
LET US CONTINUE TO BUILD THE CHURCH TOGETHER!



On May 1, 2003, after having received the feasibility study prepared by the Jean-Robert Nolet firm, and having taken advice of all members of diocesan councils, I announced a very important decision: to proceed during the year 2003-2004 with a 3.6 million dollar diocese-wide financial campaign for the realisation of priority pastoral projects, restoration work on the cathedral, and financial help to each of the 32 parishes in the diocese.

A BIT OF HISTORY

The 2002-2003 pastoral year did not have any major financial project, but as of September, 2002, new financial needs arose: the needs of our Heritage cathedral, the unexpected World Youth Day 2002 financial deficit, the increase in insurance premiums for our properties, and the impossibility of implementing critical pastoral projects due to a lack of proper funding. In response to recommendations of our priests and parish economic affairs committees, we asked Jean-Robert Nolet and Associates to do a feasibility study for a major financial campaign. Following meetings and consultations in each of the five deaneries in January, February and March of this year, the firm tabled its final report and recommendations on April 1 and 2. Then followed a month-long reflection period by all the diocesan councils to decide whether or not they agreed with the main recommendation, to proceed with the financial campaign.

POSITIVE REASONS

Supported by the Jean-Robert Nolet firm, by the positive vote of our diocesan councils (Diocesan Council for Economic Affairs, Diocesan Pastoral Council, Priests Senate, College of Consultors, Bishop's Council), attentive to the pressing pastoral needs, the precarious situation of parishes, and the mandatory repairs to the cathedral, following periods of intense prayer throughout the diocese, and in conformity with Church legislation and with the special obligations I have as bishop of Edmundston, I have decided that in the coming months will be held a diocese-wide financial campaign. According to recommendations made to me, I have retained the services of Jean-Robert Nolet and Associates. Four months will be needed to prepare the campaign which will be officially launched in September. I ask all of my brothers and sisters of the Church of Edmundston to fully and generously join in this endeavour. May this joining together in response to a felt need of our Church take the form of prayerful support, generous volunteerism and financial support according to the dictate of their hearts and their respective financial situation. May all be for the glory of God, the welfare of our Church and a quality response to the priority needs expressed. Without the support of one and all it would be impossible to launch a financial drive, but your love of the Church and your unflagging generosity already guarantee a positive outcome, similar to that of your parents and grandparents who were ever willing to rise up to enormous challenges!

Why I Say "Yes"

I say "YES" to the campaign because of my love for each one of our parishes. It is important to ensure that every parish have a solid financial base and that it be able to plan ahead a number of local pastoral projects. Twenty-five percent of the amount collected will be earmarked for the parishes, according to local objectives

determined by each parish. The development of a reserve fund shall be a welcome relief for both parishes and diocese.

I say “**YES**” to this campaign because I love the cathedral of Edmundston to which I was called by Pope John Paul II in 1993. Restoration of the stonework will cost close to a million dollars. If nothing were done to save our cathedral in the next few years, it could then be too late to keep this major symbol of our faith and of our belonging to the Church and people of Edmundston. Everybody knows about the beauty of this cathedral which is unique in the Maritimes. A cathedral is the sign of a local Church, the sign of a diocese unique to its people.

I say “**YES**” to this campaign because of my love for our youth and children, our families, our religious educators and all who are involved in pastoral ministry. It is important to carry out priority pastoral projects in both Francophone and Anglophone sectors, projects identified a number of times by our people, especially during our Diocesan Synod, projects which, however, we were unable to implement due to a lack of financial resources. These needs are pressing, but despite their being urgently needed, it is not possible for us to implement them within our actual budget restraints. The needs of youth and family ministry no longer need to be pointed out, they must be met! An adequate response must be given by the Church to our children and youth in elementary, middle and high schools, college and university. There is actually no one mandated to carry out such a pressing ministry. An adequate response must also be given by our Church to families, especially families with difficulty engaging in dialogue with their children, and in need of support and counselling. Youth and families must find their place within their own local community. It is also important to have more permanent religious education structures for family- and parish-based religious education in each of our five deaneries. I am amazed at the generous efforts of hundreds of volunteers involved in such promising religious education, but we must support them and also look to the future. We must be vigilant in forming teams of competent pastoral agents and volunteers who shall become, with the grace of God, responsible for parish pastoral ministry in years to come. We must recruit and train people to take over adult faith formation and the training of Christian leaders, liturgical celebrations, works of charity and Gospel outreach.

WITH MARY'S PATRONAGE!

With you I entrust this major financial campaign to the Virgin Mary. I am certain that in this Year of the Rosary, the Virgin will bring us the needed support to carry out the work of her Son Jesus. May Saint Joseph, the powerful and unobtrusive protector, continue to help us! May all that we do during this campaign be returned to us a hundredfold by the Lord himself! Let us continue to build the Church together!

+ François Thibodeau

+ François Thibodeau, C.J.M.
Bishop of Edmundston

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