

---

## PASTORAL VISITATION TO SAINT-JOSEPH

---



On March 19 of this year it was a special grace for me to make the pastoral visitation of Saint-Joseph-de-Madawaska. I thank the pastoral team and the parish community for their warm welcome. I fondly recall the celebration of the Sunday liturgy and the confirmation of 18 children, as well as the meeting with the parish choir and the parish pastoral council. A visit to Le Cocon Home and a round of the parish in the company of the pastor will remain highlights of the visit.

### HISTORICAL NOTES

According to the Edmundston Diocese fiftieth anniversary album, the first establishment within the Saint Joseph Parish boundaries goes back to around 1860 when the new Diocese of Chatham was created and there was only one parish in the entire actual Edmundston Diocese territory, namely, Saint-Basile. The parish of Notre-Dame-du-Petit-Sault was created in 1880 and had Saint-Jacques as its mission; it would soon add that of Saint Joseph. A first chapel was built in 1914. In 1919, the Bishop of Chatham appointed Father William J. Conway to minister at Saint Joseph's. With the aid of his assistants, the pastor of Edmundston served Saint Joseph until 1924 when it officially became "Saint Joseph Parish." Pastors of this parish were Fathers: Patrice Violette (1924-1927), Ernest Lang (1927-1932), Louis Cyr (1932-1947), Albert Daigle (1947-1952), Irénée St-Amand (1952-1957), Claude Lévesque (1957-1971), Félix Poitras (1971-1979), Alfred Ouellet (1979-1988), and Laurent Nadeau (1988-1994). Father Claude Clavet has been pastor there since August of 1994. The parish is composed of a population of 1 482 grouped into 412 families. The parish pastoral team is comprised of Mrs. Brigitte Bossé-Babineau, Mr. Donald, Couturier, and Mrs. Linda Deschênes. The pastoral council chairperson is Mrs. Dorina Bossé, and the parish economic affairs committee chairperson is Ms. Yolande Roussel. The beautiful gothic-style church dates back to 1924.

### THE PATRON SAINT

The diocese of Edmundston has two churches dedicated to Saint Joseph: Saint Joseph, Tilley and Saint-Joseph-de-Madawaska, and this should not come as a surprise. Devotion to St. Joseph was part and parcel of the religious tradition brought to New France. In 1624 already, the Recollect Franciscan Fathers celebrated Saint Joseph as the patron and special protector of Canada. It wasn't until 1870 that Venerable Pius IX declared Saint Joseph patron of the universal Church. And we must not forget the enormous role of the founders of Montréal: the Religious Hospitallers of Saint Joseph have done more than spread devotion to the saint, in that city, they also spread it wherever they established themselves. They came to Saint-Basile in 1873, and they never ceased to foster veneration to Saint Joseph. One hundred twenty-five years ago - February 28, 1875 - the first monthly devotion to Saint Joseph was inaugurated in the Madawaska region. And at the beginning of the twentieth century, Blessed André Bessette, better known as Brother André, was the catalyst for the great expansion of devotion to Saint Joseph in North America.

### HOME-BASED RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

In the Edmundston Deanery, Saint Joseph Parish is one of the first to have home-based religious education. And what enthusiasm there was, for such a programme! When they heard in August, 1999, that there would

no longer be any religious education in school for grades one to three, the parents got together in January, 2000, to demand home-based religious education for the Grade 2 children; seven parents were ready to take on the delicate but promising task of religious formation. Quite a bit of enthusiasm was generated throughout the parish. Let us note in passing that at a special meeting held March 13 of this year, the Edmundston Deanery decided that home-based religious education for Grade 1 would be offered to every child, come September, 2000. In the next few months, religious educators and parents will be contacted, to prepare for the 2000-2001 school term. The material used will be that graciously offered to us by the Bathurst Diocese, material which is easy for us to reproduce.

### **A DESIRE FOR GOD!**

Among the marvellous gifts we receive from the Holy Spirit at Baptism and Confirmation, there is the invaluable gift of wisdom. It is given to us so that our hearts may recognise the presence of God in our lives and give Him the space He needs; it is important for us to listen to God often and to talk to Him. Thanks to Wisdom, we have a desire for God and for what concerns Him. I believe that this is the gift which acts especially in every Christian parent at this time in our history; a rediscovery of the presence of God in the midst of our lives. What such a discovery can then produce is fantastic. And this ties us into the first commandment: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength." How can we love or recognise Him if there is no appropriate religious education to put us in contact with Jesus himself? I congratulate the people of Saint-Joseph for rising to meet today's challenge, at this major turning point. Since 1870, despite the proclamation of non-denominational public schools in New Brunswick, the francophone parents have spared no effort to maintain religious education in their schools, and even now their wish is to pass on the Gospel values to their children; some of these parents want to devote themselves to this religious education so that our children today have the chance to get to know Christ Jesus as their friend and fantastic saviour.

*+ François Thibodeau*

+ François Thibodeau  
Bishop of Edmundston

« From A Bishop's Journal » (329) (04 May 2000)