
THANKSGIVING FOR 1997



In this last day of the year I just want to thank God with you for all the good and beautiful that was, in the course of these 365 days past.

THANK YOU FOR THE GIFT OF LIFE

I first want to thank God for the gift of life. Some 600 new babies were born in our midst, this year: What joy for their parents and friends! I give thanks for the love shown daily by fathers and mothers to their children, the affection they show them, for the constant attention given them. Countless energy, time, and money are expended to make their children happy. How many trips and errands, how many drives to the arena, the school, the church, and to the shopping mall. I thank God for these adults who teach us uncommon lessons and give us a taste for life, and who share with love and compassion their hope-filled values. I bless the Lord for the workers and I pray Him on their behalf, that their work bring them satisfaction besides the indispensable weekly wage. And I do not want to forget the unemployed: May they quickly find employment that is both according to their expectations and their talents.

THANK YOU FOR THIS COUNTRY

With you I bless the Lord for the gift of the land, and more especially this part of creation that are the Madawaska, Restigouche, and Victoria counties. It is in abundance that He has given us this creation that is so beautiful whatever the season. Thanks for the majestic forest, for all those rivers and lakes, those hills and mountains and all they contain. Thanks for the fields and gardens. I greatly appreciate among our people their sense of marvelling, respect for the environment, and their closeness to nature.

THANK YOU FOR THIS LIFE IN SOCIETY

Even if there are times when points of view differ, it is still good to give thanks for every social organisation. Here I am reminded of all those who have taken on difficult and indispensable jobs with school as well as municipal, provincial, and federal organisations. To all these people concerned with the life quality of others I am deeply grateful, and I want to point out how true political implication is a demanding way of serving our brothers and sisters. To all those who generously volunteer their services in local social and community organisations, I extend my gratitude. Here I think of those who volunteer their time at hospitals and drop-in centres, of those who are involved with the elderly, the chronically ill, and the handicapped. I also think to all those volunteers struggling for an end to violence, poverty, and despair.

THANK YOU FOR OUR BELOVED CHURCH

I thank God with you for all that I have received from the Church: the Word that gives me life and meaning to my life; fellowship with all the parishioners; the sacramental graces, especially those deriving from baptism, confirmation, the eucharist, and reconciliation. I bless the Lord for all our couples and especially those 200 or so who were joined

together before the Lord, in the course of the year. I fervently thank God for my brother priests, especially for the two new priests with whom the Lord has blessed our Church.

FERVENT PRAYER

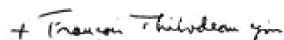
In offering this past year I also joyfully and gratefully welcome the new year 1998 as it is offered to us, along with its joys and difficulties. I ask the Lord that He give me to carry out His divine will in all things, and to live to the fullest my episcopal ministry in service to the People of God whom the Lord has confided to my care. I pray for the 60,000 members of our diocese, especially for those who have had to undergo the trials of illness, suffering, and bereavement. More than 500 people died in 1997: I pray the Lord to comfort our bereaved brothers and sisters.

LOOK UPON YOUR FAMILY

I end this year 1997 with a prayer drawn from Robert Louis Stevenson's famous novel *Treasure Island*: « *Lord, look kindly upon your family gathered here. We thank you for this house which shelters us, for the love uniting us, for the peace of today and the hope of tomorrow, for health, work, and food. May there be peace in our little world. Purify our hearts from all hidden resentment. Give us the grace to be patient and to persevere. To us who offend you, give tolerance so that we may accept and forgive others. To us who are negligent, give patience, so that we be able to patiently endure the negligence of others. Give us courage and joy, and peace of mind. Look kindly on our friends. Grant that we be, until the end, faithful and loving to one another. As clay looks to the potter, as the mill looks to the wind, as children turn to their fathers and mothers, so do we turn to you as we seek your help and your mercy, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.* »

May 1998 be the best, for you! With all my heart I call on all of the blessing of God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Happy New Year!



+ François Thibodeau

Bishop of Edmundston

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