
INAUGURATING THE 1998-1999 PASTORAL YEAR (1)



A day of study was held on August 26 to inaugurate the 1998-1999 pastoral year. The meeting was held in the St. Georges Church parish hall, with the members of the Bishop's council, deanery chairpersons, and diocesan services directors attending. What great hospitality was shown by Father Normand Godbout, the parish priest, and his parish volunteers! In the hours and days following the meeting I had the pleasure of visiting each of the deaneries and their leaders. A great beginning!

TAKING THE ROAD TOGETHER

We were prepared to earnestly and creatively take up the road together with a song from the priest-poet Robert Lebel for our theme: *"Let us take the road together, God is leading us. Let us follow it together, guided by the Spirit of God. Cloaked in its mantle of indifference, the heart of the world beats in joy, sorrow, and hope as long as it has not found Love. Must we not be silent in order to know what He expects and patiently acknowledge what He says to our times? May His Spirit make us live! May He renew our hearts and give vigour, strength, and vitality to our Church! May He teach us today how the path where Jesus leads rises before us in the words of the Gospel; and that He maintains our solidarity with the initial dream that formed His people and which has given us life, through its believing and loving. And may He light the path He lays before us. In this way the future shall open up before us, from the great waters to the ends of the earth."*

DEANERY MEMORIES

In order to have some continuity between what went on during the 1997-1998 pastoral year and the coming one, we took a walk down Memory Lane to recall the past pastoral year's important events. One after another, the deanery chairpersons recalled some event or other, among which were the diocesan and deanery workshops on pastoral restructuring, and the community celebration of the Easter Triduum. But there was more: the formation of a pastoral team, community celebration of the Easter Triduum (Southern Victoria), marriage preparation weekend, Grades 7 and 8 catechetics programme, inter-parish Profession of Faith, communion from the Cup (Grand Falls), lenten conferences, inauguration of *Les brebis de Jésus* children's groups, participation of PPC chairs in deanery meetings (Restigouche), preparation and celebration of the Third Diocesan Eucharistic Congress, parish missions, opening of the Upper Madawaska regional school, departure of two priests from the Upper Madawaska deanery, Profession of Faith, meeting with the RADO soup kitchen/sheltered workshop people, establishment of parish economic affairs committees, sacramental preparation outside of school (Edmundston).

RECOLLECTIONS FROM OUR SERVICES

The directors of the different diocesan services recalled the activities which marked the pastoral year for them: parent-catechist training sessions, school catechesis, Grades 7 and 8 survey, workshop on new sacramental preparation material, school contacts (Office of Religious Education), meetings with mentors and candidates in pastoral training, people following the Ignatian Exercises, Desert Days (Spirituality Centre), continuation of radio

and television programming and broadcasting in the Restigouche, meeting with media people on the World Day of Communications (Office of Social Communications), Bible week end, training in basic Christian communities, École de la Foi (Adult Education in the Faith), pastoral training of 32 individuals in the French sector and 30 in the English sector (Pastoral Formation Programmes), pilgrimage to the birthplace of the Canadian Church, inauguration of our diocesan website and presentation of the site at the Eucharistic Congress (over 3000 visitors to our site) (Internet), session on the liturgy with Fr. Jean-Yves Garneau, formation of parish liturgy committees, directives on church repairs, furnishings and decorating, publication of a pamphlet on funerals, liturgies of the Word in the absence of a priest (Liturgy), human chain on the occasion of Christmas, participation in the Christmas Parade, Jeunesse Missionnaire trip to Mexico, the Road of Solidarity, masses for young people (Pastorale Jeunesse), introduction of elementary school children to sharing-with-missions, correspondence with missionaries from our diocese, missionary preaching in our parishes, Development and Peace campaigns (Office of Missions).

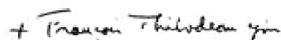
SOMETHING NEW

Spiritual retreats - the first of which were given in 1950 - were resumed at the Diocesan Centre during the 1997-1998 pastoral year. More than ten retreats were held, thanks especially to the collaboration of Father Yvon Samson and 55 volunteers. Newly re-formed, the Seminary formation team met more than ten times. It was the same with the Vocations Office which has a new face; it promoted the World Day of Prayer for Vocations, and has a place on our Internet site. Note should be noted that a first Cursillo weekend was held in our diocese, that over 800 young people were confirmed, that over 30 nominations for the Bishop M.-A. Roy Prize were made, that the pastoral visitation of the Upper Madawaska Deanery was one of the most important activities, that the Chrism Mass at Baker Brook was a most prayerful and meaningful experience, and that the work of our religious communities in the pastoral endeavour is unflagging.

PRAISE GOD!

We could not help but imitate St. Paul in his letter to the Ephesians, in praising the Lord for so many blessings. He gives His Spirit to our Church. He makes it beautiful and vibrant.

Have a good week!



+ François Thibodeau

Bishop of Edmundston

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