
A SECOND VISIT TO THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY



At the gracious invitation made to me, I visited the New Brunswick Legislative Assembly on November 30, just as I had the privilege of doing so once before in 1994, a few weeks after my coming to Edmundston. As political commitment constitutes a special form of justice and charity, the purpose of my visit was to once more assure to the members of the assembly of my daily prayer for those who look after the political life of our province, and to voice the concerns of my fellow-citizens.

A COMMON VISION

At the opening of the second session of the 54th Legislature, the deputies who sought our votes because of their concern for the common good and well-being of the entire population are faced with a number of challenges in order to guarantee fairness, justice, and compassion to those in our milieu. Their sense of justice, their integrity, their concern and their commitment to their communities have given them the confidence of the people in elections held last June with dignity and a sense of responsibility. Both government and opposition sides of the House seek together paths of solidarity and progress. On September 19, 1984, Pope John Paul II addressed the Canadian Government and the diplomatic corps in the following terms, and his words can still help our reflection, fifteen years later : *"Be defenders of a new concept of humanity, a concept which looks at the problems of humankind not only in terms of economic, technical, or political equations, but in terms of living persons, in terms of human beings created in the image and likeness of God and called to an everlasting destiny; a concept rooted in true human values and, therefore, a concept which defends them; a concept which inspires action and overcomes self-satisfaction, insensitivity, and selfishness."*

CHALLENGING SITUATIONS

Last May, at the beginning of the electoral campaign, the New Brunswick bishops pointed out the difficult problems experienced by many of our fellow-citizens, especially in the areas of work, health and community services, education, income, and justice : *"Hence it is important that the First Nations be able to live in peace in New Brunswick, in solidarity with our population; it is critical to come up with solutions to the growing poverty among children, women, families, the unemployed, and seasonal workers. It is equally urgent to ensure availability of health services within decent time limits. Solutions must be found to the situation of the dependent elderly, solutions that respect the dignity of these pioneers of our society. We must also ensure the transmission of solid values to the children in our schools, values of solidarity and hope, of justice and truth. Work being the key to social development, the creation of permanent jobs is a huge challenge for all of society. Lord's Day legislation should be revised in such a way as to promote the sacred character of this day and to give it its family and community meaning."* [Statement of the New Brunswick on the Occasion of the Next Election, May 10, 1999]

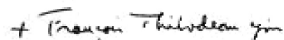
RESTORING HOPE

At the opening of the legislative assembly, there were three major addresses: the throne speech read by Lieutenant Governor Marilyn Trenholme-Counsell, the address of acceptance made by Mrs. Madeleine Dubé, and the address of support made by the MLA from Mactaquac. As the media commented on the throne

speech, suffice it to say here that I was thrilled to hear the deputy from Edmundston, Mrs. Dubé, speaking in such glowing terms of her region; along with Mr. Jacques Martin, the mayor of Edmundston, and Mr. Jean Pedneault, the journalist, I was quite gratified with the words of our deputy as she pointed out the riches and expectations of our milieu. This was a happy coincidence : at the time of my first visit to the legislative assembly, in 1994, it was the turn of the deputy from Edmundston, Mr. Roland Beaulieu, to give the address of support to the throne speech and to speak of the beautiful region of Edmundston. Pointing out that the provincial motto, "*Spem reduxit*," could be variously translated as "Restore Hope" or "Hope Rediscovered," Mr. Kirk MacDonald, the Mactaquac MLA, gave a very colourful and enthusiastic address voicing his assurance that the work of this present legislature will contribute to restore hope among many people in New Brunswick.

IMPORTANCE OF EACH MLA

The Judeo-Christian tradition invites us to view our governments - municipal, provincial, federal or international - as reflections of God who respects the dignity of each human being and shows each one special affection. This same tradition also invites us to consider political commitment as a special path of justice and charity. I am certain that not only pastors and parents, but also every MLA and every government must reveal in their attitudes and actions that God looks after each person and that it is in this way that "His love is from age to age." May the Lord who created us in His image and likeness also bless the work of our parliamentarians, so that each citizen of this province will be shown proper consideration and therefore be courageously committed in the New Millennium.



+ François Thibodeau
Bishop of Edmundston

« From A Bishop's Journal » (308) (08 December 1999)