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## ST. MARTIN OF RESTIGOUCHE: ENERGETIC PEOPLE

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Despite the St. Patrick storm, I was able to make a prolonged visitation of St-Martin Parish in the Restigouche, March 15, 16, and 17; it is a community of some 275 souls grouped in 90 families. At the Sisters' residence, one can read, « A smile, a kind word can warm up three months of winter.» My thanks to all who carefully prepared the visitation programme, especially Sister Rita Arsenault, f.m.a., the head of the parish; Sister Pierrette Babin, F.M.A., pastoral agent and local superior, and the members of the pastoral council. Marked by the presence of Fathers Léon Gagnon, Thomas Beaulieu, Lionel Martin, Claude Rossignol, Félix Poitras, and Jacques Gauvreau, St-Martin Parish has been under the pastoral care of the following Filles de Marie de l'Assomption sisters: Évangline Blanchard, Albertine Cormier, Thérèse Doucet, Bertha Plourde, and Rita Arsenault. Fathers Almer Levasseur and Narcisse Gagnon preside the Eucharist there.

### RELIGIOUS HOSPITALLERS OF ST. JOSEPH

On the eve of the feast of the Religious Hospitallers of St. Joseph, March 19, my visit there began with a eucharistic celebration at the St. Quentin Regional Hospital, which is celebrating its fifty years of existence next year. It was in 1947 that the Sisters took over the direction of the hospital: I pay a tribute of gratitude with you to all the Sisters who left their mark in our milieu and who still devote themselves wholeheartedly to the sick.

### FARMS, BUSINESSES, AND HOMES

I enjoyed the visit that I made on Friday to the Léonide Martin Garage, Arpin Electric, and the nursing home of Claude and Madeleine Paquet. On Saturday I had the opportunity to visit a number of very well equipped farms, those of Yvon Banville and Roland Durette, Arthur Thériault's snowshoe shop, and to have lunch at the home of Romeo and Pauline Aubut, owners of the parish's former rectory. In the afternoon I visited the Gerard St-Pierre Appalaches Canoe Shop and Guy Couturier's garage; on Sunday I was at Mrs. Huguette Bellavance's fabric shop and Paul St-Pierre's woodworking shop. There is nothing which is truly human that does not resonate in the heart of a disciple of Jesus. Keeping in mind this teaching of Vatican II, I often insist that all have a right to a sufficient share of the goods of the earth for themselves and their families. « God destined the earth and all it contains for all men and all peoples so that all created things would be shared fairly by all mankind under the guidance of justice tempered by charity: » This is a fundamental affirmation of the pastoral constitution on *The Church in the Modern World*.

### SACRAMENTAL INITIATION

Just as I had done at St-Quentin, Kedgwick, and St-Jean-Baptiste, the pastoral visit to St-Martin included an inter-parish meeting with the sacramental initiation teams. What collaboration and energy there is between the parents and volunteer catechists who conscientiously prepare each of the sacraments. The celebration of Baptism is becoming more and more an event that concerns the entire community: the aim is not only to look after baptismal preparation but at the integration of the pastoral approach to baptism into the community's life and ensure a most interesting follow-up. Thanks to the parents and teachers, preparation for Confirmation helps one take seriously the great gift of the Spirit. Preparation to the Profession of Faith helps one deepen

one's precious birthright which is the Gospel. The celebration of Reconciliation is an opportunity to experience the love and mercy of our God, and it is in that spirit that we experienced it as a parish community on Saturday evening. And we see more and more that marriage preparation sessions are filling a need for couples desiring to fully live their Christian mission within the community. Through sick committees and the occasional celebration of the sacrament of the sick, those touched by illness or the ravages of old age find much comfort in this sacrament. I myself celebrated the Sacrament of the Sick Saturday afternoon, in the presence of the elderly who are joined together in a group called the *Abeilles actives*. And we are also aware of a seventh sacrament: Holy Orders. Each month there is community prayer for priestly and religious vocations.

#### **CELLULE-JEUNESSE**

Besides meeting with the parish Bingo Committee and the members of the St-Martin Advisory Council, I had the pleasant opportunity of meeting with the members of the *Cellule-Jeunesse* youth group. These young people are full of life, and they are committed to living in fellowship, celebration, faith education, and commitment in their milieu. I sincerely hope that other similar groups will develop throughout the diocese. I believe that these groups show promise in our communities; these teams will surely leave their mark on coming generations.

#### **A MAJOR SYMBOL**

At the end of this visitation I had the privilege of celebrating the Sunday Eucharist, to introduce to the community and thank the members of the parish pastoral council and the economic affairs committee, as well as the other parish committees. I was also able to celebrate Confirmation, revealing in this way the presence of the Holy Spirit in the midst of the world of today. The new cross on which there is the risen Christ - the work of Mr. Pelletier of Saint-Jean-Port-Joli - is like a symbol of the community of St-Martin, a community deeply rooted in its Christian faith and looking confidently to the future. The solemn celebration of the Chrism Mass on April 1 and the forthcoming first diocesan Eucharistic Congress in preparation for the year 2000 continue to animate this faith, hope, and charity that are now beautifully at work in the Restigouche.

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