
THE FUTURE OF OUR DIOCESE (5)



ROLE OF THE PASTOR

His ministry is specific; it is not the sum total of everything. His ministry is limited and definite. He does not have to look after everything; others too have real responsibilities.

A first specific role of the priest is to *preside*. He is the one who 'stands before,' the one who is there to remind the group of the stranger (the Other) in their midst, Jesus Christ. The group will be tempted to believe that what they think becomes the norm. There will always be The Other who will disturb and challenge. The pastor is there to remind the group of The Other.

CALLING BACK TO THE MISSION TASK

A second specific role is that of calling back the group to its sense of mission. His task is to ensure that the Gospel of Jesus Christ is proclaimed in both word and deed. The pastor calls forth the gifts and discerns the charisms needed for the Gospel to be proclaimed. He is an 'awakener,' in relation to the mission. In the group, he is the one who recognises and confirms that what is being done is ecclesial. He has the duty to correct, challenge, and point out what is not evangelical. He coordinates the different undertakings, the different charisms so that all may move in the same direction. The people must serve at building up, and charisms must be awakened, for all the work to be done. These charisms are from the Spirit, and do not depend on personal initiative. The pastor ensures that the mission is being carried out. Since he presides over the Church, so also does he preside over the principal sacraments: baptism and the eucharist, those sacraments that build up the Church. This is fundamental, and if we stick to it we will need many people. To the pastor is given the gift of presiding: he was ordained for this, but it does not mean that he has all the charisms: these must be found within the People of God. *All of Christian life for all*. He has the responsibility of ensuring that this happens. It is the Church-body that must be roused. All ministries are associated with one another for the mission.

THE REAL PROBLEM

The real problem is not the priest shortage; rather, the shortage of priests allows us to renew the diocese's pastoral organisation. How do we keep alive the memory of Christ, in the diocese of Edmundston? The first question to be asked has to do with the mission and not with how we are to replace the priests. How do we promote the rise of the Church body, and how do we foster the new ministries needed - those are the challenges.

STEPS TO FOLLOW

1. A possibility would be that 2 or 3 parishes start, during the year, to get some of their already-existing organisations and committees to work together. This would be a good beginning. A new parish is not established overnight, it takes time, but in the meantime we can join together in work and activities. Not only must we not

encourage chauvinism, but we must attempt to get local P.P.C.s together once in a while to work at a common project or task. Review the session notes and decide what could be shared or worked at together, and begin.

2. By beginning with the suggestions made by the different discussion groups gives us choices. When only one option is given, it does not encourage debate. Do not forget to identify our values. The choice made will be the one respecting our values the most as well as the objective envisioned. Some have mentioned the advantage of having been participants in the session. It is not only an advantage but also a responsibility to work at offering new perspectives and facilitating ongoing discussion. This, to the extent that you begin immediately! There is not much time left, you have two years to move gracefully; if you do not start, in three years everything will explode in your faces. Listening to your summaries and comments, I see that you are not lacking any means for beginning the project. This is a challenge which you can win.

Don't forget to work at this in a prayerful atmosphere. Finish what you start! If you do this you will come out winners, and in this way the love of God will be made manifest to the entire People of God.

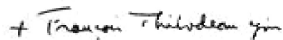
A PARTICIPANT'S PRAYER

« Lord, you suffered and died for us: come to our help, send your Spirit to each and everyone of us. Help our diocese prepare for the many changes coming. Protect our bishop, priests, and religious. Inspire our lay people to love, to have faith, and to commit themselves more and more as better practising Christians. We ask you this in this year dedicated to the Holy Spirit. Amen. »

GRAND FALLS DEANERY

As a follow-up to the February session, a second meeting meetings will be held, this time in the Grand Falls deanery. Members of the parish pastoral councils, liturgy committees, economic affairs committees, and parish committees of Notre-Dame-de-Lourdes, Saint-Léonard-Ville, Saint-Léonard-Parent, Saint-George, Assumption, Drummond, and Saint-André parishes are convened to a meeting to be held in the Roger Dionne Parish Hall (Assumption Church) on Saturday, March 21, from 9:00 A.M. to 4:00 P.M. The topic of the meeting will be the meaning of mission in restructuring. Father Roger Dionne, V.G., and Sister Claudette Ruest, S.M., will be the facilitators.

Have a good week!



+ François Thibodeau
Bishop of Edmundston

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