
THE 2001 BISHOP MARIE-ANTOINE ROY AWARD



When in December, 1995, at the conclusion of the diocese's fiftieth anniversary celebrations I announced the creation of the Bishop Marie-Antoine Roy Award to underscore the vitality of diocesan groups and organisations, I never had any idea of the great success the prize would meet with, in five years: 158 nominations, including 124 different organisations. This is quite an exploit for such a new initiative! In the weeks to come we shall evaluate further, whether, for example, it would be better to alternately award the prize to one person and then to a group, or whether the prize should be awarded every two or three years, etc.

GOOD PICKINGS

In this jubilee year 2000, the number of candidates has been greater than in previous years: in 1996, there were 28 nominations, with 30 in 1997 (22 new ones); there were 34 nominations with 28 new ones in 1998, and in 1999, twenty-five nominations (14 new ones). In the year 2000 there were 41 nominations, including 32 new ones.

AT THE HEART OF PRIORITIES

Several nominations mention the outstanding work of the Diocesan Eucharistic Congresses, the parish pastoral teams, and the parish- and/or family-based religious education teams. There are fond memories of the Eucharistic Congresses which prepared us for and led us into the year 2000 Great Jubilee. Special mention is made of the five preparatory committees of these congresses held in the Restigouche, Southern Victoria, Upper Madawaska, Grand Falls, and Edmundston deaneries. A great effort was made to deepen our understanding of the great sacrament of the Eucharist, and to implicate every parish in the diocese in these festivities. The same can also be said regarding the establishment of parish pastoral teams: at the heart of parish restructuring which has been a turning point in the life of our diocese, there are the pastoral teams, among which are mentioned by name those of Saint-Martin, Saint-Jean-Baptiste, and Blue Bell. There are now seventeen pastoral teams ministering in the thirty-two parishes of the diocese. Mention must also be made of those pastoral teams ministering in our hospitals, homes for the elderly, and nursing homes. The work accomplished on a daily basis in the Edmundston, Saint-Quentin, Grand Falls, and Perth-Andover hospitals has been pointed out. And then there are the home- and parish-based religious education teams. In the four Francophone deaneries of the diocese, a fantastic renewal is taking place, so it is good and right for us to note their promise and vitality. It is no wonder that the four Francophone deaneries are unanimous in expressing their gratitude to these newly-formed catechetical teams. Those of Notre-Dame-des-Sept-Douleurs, Drummond, Saint-André, Saint-Georges, Assumption [Grand Falls], Kedgwick, Saint-François Xavier, Saint-François-d'Assise and Connors were specifically nominated. There are many who come from outside the diocese to share with us their expertise and their faith and hope as a family or parish community. In the Southern Victoria Deanery was submitted the nomination of the Sunday School programme which, for ten, twenty, or thirty years has been active; in that deanery also the hope has been expressed for more parent-catechist involvement and for new volunteers. Throughout the diocese, passing on the heritage of our faith is seen as a major responsibility.

IN THE MIDST OF THE COMMUNITY

There can be no Christian life without the liturgy, and without a liturgy committee it would be difficult to have vibrant parish liturgies. It is apt, therefore, that the parishes of Notre-Dame-des-Sept-Douleurs in Edmundston, Notre-Dame-des-Prodiges in Kedgwick, and Assumption in Blue Bell have noted the excellent work of their liturgy committees. The same is felt about the parish choirs which demonstrate a community's involvement and which invite to pray in beauty. The parishes of Notre-Dame-des-Sept-Douleurs, Immaculate Conception, Notre-Dame-des-Prodiges, Saint-Antoine-de-Padoue, and Saint-Jacques officially recognise the beautiful work of their choirs. Besides, these are also involved at the deanery and diocesan levels, as we witnessed at the opening of the Jubilee celebrations. Parish choirs, special choirs, the "Viens chanter" Choir, "The Heart of Mary Choir," the "Chorale Notre Dame..." many voices to proclaim the joy of living. However, the joy of living is often followed by days of pain and bereavement: at such times it is good to be able to count on persons and groups who bring relief in difficult times. In this context are recognised the Grief Committees of Saint-Quentin, Kedgwick, Saint-Léonard-Parent, Saint-Léonard-Ville, Notre-Dame-de-Lourdes, and Saint-Jacques, along with the Edmundston support services for the bereaved. These groups which prepare post-funeral lunches are a marvellous and unforgettable example of fellowship and compassion. We must also mention the beautiful work accomplished on behalf of the needy by groups such as the Ouvroir Saint-François and the Bob Fife Foundation in Edmundston. Then there is the wonderful work on behalf of the handicapped carried out by the following groups: L'Écllosion, Inc., of Sainte-Anne-de-Madawaska, Le Tourbillon Co-op of Saint-Quentin, the Tournesol Workshop, Edmundston, and the Montfort, Plein Soleil, and Marie-Louise Community Residences in Edmundston. Thanks to all these initiatives, the handicapped in our milieu are integrated to a greater degree and become fully participant in our projects and gatherings, where they bring a special quality of life.

FRIENDSHIP AND SOLIDARITY

The diocesan-wide work accomplished by Development and Peace is worth noting, especially in the Grand Falls Deanery. Also worthy of note is the Edmundston Birthright Help Group. Also noted is the work of the Saint-Basile Daughters of Isabella and the Notre-Dame-des-Sept-Douleurs Knights of Columbus, the fledgling Brebis de Jésus children's group in Saint-Martin Parish, the Rencontre Amicale Association of Saint-Quentin, the Saint-Martin Bingo Committee, and the Friends of Connors Group, to end with the outstanding Year 2000 March of Women against injustice and violence to women, a march which took place both here and throughout the world: a difficult battle we must wage with courage and perseverance.

A MORE DIFFICULT CHOICE

Faced with all these nominations, the task of the Diocesan Pastoral Council was not an easy one. By looking carefully at the member participation of the group or organisation submitted for nomination, and taking into account its extension and impact on the milieu, its significance, its importance and degree of witness, its stability and endurance, and taking into consideration its suitability to the needs of our time, the members of the Diocesan Pastoral Council give First Honourable Mention to the parish- and home-based religious education teams, Second Honourable Mention to the hospital and sick ministry pastoral teams, and Third Honourable Mention to the parish grief committees. The Diocesan Pastoral Council awards the Bishop Marie-Antoine Roy Prize for the year 2000 to the five committees which prepared and implemented the five Diocesan Eucharistic Congresses. On behalf of the Edmundston diocesan Church and on my own behalf I thank and congratulate all the nominees, the recipients of the Honourable Mentions, and the the Year 2000 Award winners.

+ François Thibodeau

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Bishop of Edmundston

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