
PASTORAL VISITATION TO GREEN RIVER



I had the distinct privilege of doing an intensive pastoral visitation of Sacré-Coeur Parish, Green River, during the week of March 12. Heartfelt thanks to the parish pastoral team for having planned this visit and for having accompanied me throughout these grace-filled hours. This was for me a double jubilee, in this jubilee year, one to Sacré-Coeur Church and the other to each of the parishioners, sanctuaries of the Living God.

HISTORY

According to the book on the Madawaska centennial, published in 1973, it was in 1794 that the Green River Parish first began. Several colonists from Kenebecasis fled to these parts to escape English jurisdiction, and they asked for land for themselves from the government. This is how a handful of brave people made landfall at the mouth of Green River after a long voyage by canoe up the Saint John River. In 1890, Green River became a mission of St-Basile Parish. The mission's place name would come from a Little Falls [Little Falls, "Petit Sault", for Edmundston. As opposed to "Grand-Sault", Grand Falls] Maliseet word, "Kumpwatoguk," apparently "River of the Green Water." As a matter of fact, from about two feet down the river water near the new mission runs clear and very green, a reflection of creation with its numerous pines, abundant vegetation, and fertile soil. Thanks to its special attraction, this vast territory became popular with hunters and nature lovers. The first Mass celebrated there was on October 8, 1890. Mgr. Louis-Napoleon Dugal ministered to the mission until 1923. On January 1, 1924, Bishop Patrice-Alexandre Chiasson granted the mission parish status.

ACTIVE PARISH

The first resident parish priest was Father Albert J. Lynch (1923-1957); he built the first rectory which went up in flames in 1928. The 1910 chapel, having become too small, was replaced by a new church in 1926; it, too, was demolished by fire, in 1950. Without giving way to discouragement, the inhabitants tightened their belts and built the present church. The second pastor, appointed in 1957, was Fr. Mathieu Mazerolle (1957-1973); he was the one who built the seniors' home which bears his name. Father Énoil Thériault (1973-1976) was the third pastor. In 1977, Father Lucien Lévesque became the fourth pastor and remained there until 1988. On December 1, 1988, Father Gaëtan Côté became pastor and remained there until 1990. Father Arthur Rossignol became the sixth pastor in August 1990 and remained until 1996 when Father Alfred Ouellet filled in until Fr. Gaëtan Côté's return to the parish in August of 1997. The pastoral team is composed of Fr. Gaëtan Côté, moderator, Mrs. Alfréda Bérubé, pastoral agent, Mrs. Anna Cyr, Mr. Ronald Cyr, and Mr. Martin Racine. The parish council chairperson is Mrs. Nicole Bouchard and the chairman of the parish economic affairs committee is Mr. Roger Cyr. The parish comprises 1652 persons in 687 families.

REFLECTION OF LOVE

This wonderful parish was erected under the patronage of the "Sacred Heart of Jesus," which does not surprise me. Not only because the then bishop was a member of the Eudist Order [Official name: Congregation of Jesus and Mary] who had a deep devotion to the holy hearts of Jesus and Mary, but also because throughout the population devotion to the hearts of Jesus and Mary was becoming more and more popular. If in 1923

Bishop Chiasson dedicated the Green River parish to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, in 1925 he would dedicate the Baker Brook Parish to the Holy Heart of Mary. A disciple of Saint John Eudes who was officially declared "father, doctor, and apostle of liturgical devotion to the Hearts of Jesus and Mary," Bishop Chiasson made it his duty to promote this devotion which is vital to Christianity.

MEMORABLE MEETINGS

It was pleasant for me to accompany the parish pastoral team on visits to the Green River School as well as to La Cogerno, the village offices and those of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police; to Lizotte Consultants, the Caisse Populaire, the Fr. Lucien Lévesque Home, the Mgr. Mazerolle Residence, the R.H. Clavette Grocery Store, the Bozette Restaurant, the Yves G. Martin Corner Convenience Store, the Légumier Madawaska, and the Golden Age Club; I was warmly welcomed everywhere, and I shall fondly remember celebrating Confirmation with 59 young persons from Green River and Ste-Anne in the Green River church. These young people were so well prepared for the reception of such a great sacrament!

SPLENDID TESTIMONY

The witness of youth and elders is engraved in my heart; I recall what the young people wrote to me in requesting Confirmation, and what parents told me about their children, about how they were proud of them; and I recall all that the elders confided to me; I can still hear the voice of Mrs. Léona Thibodeau singing one of her compositions: *"I am ninety, and my day is coming to an end. It is already evening, already night, but my eyes already glimpse the day's new dawn. Welcome! Welcome to Him! What can I return for all that He has given me? Health, happiness, He spared nothing, despite the very little pain I've had to endure. Besides, it was His will. If you want to be happy, flee idleness, the greatest misfortune of our society. Walk, play, sing, and you will be more enthusiastic. It is the idle ones who will become arthritic. How can I thank all of you today for having come to celebrate with me. Give thanks to the Lord, the author of life. I want to give Him thanks. Thanks and praises to Him!"*

+ François Thibodeau

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Bishop of Edmundston

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