearer of the Word of God, celebrant of the sacraments of life. Since he will be returning for Holy Week of 1996, the joy of his return lessens the pain of not being able to find a full-time pastor for the present year. Another bishop, Bishop Gérard Dionne, has accepted to celebrate the Sunday eucharists with the people of Clair during November and December. For the months preceding Holy Week, Marist Father Paul-Henri Demers will carry out the week-end ministry.

## THE HÔTEL DIEU SISTERS

The Providence that looks over the People of God has allowed us to find two Sisters to live in the rectory at Clair at least until next August 15. They are Sister Rosanna Losier, who will look after the housekeeping, and Sister Elmona Thibodeau who will function as pastoral agent, working closely with the parish pastoral council as well as with the parish committees and organisations. I want to thank the Hôtel-Dieu Sisters for such a fine collaboration. I am grateful to Mr. Régnald E. Michaud for having administered the parish, these past few months. May the people of Clair continue to build together a community that applies itself to the teaching of the Apostles, faithful to the community fellowship, to the breaking of the bread, and to the prayers.

Have a good week!



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

« From A Bishop's Journal » (093) (08 November 1995)