
THE ATLANTIC REGION BISHOPS



A meeting of the Atlantic Region bishops was held on Prince Edward Island, September 15, 16, and 17. It was also a "first" in the history of our meetings. Let us recall that from 1829 to 1842, we were part of the diocese of Charlottetown which today has a Catholic population of 61,000 out of a total population of 135,000.

JUBILEE YEAR

As it is with the Church universal, we too are always turned towards Jesus, the Christ, the Messiah "yesterday, today, and forever". We remember the three great requirements of a jubilee year: the respect of every human being, a sharing of the wealth, and protection of our environment. It is in this context that the bishops' agenda of some thirty-odd items can be viewed. The bishops and the administrator of the twelve Atlantic region dioceses are very much aware of the jubilee requirements, and they want to experience this exceptional grace to the fullest by opening even wider the doors to Christ the Saviour and by making of their ministry a daily pilgrimage to their brothers and sisters.

PASTORS FOR YOU

It is significant that our meeting ended with a joyous concelebration in St. Augustin Church, Rustico, the oldest Catholic church on the Island, birthplace of the late Archbishop Cornelius O'Brien of Halifax and the late Cardinal James McGuigan, Archbishop of Toronto. About a pastor's pastoral charge, Saint Augustin wrote: *"I must distinguish carefully between two aspects of the role the Lord has given me, a role that demands a dangerous accountability, a role based on the Lord's greatness rather than on my own merit. The first aspect is that I am a Christian; the second, that I am a leader. I am a Christian for my own sake, whereas I am a leader for your sake; the fact that I am a Christian is to my own advantage, but I am a leader for your advantage."* [The Liturgy of the Hours, IV. New York: Catholic Book Publishing Co., 1975, p. 255]

A BELOVED PASTOR

Bishop Gerard Dionne believed last April the anniversary celebrations in his honour were henceforth at an end. Little did he know the Atlantic bishops were planning to celebrate his 25 years as bishop along with the 40th anniversary of episcopal ordination of Bishop William Power, bishop emeritus of Antigonish. Bishop Dionne's presence at the meeting was a great encouragement to all. Disavowing having any merit for this anniversary, Bishop Dionne chose to offer a mass of praise and thanksgiving for all of the Lord's goodness to him. "The goodness of the Lord is not ended. His kindness has not come to an end. They are new each day. Great is His fidelity." And since September 16 the Church was celebrating the martyrdom of two bishops, Cornelius and Cyprian, Bishop Dionne recalled the daily witness of life which every bishop must give all life long, to give his life for the Church given to his care and this, in sometimes very difficult circumstances. "What bishop would not be pleased at the glory accorded a confrere, as if this glory were his own. And where would there be a group of brethren anywhere that would not be happy at the joy of its brothers."

CHALLENGING SITUATIONS

If socio-economic conditions such as aboriginal rights, the plight of seasonal workers, limited resources of the sea, etc., constantly challenge us, the faith education of children, youth and adults compels us to watch over the continuing education of our catechists. Vocational pastoral ministry is a major challenge, for the health of the now and future Church is at stake. The quest for new collaborators is ongoing, so as to respond to the spiritual and pastoral needs of our fellow-citizens. The Lord is surely watching over his Church and he calls forth Gospel workers. We must know how to discern calls from the Lord, journey with those he has chosen, and constantly bear witness to a happy life.

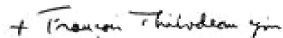
TOWARDS THE 2001 WORLD YOUTH DAYS

At the closing of the World Youth Days of the year 2000, August 19, Pope John Paul announced that he expected to see them again in Toronto in July of the year 2002. Such an event produces much enthusiasm and daring. Every Canadian diocese will be invited to welcome youths from other countries. Such a programme, begun in Paris in 1997, brings to these days an extraordinary brotherly and ecclesial dimension. In our diocese all the parishes, deaneries and pastoral councils have already been apprised of this great event which is getting close at hand.

THERE IS A STAR

While getting ready for the October meeting of all Canadian bishops in October, and as I think of all of you in the diocese, I catch myself singing these words of Angèle Arsenault's song: "*Y a une étoile pour nous, y a une étoile pour chacun de nous*" - "There is a star for us, there is a star for each one of us."

Have a good week!



+ François Thibodeau
Bishop of Edmundston

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