
PASTORAL VISITATION TO SAINT-ANNE-DE-MADAWASKA



Ash Wednesday of the year 2000 will remain memorable as a time when we were bid to actualise the charity of Christ, as the beginning of Share Lent at which time the Canadian Organisation for Development and Peace solicits our aid for our brothers and sisters in the Third World, and as the beginning of the Women's World March for eliminating poverty, injustice against them, and as well as for marking the beginning of the year 2000 pastoral visitation of the Edmundston Deanery.

HISTORICAL FRAGMENTS

The wonderful book entitled "Sainte-Anne-de-Madawaska 1872-1972" has excellent notes on the history of this parish. In September, 1872, several people from Upper St-Leonard and Lower St-Basile requested the erection of a new parish or mission for themselves and committed themselves to building a chapel or church on a spot to be determined by the bishop. Father Georges-Théodule Dugal, pastor of St-Basile, was then charged by Bishop James Rogers with ministry to this new mission dedicated to St. Anne. A chapel was quickly built on ground provided by Mr. Simon Beaulieu. At the time, the mission comprised around one hundred families and was under the pastoral charge of the St-Basile and then of the St-Léonard pastors: Fathers Théodule Dugal (1872-1874), William Varrily (1874), Alphonse Launière (1875), Thomas Francis Barry (1876-1880), and Louis Dugal (1880-1886).

RESIDENT PRIESTS

In 1886 Father Isaac Dumont became the first resident priest, a position he held until 1890; it was at this time that the "feast of St. Anne" was celebrated for the first time. Father Dumont was succeeded by Fathers Antoine Comeau (1890-1891), Maxime Babineau (1891-1903), Alphonse Launière (1903-1905), Jacques Robichaud (1905-1914), André Bérubé (1914-1920), Armand Martin (1920-1921), Claude Cyr (1921-1940) (the new church was constructed in 1923), Solyme Azzie (1940-1956), Fidèle Poitras (1956-1973), Narcisse Gagnon (1973-1979), and Félix Poitras (1979-1994). Father Gaëtan Côté is the present parish priest, having been appointed in 1994; he is moderator of the pastoral team composed of Mrs. Alfreda Bérubé pastoral agent, Mrs. Anna Cyr, Mr. Ronald Cyr, and Mr. Martin Racine. The parish council chairman is Mr. Daniel Jean and the parish economic affairs committee chairman is Mr. Mario Cyr. The parish has a population of 2051, in 741 families.

GLORIOUS PATRON

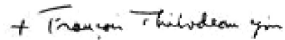
"O Saint Anne, my mother!" is a very popular hymn which is so beautifully interpreted by the Saint Anne Choir to honour their patroness. Christian tradition going back to the second century mentions Joachim and Anne as the parents of the Virgin Mary. As early as the sixth century devotion to the Virgin's parents was already popular. The devotion was brought to New France by Breton sailors, as devotion to St. Anne took on new popularity, in the wake of apparitions by the mother of Mary to Yves Nicolazic on the heath of Auray in 1623. In New France, pilgrimages to Ste-Anne-de-Beaupré were already taking place as early as 1658. It is customary in our dioceses to have no more than one church dedicated to a particular saint, but because of the presence of the Aboriginal people, some dioceses, including ours and the diocese of Moncton, have two parishes dedicated to Saint Anne, and the diocese of Saint John has three.

IN-DEPTH VISITATION

It was my privilege to visit the people of Saint-Anne-de-Madawaska on the week-end of March 12. The parish pastoral team had set up an excellent programme : visits to local nursing homes and homes for the elderly : l'Écllosion, Mont Saint-Joseph, Place Saint-Anne, Logis des Amis, Foyer Agathe-Ringuette; visits to businesses : the Caisse Populaire, Roy Pharmacy, B. Ringuette Groceries, Yves Ringuette Convenience Store, Mazerolle Welding, Danik's Restaurant, New Moon Motel; a visit to the Saint Anne School and sports clubs : 3 Stars Snowmobile Club, and the pool hall. On Saturday, March 11, at a friendly breakfast at the Quis-Ski-Rac cross-country ski club I had the pleasure of meeting over 100 people from Ste-Anne and Green River, the village leaderships, and several families. The March 12 Sunday Mass, the Development and Peace Share Lent supper, a meeting with the parish pastoral team and the Ste-Anne and Green River parish pastoral councils were good opportunities to once again see for myself the enthusiasm and hope of these communities.

AT THE SERVICE OF THE LITURGY

On Friday, March 10 I had the pleasure of meeting with the deanery's liturgy committees : we were able to share together the successes and the difficulties encountered. We were also able to deepen our understanding of how we constitute the "Body of Christ" and how we can contribute to the celebration of God the Father with our entire Church. A recurrent hope is that parishes of the same deanery get together to discuss our experiences and share resources together for the training of lectors and ministers of communion, and sacramental preparation. *"You build your temple of living stones, and bring the Church to its full stature as the body of Christ throughout the world to reach its perfection at last in the heavenly city of Jerusalem, which is the vision of your peace."* [Preface, *Dedication of a Church 1*] A Thousand thanks to the Ste-Anne parish community and pastoral team, a thousand thanks to the hundreds of people who made me welcome : may their holy patron continue to watch over them!



+ François Thibodeau
Bishop of Edmundston

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