
FR. RINO ALBERT: MYSTERIOUS DESIGN



It is difficult to evaluate the priestly vocation and its many steps, because the Lord shows himself in God's mysterious designs and the human response in actions which are coloured by each one's character, family and cultural background, the awareness of an ideal to strive for and the realisation of human weaknesses, to reach the summit which, one day, makes us react in wonder: « It is good for us to be here! » (Mt. 17), after having heard beforehand, « If a man wishes to come after me, he must deny his very self, take up his cross, and follow me » (Mt. 16). It was self-denial which first marked my childhood and youth: orphaned at the age of 3, following my father's death at the age of 29, along with his 15 year-old brother, in a farmhouse fire at Baker Brook.

GOD WANTED ME WHERE I WAS!

Our family home was in Saint-Hilaire, a short distance from the church. For about ten years my mother sang at the pastor's daily Mass, and she would take me to serve Father Aurèle Godbout's Mass. I much esteemed this priest for his piety and spiritual and human graciousness. Mother's volunteer service to the parish edified me, as well as her Christian behaviour in her tragedy. An aunt who was a Religious of Saint-Rosaire wrote: « Yvonne, my sister-in-law, seven months pregnant and mother of two children among whom is three year-old Rino who owes in great part his vocation to the priesthood to her generous self-sacrifice.» Another fact which can influence a young person in the choice of a vocation whatever it may be is the ambient environment. Mine was solidly directed toward the priesthood. My mother's side counted eight priests, and my father's side had two, one of whom was a missionary in Bengal, and I felt drawn to that. However, I had to give up this project for health reasons. Considering my eighty years, it must be that God wanted me where I am now, in relatively poor health but so ever grateful to be able to still minister to the hundred-odd residents of the Villa Des Jardins in Edmundston.

GREATER HAPPINESS IN GIVING

I exercised my priestly ministry in the parishes of St-Georges, Grand Falls (1959-1971), Saint-Basile (1971-1989), Notre-Dame-du-Sacré-Coeur, Edmundston (1984-1995), among a pious people who felt fiscally responsible for the upkeep of their church, and who listened carefully to the Word of God as they heard it either at church or at religious gatherings and meetings. I have also shown great concern for religious education at all levels, and I consider it the most precious heritage of my ministry. I was engaged in other priestly functions at various levels, during my 55 years of priesthood: chancellor of the diocese, hospital chaplain, spiritual director to several diocesan organisations, assistant judicial vicar at the marriage tribunal: these were all services asked of me by my diocesan superiors, they were a response to a call from God, for finding happiness, as it is written, « It is better to give than to receive ». If I have experienced this, it is thanks to the kindness and mercy of Jesus!

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