
A BLESSED JUBILEE YEAR!



Dear people of the Diocese, in offering you my best wishes for the year 2000 I ask the Lord who came among us two thousand years ago to grace you with his abundant blessings, that joy, peace, and health accompany you. May we welcome with gratitude and marvel each day offered to us, and may we carry on the mission of Jesus with courage and holiness.

GRATITUDE

As we come to the end of 1999 which was dedicated to the discovery and love of God the Father, and dedicated also to the elderly throughout the world, I want to thank God our Father for everything we experienced that was good and beautiful, great and holy, in the company of our elder brothers and sisters. I rejoice with you for these joyful and peaceful days which have brought warmth to our lives: births, healings, weddings, graduations, promotions, homecomings, vacations, work, etc.; the list would be long, as long as there are hours and minutes! There were also darker days: days of illness and death, and accidents of all kinds which our people experienced; courage, an unflagging faith, and remarkable, wonderful generosity accompanied these difficult times. This brings to mind the great outpouring of sympathy, friendship, and assurance of prayers I received last January at the death of one of my brothers.

MISSION

One of the joys shared was surely a better understanding and welcoming acceptance of the mission given us by the Lord within our families, our communities, and our parishes. The pastoral restructuring was an opportunity for us to better grasp the "why" of our lives, and the "wherefore" of our parishes. We are at the service of the Gospel. The Church cannot separate itself from Jesus; the Church exists for service to the work of Jesus, that of proclaiming God's Good News, His will to save all humankind, to liberate it to become His people. The Gospel is not only a message, it is Jesus himself. He is the Good News of the Father.

REIGN OF GOD

Just as Jesus revealed to the people of his time that the Reign of God was among them, so does he remind us today that it is also in our midst. The important thing is to witness in word, service, and our whole life that a great event is happening: the coming of the Reign of God, a Reign of peace and joy, of justice and solidarity, of life and grace. The Reign inaugurated by Jesus continues through the grace of the Holy Spirit. Jesus' goal is that God be at home among us. Jesus' design is for all humankind to reach its goal: having hearts truly free. Salvation is to be and live with God.

PASTORAL TEAM

A special event took place August 15, 1999, the consequences of which will not be fully felt for some time to come. The gradual setting in place of parish pastoral teams will, on the long run, modify our perception of what our mission is as well as our collaboration in this remarkably beautiful work. By our baptism and our ordination, baptised and ordained are invited to collaborate according to the grace received, in proclaiming the Gospel and in becoming more and more "missionary" in their respective milieus. We are all called to do our utmost for our people to experience Jesus Christ and so to exclaim, "This is true! This is beautiful! I believe in Jesus and I want to tell others about him!" In thirty parishes already I have mandated pastoral teams to ensure that the Christian life continues to develop in the four usual areas of proclamation of the faith, sacramental celebration, fellowship, and transformation of one's milieu. I thank once again all who have accepted the challenge of team work so that pastoral ministry no longer depends on one person only.

FAMILY-BASED RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Major efforts are now being expended to renew religious education. I am amazed at the beautiful work being carried out in families and parishes, in this area. There is a new enthusiasm to help our children and youth discover Jesus. I want to thank the teachers who have taken up this task, in those few schools where religious education is still given. Who can say where this new experience of faith sharing will take us? The welcoming of Jesus Christ creates fellowship ties that can strengthen our friendships and renew our way of being and doing, even to experiencing genuine reconciliation.

ESSENTIAL JUBILEE IDEA

The year 2000 already looks full of life; we are even planning an ordination to the priesthood on May 20, a diocesan Eucharistic Congress June 9, 10, and 11, many celebrations in every parish, the pastoral visitation of the Edmundston Deanery... It seems to me that at the heart of all these activities the essential idea always remains that of encountering the One who took the initiative of coming down among us. The main components of a successful Jubilee are: discovering "Emmanuel," welcoming him, loving him, and making him known to others. May the year 2000 be for each and everyone of us a real Holy Year.

As chief pastor of this beloved Church of Edmundston, I pray God to grant His countless blessings to you and yours. A Blessed and Happy New Year to you all!

+ François Thibodeau

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Bishop of Edmundston

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