



## From A Bishop's Journal (781)

### Happy and Holy New Year 2009!

**T**o all the men and women of good will, to all the children and youth of the Diocese of Edmundston, to all the adults and the elderly I wish a happy and holy New Year 2009! May peace, happiness and health be yours day after day! As the New Brunswick motto urges us, may hope always be there: *Spem reduxit!* May hope bloom in every family, in every parish, municipality, and association! We are given a new year: may it be, despite the many clouds of the financial, economic, and social crises, a year of solid and lasting peace. And may the divine blessing be with you every day of the year.

### Multiple Events

However, before going into particular wishes for the new year, it is important to look at the events that have unfolded and to retain the one which not only left its stamp on us, but also allowed us to truly encounter Jesus along our respective journeys. Knowing that the Lord can meet us along the human highway at the worst moments of despair as in times of greatest enthusiasm, I only list, here, events that have happened here and elsewhere: have they brought us any closer to others? Have they brought us closer to God? Have we discovered there a divine presence inviting us to an ever greater commitment? What events in my personal life have made me grow: a better job, a painful time of suffering and grieving, contacts with others who were strangers to me, a graduation, a new house, a new hobby, new friends, greater Bible knowledge, catechetics that have been beneficial to me, a celebration of forgiveness, of confirmation, of the Eucharist, meeting with a priest or spiritual adviser...? What are the events that have marked my family, in 2008? The birth of a child, the loss of a loved one, moving to another place, unexpected homecoming, visits that have done us good, family vacations, fun activities, fruitful and interesting discussions, attending Sunday mass, difficult ends of the month, cuts in employment and revenue earned...? What are the events of 2008 that have marked our municipality, our country, our world? The financial and economic crisis, fluctuations in the cost of fuel and food, local and federal elections, springtime floods and those of summertime, the massive exodus of our youth and even of families for the West and the South, the American elections, customs controls, the Sudan genocide, the humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan, the departure of young soldiers for trouble spots, the return of dead or handicapped military, climate changes, political and economic summits, certain publications or articles that were either insulting or encouraging, the change in social, political, and even religious leadership, the invention of new household products, the food crisis, the formation of catechetical teams, the World Synod of Bishops on the Word of God, the visit of Benedict XVI to the United States and France, the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the apparitions of the Virgin Mary at Lourdes, the Québec International Eucharistic Congress, the

publication of literary works and television programmes, the Commission on reasonable Accommodations, the creation of regional boards of health, the ordination of new priests, the scarcity of seminarians and religious, and the performance or non-performance of competitive sports? Etc. These are as many ordinary or extraordinary events to stimulate us or not, even today. Have we been indifferent to all these? Have we been part of them? Have they truly helped us grow?

### **“You Are There in the Midst of Our Lives”**

This long list may seem superfluous or even useless, however it is not so when we consider the words of the song “You Are There in the Midst of Our Lives,” or this statement of Vatican council II: “The joys and hopes, the grief and anguish of the people of our time, especially of those who are poor or afflicted, are the joys and hopes, the grief and anguish of the followers of Christ as well. Nothing that is genuinely human fails to find an echo in their hearts. For theirs is a community of people united in Christ and guided by the Holy Spirit in their pilgrimage towards the Father’s Kingdom, bearers of a message of salvation for all humankind. That is why they cherish a feeling of deep solidarity with the human race and its history.”

### **Meeting Jesus Christ on my Path**

Last summer I wrote a song set to music by Mathieu Lang, for the 2008-2009 pastoral year. It may be good as we reach the end of the year to come back to it since it can help us better grasp the presence of God at the heart of our lives.

If I meet Jesus Christ on my path, then I’ll discover the greatest gift of all: the Kingdom of God reigning in my life, the Father’s love revealed to the world by His Son. Let me be loving on this day..

If I meet Jesus Christ on my path, then I’ll discover the precious seed of life, the Word of the Father enlightening my life, wisdom to guide me, presence to strengthen me today. Let me be wisdom on this day.

If I meet Jesus Christ on my path, then I will feel the quiet presence in my friend, the presence that is already in my life. Divine presence revealed in the Son. Let me be Presence today.

If I meet Jesus Christ on my path, then I’ll acknowledge the signs of the times, the signal of the Father already in my life. The holy abode revealed by your Son. May I be your Abode today.

If I meet Jesus Christ on my path, then I will welcome the gift of the Spirit, the power of God already in my life. Divine promise revealed by your Son. May I be your Witness today.

I earnestly pray the Lord to bless you all, and your loved ones.

*+ François Thibodeau ym*

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Bishop of Edmundston

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