
LET US TAKE ASSURED PATHS



In order to build vibrant Christian communities, we must take the means which have been tried and have brought about success. The weekly Sunday gathering builds up the community, and the parish pastoral council is an illustration of indispensable coresponsibility. Let us continue to look at these means.

PARISH ECONOMIC AFFAIRS COMMITTEES

I equally insist that the parish economic affairs committees continue the work they have so ably begun. More than three hundred people are now involved in overseeing what belongs to our communities. What I find admirable are these committees that act as a community in managing the Church's goods, with one person looking after the parish buildings and property, while another looks after the management and upkeep of the cemetery. After this three-year trial period, we note that the parish economic affairs committees can accomplish much to alleviate the workload of those in charge of the pastoral ministry, especially the priests. The more densely populated parishes could appoint a manager who, in close collaboration with the pastor and the parish economic affairs committee, would look after everything that concerns parish finances, hiring and jobs, buildings and property. Since according to Canon Law the pastor must see to the administration of the goods of the parish, this role of oversight could be carried out by periodic meetings of the parish manager with the pastor.

THE PARISH PASTORAL MINISTRY TEAM

After having advised those in charge of parishes, the parish pastoral council and parish economic affairs committee chairpersons, I now advise everyone in the diocese of a major direction for our Diocese: the formation of parish pastoral teams to minister to one or more Christian communities. These teams, composed of between three and five persons mandated by the bishop for a specific term, are at the service of the mission of the Church of Christ, and work for the renewal of the parish through development and promotion of religious education, concern for the poor, and the community's celebrations and prayer life. Responsibility for the parish can no longer rest on the shoulders of one person alone.

I shall be very attentive to the application of this diocesan regulation, during this year and in years to come. The pastoral ministry team mandated by the bishop ensures that no aspect of the Christian life is forgotten: faith education, celebration of the sacraments, fraternal communion, and transformation of one's milieu. The team members must be recognised in their community for their love of Christ and his Church; they must be able to work as a team, be interested in the religious development of their milieu, and be concerned with their parish's actual situation regarding religious education, celebrations, concern for the poor, and a sense of prayer.

THE PRIEST'S TASK IS RECENTERED ON ESSENTIALS

"Faced with a shortage of priests, it is important that these be freed more and more from administrative tasks and that members of economic affairs committees take on their own responsibilities. Priests must find time to pray and celebrate, to look after the spiritual training of their team, and to ensure the spiritual formation of committee

members, to renew and upgrade themselves, and rest. Priests must also visit the sick and the poor in their milieus; they must proclaim the Gospel in every way, but especially through their homilies and religious education." [Diocese of Edmundston, *Paths to the Future. A Second Document of the Diocesan Pastoral Council Submitted to Bishop François Thibodeau, C.J.M.* (January 1999), p. 3] These recommendations of the Diocesan Pastoral Council are most important not only to the priests but also for the life of Christian communities.

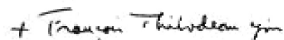
If in each parish there is a parish pastoral council, a parish economic affairs committee and a parish pastoral team all working together in solidarity for the welfare and the future of the community, great strides will have been made along the road of our pastoral restructuring. The future of our parishes will no longer depend on one person only but on an impressive number of baptised, confirmed, and ordained persons. We must aim at lightening our structures, but we must also make certain that we have the basic tools needed for the necessary participation of the community.

I believe that these are five sure paths to take for the life and future of our communities: the Sunday gathering of all the baptised, the establishment of parish pastoral councils, the formation of parish economic affairs committees, the introduction of parish pastoral teams, and the essential role of the priest. These paths to the future are important steps along the road of collaboration and coresponsibility. They will require a lot of flexibility and dialogue, and much prayer and forgiveness. Nothing is carved in stone; we shall have to start over and over again. We shall have to be faithful to Christ and his Church to the very end. With eyes fixed on Jesus and his mission, moved by the Spirit, we shall not fear to act boldly and employ the surest means to ensure the future of our Christian communities.

LET US JOIN IN GOD'S STRUGGLE

BY MOBILISING ALL OUR ENERGIES FOR HIM

These years we are living mark a turning-point in our properly passing from one year to another, one century to another, one millennium to another. In order to ensure the ongoing life and the very survival of our Christian communities in the Diocese of Edmundston, I advocate five sure but not exclusive paths; in other writings and homilies, I spoke of the importance of priestly vocations, of necessary pastoral training, and of commitment to social justice as the expressions of one's faith. These paths dispense no baptised, confirmed or ordained person from espousing other paths which lead to conversion, communion, and solidarity. They are avenues which allow us to better respond to the Lord's command: "*You shall love the Lord with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength, and your neighbour as yourself*" (Mt. 22:37, 39), or the command of Jesus: "*Love one another as I have loved you*" (Jn. 15:12).



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