
GOOD NEWS!



My intensive pastoral visitation to the Southern Victoria Deanery is proceeding apace. I have already visited seven of the eight parishes, and I have had four notable inter-parish meetings on questions of liturgy, economic affairs, sacramental preparation, and the vitality of the deanery's different social organisations. I am impressed at the high number of committed people, in each of these parishes, as well as at the seriousness with which they take the teaching of religious education within each community. Looking into the story of these parishes it is good to recognise the missionary spirit at the heart of these communities, and how they maintained contact with one another despite distances and precarious means of communication. I shall come back to this, later.

ORDINATIONS TO THE DIACONATE

I shall have the pleasure of presiding at two ordinations to the transitional diaconate. The first of these, that of Mr. Gaëtan Bernier, will take place on the feast of St. Joseph, Wednesday, March 19, at 1:00 P.M.; the ceremony will take place at the A.-M. Sormany Cité des Jeunes. [The Edmundston [French] regional high school] Gaëtan is actually interning at the Cité des Jeunes as well as at the Edmundston Regional Hospital and the RADO sheltered workshop. The second ordination, that of Mr. Ghislain Rémillard, will take place April 5, at 7:00 P.M., at Assumption Church in Grand Falls. Ghislain is the son of the late Jules Rémillard and Gilberte Beaudoin of St.-Raphaël, near Lévis, Québec. Ghislain is presently interning at Assumption Parish in Grand Falls. Ghislain is planning for a June 21 ordination to the priesthood, and Gaëtan has chosen the date of August 6, 1997. I ask your prayers for these two future deacons as well as for the six other seminarians of our Diocese, young men who are now undergoing theological studies at Laval University.

CHRISM MASS

On Monday, March 24, at 7:30 P.M. at St. Mary of the Angels Church in Perth-Andover, the annual Chrism Mass will be celebrated, in the course of which the oils used for forthcoming baptisms, confirmations, ordinations, and sacraments of the sick, will be blessed. Monday of Holy Week is also set aside as a day of prayer for our priests: at 4:00 P.M. on that day a Holy Hour [In French, as it is held especially for the priests] will take place at St. Mary's. Whether you are at work, in the hospital, or at home, I invite you to enter into deep spiritual communion with one another throughout this entire Holy Week.

MISSIONARY COMMITMENT

Last February 23, a strong spirit of solidarity was felt, in the parish church of St-Joseph. [Edmundston Deanery] Miss Patsy Morency, daughter of the late Roland and Yvonne Morency of that parish, gave a talk to the people on her missionary project to go to Puebla, Mexico. I shall have the pleasure of presiding her mission departure on April 12. During her talk, she stated: « *In order to understand what it means to be a missionary at home or abroad, one must place oneself at the level of the heart. The mission is the basis of all human life, it is Christ's sending-off, the sending-off of God on earth as an act of love. It is the love of our heart and life. Each and everyone of us can be a missionary. This we must be, for our own sake, for our happiness, and for our loved ones. I say yes to life, I say yes to happiness and to love.* » Happy mission ministry, Patsy!

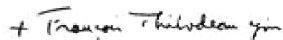
PATHS TO SOLIDARITY

I am impressed by the different ways our Church has developed to live as fully as possible this Lent and the forthcoming Holy Week. Several parishes have organised a parish mission, a high time of spiritual renewal; I thank all those who were involved in them. The Sunday afternoon meetings during Lent, at the Diocesan Centre, are proving very successful. These afternoons are a period for spiritual encounter and celebration. The Development and Peace Share-Meals help us join in solidarity with our brothers and sisters of the Third World. For the second consecutive year the Drummond parish choir will be presenting the famous *Stabat Mater* at the Richelieu Auditorium in Grand Falls, on Palm Sunday, March 23. And on Good Friday the Way of the Cross will go through the city of Edmundston and the town of Grand Falls. In the Restigouche, the Way of the Cross will leave St. Quentin at 9:00 A.M. and will proceed to the other parishes of that deanery: Saint-Martin, Kedgwick, and St.-Jean-Baptiste.

A PORTRAIT OF YOUR PARISH

Last September each parish pastoral council was asked to come up with a portrait of its parish; in this they were helped by a set of ten questions. I am happy to note that in several parishes this simple questionnaire became a useful pastoral tool; it helped the groups to better identify their milieu's needs and resources and to develop a greater awareness of what some parishioners are experiencing. As for me, I looked at two questions, with the PPC members: 1) Who are the poor in your milieu? and 2) How do you foresee your parish's structure, the next five years? The first question forces us to look at the reality of the poor in our midst and to find solutions to their plight. What many receive from social services or employment insurance is in no way enough for many of them to have decent housing, food, and clothing. As to Question 2), it calls on us to take a hard look at the pastoral personnel now on hand in our diocesan Church, and it calls on us to do something now to ensure a proper response to the spiritual and pastoral needs of our milieu. It is important for us to challenge today those who could one day become priests, and to invite others to become pastoral agents, in the years to come. We must also find replacements for a number of persons who are now sitting on pastoral councils and parish committees. May our endeavour in this be beneficial to all.

Have a good week!



+ François Thibodeau
Bishop of Edmundston

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