
NECESSITY AND OBLIGATION TO HAVE A PARISH PASTORAL COUNCIL



Document 2

On November 10 I signed and promulgated three important statutes that are shortly to become law. The first statute, published last week, dealt with revaluing the Sunday gathering. The second, which I publish today, deals with the necessity and obligation for every parish to have a pastoral council. A parish's vitality depends on it. The Edmundston Diocesan Synod (1987-1990) earnestly asked for such a council in every parish, and giant steps were made in this direction by a number of parishes. My Pastoral Letter of June 4, 1995 pointed out the importance of having parish communities concerned with the fate of all its members. Last October, all actual and potential members of parish pastoral councils (P.P.C.s) met at the deanery level to workshop regarding the attitudes, words, and actions of Jesus the Good Shepherd, so as to better discover in our midst those sheep who are in greater need, and to learn about and better apply in our respective communities the statutes and way of functioning of a PPC: What a richness for a community to have such a council, what a support it is to the parish priest, and what resources they are to a Christian community. No doubt that in this period of profound changes, PPCs will help us not to forget anyone and to will ensure that each community deeply live the fourfold essential dimensions of fellowship and celebration, and education of the faith and of prayer.

BASIS OF THE LEGISLATION

In support of my Pastoral Statute, I have retained the following thirteen points: (1) All baptised persons are living stones in the structure of the Church; (2) Jesus the Good Shepherd took pity on the crowds that were like sheep without a shepherd; (3) Vatican Council II especially insisted on the reality of the People of God, the common priesthood of all the faithful, and communion and coresponsibility in the Church; (4) The Church must be a sign of the presence of God in the modern world; (5) The diocese, entrusted to the bishop's care, is a portion of the People of God; (6) The parish must be a community of faith, of liturgy and of love, faithful to the teaching of the apostles, to fraternal communion, to the breaking of bread, and to the prayers; (7) The parish must respect each person's dignity and concern itself with each of its members; (8) A parish community's different activities must be coordinated so as to best respond to the needs of parishioners; (9) Several parishes have had beneficial experiences with their parish pastoral councils; (10) For more than fifteen years now many efforts have been made to establish parish pastoral councils; (11) The Diocesan Synod earnestly recommended that each parish have an active pastoral council; (12) Last spring, the Priests' Senate, the Diocesan Pastoral Council and the Bishop's Council unanimously accepted this motion; (13) According to the Code of Canon Law, the bishop may establish a pastoral council in each parish.

PASTORAL COUNCIL

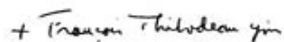
Therefore, as Bishop of Edmundston, I publish the present Pastoral Statute, notwithstanding all other prior legislation: 1) *In the Diocese of Edmundston, each parish must have a pastoral council which, along with the pastor or head of the parish, coordinates pastoral activities globally as well as all parish committees;* 2) *Each parish council will refer to the guidelines prepared by the Diocesan Pastoral Office as well as to the basic orientations published on this subject by the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops;* 3) *Walking in the*

*footsteps of the Good Shepherd, each parish council shall see to it that no group in the parish community is neglected; special care shall be paid to groups and institutions concerned with the welfare of the needy and the marginalised; 4) Each parish council shall convene an annual meeting of all the parishioners, and all parish committees shall give an account of their activities and present their future priorities; 5) Members of every parish pastoral council are strongly urged to maintain contacts with other PPCs in their deanery and with other diocesan pastoral ministry services; 6) Members of each parish pastoral council shall endeavour to periodically inform the Bishop - especially at the time of his episcopal visitation - regarding the state of the parish. **This present Pastoral Statute, prepared and published in Edmundston on November 10, 1995, is to take effect January 1, 1996.***

AN INVITATION TO THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY CLOSING CEREMONIES

In order to mark the closing of our jubilee year, a day of prayer of gratitude and petition - or at least a holy hour - will be held in all the parishes of our Diocese, on Friday, December 8, patronal feast of our Diocese. As for me, I shall be worshipping at the Cathedral, beginning at 1:00 P.M.; I shall preside the eucharist at 4:00 P.M. and then at 7:00 P.M. I will have the joy of conferring the sacrament of Confirmation on thirty youths and adults. On Sunday, December 10, you are all invited to join in the solemn eucharist to be celebrated in the Immaculate Conception Cathedral at 3:30 P.M. The choir directed by Mrs. Viviane Bouffard, will be composed of those who sang at the August 6 festivities. Each parish pastoral council has been asked to send a family to represent its parish, just as was done last year. Each family may exhibit some kind of identification. Designated families will be grouped by deanery and will join in the entrance procession. Places shall be reserved for them at the front of the nave; the same applies to the delegates of religious communities: two members per congregation. Over five hundred will be able to share a community supper to be served in the cathedral parish hall following the Mass. Tickets are on sale at the Diocesan Centre as well as at your parish rectory. And to bring the Jubilee to a joyful close, the *Balladins du dimanche* will give a Christmas concert at 7:00 P.M.

A Happy 50th Anniversary ending!



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

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