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## « THERE IS ROOM FOR EVERYONE, IN THE CHURCH! »

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I have found my place in the Church,” the beloved St. Theresa of the Child Jesus exclaimed, “and this place, O my God, you gave to me...” “In the midst of the Church, dear Mother, I shall be Love... in this way, I shall be everything... and my dream will be realized!!!” How I wish that every baptised and confirmed person would discover the place which the Lord has given him or her. And how I would love for us together to help one another to it, wholeheartedly and willingly. *“Corde magno et animo volenti!”* [“With all my heart and soul!”]

### **A WONDERFUL DISCOVERY**

One of the great benefits of Vatican Council II was to focus on all the baptised, the People of God. The Church is not only “the Pope’s business,” or “the business of bishops and priests!” The Catechism of the Catholic Church puts it this way: “The Christian faithful are those who, inasmuch as they have been incorporated in Christ through Baptism, have been constituted as the People of God; for this reason, since they have become sharers in Christ’s priestly, prophetic and royal office in their own manner, they are called to exercise the mission which God has entrusted to the Church to fulfil in the world, in accord with the condition proper to each one. In virtue of their rebirth in Christ, there exists among all the Christian faithful a true equality with regard to dignity and the activity whereby all co-operate in the building up of the Body of Christ in accord with each one’s own condition and function. The very differences which the Lord has willed to put between the members of his Body serve its unity and mission” (Nn. 871-873).

### **BUILDING UP THE BODY OF CHRIST**

At the conclusion of my visit to each of the five pastoral zones, for the launching of the 2002-2003 pastoral year, I want to thank God with you for all those who are building up the Body of Christ in our midst. The worker who day by day faithfully works at improving his or her milieu builds up the Body of Christ! The father or mother who in a spirit of hope passes on his or her deepest values to the child, builds up the Body of Christ! The student or teacher who daily searches for truth, builds up the Body of Christ! The journalist or the politician who fosters communication and even communion between people, builds up the Body of Christ! The baptised person who is faithful to the grace of his or her baptism, builds up the Body of Christ! It is not always easy to do, when one is involved in economic, cultural, social, political, and even religious endeavours; still, this happens through the grace of the Holy Spirit who continuously works His marvels among us! Even the liturgy committee member is not always aware that he or she contributes to building up the Body of Christ! The person who cares for the poor, the needy, the hungry, the sick, the immigrant, the stranger, the prisoner, also helps in building up the Body of Christ, because this was what Jesus wanted: “Whenever you have done it to the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you have done it to me.” It seems to me that this gives an added dimension to our daily actions.

### **NEW SERVICES!**

Just as there is constant change in some areas of life, so it is in the field of pastoral ministry. And so, I would like to mention a few to you, especially regarding the pastoral ministry team, the pastoral council, and the economic affairs committee.

At the very beginning of the Church, the Apostles founded the first Christian communities. When they died, they were succeeded by the bishops. When these communities grew more and more numerous, the bishops established precious collaborators, the priests of the Church. In the Edmundston diocese in 1970, there were over 100 priests! Pastors and assistant pastors were the ones mostly in charge of pastoral ministry, in those days. Since the new 1984 legislation, pastoral teams composed of priests, religious brothers and sisters, and lay people now share in the bishop's pastoral charge. This is how, since August 15, 1999, pastoral teams have been in charge of the parishes in our diocese. There are now fifteen such teams ministering to the 32 parishes. Before commissioning these teams I ask the local parish pastoral council and parish meetings to submit names of those they believe apt for this ministry, considering the pastoral focus on faith education, liturgy and prayer, community fellowship, and the transformation of one's milieu in the light of the Gospel.

Since January, 1996 there have been compulsory parish pastoral councils and parish economic affairs committees, in response to demands of the Second Vatican Council and the Edmundston Diocesan Synod.

Just as it helps the parish priest, the pastoral council continues to help the parish pastoral team. Its members, who are usually elected at the parish's annual meeting, must ensure that no one in the parish is forgotten or neglected; their special attention is focussed on the needy and the marginalised. With those in charge of the parish, they coordinate pastoral activities and the different parish committees.

Among these committees there is the parish economic affairs committee. In conjunction with the parish pastoral council, the economic affairs committee prudently manages all of the parish property (grounds, buildings), employee salaries – in other words, the property of the Roman Catholic Bishop of Edmundston of which they act as trustees. The committee submits an annual budget and report of activities to the pastoral council, mindful that for expenditures over fifteen thousand dollars, the bishop's permission must first be obtained. It is of the utmost importance also to protect the administrators of the Church's material goods and to carefully look after and administer the goods themselves.

I thank the hundred of people who make it their concern to ensure the proper development and growth of the Christian life, in their community. A grateful thank you to all the volunteers who so generously offer their talents for animation and administration to the community. They, too, are building up the Body of Christ! "For the good of all and for your glory, Lord, you willed that each one of your people serve you according to the grace and prompting of the Spirit: give to each one to find his or her place in the Church, in order to form with their brothers and sisters the Body of Jesus Christ" (*Liturgie des heures*). May you have an excellent pastoral year!

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