

---

## NECESSITY TO PREPARE THE CHANGES

---



Following unplanned events like sickness, death, and/or term endings, following especially new pastoral and spiritual needs arising, the bishop must continue with new appointments and new pastoral realignments. In a few days I shall be doing just this, for the third consecutive time. Thanks to consultations that have been held these past few months, to the pertinent advice I received, to the availability of those involved, and thanks also to the many prayers offered for this intention, I shall be able to proceed confidently. Jesus prayed at length before calling a few of them to be his apostles: it is in such an atmosphere that appointments are experienced.

### ATTACHMENTS SHOWN

In the course of my many parish visitations during the year I have noticed a real attachment by those in charge of our Christian communities. If there is change in a parish it has nothing to do with demoting anyone or with disapproval of the one in charge. Not at all: The setting up in the 33 parishes of a pastoral council and a parish committee for economic affairs is meant to facilitate changes taking place, or at least to lessen at times difficult consequences. Every Christian community animated from within by the Holy Spirit disposes of graces and abilities for undergoing these changes in tranquillity and trust in the present and the future. But changes, in whatever area of life they occur, do not generally come without heartbreak and separation. It is hard to see a friend move on, to see a pastor with whom we have developed strong ties over the years, depart. The same is experienced by parents and educators at the time of their children or students leaving.

### THE DEPARTURE OF JESUS

Each year at Ascension time the liturgy offers for our contemplation the picture of Jesus taking leave of his disciples after having been only three years with them. And he even says that it is good for him to leave because then they will be able to do even greater things than he could while with them. A mysterious revelation, this; an astonishing and comforting declaration. Jesus is amazingly calm, here. He seems to be saying, "What matters to me is you first, and not me." Still, Jesus had done everything for them and many bonds had been created between him and them. Looking at the situation objectively, one would be tempted to say that, considering the behaviour of the apostles and disciples, it would have been vital for Jesus to stay on for a few years more; after all, the disciples were barely taking their first steps in their ministry. Imagine, by the time Jesus left them, the apostles had not even grasped the reason for Jesus coming among them, they believed that he had come to set up an earthly kingdom. Still, Jesus tells them, « It is good for me to leave you. »

### A HUGE WORKSITE

Each Christian community constitutes a huge solidarity and creativity worksite, if we want to truly respond to the needs of the young and old, the workers and unemployed, the elderly and the handicapped, the marginalised and the poor. In every parish I visited during the year, introducing their parish pastoral council and economic affairs committee members to them, I stressed how important it was for us to carry on the work of the Good Shepherd, in our milieus: We must be the eyes, ears, hands, and heart of the Good Shepherd. We must be his feet in order

to go out to those who are the most in need... The vitality of a community is indicated by the attention it pays to the situation of each of its members. Growing together in faith, hope, and charity, faithfully reflecting on the Word of God that draws us together and nourishes us, celebrating together the active presence of the Risen Jesus, transforming our milieu to make it more just and brotherly... all of this constitutes a huge worksite of collaboration and cooperation. It is also indicative of the coresponsibility and cooperation that are required.

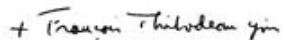
### **A GARDEN TO CULTIVATE**

Despite the announcement of new appointments, one must keep an eye on the vast garden that has been planted here, these last fifty years. Despite the time passed, we are ever in the springtime of our diocesan Church. In his beautiful encyclical on the mission of Christ the Redeemer, Pope John Paul II goes as far as to write, « The mission of Christ the Redeemer that has been given to the Church is still very far from being concluded. At the end of the second millennium after his coming, an over-all look at the state of humankind points out that this mission is still at its debut and that we must commit all our energy to his service. » He goes on: « Through witness and word, the Church has never had a greater opportunity to bring the Gospel to all people and all peoples. I see the new dawn of a mission era rising, one which will change into a radiant day rich in achievement if all Christians respond in generosity and holiness to the call and challenges of our time. »

### **BUILDING UP THE BODY OF CHRIST**

To the prayers that are ever offered to the Father for workers in His harvest must be added the attitudes and indications of faith and charity. Pastors and pastoral agents are the Lord's gifts to us. « The holy people is organised in such a way that ministerial tasks be accomplished and the body of Christ be built up. »

Have a good week.



+ François Thibodeau, C.J.M.

Bishop of Edmundston

« From A Bishop's Journal » (122) (29 May 1996)