
SYNOD FOR THE AMERICAS



The Synod of Bishops for the Americas opened in Rome on Sunday, November 16; it was convened by the pope for the coming of the year 2000. Over 300 participants from 51 American countries are attending. Twenty-two North and South American bishops' conferences, as well as from Bermuda and Central America, are represented. The Canadian Church delegation has fifteen delegates, two of whom are from the Atlantic Bishops Conference: Bishops Raymond Lahey of St. George's, Newfoundland, and James Wingle of Yarmouth, Nova Scotia.

MAIN OBJECTIVES

Under its main theme, *The Encounter with the Living Jesus Christ, Path of Conversion, Communion and Solidarity in America*, the Synod will pursue three major objectives: the promotion of a new evangelisation throughout the Americas as a demonstration of episcopal communion, the increase of solidarity between the separate diocesan Churches in the fields of pastoral action, and the highlighting problems of justice and international economic relations among American countries, keeping in mind the vast inequalities between North, Central, and South America.

AN EVENT OF CONCERN TO US

This extraordinary Synod should concern us not only because of its objectives and the implication of our bishops, but especially because of its theme, the person and message of Jesus Christ at the heart of our lives. How do we people of the Americas welcome the Risen One, day to day? How do we witness to him in the midst of our religious, economic, social, and political activities? How do we transmit the Gospel message to our families? How do we live out this message? What kind of conversion does the person of Jesus prompt, in me and in others? What kind of communion do we develop among us, in the heat of action and in our quieter moments together? What kind of solidarity do we have with the needy in our milieu and with those in other American countries? What kind of solidarity do we experience with our brothers and sisters of other dioceses, first of all with those of our neighbour New Brunswick dioceses of Moncton, Bathurst, and Saint John?

PROPHETIC MESSAGES

We can be justly proud of the Canadian delegation to the Synod. In deep communion with the entire Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, these bishops composing the delegation and who were either elected or appointed by the Pope shared with us, at our annual plenary meeting excerpts from their planned intervention, such as the following: *Everyday we hear warnings about how unwisely we manage nature. In [our] country, there is the pollution of the Saint Lawrence River and the Great Lakes, the destruction of forests, the erosion and compacting of soil by over-intensive cultivation, overfishing, acid rain, and toxic wastes. The situation is serious. Earth is crying out, showing signs of fatigue that indicate we are headed down an insane, almost irreversible incline.*

We are far from the spirit of Genesis: « And the Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to till it and keep it » (Genesis 2:15). From its beginning, humanity has been in a garden which we are all to till and keep. From the very beginning, humans are established by God in a garden of which they are the stewards.

GLOBALIZATION OF THE ECONOMY

« The Church has always insisted on the supremacy of the person over material things. With hunger a daily reality for 840 million of the world's population. (...) Our world has more people than ever before, the gap between rich and poor is accelerating, and the planet's ecosystems are deteriorating at an alarming rate. (...) » « To meet this seemingly immense challenge, what is called for is a new global ethic in the area of globalization. » (...) Economic borders that once prevented the free flow of goods and money have been systematically eliminated through free trade deals, international agreements, and the withdrawal of national legislative protection. Globalization has occurred so rapidly and broadly that we can scarcely glimpse all the implications for our social structures and political institutions, much less our ecological future.

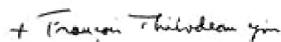
POST-IMMIGRATION CATHOLICISM

With few exceptions, the Catholic Church in Canada took root and grew up through the various groups of immigrants who made their way to its shores. From the first Catholics arriving here from France in the early 17th century to the influx of refugees and other immigrants from Asia and South America within the last decades, for the main part, the Catholic Church in Canada has been an immigrant Church. As each group of immigrants came, they brought their own clergy, their own language, and their own particular enculturation of Catholicism. (...) [The Church] stood at the centre of the community. (...) The situation of the Catholic Church in Canada today (...) is now trying to enculturate itself in a post-immigrant, multi-ethnic, religiously pluralistic and secular context. (...) The individual Catholic must find roots beyond the immigrant Catholicism that religiously formed him or her... For the Church as a whole, this is a challenge to readjust its pastoral approach radically from the maintenance of strong immigrant church communities to active evangelization within a pluralistic and secular context.

More on these issues later. Let us pray for this Synod taking place, and let us reflect on its texts.

1997 BISHOP MARIE-ANTOINE ROY PRIZE

I invite you to the Christmas Concert to be held Sunday, November 30, at the Richelieu Auditorium in the Thomas Albert High School in Grand Falls. It is at this venue that I shall officially grant the 1997 Bishop Marie-Antoine Roy Prize to a group or organisation that has made a major contribution to our milieu. The concert will feature the Drummond and Saint George choirs, and the three choirs of Assumption Parish, Grand Falls. Receipts from this concert will go to the Grand Falls Food Bank. Have a good week!



+ François Thibodeau
Bishop of Edmundston

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