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## MY CHRISTMAS PRAYER FOR 2001

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At Christmastime my wishes are a prayer, Jesus.

First, I want to wish you a Happy Birthday!

May your kingdom of peace and life, of justice and truth grow day by day.

May your Word of Life be ever more welcome and better lived by all.

With you I greet God your Father and our Father, and the Spirit whom you send us.

With the whole church I greet Mary, your Mother, and Joseph, the silent witness.

I join with the angels and all the saints in proclaiming:

*Glory to God in the highest,*

*Peace to His people on earth!*

Thank you for all the graces given during this unforgettable year.

Thank you for the precious inheritance of the Jubilee of the Year 2000.

Thank you for Pope John Paul II's letter on the New Millennium, calling us to holiness.

Thank you for all the sacraments that continue your saving action among us.

Thank you for the home- and parish-based religious education: they lead us to you.

Thank you for the World Youth Days Pilgrim Cross that came to us.

Thank you for the festivities marking the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of St. John Eudes.

Thank you for the coming of the Great Reliquary of St. Theresa of Lisieux, your messenger of love.

Thank you for all the brothers and sisters you give me, in your Church.

I give you the new year 2002: you will always be there, till the end of time!

I give you the XVII<sup>th</sup> World Youth Days of the year 2002.

I offer you the Continental Congress on Vocations, coming in April.

I offer you the Edmundston Diocesan Church: May its love be from age to age!

I offer you my family, my brothers and sisters of the Eudist family!

I offer you all those who suffer and mourn, all the poor and the sick.

Give peace to the world! Give us your peace! Grant me your peace!

*Launch out! Duc in altum!*

As Christmas approaches I cannot help recalling the words of Pope John Paul II on the New Millennium:

*Let us go forward in hope! A new millennium is opening before the Church like a vast ocean upon which we shall venture, relying on the help of Christ. The Son of God, who became incarnate two thousand years ago out of love for humanity, is at work even today; we need discerning eyes to see this and, above all, a generous heart to become the instruments of his work. The Christ whom we have contemplated and loved bids us to set out once more on our journey: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Mt. 28:19). The missionary mandate accompanies us into the Third Millennium and urges us to share the enthusiasm of the very first Christians: we can count on the power of the same Spirit who was poured out at Pentecost and who impels us today to start out anew, sustained by the hope 'which does not disappoint' (Rm. 5:5).*

*At the beginning of this new century, our steps must quicken as we travel the highways of the world. Many are the paths on which each one of us and each of our Churches must travel, but there is no distance between those who are united in the same communion, the communion which is daily nourished at the table of the Eucharistic Bread and the Word of life. Every Sunday, the Risen Christ asks us to meet him as it were once more in the Upper Room where, on the evening of 'the first day of the week' (Jn. 20:19) he appeared to his disciples in order to 'breathe' on them his life-giving Spirit and launch them on the great adventure of proclaiming the Gospel.*

*We need to imitate the zeal of the Apostle Paul: "Straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on towards the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 3:13-14).*

*The Risen Jesus accompanies us on our way and enables us to recognize him, as the disciples of Emmaus did, 'in the breaking of the bread' (Lk. 24:35). May he find us watchful, ready to recognize his face and run to our brothers and sisters with the good news: "We have seen the Lord!" (Jn. 20:25)*

With these best wishes I bless you from the bottom of my heart.



+ François Thibodeau  
Bishop of Edmundston

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