
AFter THE REFERENDUM AND THE ELECTIONS



May 14, 2001 will long be remembered by many: the referendum and municipal elections drew the attention of people not only in New Brunswick but throughout the country.

CONGRATULATIONS AND SOLIDARITY

I first want to extend my sincere congratulations to those who have been elected either at the municipal or the school board level: your task will not be easy. At the beginning of the new millennium, together you will have new challenges to take up, to achieve excellence. Situations are not always comfortably quiet! Quite the opposite; the welfare of students and teachers, and that of the citizenry in general require constant vigilance, with new challenges requiring new approaches.

You who have received such an important mandate from your peers, I congratulate you for the trust placed in you. In difficult as in quiet times, be attentive to the needs of your fellow citizens. Your work will then be like good grain sown in good earth.

To the losing candidates I want to point out that this commitment to others, however different from what you had hoped for, can still be carried out in other ways. My hope is that you find within your communities meaningful outlets for service to your fellow citizens where, I am certain, you will demonstrate your concern for their welfare.

THE REFERENDUM

It is still too early to measure the fallout produced by this community exercise. I accept the result of this democratic enterprise, and I acknowledge the results of the referendum. The questions raised and answers given show that things can no longer go on as before. Even though it is legal and regulated, video lottery machines have too many negative consequences in the social and family areas for us to be indifferent. Throughout the referendum process concern was expressed about compulsive players, and this concern must not be lost from sight. Rather, VLT owners and governments must help in a substantial way to prevent dependency and to provide treatment for victims of this game. If at times "the best" is enemy of "the good", toleration of VLTs must be matched by adequate regulation. The majority of the population is for the maintenance of VLTs: doubtless great vigilance will be exercised in ensuring the observance of regulations. But is it necessary to have so many machines, around? Can they be installed elsewhere than in bars? What rules could prevent abuses, in video lottery machines?

APPOINTMENTS

Back in February parish pastoral councils and pastoral teams were asked to evaluate their work, and they were also asked to give me names of people who could take up certain responsibilities in their parishes. For a third year, now, I shall be mandating teams to pastor one or more parishes together. I hope to announce the appointments of the 2001-2002 pastoral year before June 15. I ask your prayers, and I am assured of the spirit of availability of our people, and their faith in the Church.

FINANCIAL DRIVE 2001

Quietly and without fanfare, the Group of One Thousand collected \$212,510.00 in its five-years' existence. This helped us not only maintain our full complement of diocesan services but also the Diocesan Centre. Without this voluntary contribution on your part, we would have had to markedly increase the diocesan per capita tax (the "cathedraticum"), in order to avoid a financial deficit. The Group of One Thousand having been organised for five years' duration, it is now the Diocesan Support Campaign that carries on the task, and you are solicited to make a generous gift to the Diocese of Edmundston, 60, rue Bouchard, Edmundston, NB E3V 3K1.

The Diocese of Edmundston is looking for an additional \$40,000.00, since ordinary revenue do not cover our regular expenses. We must especially ensure a solid foundation to our home- and parish-based religious education programmes, the ongoing formation of people in pastoral ministry, and the development of an active youth ministry programme, especially in view of the forthcoming 2002 World Youth Days. It is for all these reasons that we solicit your help and generous participation. Give according to your means and your heart; we pray the Lord to give you a hundredfold. An income tax receipt will be issued for your donation.

Hoping to number you among our collaborators in the Diocesan Support Campaign *Financial Drive 2001*, kindly accept my gratitude and that of our Diocesan Church.

+ François Thibodeau

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Bishop of Edmundston

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