
BEAUTIFUL UPPER-MADAWASKA!



Sunday, September 17, will remain a memorable date for the diocese of Edmundston, but especially for the people of Upper-Madawaska who celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of our Church with extraordinary devotion. An exceptional twelve-hour pilgrimage led us through the six parishes of the deanery: pot-luck lunch at Lac Baker and exhibit of regional memorabilia, 50th anniversary procession, visit to the Clair historic site and to the Connors parish church, including a visit to the more than century-old Connors family home, eucharistic celebration at St-François in a church filled to capacity, highlighting a choir made up of all the deanery parish choirs, over ten priests and three bishops, the new auxiliary bishop of Portland joining [retired] Archbishop Plourde and myself, a community supper for 1400, and a four-hour plus evening of entertainment by singers and musicians from the six parishes. A celebration that calls for an annual repeat performance! My heartfelt thanks to all those who made these festivities possible. Special thanks to Archbishop Aurèle Plourde who shared the Word with us and who has granted me permission to quote extensively from his sermon.

WHAT IS A DIOCESE?

"Vatican Council II says that a diocese, united to its pastor and, through him united in the Holy Spirit thanks to the Gospel and the Eucharist, makes up a particular Church in which the Church of Christ is truly present and active. The diocese is a Church. Hence, the Church is you and me. Vatican II asserts that the Church is composed of all who believe in Christ. It is the family of believers, of which we are a part. A diocese is therefore the gathering, the family, the community of those who, in a given territory, live in union with Christ, in faith, hope, and charity. Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1906-1945), a theologian, said: 'The Church is Jesus Christ living as a community.' But I hasten to add that if the Church is all of us, we still make up only a part, a component, of the Church; the human, visible, component. But the Church has another component, an invisible but how so very important one: the presence within her of God, Father, Son, and Spirit."

A FAMILY

"The Church is also the dwelling place of God. Work of Christ, it is in her and through her that he pursues his work of salvation. The Church is the family of God, in such a way that if we abandon the Church we also abandon God and those who believe in God. Saint Paul asserts that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. But how does he save sinners? Through the mediation of the Church. As a matter of fact, he is the one who acts in his Church in diverse ways, especially through his Word and his sacraments. Saint John tells us that Jesus is the living and creative Word of God. Now, to whom does God confide the proclamation of this Word and its interpretation? To His Church. He told his apostles: 'Go out into the world, proclaim the Gospel to every creature. Whoever believes will be saved, and whoever does not believe will be damned.' When we understand the importance of the Word in the life of individuals, families, and in the life of the world itself, it is easy to understand what a favour it is for God to speak to us in and through the Church."

PARISH COMMUNITIES

"All the sacraments are actions, gestures of the risen Jesus, and means of salvation. It is to the Church that God confided the work of handing down the sacraments and through them, to help humankind achieve salvation. That

is what a Church is, that is hat a diocese is: a place where, thanks to its parish communities, God abides and acts. The place where the salvation of Christ's collaborators is worked out. If God created us without our consent, He does not save us without it. You well know the falsehood of the statement made by some: 'Christ, yes, but the Church, no: I deal directly with God, I don't need the Church.' You can see the error of those who abandon the Church because of the weakness of her members, clergy included. God has deposited a treasure in the Church we make up, in the diocese you comprise. But how many are there who ignore this treasure?"

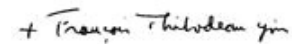
A TREASURE

"The treasure which the Church possesses is not called money but grace, [spiritual] power, and gifts. My wish is that these festivities help us better understand what Jesus did for us by establishing his Church, a Church which, as it grew, developed into a diocese so as to better bring to the faithful the means of salvation that we need. God came into the world to save sinners, and it is within and as a Church that He does so. Let us give thanks to God for His gift of the Church."

LET THE FEAST CONTINUE!

The celebrations of the 50th are far from over: a Eucharistic Congress will take place October 21 and 22; writings will also be published, one on Bishop Lacroix and another on Monsignor [Numa] Pichette. November will call us to remember those who went before us on the Jubilee Trail. Nonetheless, even now we can ask ourselves what we shall keep in memory of all these activities: will they have helped us better understand the marvellous mystery of our beloved Church? I hope so with all my heart.

Have a good week!



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