
A HAPPY AND HOLY NEW YEAR 2002!



A song and a prayer arise from my bishop's heart; first, a song: "May peace be on this earth for the next one hundred thousand years! Give us a thousand doves, every dawn of day! Give us a thousand doves and a million nightingales! May one day all people become children again. Tomorrow is us: no more war tomorrow. Tomorrow canons everywhere will lie buried under the flowers. A beautiful world is one where we can live without fear." And a prayer: "Lord Jesus Christ, you said to your apostles, 'I leave you peace, my peace I give you. Look not on our sins but on the faith of your Church, and grant us the peace and unity of your Kingdom where you live for ever and ever.'"

HAPPY TO BE ALIVE!

How good it is for renewed hearts to welcome the year 2002! Happy the eyes that will see in the new year God's wonderful works in our midst! Happy the ears that will hear, in this year of grace, the voice of God reaching us in our daily lives! Happy are we, family of God's people, to be, as the liturgy says, "the chosen race, the royal priesthood, the holy nation, the people set apart to proclaim the wonders of the One who has called us to His wonderful light!"

LET US NOT FEAR!

We are united in one baptism and one faith keeps us alert, while we are moved by one hope and pressed on by one charity to love one another; and a common mission sends us forth into the world on behalf of our beloved Saviour! We are inhabited by the Spirit, and so, we have no fear! We are in God's hands, so that all humankind may finally know about the Good News of Jesus. Thanks to God, our diocesan Church of Edmundston comprises over fifty thousand baptised women and men -- and you are among them! It is to each and everyone of you that I speak, so that we may carry together the mission given to us on behalf of our Saviour Jesus.

IRREPLACEABLE YOUTH!

I count on you, young people! Your youthfulness is needed so that through your actions our Church, which is only 57 years old, may remain young! In school, at work and play, share with others your God-given talents. Be at home in our pastoral projects and liturgies, especially with the 2002 World Youth Days. Revitalise our activities! In continuing, patient, and constructive dialogue with those who no longer have your youthful vigour, give the best of yourself. Do not hesitate to bring a new breath of life in 2002 so that, ever youthful, our Church be such through the youthfulness of Christ himself. May the example of Blessed Kateri Tekakwitha and Blessed Catherine of St. Augustine, two young women from among us, inspire and invigorate us!

HEAVY RESPONSIBILITIES

And you, workers, heads of families, men and women who bear such heavy responsibilities, and you elders and elderly, you all have a stake in our beloved Church of the Edmundston Diocese. By your personal

resources, your work and your prayer, your presence, your attitudes and your expressions of fellowship and hope, you continue to share in the mission of the universal Church, to bear the Good News of salvation in Jesus, Son of the Father and son of Mary.

COMING GLORY

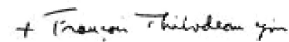
To you, dear friends who are ill, you who are poor, you who are overwhelmed by so many trials and handicaps, to you I want to repeat the words from St. Matthew's Gospel: "Blessed are the afflicted: they shall be consoled." You are precious in the eyes of God. You are at the heart of the Church, and associated in a special way to Christ's mission. You carry in your body what is lacking in Christ's passion. Nothing can separate you from the love of God manifested in Christ Jesus. The sufferings of the present are nothing compared to the glory that will shine through you.

COUNTLESS BLESSINGS

You, beloved brother-bishops and priests, you, too, pastoral agents, members of parish pastoral teams and of the diocesan services and committees, you are associated in a special way to my pastoral ministry of hope. By vocation and mission, you are one of my reasons to hope, and a principal reason for a bright promise marking the future of our Church. The Holy Spirit continues to be present, to challenge, and to send forth. Heartfelt gratitude for all the missions given and all the positive and love-filled answers. Thanks be to the Lord for those priests who dedicate themselves without cease to show forth God's free gifts; thanks for the future priests who still today accept to fully live their burgeoning priestly vocation. Thanks to God for all the religious, for the men and women who fully live their consecrated life and who witness in our world to communion in Jesus. Thanks to the Lord for the thousands of volunteers who give so much to our milieu, especially in teaching the Word of God and sacramental preparation.

A MISSION TO PURSUE

God bless the New Year 2002! May it be for each one of us a step further in our mission. May we together proclaim to the world the Good News of Salvation! May the Edmundston Diocesan Church as a whole be a sacrament of salvation for all people in our milieu. Closely united to one another, may we continue in a renewed spirit of hope the work so well started. I give you my New Year's blessing from the bottom of my heart. May Peace, Joy, and Health be yours throughout the year!



+ François Thibodeau
Bishop of Edmundston

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