
A PEOPLE THAT WANTS TO CARRY OUT ITS MISSION TASK



When I visited Notre-Dane-de-Lourdes Parish on February 28 and March 1, I had the firm conviction of being among people who want to take themselves in hand and carry out together the mission that is theirs.

A TERRIFIC PANORAMA

The parish site is of remarkable natural beauty: hills, valleys, woods and rivers harmonise together to make of the parish a welcoming place for all who want to live close to nature. It would be a good thing if at the opening of the new Trans Canada Highway those who have not yet visited Notre-Dane-de-Lourdes do so by taking the Grande Rivière Road (Flemming), Martin Road, or just the Notre-Dame-de-Lourdes Road to visit the church which was built in 1909, and the Lourdes Grotto which was erected in the early 50s. Such a visit would be beneficial.

MISSION AND PARISH

Notre-Dame-de-Lourdes dates from 1909, a mission of the Sainte-Anne-de-Madawaska Parish, and was pastored by the Sainte-Anne priests until 1943 when the first resident parish priest, Father Fidèle Poitras (1943-1956), arrived. Over the years, he was succeeded by Fathers Adrien Martin (1956-1968), Lucien Lévesque (1968-1974), Jean-Marie Martin (1974-1981), and Yvon Ouellet (1981-1992). Since 1992 the Filles de Marie-de-l'Assomption Sisters have been responsible for the parish's pastoral animation: Sister Lorraine St-Amand until 1994, and Sister Ovéline Roy since then. Among those priests who have ensured Sunday ministry in the parish are Fathers Armand Plourde, Edgar Lavoie, C.J.M., Bishop Gérard Dionne, and Fr. Gaston Duchênes, S.M. The parish population is composed of 440 people in 146 families.

"A PEOPLE'S AWAKENING"

The community action projects undertaken in 1969 under the direction of Father Lucien Lévesque showed a remarkable success: renovation of houses, improvement of telephone lines, better roads, several sugar camps, community and woodcraft centres, sewing room, parish hall complete with kitchen facilities, etc. The film *Le réveil d'un peuple* documents this community development effort of the people working together for their individual and collective good.

APPRECIATION

At the Sunday celebration to confer the sacrament of Confirmation to seven youth of the parish I did not hesitate to present to them as models of Jesus their brothers and sisters who, as a consequence of their baptism and confirmation, are implicated and freely give of their time and energy in the following activities: parish pastoral council, parish economic affairs committee, liturgy committee, religious education, after-funeral meals and other meals and lunches, the Fourth Eucharistic Congress Committee and Sub-Committee, and the following social organisations: Mouvement des Femmes Chrétiennes, Knights of Columbus, Brebis de Jésus children's group,

Dames de service, Vie Saine et Active organisation, the sports Association, the Caisse Populaire credit union, billiards, involvement in the liturgy: choir, altar servers, lectors, ministers of communion, sacristan, collection takers, bell ringer; and fund raising activities, parish bulletin, work details, etc. May they receive a hundredfold from the Lord for all they have done for him, for his Church and for their brothers and sisters. Given the small number of the population, their constant implication in volunteering their services is very demanding.

SUNDAY GATHERING

When one enters the village one is greeted by a sign giving the hour of the Sunday gathering. How I wish that this hour would truly mark the gathering together of all the parishioners, as I experienced it February 28. It is in the very midst of the gathering that the Christian community is built up. One should not miss this gathering except for major reasons. The simple fact of getting together reminds us that this day is not like any other, that it is a reminder of our faith in the Resurrection of Jesus and a promise of our own future. This gathering should also be a cause of joy; the joy of greeting beloved brothers and sisters strengthens the sense of fellowship and encourages celebration. One simply cannot imagine how great it is, to welcome the Word of God. And how marvellous it is to receive the Body and Blood of Christ! This mystery of faith is truly great. Let us not abandon our Sunday gatherings, since it is there that our Church is fashioned.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Among the responsibilities that the parish pastoral team will have to assume will be attention regarding home and parish religious education. We must pass on to both our children and elders the precious heritage we have of the Gospel of Jesus. A child's attachment to its grandparents is a good indication for religious education restructuring; so many values can be passed on by grandparents to their grandchildren: toleration, goodness and loved lived in the name of Jesus are priceless values that make living within a parish community agreeable. May the Christian community of Notre-Dame-de-Lourdes continue to grow in faith, hope, and charity, under the motherly protection of its beloved patron saint.

Have a good week!

+ François Thibodeau

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Bishop of Edmundston

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