
A WONDERFUL DIOCESAN GATHERING AT ST-BASILE



On March 12 of last year I had met with the religious communities of the diocese, and the extraordinary thing about it was that each congregation - not only the Religious Hospitallers of St. Joseph but all the congregations - had a good word for St. Joseph! And after all that I saw and heard on Sunday, 19 March 1995, I should not be surprised that most parishes and families also have a good word on behalf of St. Joseph. It is the entire diocese that has benefited from the Saint's protection and tender care.

If the activities marking the 50th anniversary of our diocese had no other effect than having helped us rediscover this devotion to St. Joseph which left its imprint on so many of our forebears, these festivities would not have been pointless; rather, they would have revived our devotion to this saint who so steadfastly walked in faith and who rendered his service in humility and steadfastness.

I gratefully thank all those who worked at organising this jubilee celebration in the Edmundston Deanery. It was quite a celebration we had, at St-Basile! Thank you and congratulations! You generously and eagerly organised a very interesting programme: open-house at the Hôtel-Dieu, eucharistic celebration in honour of St. Joseph, community supper at the Golden Age Club. This first gathering [in the diocese] really made us rediscover a traditional devotion that is most vital to our people.

A SPECIAL DEVOTION

"Called on to watch over the Redeemer, Joseph was what the Angel of the Lord had called him to be: he took Mary as his wife. From the very first centuries, the Church Fathers, inspired by the Gospel, showed that just as Saint Joseph took an affectionate care of Mary and set himself joyfully to the education of Jesus, so is he the guardian and protector of the Mystical Body which is the Church, of which the holy Virgin is the figure and model." It is in these words that Pope John Paul II gave homage to Saint Joseph on August 15, 1989, in his apostolic exhortation entitled *Saint Joseph in the Life of Christ and the Church*.

Saint Joseph was deeply devoted to Jesus and Mary, and he continues to do as much for us who form the Church of Jesus, the Edmundston Diocese Church. For more than 50 years Saint Joseph has watched over this portion of the people of God that we are. I am well assured that you can tell what wonderful things Saint Joseph has done for you personally, for your family, your parish, your community, our diocese... During this jubilee year I would be for you to tell me about it. I believe that we could right a big book on the topic: for example, how Saint Joseph intervened in the building of this or that edifice, how [he aided] in the discernment and follow-up of a specific vocation, how he was instrumental in a physical healing, how he attended a dying person... You can just write your recollections on a piece of paper, send it to me, or give it to one of the Religious Hospitallers of Saint Joseph. I'll share the responses with you, at some other celebration.

AN IMPRESSIVE LIST

The list of wonders already attributed to Saint Joseph is quite long, and this is not surprising: while on earth he so loved God that he trusted Him in all things; he so loved his wife and Jesus that he still continues to do so by looking

after the Church of Jesus, Jesus' Mystical Body. With you I gladly say, "Blessed be the Father, who called him; blessed be the Son, who chose him; blessed be the Holy Spirit, who loved him; blessed be Mary, who became his wife; blessed be the Church that he watches over; blessed be all those who love him." If we can rediscover the deep meaning of devotion to Saint Joseph, it is the entire Edmundston Diocese Church that will come out more alive and youthful, since it will have recognised once again the power of this young lover, husband of the Virgin Mary, to whose care the Son of God was entrusted then and now. To point out to you the devotion of our people to Saint Joseph, consider that one hundred years ago was founded Saint Joseph Parish in Tilley in the Southern Victoria Deanery; and 76 years ago, the parish of St-Joseph-du-Madawaska was founded. One hundred twenty-two years ago there came to St-Basile a religious community dedicated to St. Joseph, the Religious Hospitallers, to whom I extend my gratitude for all they are, in the midst of our Church.

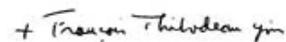
A SPLENDID PAGE

In the book entitled *Saint-Basile berceau du Madawaska* [St-Basile, Cradle of Madawaska], there is a page dedicated to devotion to Saint Joseph, in Madawaska County. We read the following: "Father Napoléon Dugal, the pastor, and the Sisters at the Convent have a lot of confidence in Saint Joseph, and through different means they disseminate this devotion throughout Madawaska County. An indefatigable pastor, Father Dugal zealously spread devotion to Saint Joseph. From 1890 onwards, the Sisters honour in a special way their holy protector by organising pilgrimages during the month of March. These pilgrimages to St. Joseph became a tradition that was kept until the 1960s."

"Saint Joseph continues his watchful, tender, fatherly concern for our house at St-Basile," writes Sister Viola Beaulieu, the community archivist. "Our founding mothers, faithful to the devotion passed on to us by our mother-house in Montreal, found in this devotion consolation and support for their apostolate. We had recourse to him in our every need, whether it was temporal or spiritual. Mère Maillet, one of our founders, spread the devotion to our protector. She encouraged people to turn to this great saint in their adversities. The founders had a limitless confidence in Saint Joseph. If the St. Joseph Oratory in Montreal is a high place of devotion in Canada, we can humbly say that the Hôtel Dieu [of St-Basile] was a bright beacon of prayer to this glorious protector, in Madawaska County."

A beautiful page of our history describing wonders attributed to Saint Joseph. Other pages on our beloved Edmundston Diocese Church have yet to be written, and we shall continue to do so. Already, thanks to the persistent work of the Organising Committee of the 50th Anniversary, and thanks to Mr. Jacques Albert of the Madawaska Historical Society and to the collaboration of those responsible for the 33 parishes of our diocese and of the religious communities, we can be justly proud of the souvenir album of the diocese, which has just been published. "You are ours, beloved Church, you tell us again of peace and freedom. In the depths of our heart you will always remain a beautiful project, a rendez-vous of love. Let us celebrate together fifty years of history often woven of courage and hope; let us recall the struggles of our ancestors: propagating life, they built the Church. Honour and praise to those builders! We are proud, and this is our story."

Have a good week!



+ François Thibodeau, C.J.M.
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