



## **From A Bishop's Journal (680)**

### **Successor of the Apostles (2)**

**O**n the occasion of the anniversary of my episcopal ordination I want to share with you the homily given by Bishop Gerard Dionne on that occasion, in the Immaculate Conception Cathedral in Edmundston, on January 9, 1994, feast of the Baptism of the Lord.

#### **Father in the Faith**

Brothers and sisters, this man for whom you will always pray, at Mass – “For our bishop, François” – this man who becomes your father in the faith, will need your help. He seeks your friendship because he is human; because he is your bishop, he expects your collaboration, and because he is your pastor, his desire is to gather you in love. Ensure him of the support you gave to those who came before him. The good of your souls depends on it.

#### **One Heart with his Heart**

Dear priests of the diocese of Edmundston, a new shepherd gives you the possibility of being yourselves shepherds to your people. The Church asks you to welcome him with respect and confidence, something you have already done. There are not many of you, and your task is not easy, but the Lord is with you. “Do not be afraid, little flock, for it has pleased the Lord to give you his Kingdom.” You will need him. He is the one who makes your ministry apostolic and ecclesial. Be one heart with his heart, one voice with his voice, so that the faithful will know that “there is one flock and one shepherd.”

#### **Human and Divine Intervention**

Dear Bishop Thibodeau, the time has come for me to pray like John the Baptist: “He must grow and I must diminish.” However, I shall avoid saying it because I find you tall enough as you are, and when I stand between Archbishop Chiasson and Bishop Lacroix, I have no urge to grow smaller!” If there can be no bishop's appointment without human intervention, his ordination cannot take place without divine engagement. It is through the invocation of the Holy Spirit and the laying on of hands in the name of the Lord that you shall shortly be ordained. You have no reason to doubt the value of these rites. You only have to recall the words that Paul addressed to Timothy: “Stir into flame the gift of God bestowed when my hands were laid on you.” Paul's hands are now those of the bishops,

successors of the Apostles. You shall yourself be consecrated like them, become a member of their College, and a successor of the Apostles.

### **Charged with the Church of Edmundston**

Dear Bishop Thibodeau, the Church has chosen you. It is she also that ordains you. This same Church asks you to be a pastor for this portion of the believing flock. If the Church is universal it is because she is first in Jerusalem, then in Rome, and Edmundston. You are especially responsible for the Church that is in Edmundston, without neglecting to share the concerns and hopes of the entire Church led by the other bishops under Peter. You already know your responsibilities, and the faithful know theirs, too. Four times now in 49 years they have had a bishop in Edmundston. Guided by their priests and their faith, they welcome you with hope. They are generous in collaboration and friendship, rich in talent and imagination, full of great desires and grand projects. You shall only have to make a sign, to point out the path to be followed: there are plenty of runners. Two former bishops of this diocese are here as witnesses.

### **Intensity of Faith**

The Church of Edmundston must not measure itself according to the size of its population or the extent of its territory, but according to the faith of the faithful and the richness of their talents. Everything is possible with you because, as Gabriel said to the Virgin Mary: “Nothing is impossible to God,” because “His love is from age to age,” as your motto puts it.

### **I Have Called You**

We can say of the bishop what Isaiah said of the Servant of Yahweh in the first reading: “Here is my servant whom I uphold, my chosen one with whom I am pleased, upon whom I have put my spirit; I have called you, I have grasped you by the hand; I formed you, and set you as a covenant to the people, a light for the nations,” because “the bishop must walk under the gaze of God to bring the hearts of the fathers to their children, and bring the rebellious to the practice of justice, in order to bring to the Lord a people ready for him.” Take courage, dear Bishop Thibodeau, and may you be very happy in your diocese! (End of the homily)

### **Souvenir Prayer of my Ordination**

O Blessed Virgin, Mother of Jesus and our Mother, you give thanks to the Lord for the wonders He has worked in you and you proclaim His love everlasting. As the diocese of Edmundston is dedicated to your honour, we come to you in complete trust. Be one with us before your Son, Jesus. With us, pray for all peoples of the world. With us, pray for all those who have been touched by baptism. With us, pray for all those who are in trouble or in need. Make us worthy witnesses to the love of God in His Holy Name forever and ever. Amen.

*+ François Thibodeau*

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