
SAINT MICHEL PARISH, DRUMMOND



On March 18 and 21 I made the pastoral visitation of St. Michel Parish, Drummond. The parish council and the pastor had drawn up the schedule, for which I thank them: the schedule allowed me to share richly in the lives of my brothers and sisters.

AT THE HEART OF LIFE

March 13, I had the pleasure of meeting with the District 3 School Board and the teaching staff of the Msgr. Lang and the Académie Notre-Dame schools. I also met the 43 future confirmed of Grade Six, and the management and workers at McCain Enterprises. In the evening I met with representatives of the different social groups and organisations, to extend my thanks for what they do: the Grand Falls Food Bank, the Brebis de Jésus, Knights of Columbus, church choirs, Golden Age clubs, 4-H Club, mission committees, clothing depot, parish pastoral councils, Development and Peace, after-funeral lunch committees, Femmes Chrétiennes, Daughters of Isabella, Faith and Light, prayer groups, Women's Institute, Scouts and Guides, UTANO. Other associations were also mentioned: Richelieu, Canadian Legion, SERF, Red Cross Volunteers, AA, Alanon, volunteer firemen, sports associations. What life there is beating, at the heart of this deanery!

PEOPLE OF COURAGE

On Sunday, March 21, it was hard to find a place in the church that was filled to capacity. Following the Confirmations, there was a meeting with the parish pastoral council in which we highlighted the positive initiatives realised on the front of religious education in the home: over 80 young parents are already implicated with Grades 7 and 8. A fellowship dinner allowed the PPC members and the village council with spouses to share with one another about what is going on and what we hope to see and have in the future. Following a visit to the village offices it was the turn of the parish's elders. Everywhere was felt the same sense of fellowship, of joy of life, and of courage enough for a multitude. Within the parish there are over 150 kilometres of roads of great scenic beauty.

BECOMING SAINTS

On a number of occasions the people mentioned Father Félix Dugal who pastored at Drummond from 1894 to 1932; the man left behind a reputation of holiness. In the parish souvenir albums we read statements like *"Father Félix Dugal always devoted himself to doing unostentatiously the most ordinary things in a most extraordinary way. He had of his priesthood a high esteem and his spiritual life inspired his every action. He was good to his neighbour, of a goodness that opened hearts. This goodness of his showed itself mainly in his untiring devotion to the poor, the needy, and the sick. Father Dugal had a great zeal for priestly and religious vocations."* A parishioner stricken with cancer reminded me that we are all called to holiness. All the faithful, whatever their state in life or lifestyle, are called to be perfect as their heavenly Father is perfect: carrying out exactly the will of God, this is holiness. *"You are my friends if you do what I command you."* [John 15:14]

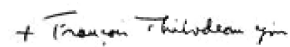
CENTENARIAN-PLUS PARISH

According to the priest-historian Thomas Albert, it was in the 1850s that colonisation picked up in the Madawaska region. Settlements opened quickly, new inland colonies opened to clearing and cultivation and started to develop. Around 1860 the colonists, mostly Irish, settled in Drummond, and it was not until around 1880 that people from the Madawaska and the Témiscouata regions came to the fertile lands so suitable for cultivation - or so the memorial albums say. On the feast of Saint Michael the Archangel Bishop James Rogers of Chatham established the first religious parish of Drummond, with Father George Gauvin as its pastor (1890-1893). At his leaving, in 1894, Father Gauvin was succeeded by Father Michael O'Keefe who was also pastor at Grand Falls, and Father E.T. Wallace, following which the parish embarked on the long ministry of Father Félix Dugal. Since 1932, the pastors there have been Fathers Joseph-Paul Lévesque (1932-1941), Msgr. Alfred Lang (1941-1968), Msgr. Urbain Lang (1968-1988), and Alfred Ouellet (1988-1994). Father William Rice has pastored there since August 15, 1994. The parish has a population of 2500 in 785 families. Mr. Jacques Gervais is chairman of the parish pastoral council.

TESTIMONY OF YOUTH

In closing I want to share with you the testimony of three young confirmed, taken at random: "Being confirmed is to receive the Holy Spirit in my heart to help me carry out the mission of Jesus in the world. The Holy Spirit teaches me to pray the Father in my heart; He teaches me how to forgive and helps me discover the Father. I hope that the Holy Spirit will remain with me throughout my life and that Jesus will lead me by the hand and guide me in my life." "Being confirmed means to welcome the Holy Spirit who will give me peace and patience. I would like to have the Holy Spirit in my heart, so as to help others." "I am an 11-year-old girl. I am noticing the beautiful things that the Holy Spirit does for me: He guides me in my choices, He rejoices in my resolutions, and He wants me to be a witness of this love through word and action. He calls me to go further and to live fearlessly because I know that He is there, even in hard times."

Have a good week!



+ François Thibodeau
Bishop of Edmundston

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