
NEWS FOR YOU!



Despite my weekly Journals to you it seems that there is no end to my commenting and passing on to you news that come seemingly spontaneously, through the days and weeks, and today I want to give you news of the Marie-Jeunesse Family, directions for religious education in the Maritimes, and the financial campaign feasibility study.

THE MARIE-JEUNESSE FAMILY

In September, 1995 we had the pleasure of welcoming among us members of the Marie-Jeunesse Family, when they opened, on 14 September, an inn in Edmundston for young people, especially for those who wished to better learn about Jesus. The house is situated on Rice St. in Edmundston, and it is still a house open in welcome, and a centre of evangelization” On May 31, 2002 Archbishop André Gaumond of Sherbrooke, Québec, approved the Statutes and Rules of the Famille Marie-Jeunesse, giving the group recognition as an association of the faithful whose mission is the evangelization of youth: this was a great day for the Family! Since the main house is in the Sherbrooke archdiocese it was normal that the archbishop himself, in consultation with the other bishops of the Province, to approve the group’s existence. Since the fall of 1995 our diocesan Church had welcomed five members of the group as seminarian candidates to the priesthood. Only God knows everything that was done for these young men by the people of our diocese, both regarding their theological studies and their pastoral internship. The Marie-Jeunesse Family owes a debt of gratitude to the Church of Edmundston! Bishop’s Council, Priests’ Senate, Edmundston Seminary formation team, parish pastoral teams, members of the diocese... all unstintingly contributed to the development of these young people to the priesthood. In 1995 it was assumed that once ordained, members of the Marie-Jeunesse Family would join the Edmundston presbyterium and work closely with the priests of our diocese. However, through incardination the deacon or the priest gives himself without reserve, with no conditions, and for his lifetime, to one bishop, one presbyterium, and one Church. It therefore became difficult to incardinate to our Church seminarians who would accept to be with us for a limited time only, who wanted to live a community life within the Marie-Jeunesse residences, and minister near exclusively to youth. It was in order to respect the characteristics of the Marie-Jeunesse Family that the bishops involved in the case thought it desirable that the first-ordained of the Family be made deacons and priests in Sherbrooke. I rejoice that Martin Proulx, Patrick Laflamme, Dominic LeRouzès and Patrick Rancourt are to be ordained deacons on Saturday, January 25, 2003, in the Benedictine Abbey Church of St.-Benoît-du-Lac, and that they shall be ordained priests May 24 of this year. They have the assurance of my prayer and my friendship, and my deepest wish that there be some among them come back to our diocese, to work in our youth ministry. We are in the process of establishing a diocesan youth ministry programme and of following up on the 2002 World Youth Day. There is room for Marie-Jeunesse, too! Together, may we truly become “salt of the earth” and “light of the world”.

FAMILY-BASED RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

It is with a hopeful feeling and deep gratitude to our children and youth, their parents and religious educators that the francophone bishops of the Maritimes ratified the common guidelines for our children’s initiation to the Christian faith. This programme of initiation is part of a process of permanent faith education. It involves the faith education of our children of pre-school age as well as the 6-13 year-olds and teen-agers. It was therefore important to ask ourselves some questions: to whom are the guidelines being addressed? What is the lived experience of our children and youth, today? What do they know about Christian life and parish

involvement? These new individual, family, and parish realities incite us to discover novel ways of presenting the Gospel message in all of its life-giving power. It is our hope that religious education be an important step in this direction. We must always bear in mind that religious education must focus on the child, and that it is important to take into account the child's emotional, intellectual and religious development, that Jesus Christ, the Good News, is the very heart of the Christian life, and that the Holy Spirit helps us live out the love project of God our Father, a project revealed to us in Jesus. I shall come back later to these important points and catechetical directives; here, let me just point out how much I count on our children themselves, and on their parents, religious educators and all who are involved with them in this indispensable pastoral ministry of the new evangelization.

FINANCIAL CAMPAIGN FEASIBILITY STUDY

Upon recommendation of parish economic affairs committees, of the clergy of the diocese, and of the diocesan councils, I asked Mr. Jean Robert Nolet and Associates to undertake, in February and March of this year, a feasibility study for a diocesan financial campaign amounting to the sum of three million dollars. Our parishes have major financial problems; the decrease in numbers of churchgoers makes the maintenance of our parish properties more and more problematic, and the financing of our pastoral projects is becoming more and more difficult. Our cathedral needs major repairs if we are to keep it; it shall take more than a million dollars to clean and redo the outside walls. Diocesan-wide pastoral projects which had been asked by the Edmundston Diocesan Synod to respond to the needs for family- and parish-based religious education, youth ministry, the formation and training of lay people for parish pastoral work... these are still being developed and have not yet been fully realised because of a lack of financial resources. The feasibility study will show the degree of interest of our population and the interest there is in a major financial campaign. Throughout our history our people have shown themselves to be very generous in supporting their Church and their priests. Even during the Depression they managed, between the years 1927-1930, to construct the cathedral in Edmundston, a jewel of our religious and cultural heritage, something we are justly proud of: is there more beautiful cathedral in all of the Maritimes? I invite you, as you are able, to join in this study regarding a financial campaign. Meetings will be held on Monday, February 24 at Assumption Church for the people of Southern Victoria at 2:00 P.M., and for the Grand Falls Deanery at 7:00 P.M.; on Tuesday, February 25, the meeting will be held at the Diocesan Centre, at 7:00 P.M., for the Edmundston Deanery; on Wednesday, February 26, the meeting will be held in the parish church at Clair, at 7:00 P.M., for the Upper Madawaska Deanery, and on Thursday, February 27, the meeting will be held in the Saint-Quentin parish hall, at 7:00 P.M., for people of the Restigouche Deanery. My prayer is that this campaign be the work of every Catholic in our milieu and of all who support us in this difficult yet indispensable undertaking. The Diocesan Economic Affairs Council is a major supporter of this undertaking.

+ François Thibodeau

+ François Thibodeau, C.J.M.
Bishop of Edmundston

« From A Bishop's Journal » (471) (15 January 2003)