
WONDERS ARE STILL DONE AT KEDGWICK!



On March 1, 2, and 3 I had the joy of doing the pastoral visitation of the parish of Notre-Dame-des-Prodiges of Kedgwick. The programme which had been prepared in its smallest details by Father Pierre Thibodeau, the parish's devoted pastor, and the members of the pastoral council allowed me to meet the population as a whole, during these days of grace. It is truly as the Lenten theme for 1996 says: The routes of the world are the very roads taken by Christ to spread hope.

BY YOUR RICHES MAINTAIN THEIR COURAGE

Such is the motto of the Kedgwick municipality, one that is justly proud of its approximately 2200 inhabitants, its history, its woods that range over some 1400 square miles, its farmlands, and its rivers teeming with Atlantic salmon, speckled trout, and rainbow trout... Bishop Arthur Melanson established the parish in 1910, while still pastor of Balmoral. The first resident priest was Father Jean-Baptiste Thibault who ministered in the parish from 1915 until his death in 1940. These twenty-five years established the parish upon strong family values, faith and mutual assistance, courage and solidarity. The pastors succeeding Fr. Thibault would continue in their own way the work of the founding pastor; these priests were Fathers Camille Leclerc, Thomas Beaulieu, Narcisse Gagnon, Benjamin Saindon, Armand Plourde, and Gabriel Friolet. Memory of these stalwarts is still fresh in the minds of the parishioners.

WORLD OF YOUTH

During my visit I spent time studying the situation of the youth of the region. I met with them at the Marie-Gaëtane and Écho-Jeunesse schools, as well as at the Maison des Jeunes and the Puits de Jacob drop-in centre. At the science expo, I was struck by our budding geniuses with their discoveries and explanations. On Sunday, March 3, I had the pleasure of confirming forty of these young people. It was marvellous to hear them sing, "I know that you are calling me to struggle for a better world,/ I would like to walk with you,/ I would like to spread your light,/ I want to serve others/ and be among the poor who are hungry and friendless." I rejoice in the opening of a house for youth aged 12 to 18, in the former Whites Brook church: it will serve as a drug and alcohol prevention and rehabilitation centre.

THE WORLD OF WORKERS

At the invitation of their owners I visited three grocery stores and four of the major workplaces of the area: the Kedgwick Mill, the Armoires Arpin cabinet makers, Heritage floors, and the Deniso Lebel Mill. These visits were for me a way of showing my appreciation to these service and transformation media. I felt at these places respect for work well done and pride in the finished products, joy in living, true solidarity, and concern for the environment. Nothing that is human can remain indifferent to the disciple of Jesus.

THE WORLD OF THE ELDERLY AND THE SICK

By celebrating the eucharist at the Maison Notre-Dame and Foyer Amical homes for the elderly, and by visiting more than a dozen homes to meet elderly or sick people, I wanted to express my gratitude to all those who have left and are still leaving their mark on the community. "Happy are those witnesses to the invisible who continue to work our land. Blessed are you, helpers in the forthcoming rendez-vous, your Kingdom is already among us. We need you." By their witness, their constant prayer and the offering of their entire lives, they are still contributing to the upbuilding of our community.

A COMMUNITY CAPABLE OF LOOKING AFTER ITSELF

Last year the parish of Kedgwick was six long months without a priest; this was a severe test for the population as a whole, which had been used to the daily presence of a priest in its midst. Nonetheless, in this very crisis great things happened and were revealed. There was a remarkable taking in hand of everything that could be carried out by baptised and confirmed persons: administration of economic affairs, careful preparation of the sacraments, animation of celebrations (choir, music), catechetics, visits to the sick, affirming presence to people in difficult situations. It was with great joy that the community welcomed its new pastor last August, a spiritual leader who shall assist in the growth of faith, hope, and love, through his prayer, his teaching, and pastoral activity.

Essential Collaborators

I truly rejoice in the growing number of people who because of their baptism and confirmation are committing themselves to working for the community welfare. I was happy to baptise three children after the baptism preparation team and the parish priest had welcomed the parents and family and had gone through the baptism preparation. I also met with those responsible for preparing the Saturday evening Liturgy of the Word service, the members of the pastoral council and those of the economic affairs committee, along with three other committees of the Restigouche Deanery. There truly is, here, eagerness and a constant and marvellous collaboration. Mr. Maurice Babineau, the Knights of Columbus District Deputy and author of the book on the parish's 75th anniversary, would surely write another *Kedgwick, c'est chez-nous!* The Sunday celebrations we had together in the parish church, and the fellowship meal we shared with one another indicate the vitality of this Christian community which is Notre-Dame-des-Prodiges. May this pastoral visit contribute to make it grow even more. From within these living forces I firmly hope that the Lord will choose future priests and future Gospel workers.

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