
VISITATION OF THE UPPER MADAWASKA DEANERY (2)



I would like to share with you a little of what I experienced at the time I made my pastoral visitation to the Upper Madawaska Deanery, during the Lenten season.

SAINT-HILAIRE

I begin this report to you by quoting from one of the most famous sons of Saint-Hilaire, Father Thomas Albert (1879-1924), historian of the beautiful Madawaska region: « *The period of stability following the Ashburton Treaty (August 9, 1842) was conducive to colonisation, and so, during this time we witness a number of colonies being founded. The Saint-Bruno, Sainte-Luce, Saint-Hilaire, and Saint-François roads saw the arrival of their first inhabitants. The future parishes of Eagle Lake, Sainte-Agathe, Saint-André, Drummond, and Baker Lake begin a prosperous history.* » [*Histoire du Madawaska*, p. 233] The souvenir albums commemorating the parish (1969) and the Madawaska (1973) centennials are important historical sources. In the fall of 1868 Bishop James Rogers of Chatham, anticipating the attachment of Sainte-Luce Parish to the diocese of Portland, Maine, detached the whole north shore of the parish along the Saint John River and created the new parish of Saint-Hilaire, so called in memory of the generous benefactor of the land on which the church was built, Mr. Hilaire Cyr. Until 1926 Saint-Hilaire Parish also comprised the parish of Baker Brook and reached as far as Verret. During these 129 years, the following priests have pastored at Saint-Hilaire: Fathers François-Xavier de Langie, Joseph A. Roy, J.C. Éthier, C.S.C., Jean Bazoge, C.S.C., Joseph Pelletier, Jean-Frédéric Maillet, Joseph Martin, Antoine Comeau, Télesphore Lambert, Zoël Lambert, Armand Martin, Wilfrid Lagacé, J. Aurèle Godbout, Hilaire Daigle, Patrice Cyr, Charles-Eugène Michaud, Étienne Dubé, Arthur Rossignol, George Fournier; Father Jacques Thériault is the present pastor of a community of 829 persons.

I was very happy to inaugurate the pastoral visitation of Saint-Hilaire Parish as early as 8:00 A.M. with a tasty breakfast at Luce's camp at Riceville; breakfast was served to 125 of us. The remainder of the day was punctuated with visits to the sick and the elderly, as well as to the local businesses. A meeting with the Saint-Hilaire municipal officers allowed for a sharing of project ideas and to note the remarkable positive relations existing between the parish and the municipality. The celebration of the Sunday Eucharist with Confirmation in a pious and prayerful atmosphere, followed by a get-together of the people in the new municipal building was one of the highlights of the visitation. A meeting with the parish pastoral council helped us gauge the vitality of the parish community.

BAKER BROOK

There had been talk of building a chapel, at Baker Brook and so, in 1917 Baker Brook was canonically erected as a mission. Father Wilfrid Lagacé was the first pastor and priest-in-charge; he arrived there August 23, 1925. In 1926, fire ravaged part of the village, and the church which was in the building stage and the school both went up in flames. The solemn blessing of the actual church took place July 29, 1928, and a few days later (August 4) Saint-Coeur-de-Marie Parish was decreed and recognised as an independent parish. After the departure of the founding pastor in 1931, Father J. Albert Poirier took over as pastor. Between 1940 and 1998 the Baker Brook parish has been ministered to by the Franciscans: Fathers Joachim Monfette, Stanislas

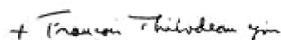
Ferland, Pascal Provost, Florian Philibert, Ludolphe Ayotte, Hugues Beauregard, Onésime Lamontagne, Théophile Charland, and Augustin Lanneville. In over thirty years of faithful service Father Joseph Moisan has served first as assistant pastor and then as pastor since 1975. On behalf of the Diocese of Edmundston and in my own name I want to express my deepest gratitude to Father Moisan and to all the Franciscans. Father Moisan's leaving us in July will create a big gap not only in Baker Brook but in our whole diocesan Church. We recall that the Franciscans worked for 75 years in the Southern Victoria Deanery, and the first bishop of our Diocese, Bishop Marie-Antoine Roy, was a Franciscan. May Saint Francis of Assisi intercede for us, that we may obtain holy Franciscan pastors like Father Moisan and his courageous confreres. I also want to note that two other religious congregations ministered in the parish of Baker Brook, the sisters of the Congregation of Notre Dame at the village school, and the Sisters of Charity (Grey Nuns) at the Foyer Ste-Elizabeth nursing home.

I was glad to preside the Sunday Eucharist with Confirmation of 15 children at Saint-Coeur-de-Marie Church, March 15, and meet the parishioners. A meeting with the parish pastoral council and the parish and the parish economic affairs committee gave us an opportunity to look ahead, after the departure of their parish priest; meetings with the diocese's deaneries, after the February 4-6 session was an important step towards specifying certain recommendations regarding the restructuring of our parishes. After having driven through the parish by way of Morneault Road and Val-Lambert, I had the pleasure of meeting with the staff and residents of the Foyer Sainte-Elizabeth, to visit each resident individually, and to share supper with them. Following the example of the Virgin Mary's unforgettable visit to her cousin Elizabeth may we all, during this intensive pastoral visitation, discover the presence of Jesus in the midst of our lives and repeat with Mary her beautiful *Magnificat* for the marvellous work which God is still doing, among us. Truly, *His love is from age to age*.

SOUTHERN VICTORIA DEANERY

On Saturday, May 9, a one-day session will be held for the English-speaking population at Perth-Andover, in the Southern Victoria Deanery. The session will begin at 9:00 A.M. and continue until 4:00 P.M.; the topic will be *The Future of Our Diocese and Pastoral Readjustments*. The facilitator will be Father Gilles Routhier of Laval University.

Have a good week.



+ François Thibodeau
Bishop of Edmundston

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