

---

## THE 125TH ANNIVERSARY OF STE-ANNE-DE-MADAWASKA



---

Next year will mark the one hundred twenty-fifth anniversary of the parish of Ste-Anne-de-Madawaska. What thanksgiving we must give for the marvels worked there during this period! The centennial album tells us that in September, 1872, a number of inhabitants of the upper part of St. Leonard and the lower section of St. Basile took advantage of the pastoral visitation of Bishop James Rogers, the first bishop of Chatham, to ask him to establish a new mission in the region. This request was made for a number of valid reasons: the great distance to travel for the people to get to church, and difficulty in assisting in the divine services and in sending the children to catechism, among other reasons. Father Georges Théodule Dugal, pastor of St. Basile, was charged with setting up and look after the pastoral ministry of the new parish dedicated to St. Ann. Trustees were appointed and work started on the building of a chapel; the first Mass was celebrated Christmas Day, 1872. At the time, the parish had 100 families. The first parish mission was given in July, 1876, at which time the feast of St. Ann was celebrated for the first time. In 1882, the feast which had not been celebrated since 1876, was solemnly marked with a sung preparatory triduum. This tradition would continue for many years, and the pilgrims would attend in great numbers.

### FOR MORE THAN THREE YEARS NOW...

As we get closer to the feast of St. Ann, July 26, it is well to recall that already in 1680 the first bishop of New France, the Blessed François de Laval said, « We declare unequivocally that nothing has helped us more to support the burden of our pastoral charge in this budding Church than the special devotion which the inhabitants have towards St. Ann, a devotion which we dare say sets them apart from all other peoples. Our young country has a special need for powerful protectors in heaven, and we see the faithful here have recourse to St. Ann in their every need, that which it has pleased God to reward them with countless favours of all kind. » Blessed Marie of the Incarnation, the first Ursuline nun to come to North America, also attested to this devotion: « Seven leagues from Québec lies a village called Petit Cap where there is also a church dedicated to St. Ann, in which church the Lord works great marvels in favour of this holy mother of the most holy Virgin. Paralytics walk, the blind are granted their sight, and the sick, whatever illness afflicts them, recover their health. » Father Thomas Morel, a missionary along the Beaupré Coast, wrote, « God has placed in the hands of St. Ann a treasury of graces and blessings which she generously hands out to all who come to this place asking for favours. »

According to the Ste-Anne-de-Madawaska centennial album, the piety of the pilgrims was obvious, a number of healings were noted on the day consecrated to the sick. On September 25, 1886, Father Isaac Dumont was appointed the first resident pastor; this is a memorable date for the St-Anne parishioners. Construction of the new church - the stone structure that is still in use today - did not begin before December of 1922. In January, 1923, 127,000 feet of lumber was cut for the new building; a good part of the granite stone quarried on land owned by parishioners was dragged to the construction site and cut to size there. The church columns, all of one piece, were from trees cut locally. On July 23, 1925, Monsignor Louis-Napoléon Dugal solemnly blessed the new church. Recognised as a true shrine dedicated to St. Ann, the church measures 148 by 68 feet and can accommodate 1500 people. On July 26, 1925, a major pilgrimage was organised in honour of the patroness of the parish, and all the faithful of the region were invited to attend.

## **WHO WAS ST. ANN?**

Little is known about St. Ann. Her name is not even recorded in the Bible. Still, we know that she is the mother of the Mother of God, and this tells us more about her, her power, her virtues and her glory, than any detailed biography. « We also know that it is through St. Ann that several wonders have occurred, such as healings of the body and the soul. The latter ones are a thousandfold more splendid than the former, » notes Father Eugene Lefebvre who was for a long time director of pilgrimages at Ste-Anne-de-Beaupré. This renowned Redemptorist writes, « Beaupré is the most beautiful book ever written on the glory of the mother of Mary. » And it is in this blessed place that I shall be for this year's feast of St. Ann, at which time I shall preside a number of services, July 25 and 26: solemn Eucharist, blessing of the sick, candlelight procession. « The marvels worked at Beaupré open on the dazzling scene of the treasures of power and goodness with which the Son of God showered his grandmother. From Mary of the Incarnation and Bishop Laval to our days, Beaupré has been for millions of Christians a place where the blind see, the deaf hear, and the paralytics walk. »

## **A DIOCESAN SHRINE**

For close to 125 years Ste-Anne-de-Madawaska has been holy ground where it is good to gather for prayer and celebration. This shrine we owe to our forebears is a meeting place for everyone in the diocese. United with all the pilgrims of Ste-Anne-d'Auray in Brittany, France and Ste-Anne-de-Beaupré in Québec, united with all these people who visit the churches and shrines dedicated to St. Ann, whether it be at Maliseet, Caraquet, Fredericton, Burnt Church, Kingsclear, Ste-Anne-de-Kent or Baie-Ste-Anne, we want to make of this July 26 a day of prayer totally dedicated to the grandmother of Jesus.

A good St. Ann's Day!

+ François Thibodeau ym

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

« From A Bishop's Journal » (129) (17 July 1996)