



**“MAGNIFICAT! MY HEART GLORIFIES THE LORD!”**

It was in the Edmundston Diocesan Centre that on Thursday, May 5, 2005, there was a banquet to honour those priests who were celebrating an anniversary. There were the thirtieth anniversary of Bishop Gérard Dionne's episcopal ordination, the fiftieth priesthood anniversary of Father Ronald Bellefleur, and the fortieth of Fathers Claude Côté, C.J.M., Roch Létourneau, S.M., and myself. I join you in praising the Lord in the words of the Virgin Mary: “My soul magnifies the Lord, my heart rejoices in God my saviour! He has done great things for me! *His love is from age to age!*”

#### **A THOUSAND THANKS**

Lord, I thank you for my parents Hormidas and Yvonne, for my brothers and sisters, for their families, and all my friends. Thank you for having allowed me to be born in Saint-Odilon on July 27, 1939, thank you for the grace of baptism, confirmation, and Holy Eucharist. Thank you for the six years of schooling I had in the rural school and the village school. Thank you for those years at the Externat Saint-Jean-Eudes and the Saint-Cœur-de-Marie Seminary in Québec City. Thank you for having called me to be a follower of Saint John Eudes, an evangeliser and formator of Gospel workers. Thank you for my priestly ordination celebrated in the Saint-Odilon parish church by Bishop Joseph-Aurèle Plourde, May 8, 1965. Thank you for my three years of teaching religion at the Externat Saint-Jean-Eudes and my three years of study in social work at Laval University. Thank you for the nineteen years with the Québec diocesan services, as director of social ministry and of the diocesan journal, *Pastorale Québec*. Thank you for my three years of service to my brothers as provincial superior of the Eudist Fathers in North America. Thank you for calling me to the episcopacy on October 20, 1993, and for my episcopal ordination in the Cathedral at Edmundston, by Bishop Gérard Dionne and my brother bishops, on January 9, 1994. Thank you for all these years filled with so many graces and blessings! “The Almighty has done great things for me, holy is His Name!” (Lk. 2:49)

#### **REMEMBRANCE OF DIVINE BLESSINGS**

Lord, I want to thank you for all the members of the Edmundston presyterium, for all the priests who day after day give generously of themselves to proclaim the Word, celebrate the sacraments, and serve all their brothers and sisters. Thanks be to you for all those you have called to be the mouthpiece of your Body and who proclaim your Name; thank you for all those you call to be the hands of your Body to build a world of justice, for all those you call to be the eyes of your Body and who look lovingly on everyone they meet, and for all those you have called to be the ears of your Body and who heed the cry of the poor and the despised of the earth. I thank you in a special way for Father Ronald Bellefleur and his devoted service in the parishes of Drummond, Saint-Quentin, and Saint-Jacques, and for his pastoral ministry at Mont-Assomption, the Grand Falls General Hospital, the Thomas Albert Regional High School, and the Edmundston Regional Hospital. Praise be to you for his offering you every day his illness, his suffering, his prayer, and his priestly witness. Praise be to you for Father Roch Létourneau, a priest of the Marist Society, who missioned in Senegal, in the Diocese of Ottawa and that of Gaspé, and who today ministers as chaplain at the Foyer Saint-Joseph in Saint-Basile. Glory to you for the hope and love he spreads among his sick brothers and sisters. I want to thank you for my Eudist confrere Father Claude Côté who edified me during his theology studies, and who held important positions at Université Sainte-Anne in Church Point, Nova Scotia, and at the Saulnierville and Bon-Pasteur parishes, and who today pastors the parishes of Notre-Dame-du-Rosaire in Connors, Saint-François-de-Madawaska, and Saint-François-d'Assise, in Clair. Thanks be to you for these your witnesses who make visible your sacramental presence, for these dispensers of your paschal life and who, at every Eucharist, nourish and enrich the members of your Body and bring together earth and sky, the provisional and the eternal, the living and the dead, the pain of the world and the beatitude of your Kingdom, the present, the past, and the future of every human being.

#### **GIFT AND MYSTERY**

Lord, I bless you for Bishop Gérard Dionne's fifty-seven years as a priest and thirty years as bishop. After serving as curate at Notre-Dame-des-Sept-Douleurs Parish, chaplain at the Marist Sisters' Mont Sainte-Marie Orphanage, and the Blessed Sacrament Sisters, as chaplain to the Religious Hospitallers of Saint Joseph in Saint-Basile, as director of the Office for Latin America at the Canadian Catholic [Bishops] Conference in Ottawa, and as pastor of Notre-Dame-des-Sept-Douleurs Parish in Edmundston, he generously accepted to be auxiliary bishop of Sault Sainte-Marie, in Ontario. He then became the fourth bishop of Edmundston. We praise you for all the work he accomplished, seeing himself as the brother of every human being, the brother of every baptised person and this, especially through the formation of the École de la Foi in Sudbury, Ontario and Edmundston, the Diocesan Synod, and the promotion of priestly, religious, and missionary vocations. Allow me to borrow the words of His Holiness Pope John Paul II from his book *Ma vocation don et mystère* ["My Vocation, Gift and Mystery"], which he published on the occasion of his fifty years as a priest: "To be an authentic guide to the community and a true steward of the mysteries of God, the priest is called to be a man of the Word of God, a generous and indefatigable evangeliser, before the immense tasks of the new evangelisation. This is a considerably demanding requirement, because people today expect the priest to live according to the Word, and not only to preach it. The priest must live from the Word."

#### **SHEPHERDS OF THE FLOCK**

Finally, Lord, allow me to repeat the words of Pope John Paul II, at the celebration marking his 25 years of pontificate, when he gave us the Exhortation *Pastores Gregis* on the bishop as a servant of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, for the hope of the world: "Relying on the word of God and holding firmly to hope, which like a sure and steadfast anchor reaches to the heavens, the Bishop stands in the midst of the Church as a vigilant sentinel, a courageous prophet, a credible witness and a faithful servant of Christ, our hope of glory." May gratitude always fill our hearts!

+ François Thibodeau ym

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

« From A Bishop's Journal » (593) (18 May 2005)