



A TRIBUTE TO ARCHBISHOP PLOURDE

On August 7, along with the people of Baker Lake and neighbouring parishes, I joined in the parish-diocesan festivities marking the fiftieth anniversary of ordination of the priesthood of Archbishop Joseph-Aurèle Plourde. I offer him my heartfelt congratulations, on this great moment in his life, I congratulate and thank him on behalf of the Church of Edmundston for the gift of himself in 1944 and again in 1964, for the cause of Christ, of the Gospel, and of the Church. We thank him for having given of himself in the course of his life and in the manner of Jesus, so that people may have life in abundance. And I am especially grateful to him, that on November 1, 1964 he ordained me a deacon, and on May 8, 1965, just a few months after his episcopal ordination, he ordained me to the priesthood.

As he told me last October upon hearing of my episcopal appointment, both of us were far from expecting, in 1960-1961 when we were both teachers at [the then] St-Louis University, that one day he would become bishop and ordain me to the priesthood and that I in turn would become bishop of this beloved Church of Edmundston. God's ways are unfathomable, original, full of the unexpected.

In the course of these 50 years, Archbishop Plourde broke the Bread of the Word of God and the Bread of the Eucharist for his brothers and sisters, with generosity, tenacity, intensity, fire, and apostolic zeal worthy of the pioneers of the Canadian Church. Through the organisation and giving of closed retreats in Edmundston, by his teaching at St-Louis University and his parish ministry at St. Quentin and St. Leonard, by his work at the Edmundston diocesan offices and in the army, by his presence in organisations and associations, by his episcopal ministry in Alexandria and Ottawa, by all the work he accomplished within the Canadian Church and also the Roman Synod, by his daily witness and prayer, his numerous writings he has brought "in persona Christi" ["in the person of Christ"], as his motto declares, life to the world.

PRIESTS' SENATE

Last May, at our get-together at La Pocatière, the priests drafted a new constitution for the priests' senate of our diocese. The senate is composed of seven priests: the vicar general, four priests elected in secret ballot by their peers, and two other priests appointed by the bishop. Their principal task is to deal with matters affecting the life of our priests, their spiritual and pastoral renewal, and their ongoing formation, according to Pope John Paul II's exhortation, "*Pastores Dabo Vobis*" (March 25, 1992) on the formation of priests and future priests. The senate election process was set in motion March 21, with a first ballot that did not have the required majorities. On July 7, following the acceptance of those elected, I officially published the list of confrères forming the priests' senate. Fathers Gaétan Côté and Napoléon Michaud have been elected to a four-year term, and Fathers Rino Thériault and Alfred Irving have been elected to a two-year term. I have appointed Fathers Renaud Côté and Normand Godbout to a two-year term. As the vicar general, Father Roger Dionne is automatically a member of the senate. Father Lewis Long will be secretary of the priests' senate. I congratulate and thank the members of this new Senate. A first meeting is scheduled for September 15.

DIOCESAN SERVICES

The diocesan services which had been closed since the end of May have resumed their activities. In the next few days, the directors of the different offices will carefully organised their pastoral activities. On Tuesday, September 6, they shall meet with the priests concerned in order to evaluate the 1991-1994 Priority: The Gospel: A Heritage to Discover and Share, whose most important activity was the parish missions of evangelisation throughout most of the diocese, on the topic, "What Have You Done with Your Baptism ?" Some of you might remember the sermon themes: "Called by God," "United to Jesus," "Enlivened by the Spirit," "Sent into the World." You also remember the Scripture sharings and meditation groups, especially the home meetings. You also remember the moments of prayer and of celebration. What remains of all this ? What kind of follow-up must there be ? The rediscovery of what we become in baptism is the very beginning of all pastoral and church renewal.

On Wednesday, September 7, the directors of the diocesan pastoral office will pool together their projects and will plan their visits to the deaneries and parishes. These directors are not numerous, but I am certain that they shall be giving the best of themselves. Sister, Claudette Ruest is the diocesan coordinator of pastoral ministry, Father Jeff Doucette is in charge of the vocation office, Mrs. Manon Ruest Bourgoin will be looking after the youth ministry [French Sector]; Sister Constance Gervais of the catechetical office and Mr. Gilles Morin, also of the catechetical office besides being in charge of the office of social communications, Sister Geraldine Brotherton will continue looking after the Centre of Spirituality, and Father Armand Chouinard will be looking after the direction and spiritual renewal within the activities of the 50th anniversary of the diocese. This is the small diocesan team of permanent members. More than ever, volunteers will be welcome, in order to ensure the desired pastoral renewal, to respond to needs manifested and to apply the recommendations of the Diocesan Synod. In forthcoming months, besides setting in motion a energetic and bold vocation programme, it is of the utmost urgency to consider establishing a family pastoral ministry and social pastoral ministry programmes.

Have a good week!

+ François Thibodeau

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