
ST-JEAN-BAPTISTE PARISH : 50 YEARS



June 21 marked the fiftieth anniversary of St-Jean-Baptiste Parish, in the Restigouche deanery. Big groups attended the different venues, especially the thanksgiving Mass and the community meal that followed.

"EMMANUEL"

Celebrating your parish's golden anniversary leads me to thank the Lord especially for two great benefits, the first being the presence of Jesus among you, these past fifty years. The Lord established his household among the people, and shared in their joys and sorrows; he is still present among you today. « *And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.* » [Matthew 28:20] It is Jesus' deepest desire to come and live among us.

LIVING IN FELLOWSHIP

The second benefit is the presence of baptised, confirmed, married, and religious people in this milieu. Theirs is a very special mission: to reveal to their co-parishioners the kindness of our God, and to ensure that each man, woman, and child in this parish really get to know for themselves the goodness of the Lord.

A LOOK OF FAITH

It takes a lot of faith to discover the wonderful presence of Christ among us; it is in faith that we discover this great mystery. Like every parish, the Church is a unique sign of the Risen Jesus. It is in the parish community that the Word of God is proclaimed, and this word we believe to be the Word of God Himself. We owe so very much to this Word that is our guide, our light, our comfort, and our rekindled hope. How often has this Word been proclaimed in this parish, in each family, in each home, these past fifty years?

SIGNS OF LOVE

It is in the sacraments that Christ shows himself to us in a very special way. Countless graces have been granted in baptisms celebrated here, these fifty years; what a favour it is, to be a member of the Body of Jesus Christ! In baptism the Father calls us His beloved children, joined to Jesus; quickened by the Spirit, we are sent forth into the world. So much forgiveness has been granted, too. Many confirmations were celebrated, and countless eucharists offered for the glory of God and the salvation of the world. So many marriages have been held, here, stepping stones on a mission on love. Priests have had the joy of celebrating the eucharist in this parish, and many of our sick brothers and sisters have been comforted by the sacrament of the anointing of the sick. And at the death of our brothers and sisters, words of comfort and hope have been offered to the mourning. All of these are signs of the presence of the Risen One among you. It is so very important to celebrate an anniversary such as this with the community in order to express our joy in having the presence of Christ among us, and to proclaim our deep gratitude.

THE GOODNESS OF PEOPLE

We get so many benefactions from the Christian community, so many acts of kindness, words of friendship, help from others... the many bonds that are tied within the family and the neighbourhood. We admire the beautiful quilts made by the ladies, but what the people are as a community is even greater, it is like a seamless garment... It is together that we form the Body of Christ. It is important that we keep this look of faith in mind, for each parish. We are not just anyone, not any thing. We are the beloved of God, and we are charged with proclaiming God's wonderful deeds. Like St. John the Baptist, we are called on to make straight new paths for Jesus.

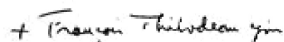
JOHN THE BAPTIST

Saint John the Baptist is a saint I admire very much for his sense of justice, of the sacred, and of sharing. He opened new paths to Jesus, and I believe that this is one of the marvellous features of a parish: to open new paths, new avenues, new doors to Jesus. It is not a question to redo what was done in 1948 but to carry out our mission task with the same zeal as those who first settled here, with the same faith, the same hope, the same love.

NEW CHALLENGES

The years to come will be very challenging ones, and we have to take up those challenges together. The Holy Spirit will never forsake us. He will be there to give strength, courage, and enthusiasm to build and rebuild. Proud in our past and present, I urge you to be full of confidence in the future, and that is why I invite you to sing our diocesan anniversary song, *You are ours, O beloved Church; you speak to us of peace and freedom. You will always be for us a beautiful project, a gathering-place of love. Let us celebrate together fifty years of history woven of courage and hope; let us recount the struggles of our ancestors: while bringing to life they also built the Church. Glory and honour to all these pioneers; we are proud, and this is our story. Let us celebrate these beautiful moments we are living together in happiness; at this homecoming let us tell one another of the strengths shared by our families: kindness, mutual help, perseverance and faith. We are proud, this is a part of our daily life. Let us celebrate together the years to come, they are a promise of life, to us. Let us recall the anniversary route that leads to new discoveries. In our faith, let us recommit ourselves more strongly. We are a proud people, and this is our project.*

Have a good week!



+ François Thibodeau
Bishop of Edmundston

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