
THE 1999-2000 PASTORAL YEAR



Two major events have marked the beginning of the 1999-2000 pastoral year: the diocesan session on home-based religious education, and the incorporating of all parish pastoral teams into their respective deaneries. It was a grand "blitz", energising and encouraging, in the Restigouche, Southern Victoria, Edmundston, Grand Falls, and Upper Madawaska deaneries.

CATECHETICS SESSION

My last *Bishop's Journal* article dealt with this diocesan session, so I just want to point out the hope we were left with following these blessed days of August 23, 24, and 25. The presence of young parents at this session and the participation of those in charge of pastoral ministry are heralds of a challenging new field of endeavour. Together we shall be asked to share with our loved ones the faith which is ours and the hope which enlivens our existence. Together we shall find the words and actions to proclaim Jesus today.

TEAM LIFE

The meeting of parish pastoral teams was an opportunity to not only explore the mechanics of team work but especially to examine the meaning of team life. Team life is more than a mere grouping of people working together; with eyes fixed on Jesus, the team gathers in his name and is sent out. It is important to often refer to this mandate from the bishop: "The pastoral team is first and foremost in service to the mission so that no place, no Christian community is deprived of the Good News." Team life is the fruit of a long process, and we must give it time. In the August 15 message I addressed to the pastoral teams I stressed that the coming year will be one of adjustment, as team life and team work are mutual learning processes. Beyond appearances, in order to succeed, every pastoral team must take the time for its members to get to know one another, accept one another with both their talents and limitations, bring out their personal qualities within the team for greater complementarity, develop a common awareness of the mission through relations of brotherhood and collaboration, and agree together on the objectives which will enable the parishioners to receive the services and support they need, to walk the Gospel path.

CONDITIONS OF SUCCESS

What can awaken team life? This question stimulated much useful discussion: mutual collaboration, appreciation of one another, love, listening, dependability, personal worth, joyful disposition, sense of trust, mutual help, welcome of others, availability, discretion, frankness, openness, loyalty, forgiveness, evaluation: as many attitudes, gestures and values to cultivate, for the development of team life. And the question *What can destroy team life?* brings this answer: jealousy, hypocrisy, gossip, criticism, suspiciousness, individualism, rivalry, lack of forgiveness. Convinced of the necessity and even the urgency of creating solid pastoral teams, members place their trust as much in their teammates as in the Holy Spirit who animates the whole Church.

PRAYER OF GRATITUDE

As we close this pastoral "blitz" it is good to repeat this blessing: *Blessed are you, O Christ, for those you have called to be your mouthpiece and who bring your name to the ends of the earth. Blessed are you, O Christ, for all those you call to be the hands of your Body and who work at building up a world of justice and peace. Blessed are you, O Christ, for all those you call to be the eyes of your Body and who look with kindness on everyone they meet. Blessed are you, O Christ, for all those you call to be the ears of your Body and who hear the cry of the poor and the despised of the earth.*

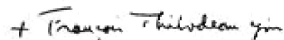
DIVERSITY OF MINISTRIES

It is right and fitting to give thanks for the diversity of ministries in our communities: they are called up by the Holy Spirit in response to our prayers. Thinking those in charge of the growth of our communities, we could continue our prayer: *Blessed are you, O Christ, for those you call to be servants of the unity of your Body, for those in charge of our communities, who help each of their members discover and fulfil their own vocation. Blessed are you, O Christ, for these witnesses who make visible your new sacramental presence; for these dispensers of your risen life who, at each Eucharist, nourish and maintain the members of your Body and bring together earth and heaven, the temporal and the everlasting, the living and the dead, the sufferings of the world and the beatitude of your Kingdom, the present, past, and future of every human being.*

WISHES

As the Year 2000 jubilee draws near, I reiterate my deepest conviction that one of the ways to experience this Year 2000 is through securing the institution of parish pastoral teams and religious education formation in all our communities. Through these two means, Jesus will become even better proclaimed, recognised, welcomed, and acclaimed.

Have a good pastoral year!



+ François Thibodeau

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