
EDMUNDSTON DEANERY PASTORAL VISITATION



After having made the visitation of the Restigouche (1996), Southern Victoria (1997), Upper Madawaska (1998), and Grand Falls (1999) Deaneries, I shall undertake next week an intensive pastoral visitation of the Edmundston Deanery which comprises seven parishes, with a population of over 23,000.

AIM

The aim of these visits is primarily spiritual: to meet the people of the diocese in their own milieus, to grow together in faith, hope, and love, to keep in mind the memory of Jesus, and to better know the milieu in order to respond better to the people's pastoral and spiritual expectations.

PROVISIONAL SCHEDULE

Ash Wednesday, March 8, will be for the whole Catholic Church a day of penance and forgiveness on the occasion of the Year 2000 Jubilee. The pastoral visitation of the Edmundston Deanery and the opening of Lent will be officially inaugurated with Eucharistic celebrations at Notre-Dame-des-Sept-Douleurs Church (4:00 P.M.) and the Cathedral at 7:30 P.M.

On Friday, March 10, I shall meet with the Edmundston Deanery Liturgy Committees at Ste-Anne-de-Madawaska at 7:30 P.M. March 11, 12, and 13 will mark the visitation of the Ste-Anne and the Green River parishes, with Confirmations at the Green River Church Saturday evening at 7:00.

On Friday, March 17, I shall be meeting with the deanery's parish economic affairs committees at the Saint-Basile church. The Saint-Jacques Parish visitation will be on March 17, 18, and 20. Confirmations will be held Saturday afternoon, March 18, at 4:00 P.M.

I shall be visiting St-Joseph Parish on Sunday, March 19, when I shall be confirming the children there at the 10:00 o'clock Mass.

Immaculate Conception Parish will be visited March 23, 24, 25, and 27. French Confirmations will take place at the Saturday evening celebration (March 25, 7:15), and the English Confirmations will take place Pentecost Sunday. On Friday, April 7, I shall be meeting with all those involved in sacramental preparation throughout the Edmundston deanery; this meeting will take place at the Saint-Jacques Church, at 7:30 P.M.

The Saint-Basile Parish visitation will take place April 7 and 8. Confirmations will be held at the April 8 celebration (7:30 P.M.). April 9, 10, 11, and 12 have been set aside for the Notre-Dame-des-Sept-Douleurs Parish visitation, with Confirmations taking place at the 2:00 P.M. celebration, April 9. On Friday, April 14, I shall be meeting the representatives of all the deanery's organisations and associations, at 7:30 P.M.

Monday of Holy Week, April 17, will be an exceptional day of prayer and communion: Solemn Vespers will be held in the Saint-Jacques church at 5:00 P.M. in the presence of the priests and future priests, pastoral agents and members of the parish pastoral teams, and at 7:30 in the same church will take place the Chrism Mass in the course of which I shall bless the holy oils.

On Good Friday, April 21, a Way of the Cross of Solidarity with the suffering will wend its way through the streets of Edmundston, to end at the Cathedral for the 3:00 o'clock Good Friday Office. On Holy Saturday, April 22, the Easter Vigil will take place at the Cathedral.

SHARE LENT

Ash Wednesday also marks the beginning of Share Lent which is organised by Development and Peace. The Share Lent official opening will take place on March 8 at Notre-Dame-des-Sept-Douleurs Church at the 4:00 P.M. Mass, followed by the sharing supper. I am happy to note that Development and Peace has joined in the Jubilee tradition: concern for people, sharing of riches, respect for the earth. All of this contributes to changing the world! May this Lent 2000 be a high point of the Jubilee year! Take part in the many sharing suppers organised throughout the diocese.

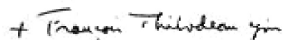
FIFTH CONGRESS

The pastoral visitation 2000 programme would not be complete without mention of the next Eucharistic Congress to be held June 9, 10, 11, which will also mark the end of a first round of intensive pastoral visitations of the diocese. The Congress theme, *Animated by the Spirit, Nourished on the Eucharist, the Church Is Renewed*, will help us experience days of exceptional grace.

GRACE-FILLED EVENT

I can loudly state that the pastoral visitations have been grace-filled events for the population and for the bishop himself: it is truly a special resource the bishop has to personally meet the People of God. The pastoral visitation is an apostolic work, a grace-filled event which recalls the unique and marvellous visit which Christ Jesus himself made to humankind in coming to live among us. The Year 2000 Jubilee witnesses to this grand event in the history of humankind. *"The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us."* May this year 2000 visitation revitalise and bring comfort. May all in the deanery discover or rediscover the all-loving presence of Jesus the Good Shepherd at the centre of our lives, and may this grace spread throughout our diocese. May Our Lady of the Visitation's loving attention be with us!

The Ash Wednesday liturgy reminds us to *Keep alive the memory of the Lord; do not rest!* I count on your fervent prayers, that this pastoral visitation be beneficial to us all.



+ François Thibodeau
Bishop of Edmundston

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