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## GENEROUS COMMITMENTS

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For a fifth consecutive year seven young people from the Diocese of Edmundston, accompanied by Sister Claudette Ruest, S.M., Mrs. Manon Ruest-Bourgoin, and Mrs. Parise Byram, will be leaving April 28 for Mexico to commit themselves to a month's work among the poor families of that region, in response to their baptismal calling. As their bishop I am sending them to bear witness to their Christian experience. They have undergone an intensive preparation for this missionary undertaking, these past few months, learning the Spanish language, reflecting on the Word of God, learning to work as a team, and contacting many Christian communities of our diocese. They have received the support and signs of solidarity from people everywhere. May this month-long experience be most beneficial to them.

### WORLD VOCATION SUNDAY

Sunday April 28 marks the World Day of Prayer for Vocations. I am most grateful to all in the diocese who, in response to the Lord's invitation pray the Father to send labourers to His harvest. Young and not-so-young are very faithful to this mission of intercession. Not only our diocese but the Church as a whole need new forces to carry out the mission that was so well started. Our world is still in need of the witness and ministry of priests, missionaries, and religious brothers and sisters. On this World Day of Prayer for Vocations, let us pray that every person discern the personal call that the Lord is sending.

### PRIESTS' ANNUAL RETREAT

The priests' annual retreat will be held at the Diocesan Centre from Monday, April 29 to Friday, May 3, under the direction of Sister Rita Gagné, an Ursuline nun from the Gaspé Diocese; this retreat will bear mainly on deepening the 1996-1997 liturgical themes. As with last year, the retreat this year will unfold in the greatest silence possible; except for major emergencies it is important at this time for the priests to abstain from all phone calls and visits. I invite all in the diocese, this week, to have a special intention in their prayers for the priests of our Church. Please note that from 4:0 P.M. Monday, April 29, until Friday, May 3, the Blessed Sacrament will be exposed in the bishop's quarters' chapel at the Diocesan Centre, and any who wish may share in this permanent adoration. At the Friday Fellowship Meal we shall be celebrating the priestly anniversaries of: Fr. Narcisse Gagnon (55), Fr. Rino Albert (50), Msgr. Fernand Boucher (50), Fr. Aurèle Godbout (40), Fr. Jean-Guy Lachance (40), Fr. Claude Michaud (40), Fr. Ernest Dumaesq (30), Fr. Alfred Irving (25), and Fr. Michel Bouffard (20). The priests' retreat is a special time of spiritual renewal for our priests, a time of prayer and priestly solidarity that only major reasons may dispense one from attending.

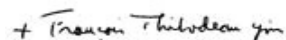
### PRIESTLY ORDINATION

On Saturday, May 25, at St. Ann's of Maliseet, I shall have the joy of ordaining Leo Curtis Sappier to the priesthood. Curtis was born February 3, 1956, and is the son of Peter and Bertha Sappier of Maliseet. This occasion will mark the second time in my life that I preside at a priestly ordination. According to information presently available, this will be the first time that a member of the Atlantic First Nations is ordained a priest. Curtis was the Maliseet school principal when he was first approached in 1990 with the suggestion that he study for the priesthood; constantly supported by the Maliseet community, Curtis discerned with his people

this call made to him by Bishop Gerard Dionne. He entered St. Paul Seminary in Ottawa in September, 1990; he was instituted lector June 16, 1991, and acolyte, August 23, 1992. He made his pastoral internship at the Aniashnabe Native Spirituality Centre, Holy Spirit Parish, Sturgeon Lake, Ontario (1993-1994), and at the Immaculate Conception Cathedral Parish, Edmundston (1994-1995). I ordained Curtis to the diaconate on July 26, 1995, and he returned to St. Paul Seminary in Ottawa last September to complete his studies for priestly ordination. Curtis has a broad life experience: his work among the native population has always been most appreciated. Curtis is a very soft-spoken and warm person, especially with the young and the sick. He shows much compassion for and understanding of others; with him, it is very much "people first." The Sappier family is very well known at Maliseet: Curtis is one of sixteen children, and he is godfather to eleven nephews and nieces. He is a good sportsman, especially in hockey. He is known for his wisdom and great spirit of faith. He is very interested in the culture of his people.. He has worked with book drug addicts and alcoholics. He has made great efforts to better understand the francophone language and culture. Let us keep him in our prayers.

#### FIRST EUCHARISTIC CONGRESS

It is in the Restigouche Deanery that the first diocesan Eucharistic Congress preparatory to the Jubilee Year 2000 will be held June 7, 8, and 9 of this year. It is exciting to see all the preparations in the works, in each of the deanery parishes: liturgy workshops, instructions on the person of Jesus Christ, guided tours of each church, workshops of the Eucharist (at St-Quentin) on May 18 and 19 with Fr. Jean-Yves Garneau, etc. I invite you to say the 1996 Congress prayer often: *Father, we acknowledge that your love is from age to age. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, your Son Jesus offered himself for us, and he continues to give himself to us in the sacrament of the Eucharist. As we approach the Jubilee Year 2000, help us keep the memorial of Jesus at the heart of our lives. May our Sunday gatherings be the source and summit of our Christian lives, as we recall the death and resurrection of Jesus and wait for his coming again in glory. We ask you this and we thank you our God who is the same yesterday, today, and forever. Amen.* Have a good week... a good retreat... a good Congress.



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

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