
A COVENANT TO KEEP



The Lenten season is finished, Alleluia! Alleluia! - but the covenant which the Lord does not cease to offer us and which we internalised these past 40 days must continue to strengthen. What we have learned by means of the Lenten exercises must continue to be our daily aim: deep union with God and true love of neighbour, in the manner the Risen Jesus has revealed them.

WONDERFUL CONSULTATION

The consultation undertaken immediately following my episcopal ordination was cause of ample correspondence. All the information received is being studied by the provisional episcopal committee and this, with great discretion. This information will be important stepping-stones in the organisation of our pastoral ministry and for appointments as a whole. I thank all those who sent me their replies, reflections, recommendations: I shall return to them soon.

FINANCIAL STATEMENT

The diocesan Council of Economic Affairs submitted their statement for the 1993 fiscal year. I thank the committee for its work on behalf of the Church of Edmundston. The figures submitted raise many questions regarding the future of our diocesan services and of the diocesan centre itself. Because of this, with the assent of the diocesan pastoral council and of the provisional diocesan council, a study committee has been appointed to come up with specific recommendations on the question. Usual revenues of the diocese have been around \$ 300,000.00, these last few years; had it not been for special revenues, the diocese would have had a deficit of \$ 70,000.00 for a third consecutive year. The Diocesan Centre itself has expenditures of about \$ 100,000.00 in the form of salaries, maintenance, the bishop's residence, diocesan services, and the renewal centre. In the last five years, use of the Diocesan Centre has dropped from 68 % to 12 %.

There are many questions, and in a matter such as this, haste is a bad adviser; still, it seems that a nine-month period of reflection and study would be most beneficial. Why this drop in the use of the Diocesan Centre? Where have the different groups gone, who used to come to the Centre for renewal? Don't youth, couples, and families still need periods of renewal and sharing? Must we promote the use of the Centre, or must we decentralise diocesan services: in Edmundston, Grand Falls, the Restigouche? In such an event, what would happen to the combined pastoral ministry? For more than twenty years the Diocesan Centre has been very important for our people as a whole: a feeling of belonging, a place for renewal and for fine services, a simple and beautiful housing of their bishop, easily accessible to all. If the Centre were to be sold, where would the bishop, the chancery, and the diocesan services be lodged?

DIOCESAN SERVICES

There are actually thirteen full-time persons attached to the diocesan services: the bishop, the chancellor, the accountant, the pastoral affairs coordinator, two religious education coordinators, two youth pastoral ministry coordinators, a coordinator of liturgical and missionary services, a director of the spiritual renewal centre, and three secretaries. Budgetary constraints, new needs, and new pastoral concerns oblige us to take a close look

at these services. Here, too, one must not be hasty; it is together that we must come up with the best solutions, in the actual context. We shall have to go calmly, but prudently and bravely forward, according to available resources. The generosity of the people has never been lacking, during the fifty years of the diocese's existence, but we must search for alternatives to help us pursue in our midst the task of evangelisation .

I have openly given you this information because of the concern I have that we all search together for just and community solutions. It is not a matter of sowing useless panic but of weighing wisely the facts at hand brought out by the council for economic affairs. My predecessors had to make very serious decisions, in order to build our diocesan Church; we must in turn continue the task undertaken: evangelisation at the heart of our daily lives.

JUBILEE YEAR

From December 8, 1994 to December 8, 1995 we shall have a holy year, a jubilee year on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of our Diocese. On December 19, 1944, Pope Pius XII established the diocese of Edmundston, and it was on August 15, 1945 that Bishop Marie-Antoine Roy, O.F.M., was consecrated first bishop of the diocese. A diocesan committee is now being formed, and you'll soon be hearing from it. As for myself, I hope that these celebrations take place in simplicity and fervour, that they make us better recognise the marvel of the mystery of the Church, sacrament of salvation for humankind. Let us profoundly experience these events at parish and deanery levels, and let us take note now that the diocesan festivities will be held from August 2 to 6, 1995. More, later.

Happy Easter time!

+ François Thibodeau

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

« From A Bishop's Journal » (012) (06 April 1994)