
PRAYER AND THE WORD OF GOD



The month of May promises to be one of intense activity: confirmations to celebrate throughout the parishes of the diocese, the priests' meeting from May 9 to 12, Jeff Doucette's ordination on May 21, meetings of the different diocesan councils, forthcoming graduations, etc.

On February 28 I addressed my first pastoral letter to the priests of the Church of Edmundston. These last few weeks, I have shared this letter with you, a letter in which I remind them of the glorious ministry of evangelisation, formation and sanctification which has been given to them. Here is the last part of that letter.

PRAYER AND THE WORD OF GOD

In the wake of the Diocesan Synod, I ask that every priest free himself of all administrative tasks: there are so few priests that it is of the utmost importance that they dedicate themselves primarily to prayer and evangelisation, as well as to the sanctification of the people of God. I ask that those who have the responsibility of parishes establish two committees by January 1, 1996: a parish pastoral council and a finance committee. Further details will be given shortly. During the pastoral visitations I shall be undertaking in each parish, we shall look together at how we can better help one another serve the people of God by implementing the recommendations of the Diocesan Synod as well as the major directives of the Holy Father, especially those mentioned in '*Pastores dabo vobis*.'

APPOINTMENTS

Several pastoral mandates are coming to an end. I plan on having appointments ready by the month of June, and these appointments will be for a determined period of time: one year for a parish administrator, and six years for a pastor. I count on the priests' total availability, while keeping in mind the aptitudes and health of each one. In order to develop priestly solidarity we shall have to promote voluntary groupings of priests. It would be good that such groupings exist in each deanery. There are big rectories: why not join together? In this way we could together develop a life of prayer and mutual help, share common expenses, and pool our energies and possibilities together. It is usually up to us, that our dreams be realised. The actual financial context will force us to radical solutions in order to invest more in pastoral ministry than in the costly maintenance of numerous and often poorly utilised buildings.

SHEPHERDS AFTER THE HEART OF GOD

"Tend the flock of God that is your charge, not by constraint but willingly, not for shameful gain but eagerly, not as domineering over those in your charge but by being examples to the flock" [1 Peter 5:1-3]. May this priceless advice given to us in the first Letter of Peter rekindle the enthusiasm of our own hearts. May the words of the Curé of Ars also guide us along the path of happiness and renewal: "Man has a wonderful role, that of praying and loving... You pray, you love: that is the happiness of man on earth! I do not believe that there is any other path that a priest can take: that of prayer and love."

In ending this pastoral letter, please accept as an expression of my affection and love for you the following song which was composed May 8, 1991, on the occasion of the twenty-fifth anniversary of my ordination to the priesthood:

Oh beloved of God,
be in all places
'messenger of the Most High,'
since our Saviour, blessed of the father,
has chosen you today
to teach his gathered flock.

Oh beloved of God,
be in all places
'good shepherd of the flock,'
since our Saviour, the sovereign shepherd,
has called you today
to gather all his sheep.

Oh beloved of God,
be in all places
'praise of the Lord,'
since our Saviour, the Father's worshipper,
begs you today
to comfort his people.

Oh beloved of God,
be in all places
'pure offering to the Lord,'
since our Saviour, eternal High Priest,
consecrates you today,
to sanctify his people.

Oh beloved of God,
be in all places
'Eucharist of the Lord,'
since our Saviour, the true bread of life,
offered his body and blood
as food for his people.

May the May 9-12 priests' meeting be for the greatest good of the entire Church of Edmundston.

+ François Thibodeau

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

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