



From A Bishop's Journal (746)

The Priests' Retreat

The annual priests' retreat will take place, this year, from April 28 to May 2, at the Diocesan Centre, with Father Wesley Wade, vicar general of the Bathurst Diocese, as facilitator. With him we shall reflect on the mission of the priest today as servant of the Word of God and of the sacraments, at the heart of the new evangelisation. The priests' annual retreat is really a very special time in the priest's life, a spiritual springboard, a time for prayer and reflection and priestly solidarity, a special time of grace for the priests and for the Church. Except for serious reasons, every priest takes part in this retreat.

Prayer Support

I am certain of this: every one of you will be united to the priests in daily prayer on their behalf. Mass will be celebrated in the Bishop's chapel (60, rue Bouchard) at 8:30 A.M., April 29 and 30, and on May 1, the mass will be followed by seven hours (9:00 A.M.–4:00 P.M.) of Eucharistic adoration. During these retreat days the faithful are invited to visit the Eucharistic Jesus, to thank him and beg him to continue sending workers into his vineyard. From Monday evening to Friday noon, it will be "grand silence" throughout the Centre, except at mealtime. Friday, May 2 will be a day of thanksgiving for the 70 years of ordination of Monsignor Urbain Lang, P.H., 60 years of ordination of Bishop Emeritus Gerard Dionne, and the 50 years of ordination of Fathers Normand Godbout, Jean-Guy Lang, Patrice Picard, P.M.É., and Rino Thériault. Our gratitude to the Lord for all His kindnesses!

A Few Statistics

We can count ourselves lucky that our Church comprises 39 priests: 27 priests of the Edmundston Diocese, 3 from neighbour dioceses, and 9 religious priests: 4 Eudists, 1 Marist, and 4 Voluntas Deis. We are happy to have the continued presence of 25 priests in the territory of the diocese. We actually have 2 seminarians. From 2004 to 2005 the number of priests – diocesan and religious – went from 405 891 to 406 411, throughout the world. The number of philosophy and theology students in diocesan seminaries and religious houses has gone from 113 044 to 114 439 in 2005. In two years there has been a total increase of 1.23%. In 2005, for every 100 candidates to the priesthood throughout the world, there were 32 from the Americas, and there were 26 Asians, 21 Africans, 20 Europeans, and 1 from Australia. During the same period 2004-2005, the world's

Catholic population rose from a little over 1 billion 098 million to around 1 billion 115 million, an increase of 1.5%; this relative increase is very near that of the world population (1.2%), so the total world Catholic population has not substantially changed (17.20%). Behind these figures, it is important to see brothers and sisters dedicated to Christ, concerned with being disciples, and capable of “raising” other Christians.

Aid to Seminarians

The Pontifical Society of St. Peter the Apostle (175, rue Sherbrooke est, Montréal) gathers funds to help future priests throughout the world. It recently published an article in its publication *La barque de Pierre* about a resident of the Diocese of Edmundston, Mr. Odé Cyr, 77 years old. Mr. Cyr explains why he supports the seminarians: “You ask me to tell the readers why I sponsor the seminarians. I am quite embarrassed to talk about this because I don’t believe it is necessary to trumpet one’s good works. The words of Jesus come to mind, that the left hand should not know what the right hand is doing. I am a very simple man and I usually like to be discrete about what I do. However, when I consider that my testimony might encourage others to support a seminarian, I accept your invitation to share with you. My main reason for adopting seminarians is that before I die I want to do a bit of good on earth. I believe in the priesthood and I hold the priests in high esteem. When I was younger I would have liked to be a priest, but I felt that I would not have been able to undergo the long years of study required. However, I became an Oblate Brother at 28, and remained a year. An interesting point is that my wife, who passed away in 2001, had at one time been with the Oblate Missionaries of Mary Immaculate. I very much enjoyed the life of an Oblate Brother, but at the time I had major health problems. My spiritual director told me: ‘Odé, leave the Brothers. Go back to your fields, and there your health will return.’ I obeyed him and came back to my farm, where I gradually regained my strength. I have spent my entire lifetime doing manual work. I had over 130 acres of potatoes. I worked the land with my wife and my brothers Thomas, Jacques, and Luc. I jokingly referred to them as my two apostles and my evangelist!.. In some way, this is what they were!

Helping the Mission

I no longer have my wife, and I live alone. When hired to do so, I do lawns. I do this at my own speed. I like hoeing and working the earth, spreading it, and seeing lawns grow. Even if my muscles and joints are sore, I don’t stop, I keep on working the soil. I do it for my seminarians. I am now sponsoring over 30 of them. They are in Japan, India, Africa, and elsewhere. If God gives me the strength to continue working ‘my lawns’ until I reach 90, I would really like to sponsor more seminarians. My dream would be to have 72 seminarians: I like to recall Jesus and his 72 disciples. I like to imagine 72 priests celebrating the Eucharist and sharing in the mission of Jesus. I am proud of my priests, who do what I myself cannot do. I thank God for having the chance to do a little bit for him before I leave this earth. Helping the mission makes me so very happy!”

Gratitude

On behalf of the Church of Edmundston I want to say THANK YOU to all those who continue helping the priests and future priests with their generous donations, kindly prayers, and many initiatives.

+ François Thibodeau

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

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