
HAPPY 2000-2001 PASTORAL YEAR!



This brings you my best wishes for a happy 2000-2001 pastoral year to all in the diocese, and to their pastoral teams.

UNDER THE SIGN OF THE ASSUMPTION

The pastoral mandates for the coming year take effect today, August 15, 2000. It appears to me that in this jubilee year Our Lady of the Assumption brings a marvellous sense to the Lord's mission for us. It would have been impossible for Mary to undertake her own life mission by herself. She would not have been able to consent to the divine plan without the constant presence of the Holy Spirit in her life. From Nazareth to her celestial grandeur, it was a long road she trod because it pleased God to work marvels for her. *"He has looked with favour on the lowliness of his servant. Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed; for the Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is his name. His mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation"* (Luke 1:48-50 NRSV).

A SNAPSHOT OF A CHURCH TO COME

What happened to the Virgin Mary is a snapshot of what is about to happen to the Church, and to our Church in particular. *"A perfect image of the Church to come, she guides and supports the hope of its pilgrim people,"* says the liturgy in her honour. Let us petition her and pray to her often. Her availability to the will of God inspires us to walk in her footsteps. Her unshakable trust in the Holy Spirit brought forth from her a completely positive response. Image of the Church to come, she gives us an outstanding view of our mission to present her Son Jesus to the world of our time: the marvellous mission of evangelisation, a splendid mission of bearing the Good News to our brothers and sisters in our midst, today.

WELCOME, FATHER JOSEPH!

For nearly fifteen months I have been talking about the possibility of welcoming to our diocese a few priests of the Fidei Donum Priestly Association in the Congo. The offer was made in the spring of 1999. After lengthy communication with Bishop Cyprien Mouka, auxiliary bishop of Boma, Congo, a decision was reached whereby one of these priests would come to our diocese and two others would go to the Diocese of Yarmouth, Nova Scotia. The coming year will help us evaluate this kind of interdiocesan collaboration, then we shall be able to enter into three-year mutual commitments. This initiative has already produced positive signs, and I am happy to welcome Father Joseph Numbi Phaku among us. Born December 15, 1954, Father Joseph was ordained a priest September 22, 1985. We shall benefit from his experience as assistant pastor and pastor. I appoint him to the pastoral team ministering to the of Saint-Léonard-Ville, Saint-Léonard-Parent, and Notre-Dame-de-Lourdes Christian communities. The aim of this year of immersion for him is to learn about the reality which is our diocesan Church. That is why, even as he resides at the Saint-Léonard rectory, he shall be available to help other parishes according to his timetable. My first impression of him is that he is a warm person, available to others, a man of prayer, and a shepherd. He loves choral singing and sports. In the past he was often consulted on liturgical matters. He will be a great support in our attempts to develop always more our sense of mission and international cooperation. Welcome, Father Joseph! May you be happy with us and be a sower of joy among us!

OTHER MANDATES

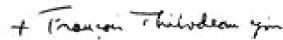
I appoint Mr. Robert Inman to a one-year term as pastoral agent for the Southern Victoria Deanery, and member of the parish pastoral team ministering to the Christian communities of Perth-Andover, Maliseet, Aroostook, and St. Patrick. I also authorise both Mr. Harold Short-Evans and Mr. Robert Inman, acolytes, for a one-year experimental period, to preside at weddings in the Southern Victoria Deanery in emergency situations and this, with the express authorization of both the pastoral team moderator and the bishop, in accordance with the Church's actual legislation.

PRIORITIES FOR 2000-2001

There will be no Eucharistic congresses or intensive pastoral visitations in the year 2000-2001, but each deanery is asked in the coming weeks to define its own pastoral priorities. Team work cannot be improvised, so preference will be given to get to know one another better and to work together at the evangelisation task. A meeting of priests and future priests is called for Tuesday, September 19, 2000, to help us understand the leadership of priests within a pastoral team. A meeting with everyone involved in pastoral teams is scheduled for Saturday, November 4, 2000. It goes without saying that home and church religious instruction will top our agenda, in both the French and English Sectors. Family life ministry will also require our attention for us to respond to the many new situations arising. A bold vocation ministry remains a priority, also, if we are to have ordained ministers after the heart of Jesus, as well as religious brothers and sisters to carry on the task so well begun, and missionaries to work at the Church's universal mission.

The Pope's announcing this coming week the holding of the Year 2002 World Days of Youth in Toronto motivates us to promote youth ministry further. Each Canadian diocese will be asked to welcome in its midst young people from other dioceses around the world. More on that later. May the Lord grant us his blessings so that we may accomplish his holy will in all things. I thank you with all my heart for your precious collaboration in establishing the Kingdom of God among us.

Have a good year!



+ François Thibodeau
Bishop of Edmundston

« From A Bishop's Journal » (344) (16 August 2000)