
AD LIMINA VISIT



To live the experience of an *ad limina* visit so very close to the third millennium is a unique grace, it is to experience God's goodness for His children; it constitutes a going back to the deepest roots of the Christian faith, to the witness of the first Christians and their pastors; it is also a firming up of the bond uniting all particular Churches throughout the world; it is also a thanksgiving to God for the numerous and vital ties binding the Edmundston Diocesan Church to the rest of the world.

A FINE LEGACY

On September 15, following a celebration of the Eucharist with the Diocesan Centre team and a meeting with my predecessor Bishop Gérard Dionne who had dropped by to wish me bon voyage, I made my way to the cathedral to offer this pilgrimage to the Lord and to place myself under the protection of the Immaculate Conception. I then recollected myself at the tombs of my predecessors in Edmundston: Bishops Marie-Antoine Roy, O.F.M. whose only desire was to tell his people of God's infinite riches; J.-Roméo Gagnon for whom living was to follow in the footsteps of Jesus; and Fernand Lacroix, C.J.M., for whom Jesus was everything in all things. Having just received prior to my departure the pastoral message of the Canadian bishops on the 350th anniversary of the Canadian Martyrs, it was well surrounded with a beautiful spiritual legacy that I made my second *ad limina* visit to Rome, to the tomb of the Apostles Peter and Paul.

WARM WELCOME

Two Eudist confreres were at the Rome airport to welcome me and drive me to our mother house, and from there to the St. Martha House at the Vatican where I joined up with my nine brother bishops of the Atlantic Provinces and the Apostolic Administrator of the Grand Falls, Newfoundland Diocese, Father Ed Bromley, along with the Maritime Conference's secretary, Father Daniel Deveau. It felt as if I was being welcomed by St. John Eudes himself who, through the Eudist community, was motivating me to continue the wonderful task of proclaiming the Gospel. The meeting with the bishops from the Maritimes allowed us to deepen our understanding regarding the necessary enculturation of the Gospel message: our forerunners in the ministry, especially those who laboured among the First Nations, inspired us to proclaim the holiness of our God and the dignity of every human being.

PASTORAL MEETINGS

The visit to the different Roman dicasteries and congregations are an occasion for dialogue between the heads of the Holy See and the diocesan bishops on the major pastoral concerns of the day. A few examples will suffice for now to illustrate this. For instance, at the Pontifical Commission for Justice and Peace we discussed the difficulties occasioned by the maritime tragedy, the coming of European fishers not making the situation any easier. We also brought up the topic of promotion of human rights. The first World Congress of Human Rights Ministry, which I attended in July, 1998, drew the attention of the Congress participants to the pressing question of education in human rights, and it indicated three groups of people who urgently need help in this area: the poor, women, and the aboriginal people. The Commission secretary pointed out the significant work done on behalf of respect for human rights, and peace. At the Pontifical Council for the Laity we shared especially on ministry

to youth and the World Days of Youth rallies. The young are scheduled to meet with the Pope from August 15 to 20 of the year 2000, in Rome. Preparations are already well along for the year 2002: the candidacy of Toronto as host city is being seriously considered, and all Canadian dioceses are supporting this. At the Pontifical Council for the Family we discussed the coming third meeting of the Holy Father with families from throughout the world, the meeting to be held at Rome also within the context of the Great Jubilee, with the theme *Children: Springtime of Family and Society*. We discussed the problems encountered by families in our milieus: poverty, separation, discord, as well as on the values of communion and affection that are there. Those in charge at the Congregation for the Evangelisation of Peoples stressed the importance of the mission 'ad gentes', while telling us that the beautiful work our Churches are accomplishing in the developing countries and the young Churches, and the solidarity depicted must continue.

OTHER MEETINGS

At the Congregation for Catholic Education we pointed out the recent developments in family- and parish-based religious instruction, since there are so few Catholic schools in the Atlantic region; we also looked at the actual criteria regarding the selection and training of candidates for the priesthood. At the Congregation of Bishops there was talk about the selection of future bishops and ways of making the appointments faster; we also discussed the minimum and maximum areas a diocese should cover, and the Northern dioceses will shortly see changes in their physical make-up. At the Congregation for Divine Worship each of the sacraments was looked at, especially the celebration of confirmation and the sacrament of reconciliation and penance. Three situations drew the attention of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith: the Catechism of the Catholic Church, especially the chapter on capital punishment, abortion and divorce, private revelations, and Bible studies. At the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life meeting we emphasised the input of religious in the life of their respective Churches; we also recalled the Synod on the Consecrated Life and the excellent apostolic exhortation which followed from it. We also discussed recruitment and training. At the dawn of the year 2000, the Council on Christian Unity pointed out the efforts already under way among the different confessions, especially the dialogue with the Anglican Church and the wonderful common document on *The Gift of Authority*. At the Council for Social Communications we discussed the problems related to proclaiming the Gospel message to a secularised people. Finally, at the Congregation of the Clergy we noted the concern there for the welfare of our priests and for a follow-up to the document *Pastores dabo vobis*.

I shall continue next week this report of my *ad limina* visit by sharing with you the allocution of our President Bishop André Richard, and the Holy Father's response.



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« From A Bishop's Journal » (299) (06 October 1999)