
A SPECIAL HOLY WEEK



As each day of the year is a gift from God, all our days are holy, but the week from April 5 to 12 will be altogether special for the people of the Edmundston Diocese.

XIII WORLD YOUTH DAY

Palm Sunday has been declared by Pope John Paul II the *World Youth Day*. I remember that in 1992 I was privileged to experience Palm Sunday in St. Peter's Square in Rome, the liturgy being presided by the Pope and attended by hundreds of thousands of youth. Just as the young people in Jerusalem had long ago acknowledged and welcomed Jesus as the One who came in the name of God, so in 1992 these young people, through their prayers, songs and applause professed their faith in Jesus the Son of the Living God. To the mind of John Paul II, Palm Sunday is like the threshold to a holy week to be experienced in close relation with Christ. You will recall that last August in Paris the World Youth Conference followed pretty closely the outline of a holy week, with its peak being the baptismal vigil and the pascal celebration. At the close of the last Canadian Bishops' Assembly, a special committee was set up to study the possibility of hosting World Youth Days in Montréal, in the year 2002.

BLESSING OF THE OILS

On Palm Sunday I shall be concluding my intensive pastoral visitation of the Upper Madawaska Deanery parishes. Within this framework I shall be privileged to preside the Eucharist and confirm the youth of St-François-Xavier and Connors parishes. On Monday of Holy Week, at 7:30 P.M. in the Baker Brook church I shall preside the Chrism Mass in the course of which I shall bless the oil of catechumens and the oil of the sick, and consecrate the holy chrism. During this ceremony our priests shall also renew their commitment. I invite all of you to this liturgy, one of the more significant in the life of the diocesan church. In the afternoon of Monday of Holy Week, a holy hour will be held from 4:30 to 5:30, the intention of which is prayer for many and holy priests.

EASTER TRIDUUM

Between Holy Thursday and Easter Sunday a number of religious activities will take place. I trust that you will continue the beautiful tradition of assisting in good numbers, whether it be at the Holy Thursday eucharist commemorating the Last Supper, the community way of the cross either in church or through your town, the Good Friday service, times of prayer and reflection, the Easter Vigil, or the beautiful Easter Sunday celebrations. These are uncommon periods for growing in faith in the Risen Christ and to join closely together to our brothers and sisters, especially the suffering and the destitute.

A NEW LIFE

April 6, Monday of Holy Week will also be election day in the new city of Edmundston. All of you who are taking part in this election process - whether as candidates or as electors - will be in my prayer. You know how much Holy Scripture views the City as the place of solidarity and fellowship, and Jerusalem being the symbol

of religious, social, and political unity. Psalm 127 says, « *Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labour in vain. Unless the Lord guards the city, the guard keeps watch in vain.* » I know your faith and your desire to daily build up a city in which it will always be good to abide. Where there is peace, justice, friendship, truth, sharing, harmony, dialogue, concern for the poor, we know that God is present.

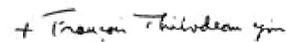
SOLIDARITY IN THE MIDST OF THE WORLD

In reference to this new stage in the growth of the City of Edmundston I re-read a few excerpts from the Vatican II document on *The Church in the Modern World*, and I came across a passage on the interdependence of Church and Society, in paragraph 74. There is nothing truly human that does not find an echo in the heart of Christ's disciples. The Christian community sees itself as truly and intimately in solidarity with humankind and its story. Profound transformations are being experienced today in structures and institutions: they accompany cultural, economic, and social evolution. These changes exert a great influence on the community's political life, specially those rights and duties of each one in the exercise of civic liberty and the pursuit of the common and public good.

FOR THE COMMON GOOD

In order to establish a truly human political life, there is nothing more important than developing an inner sense of justice, goodness, commitment to the common good, and to bolster fundamental beliefs on the real nature of the political community, as well as on the end to be reached, the good exercise and limitations of public authority. The political community is there for the common good, and it finds its justification and meaning, and has its laws grounded in this common good. As for the common good itself, it is composed of all the conditions needed for social life that allow people, families, and groups to develop as fully and naturally as possible. The political community and public authority are grounded in human nature and depend therefore on the order established by God, even if the determination of political systems and the appointment of leaders depend on the free exercise of the will of the people.

Have a good Holy Week!



+ François Thibodeau

Bishop of Edmundston

« From A Bishop's Journal » (219) (01 April 1998)