
SAINT ANDRÉ PARISH



I ended my fourth intensive pastoral visitation on March 20 and 22. The impressive and varied programme had been prepared by the parish pastoral council was a great aid in my getting to better know these "spirited and welcoming" people, as they are described in our Diocese's fiftieth anniversary memorial album.

A PROMISING FUTURE

Confirming 29 youth in the presence of a crowd like it happened here on the evening on March 20 allows one to "dream in colour" about this nearly 100-year-old parish. One hears about the religious education, liturgical, and administration activities going on in the parish, as well as plans for the future, from the parish pastoral council. Talking with the young people from the Saint-André School, who are in temporary quarters at the Thomas Albert Regional High School, is to discover a world where yesterday's and today's values intersect. And visiting the people at the Centre Horizon, the Villa Saint-André and the Jeannine Gagnon, Rita Cyr and Linda Cyr Homes is to share in an environment marked with friendship, creativeness, generosity, compassion, and life. Visiting the Soil and Earth Conservation Centre of Eastern Canada is to discover the world of research and communication at the service of people here and elsewhere, for both today and tomorrow. Visiting the Lévesque Bakery, the clothing depot, the village offices, the fire department, and the recreation centre is to meet people concerned with adequately feeding, clothing, and protecting their brothers and sisters. A visitation such as this makes one proud of one's achievements and incites one to mutual help and to hope in a bright future.

A BIT OF HISTORY

The first colonists to settle in Saint-André were originally from the region between Rivière-Ouelle and Trois-Pistoles in Québec Province, with some from Acadia. It is noted that the early colonisation was marked by a very difficult beginning. The colonists struggled to clear the land but earned money mostly from hunting and trapping. Before the building of the parish church in 1904, the people attended Assumption Church in Grand Falls, St. Bruno Church in Van Buren, or the church at St-Léonard Parent. The first pastor was Father Joseph Martin (1904-1907), followed by Father Éloi Martin who died prematurely in Rome at the age of 49, on May 25, 1925, while attending the canonization of St. Theresa of the Child Jesus, with Bishop Patrice Chiasson; Father Martin was a zealous promoter of priestly, religious, and missionary vocations. Then followed Father Félix Verret (1925-1940): on July 28, 1940, there was great consternation in the parish when news spread of Father's sudden death in the church, that morning, while hearing confessions. Fr. Verret was followed as pastor by Fathers Claude J. Cyr (1940-1945), Félix Morneau (1945-1951), Camille V. Leclerc (1951-1959), Benjamin Saindon (1959-1969), Narcisse Gagnon (1969-1973), Irénée St-Amand (1973-1981), Jean-Marie Martin (1981-1983), Rino Thériault (1984-1994), and Jacques Gauvreau (1994-1998). Since October, 1998, Sister Jeannine Cormier, N.D.S.C., aided by Sisters Annette Dionne, N.D.S.C. and Delma Bastarache, N.D.S.C., share the responsibility of this parish of 1770 people in 500 families; Father Lucien Lévesque ensures the celebration of the Eucharist and the other sacraments.

A TIMELY PRAYER

As the wind blew over the tops of the parish's highest hills, Comeau and Woodville Ridges, and the vast stretches of land, my heart was filled with thanksgiving for all the life I felt pulsing throughout this pastoral visitation. The following prayer by Lionel Pineau, which appeared in the Rimouski Diocese's *D'une semaine à l'autre* is like a psalm to the glory of God manifested in the creation and throughout the course of salvation history:

Power of God that rules the universe,
Power of God in the howling winds
Power of God in the angry surf
Power of God in the cracking lightning.

Splendour of God in the breaking sunrise
Splendour of God in the noonday sun
Splendour of God in the dusk of day
Splendour of God in the starry night.

Presence of God on our human journeys
Presence of God in the pit of distress
Presence of God in the sharing of bread
Presence of God in the feast of life.

Affection of God in the young lovers' eyes
Affection of God in the new-born child
Affection of God in the family life
Affection of God in the elderly gaze.

Poverty of the Lord in the child in the manger
Poverty of the Lord stripped of his glory
Poverty of the Lord on the wood of the cross
Poverty of the Lord in the dark of the tomb.

Power of the Lord victorious over death,
Majesty of the Lord in his glorious body
Presence of the Lord in his gathered people
Poverty of the Lord become Bread of life
Affection of the Lord whose name is but Love
Wisdom of the Lord. Amen. Alleluia.

May this poem dedicated to God Creator and Saviour, the Risen One of Easter Day, give us the strength and hope to carry on His mission.

+ François Thibodeau

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Bishop of Edmundston

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