
« A CALL... A RESPONSE »



The 2002 pastoral letter has important vocation messages, meant to help us discern the Lord's call today.

FATHER CLAUDE CÔTÉ, EUDIST

« He has led me by the hand into green pastures. » Like every vocation, mine has the Lord as its starting point... The Lord challenged me. Not directly, like a voice I physically heard, but by people I met along the way... or by events. Among the people I met there were, first and foremost, my parents, honest people who did not consider themselves above others, people whose faith was unswerving. This faith illuminated the family. Family prayer was part of daily life. My parents always considered it a privilege to welcome a priest in their home or to their table. It is not surprising, then, that many priests became friends of the family! When I was in grade 8, a priest, the first pastor of the parish, spoke to me, but the ground had already been well prepared. For over four years an Ursuline nun had suggested that the family say a short prayer every day, for as long as one had not chosen a vocation. The prayer ran: « O God of wisdom and counsel, grant me the grace to discover the state of life I must choose, to accomplish your holy will. » I said this prayer until I reached my final decision.

After years of study with the Eudist Fathers, and after many years also of spiritual direction and much prayer, the Lord's calling came into sharper focus. It was a call to me, to preach to others the message of love which Jesus had given, especially to the poor and the little of this world. After four years of theology I felt great joy in my response and, on May 8, 1965, Bishop Louis Lévesque ordained me in my parish church. I was the first priest from the parish. Before ordination I had to decide whether to be a parish priest or to join the Eudist Fathers. Having studied with them, I had been able to learn firsthand about their community life, and I was impressed by the spirit animating them. Since I had been steeped so many years in this atmosphere, I opted for the Eudists. It is not always easy to discern God's ways, but after 37 years of priesthood, I see better, now, how the Lord has led me, and I can only thank Him for having chosen me to work as a priest, in his mission. The Lord has truly overwhelmed me with the wonder of His love, and I would like to continue proclaiming this loud and clear so that as many as possible taste and experience His love.

FR. BENOÎT BOSSÉ: « SOMETHING NOT EASY! »

I was born in 1927, a farmer's son. I started attending church with my parents at a very early age. Around the age of four I heard a 16 or 17 year-old comment: "Me, I never went to school, and I can't read or write." This comment upset me and really scarred me. Thereafter, I often used to tell myself: "I won't be like him, I'll go to school, and there I'll learn to read and write." When the time came, I started school. I remember enjoying school because I learned to read, write, do arithmetic, etc. I was in third grade when I told my mother I would like to be a priest. She answered in approximately this way: "You're thinking of getting into something not easy, my Ben! Look! It takes everything she has for the schoolteacher to please thirty-odd families, and a priest has to please an entire parish! Think about it carefully." I had been hoping for her approval... and I felt quite let down. I continued with my school work. I continued in the same school until 1941, when I finished grade 8. I then asked to attend school in Edmundston. Two years later I finished grade 11 and passed the provincial exams with top honours, with "First Division" Mention. This earned me the Governor General's Medal.

My success in school had raised the family's enthusiasm. Without knowing too much how things went, it happened that at the end of July or the beginning of August I was registered as a student at Université du Sacré-Cœur in Bathurst. I was asked whether I would accept a teaching position while pursuing my studies. This would help defray my room and board and tuition. It would also give me a private room instead of a common dormitory and study hall. Besides, it would keep me in pocket money. Of course I accepted, especially that it would bring relief to my parents. That fall, upon arrival I met with the dean of studies to find out what was in store for me. After a few words he assigned me the room I was to occupy and the books of the course I was to give: chemistry to the second year college students! He told me to take good care of the book, since I would be needing it next year, to teach the third year students. He wished me good luck and assured me of his help, should I need it... Two years later, after having done good work, I obtained my B.A. degree.

Accepted and guided by Bishop Joseph-Roméo Gagnon, I entered the Québec Major Seminary in 1949 and registered with the faculty of theology, there. I was ordained four years later, May 30, 1953, in the Edmundston Cathedral; on June 10 I received my licentiate in theology. Since then, I taught at Université Saint-Louis in Edmundston for eighteen years and did weekend pastoral ministry; I was also assistant priest at Saint-Jacques for a year, and pastor of Saint-Thomas-d'Aquin Parish in Lac-Baker for seventeen years. I am now retired, but help with occasional ministry. Allow me to say that I have never regretted answering the Lord's call.

+ François Thibodeau ym

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