
WE HAVE RECEIVED SO MUCH FROM THE CHURCH



When we take time to consider all that we have received from the Church from the time of our birth to the present, we cannot do otherwise than render heartfelt thanksgiving to God for having gifted us with His Church. It is thanks to Him if in His great merciful design I was welcomed at birth and given baptism. It is thanks to Him and His Church that I was able to hear the Good News and share in the divine life through the sacraments. It is thanks to Him and His Church that I was enabled to celebrate a Christian marriage, grow in faith and love and hope, when trials or deaths affected me... And we continue on, listing the benefactions of God through the Church on our behalf. So, what could I do to show my gratitude to Him?

DIOCESAN COLLECTION FOR THE FEAST OF CHRIST THE KING

For the last few years a collection has been taken up in our parishes to maintain a bishop in our midst and to pay for diocesan services needed for the life of our 32 parishes and five deaneries. The only contribution required of each Catholic every year is called the "diocesan per capita tax." This year the amount has been set at \$2.50 by the Diocesan Council for Economic Affairs. You realise that we are far from asking you to tithe, that is, one-tenth of your personal revenue, which is what is the established norm among certain religious groups and other non-Catholic churches. The other revenue received by the diocese of Edmundston is composed of interest on investments and voluntary contributions by people in the diocese. I count on each pastor to highlight the annual Christ the King Collection. I know that every parish needs its own revenue to look after its own needs, but the diocese, too, counts on your generous contribution if it is to survive and respond to the needs of all, and face the challenges of the coming millennium.

GROUP OF ONE THOUSAND

The per capita tax being so low, relative to that of other dioceses, I must insist on voluntary contributions: Christ the King contribution, but also the Group of 1000. I thank the 600 or so people who each contributed one hundred dollars, last year, and the 287 who have made their donation, this year. Still, we have not reached our objective of \$100,000 per year, for five years. If we could find one thousand volunteers to contribute \$100 per year for the next five years we could use the accrued interest to pay for part of the expenses incurred at the diocesan level. Please note that a receipt for income tax purposes is issued for every donor.

BENEFICIAL SERVICES

Throughout the years we have responded as best we could to the pastoral and spiritual needs of our milieu: religious education, lay ministry formation programme, pastoral ministry at the deanery level, School of Faith, youth programmes, mission outreach programme, beginnings of social justice and family pastoral ministry, retreats for different Christian groups, etc. We want to offer an appropriate service to engaged couples, through marriage preparation programmes. And for couples in difficulty, we have the Marriage Tribunal for regularising irregular marriage situations or else to judge the nullity of certain cases. Among those in the diocesan offices, some work for a small stipend and others donate their time and energy, working for no salary.

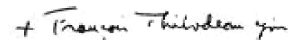
JUSTICE, GENEROSITY, OR PRIVILEGE

While some financial campaign organisers maintain that it is fair to pay for costs incurred or services received, others insist more on the notion of generosity which people have always shown for the works of the Church. Others insist that it is a privilege to share in the very mission of Christ to his Church. Repeating the deeds made by the first Christian communities towards the apostles, it is possible for us today to support those who are called to look after the People of God and respond to the pastoral needs of today.

A TRADITION OF COOPERATION

I want to thank God with you for all those gestures of goodwill made by our people on behalf of their parish and their diocesan Church. There recently was a group of some forty people who went to their parish church for the regular clean-up: What a great job that was! What devotion and generosity on behalf of our Church! How much time given to the Church, and what beautiful initiatives carried out! If one were to keep close tabs on the number of hours these volunteers have given for welfare of their Christian community we would be surprised at the great number of volunteers and the many hours dedicated "to the glory of God and the welfare of our Church." I encourage you to continue your moral, spiritual, and financial commitment on behalf of your parish community and your diocesan Church. The Church has been generous for you; it is now your turn to show your generosity to the Church, once again.

Have a good week.



+ François Thibodeau
Bishop of Edmundston

« From A Bishop's Journal » (200) (19 November 1997)