



AN EXTRAORDINARY PILGRIMAGE!

The coming of the World Youth Day Cross in our midst, from July 30 to August 5, was the occasion for embarking on an extraordinary pilgrimage throughout the Edmundston diocese, and I hasten to acknowledge my greatitude to you all. My heartfelt thanks to the WYD Diocesan Committee, the deaneries, the pastors of parishes, the pastoral teams, the mass media, the sponsors, the organisers of activities, the choirs and organists and all those who welcomed the cross. On behalf of the Diocese of Edmundston and in my own name I want to express my deepest appreciation. To Mrs. Manon Bourgoin-Ruest, chair of the Diocesan Committee, and to Mr. Robert Dubé, the Cross bearer, I owe a special Thank You: how wonderful it was to work and pray together! On Monday, July 30, we received the most valuable Cross from the hands of Bishop André Richard, C.S.C., of Bathurst. We wanted to have it make the round of all the parishes in the diocese and then, on August 5, hand it over to Bishop Faber McDonald of Saint John.

The pilgrimage was a marvellous success and a great blessing for all the parishes and the diocese as a whole, and a special grace for our youth. The welcome given was different wherever we went; what great expressions of faith were shown! I for one will never forget what I experienced in each of the deaneries. Returning from Glenlevit, the Cross was welcomed by a strikingly beautiful sunset, a most promising sunshine for these days of prayer and petition. Who could forget the period of intense prayer, in the Restigouche, the tears of joy that broke out spontaneously from the people, and the Way of the Cross filled with hope? Who will forget the experience in the Grand Falls Deanery, being met at the doors of the churches, the stops along the way at Près-du-Lac Restaurant and McCain's, the hours of prayer, the procession from the St-Georges Church to Broadway Boulevard, the community picnic at La Rochelle, the surprise visit to the dean of our presbytery, and the vigil in Drummond? Who could forget the activities in Southern Victoria, the ecumenical prayers and stations in front of each church, the initiatives of the Maliseet Nation coming to meet the Cross, the visit to the Hotel Dieu in Perth-Andover, and the gusts of wind at Limestone Siding? Who could forget the activities in Upper Madawaska, the visit to the Correctional Centre, to the residents of the Foyer Ste-Élizabeth in Baker Brook, the community picnic and the inter-parish prayer vigil held in Clair? And what about the Edmundston Deanery, the gatherings on the steps of the churches, the Way of the Cross at Ste-Anne-de-Madawaska, the celebration at Saint-Basile, mother church of the Madawaska, the visits to the Hôtel-Dieu and Foyer Saint-Joseph, the celebration at Saint-Joseph-de-Madawaska, Saint-Jacques, and Notre-Dame-des-Sept-Douleurs, the prayers in the chapel of the Blessed Sacrament Sisters, the Mass celebrated on the steps of the Cathedral, and participation in the Foire Brayonne festivities?

I was truly impressed by all that was experienced in our diocese, on these beautiful days. The population sensed that a momentous event would take place among us on July 22, 2002, and that everything would focus on the great mystery of our faith, the death and resurrection of Jesus, the Son of God, who came to share our joys and suffering. At the conclusion of the 1984 Jubilee of the Redemption, Pope John Paul II, the force behind the World Youth Days, gave as a mission to the youth to make Jesus known the world over. His message was greeted with faith and enthusiasm. Proof of this were the 4 million youth who gathered in the Philippines in 1995, the million youth who met in Paris in 1997, and the two million who came to Rome in 2000 - record numbers of people. Never has the world seen such an influx of people as happened in the Philippines; never had Paris experienced such a get-together; and never in its history had Rome seen such a gathering. It could also very well be that the Canada gathering will draw a record number of youth, too. Reservations are already being taken for 16- to 35-year olds planning to attend the WYD, July 18 to 28, 2002. The events will begin in the Canadian dioceses from July 18 to 22, then all will travel to Toronto to greet the Holy Father. I invite our youth to register as quickly as possible, with the Diocesan WYD Secretariat, 60, rue Bouchard, Edmundston, N.B., E3V 3K1.

PAPAL MESSAGE

On July 25 the Holy Father addressed a special message to the youth of the world. He wrote: « *My dear young people, it is now time to prepare for the XVIIth World Youth Days. I invite you in a special way to read and study the letter on the new millennium, which I wrote at the beginning of the year as a guide for the baptised, in this new stage in the life of the Church and of humankind. “A new century, a new millennium is beginning in the light of Christ. But not everyone sees this light. Ours is the admirable and demanding mission of reflecting it. Yes, it is the time of mission! In your dioceses and parishes, in your organisations, associations, and communities, Christ calls you, the Church welcomes you as to your home and school of communion and prayer. Deepen your study of the Word of God, and let it enlighten your mind and your heart! Draw strength from the sacramental grace of Reconciliation and the Eucharist. Frequent the Lord in this ‘heart to heart’ encounter which is eucharistic worship. Daily you will be given the strength to comfort those who suffer, and the power to bring peace to the world..”* »

I myself urge all our youth to join in this wonderful gesture: you will grow from this terrific human and divine experience. And our entire Church will come out of this experience with a younger and stronger countenance. I once again thank you for the enthusiasm you showed when you welcomed the WYD Cross. “God’s love is from age to age!” Our diocese will be hosting many youth in July, 2002, and I am sure that they will be most graciously and joyfully welcomed; and together we shall go to Toronto to celebrate our joy of life and our faith in Jesus.

BEGINNING OF A NEW PASTORAL YEAR

The feast of the Assumption marks the coming into effect of the new appointments and the beginning of our new pastoral year 2001-2002. I wish to all of you a promising and wonderful year. I hope that the new pastoral teams will find much joy in working together for the Kingdom of Jesus. Three priorities will continue to challenge us: the continuing implementation of home- and parish-based religious education, the establishment of parish pastoral teams, and the development of a challenging and interesting youth ministry. May the Virgin of the Assumption and her Divine Son be with us always and grace us with countless blessings.

+ François Thibodeau

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Bishop of Edmundston

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