
FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF THE COMING TO EDMUNDSTON OF THE BLESSED SACRAMENT SISTERS



On behalf of the diocesan Church of Edmundston as well as in my own name I give thanks to God for the fifty years of contemplative presence of the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament among us. Who could witness to all the good accomplished in our midst by this courageous religious community? In the wake of all the people of our Church who pray with and for the Church - the elderly or the younger generation, the sick and the well - they have daily sown seeds of prayer, and it is the entire Church which now reaps the benefits.

BEGINNINGS OF THE "ANNALES"

It was very moving for me to read and re-read the first issues of the *Annales du Cénacle du Christ-Roi à Edmundston*, where we read about the beginnings of the Edmundston convent. It was a happy coincidence that on Christmas, 1944, Pope Pius XII announced the founding of the Diocese of Edmundston, and Father Marie-Antoine Roy, O.F.M. replaced his brother Father Égide Roy, O.F.M., as chaplain to the Blessed Sacrament Sisters in Chicoutimi. Eight months later, on the day of his episcopal ordination on August 15, 1945, Bishop Marie-Antoine received a letter from the Sisters in Chicoutimi expressing the wish to establish a house in Edmundston. After establishing St-Louis College and the Retreat House, Bishop Roy would respond favourably to the sisters' desire.

A HISTORIC LETTER

On April 10, 1948, Bishop Roy wrote: « *Over a year ago the Sisters Servants of the Most Blessed Sacrament have sought and been granted permission to open a monastery in the episcopal city. The difficulty in finding a suitable house had until now delayed the execution of their project. Following a long search they have acquired the property of the late Doctor Laporte, and they hope to settle in during May. As contemplatives and perpetual adorers of the Most Blessed Sacrament, their wish is to establish a centre of eucharistic outreach, where the faithful shall have easy access and where they shall be welcome to nourish and renew their piety. There is no need to prove that through prayer and sacrifice they will be outstanding supporters of the diocese. They shall attract graces that enlighten the mind, purify the heart, and sanctify the soul. Their uninterrupted prayers of petition will bring down an increase of divine blessings. The Sisters Servants of the Most Blessed Sacrament will therefore be intercessors and petitioners between Christ who wants to give everything, and us who so much need to receive. Besides this, they are pleased to offer the clergy their services in the making and repairing of priestly vestments. We readily granted their request for opening a house; it is with pleasure that we shall welcome them into this diocese.* »

LINKS

It is with like sentiments that I invite you to give thanks for these first fifty years of contemplative life in Edmundston. Thinking about all the sisters who have come here, about those who are here today, about their affiliates, and about those who one day will succeed them, let us confidently turn to the Lord whose love is from age to age. On one of his autographed pictures, Bishop Marie-Antoine Roy wrote: "To the Reverend Sisters Servants of the Most Blessed Sacrament, living links between the Eucharistic Christ and the Diocese

of Edmundston, blessing and peace!" In his bishop's heart, Bishop Roy had undying esteem for these religious newcomers to his diocese. In a heartfelt, candid address, he exclaimed: « *The Servants of the Most Blessed Sacrament have requested to come and settle in our episcopal city. We and the members of the clergy have granted their request with happiness and joy; but it is we who ought to have crawled to them on our knees and with tears in our blood-stained eyes and begged them to come to us.* »

ELOQUENT TESTIMONY

What noble sentiments, from this man of God. He expressed in his own words and in the style of the times the gratitude of his diocesan Church. In a sense he extended the Virgin Mary's *Magnificat* at her visit to her cousin Elizabeth: The Almighty had accomplished such great things for her that she could not keep them in her heart. And all the praises we can read in the *Annales du Cénacle du Christ-Roi* remind us of those proclaimed by the mother of John the Baptist: Blessed are you who have believed, blessed are you who have been chosen to be the mother of my Saviour. You could read in the *Annales* what the intrepid pastor of the time, Monsignor William Conway, said, in commenting the text « *Benedictus qui venit in nomine Domini* » [« *Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord* » (Luke 19:35)] and insisting on the excellence of eucharistic devotion: « *These religious have come in the name of the Lord.* » Like discourse was held by lawyer J.A. Pichette: « *Too often in the midst of material worries of all kinds we are led to under-estimate the benefit of prayer and of spiritual values. The community of the Servants of the Most Blessed Sacrament, through their adoration before the Monstrance, their sacrifices and prayers, will unceasingly lift up to God's throne the adoration of the people of the diocese while inspiring them to join in a like spirit of sacrifice and prayer.* »

Have a good week!



+ François Thibodeau
Bishop of Edmundston

« From A Bishop's Journal » (243) (16 September 1998)