
INVESTING IN YOUTH



November in the wake of the 2002 World Youth Day in Toronto, the bishops' committee coordinating the celebration stated that the heavy deficit incurred was an investment in youth both here in Canada and throughout the world. I share this conviction, and it is in this spirit that a few days following the bishops' statement, I accepted the bill sent to the diocese of Edmundston for the sum of \$158,541.00, to be defrayed as soon as possible.

INSUFFICIENT REVENUE

Several factors can explain the 2002 WYD deficit, the main one being the relatively small number of paid registrations of youth, compared with expenses incurred by the organisers. This state of affairs is due in part to the great number of people who were afraid of travelling, following the September 11, 2001 tragedy. Uncertainty regarding the health of the Holy Father was also mentioned as a factor: how often the media played up this uncertainty about the Pope's presence at the celebration. Finally, there is also the fact of the immense number of those, young and old, who joined in the weekend celebration without bothering to pay their registration fee.

NATIONAL SOLIDARITY

Every diocese in Canada must do its share to clear the deficit. As the financial books are still in the hands of chartered accountants, the final tally has not yet been made public, but we know that there is a huge deficit. It is surmised that the deficit can be erased if every Catholic in Canada gives three dollars, in the coming months. Since the Catholic population of our diocese is estimated at 52,847, our share in paying off the deficit is \$158,541.00.

THE WYD IS WORTH THE EXPENSE!

People both in our diocese and in Toronto accomplished very much, for the success of the WYD. We called on your generosity several times, either in recruiting volunteers or benefactors. Those who took part in the WYD activities, whatever their age, feel that they experienced a Church activity of immense proportions, an event whose benefits are as yet not fully recognised, an event which is the bearer of future hope for a renewed Church. It has really been worth it!

URGENT APPEAL

Dear friends, I urgently appeal to each and everyone of you, so that between now and the end of the year we wipe out our share of the WYD debt. Receipts for income tax purposes will be sent to those who send their donation to: WYD 2002, 60, rue Bouchard, Edmundston, N.B. E3V 3K1. We have not sent a bill to anyone, but we must say that at the national level note is taken of the Catholic population of every diocese. Thus, if a parish has two hundred Catholics, six hundred dollars are expected from the parish... If a parish has five thousand parishioners, fifteen thousand dollars are expected from that parish... I am not in the habit of

meddling in economic affairs, but it is because of the entire Canadian Church's request that I appeal to you, to show our solidarity with our youth and all the youth of the world. I urge you to use the Feast of Christ the King collection, (November 23-24) to fully pay off the WYD debt. If there are organisations and individuals in your milieu who could help us, do not hesitate to approach them!

MESSAGE OF HOPE: A WONDROUS SPARK

Allow me quote the words of Archbishop Luigi Ventura, Papal Nuncio to Canada, speaking on behalf of the Holy Father: "I want to express the Holy Father's deep appreciation and gratitude for what you have generously and self-sacrificingly done in your own dioceses and throughout Canada. Images of the Toronto World Youth Day are still fresh in my mind, and the emotion caused by youth who came from all over the world to express their will and their plans to follow Christ the Lord and Master of truth and life. It is this crowd of young people who came at cost to themselves to this world celebration of faith which has surprised us, with their message of hope for the future of the Church. You have invested a great deal in the youth of your countries, and I am convinced that you shall harvest the fruit, in the years to come. The World Youth Day Pilgrim Cross has left its mark, one that is not about to dissipate, throughout the country. In his talk following the Angelus, on July 28 in Downsview Park, the Holy Father said: 'May our gathering be the sign of an awakening of pastoral youth ministry in Canada. May the enthusiasm raised during these days be like a spark setting off a new season of forceful Gospel witness!' I would like to reiterate the Holy Father's gratitude addressed to the president of the Canadian Bishops Conference for everything you have done and invested to ensure the success of the World Youth Day."

IMMEDIATE FOLLOW-UP

Just as the bishops of Canada have formed a committee to follow-up on the World Youth Day, we shall do the same in our diocese: thanks to the excellent work of the diocesan pastoral ministry coordinator in conjunction with the 2002 WYD coordinator, a diocesan committee has been formed to establish a dynamic and innovative youth ministry. Let us continue, together, continue to invest in our youth!

+ François Thibodeau

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