
TOGETHER TO THE YEAR 2000



The entire Restigouche Deanery was mobilised June 7, 8, and 9, for the First Diocesan Eucharistic Congress preparatory to the year 2000. I must offer innumerable congratulations and thanks on behalf of the diocesan Church and in my own name to all who were involved in the planning and the carrying out of such an extraordinary activity. The success obtained is in itself a wonderful sign of appreciation. But even more: these activities are a vital sowing of seeds to help us over the new millennium.

BRIEF EVALUATION

What should we remember of the activities that shaped the first Congress? Everyone and every group can express it for their own milieu. For myself, I would like to point out a few aspects that touched me the most: the powerful atmosphere of prayer, the great participation of the local population, a rediscovery of the Eucharist, the awareness that together we form a people, the active presence of Jesus in our midst, the desire to celebrate together our one faith and hope, the creativeness that was brought to our celebrations, the happiness felt in displaying our deepest values, and the many beautiful talents of the local population.

WE HAVE REMEMBERED

Yes, in different ways we have remembered Jesus. When during the evening of Friday, June 7, the unforgettable candlelight ceremony inaugurating the Congress took place in the presence of over 1000 people, we remembered Jesus in the biblical scenes illustrating his encounter with the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well, and in the stories of the Good Samaritan and the Prodigal Son. We recalled his last supper, the washing of the apostles' feet, and his long prayer for unity among his disciples. The forty hours devotions brought together hundreds of people from many organisations and parishes; at morning prayer there were over 300 people. And then there was the workshop on the Eucharist given by Sister Marie-Thérèse Nadeau. Over two hundred attended the Saturday and Sunday sessions. The celebration of the anointing of the sick that took place at St-Martin, the one on reconciliation that was held at St-Jean-Baptiste, and the First Communion that took place at Kedgwick, along with the youth rally for those preparing for their profession of faith... all of these activities were as many signs of the people's faith. And who will ever forget the traditional procession from the church to the arena, and the crowd that made it to the arena to participate in the solemn Mass? Then, following a community supper, there was the lively gospel night... Truly, this eucharistic congress will have enabled us to represent Jesus in different ways, and to recall who he was as well as his attitudes, words, gestures, mission, and abiding presence among us. More than ever we have, both as Church and individually, remembered Jesus. He is truly our salvation, our hope, our joy.

THREE SUGGESTIONS

How could we continue this first eucharistic congress in our personal as well as our parish and community lives? True, a monument could be erected in front of the St-Quentin church, reminding future generations that « Here was held the first Diocesan Eucharist Congress preparatory to the Jubilee Year 2000. » In the coming months we could have a photo exhibit of the Congress: it would be both interesting and pleasant, but today I would like to suggest three simple ways of extending the Congress. **SHARING THE WORD OF GOD**

Throughout the Congress we have talked about the necessity of keeping alive the memory of Jesus. Hence I would invite you to take fifteen minutes a week to reflect on the Gospel, the Word of God. This activity could be as simple as taking your **Living with Christ** or Sunday Mass book and reading over the Gospel of the Sunday coming up or of the one just past, and to meditate on the text for 10 to 15 minutes.

FAMILY PRAYER

Would it be possible to pray together before meals or at another time, to recall a word or deed of Jesus? This, too, could be very simply done: « We remember that you gave us a magnificent meal on Holy Thursday, Lord, and we thank you. You told us stories like that of the Prodigal Son and the Good Samaritan: we remember you and we thank you, Jesus. We remember that you welcomed the woman at the well, and we thank you, Jesus. » And so on, in words as simple as that.

THE SUNDAY GATHERING

In the prayer for the Eucharistic Congress we prayed that « Our Sunday celebrations be the source and summit of our Christian life. » Throughout the Congress you experienced how good it was to be with Jesus and to pray together. You know how important the Lord's Day is for yourselves and your community life. I know that there can be serious reasons keeping you from attending Sunday Mass, but I am certain that they do not come up 52 times a year... More than ever I invite you to take part every Sunday in the church gathering in order to « Do this in memory of me. »

If we were faithful to these three points, they could provoke us to further service on behalf of our brothers and sisters, and they would nourish our daily commitment.

Gratitude and blessings! And next year at Maliseet!

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