
AN OVERABUNDANT SPRING!



The articles I write every week are but a pale reflection of what is happening in our communities. At times they are like the high waters of the Red River in Manitoba, and at other times they are like placid and silent streams that meander through our woods. Days of renewal, congress, book fairs, weekends, anniversaries, and celebrations punctuate our days and weeks.

HOLY SPIRIT, TEACH US ABOUT JESUS

to mark the feast of Pentecost on May 18, I published a pastoral letter, as has been my habit. This fourth letter addressed to the faithful of the diocese speaks of the presence of Jesus in the midst of the world, and its title is *Holy Spirit, Teach Us about Jesus*. The Lord is present in his Word and his sacraments, but he is also present in people and events. I shall come back to this in the weeks to come.

HUNGER AND THIRST FOR THE LORD

Our priests' annual retreat is always a special time for our clergy. This year, Father Claude Michaud, the retreat facilitator, talked on the theme *Hunger and Thirst for the Lord*; Father Michaud shared with us his deep reflection on God and the fruit of his own pastoral experience: How do I look at God, at Jesus, at the world? How does God look on me, on the world, and on history? Seven seminarians, 25 priests and two bishops made quite a group of people growing in the faith and in solidarity, in prayer and recollection. Assured of the prayer of the faithful of our diocese, we lived this special time apart in solidarity with the whole Church.

AT THE HEART OF OUR MISSION

Our second Diocesan Eucharistic Congress in preparation for the Jubilee Year 2000 will take place in the Southern Victoria Deanery, at Maliseet. The Congress theme is *The Eucharist, Heart of Our Mission*. Last weekend I drove down to Maliseet: together the people are restoring their church, both inside and out. The 1997 Congress bids us to focus on Christ. The Lord is the centre to which are drawn people of every colour and culture, to unite them in a common project. This Congress will be an especially good time to meet the people of Southern Victoria and to discover, especially, the spiritual riches of our native brothers and sisters.

AT THE HEART OF OUR LIVES

If the people of Southern Victoria have a chance to have a retreat given by Permanent Deacon Ron Boyer, an Ojibwa ministering at Kanawake, Québec, the priests will set aside part of their annual meeting time, May 29, to reflect on the meaning of the Eucharist at the heart of their lives and to recall the memory of Jesus. Using Fr. Henri Nouwen's profound thoughts, they will reflect on what happened on the road to Emmaus: anguish and searching, discerning of the presence of Christ, welcoming the stranger in their midst, shared meal, sending forth on a mission.

THE POWER OF THE SPIRIT

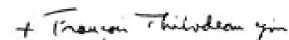
Three youths wrote to me, requesting Confirmation. The first one has leukemia and he asks me to confer on him the gift of strength to cope with his illness, and the other two request the same gift to help them bear their serious physical handicaps. Moving letters, these, that remind us how the Holy Spirit continue to guide us, especially in the difficult passages of life.

DRUG DEPENDENCY

Pursuing their contacts with our different deaneries, members of the Diocesan Pastoral Council visited "Jacob's Well," in Kedgwick, for their regular meeting, as well as to learn more about the drug dependency phenomenon and to meet recovering drug addicts. The discussion led by Mr. Luc St-Laurent, director general for drug addiction services for Health Region 4, made the point that addiction is everybody's business, even of the Church, since the Church's main role is the transmission of values. There is greater access to a whole range of intoxicating substances: liquor, drugs, medication. Drug dependency affects many people other than the sick. It is believed that at least ten persons who are close to the addict are themselves affected. Very often, drug addiction is the cause of a whole gamut of physical and mental health problems, at an exorbitant cost to society. It is estimated that at least one-third of all illnesses are more or less closely related to excessive consumption of drugs, costing our province between two and three million dollars a year.

USE, ABUSE, AND DEPENDENCY

Drug addiction is an illness, but social prejudice against addicts is deep-rooted, and it destroys rather than helps the victim. The phenomenon of drug dependency has a threefold scale of gravity: use, abuse, and dependency. When there is dependency, drugs are central to the life of the addict, and it takes precedence over everything else. In Western New Brunswick, drug addiction is treated at the Detoxification Centre on Queen Street, in Edmundston. The Centre has ten beds, and the treatment is usually ten days long. The most important part of the treatment consists in becoming aware of one's problem with every aspect of one's life. Then there is a decision-making process about finding a solution. It is believed that the best path consists in a community rather than institutional approach. The addict's own milieu - parents, community - is involved in his treatment. This model seems to be the one that achieves the best results on the long run. What we heard from recovering addicts said a lot about the courage it takes to ask for help as the essential starting point on the path to healing, and of the necessity of community support. Have a good week!



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