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## “ WITNESSES OF A GOSPEL OF SALVATION ”

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On behalf of the whole Church, I ask the Lord to consecrate us unto him, that we may be for the world “witnesses of a Gospel of salvation.” Let us remember what baptism, confirmation, and ordination have made us, through the Holy Spirit coming down on us.

### **JUSTICE, AFFECTION, AND HUMILITY**

We must sincerely search our hearts and souls and ask ourselves what we are doing with this marvellous gift of the Holy Spirit who urges us to become more and more disciples of Jesus. And that we may become so even more, I would like to ask you today and ask the Lord himself to stimulate the life of our Christian communities by increasing our efforts to transmit our faith and our commitment to social justice. “You have been told, O man, what is good, and what the Lord requires of you: only to do the right and to love goodness, and to walk humbly with your Lord” (Micah 6:8). Several steps have already been taken and we must be very grateful for all these communities who have taken these major concerns seriously, especially family- and parish-based religious education. Through their new projects, new attitudes, and new ways of life, Christian communities help the Church be more and more the Sacrament, the Sign of the acting presence of Jesus among his people in the world. They allow each baptised, confirmed, and ordained person to be a Gospel of salvation.

### **MISSIONARY COMMITMENT: MORE THAN A FEEL-GOOD ATTITUDE**

It is right and just to thank the Lord for so many wonders, for all the devotedness, the vitality, and the witness. May every Eucharist be a special occasion to recognise the Holy Spirit at work among us, in 2003! With grateful hearts we shall remain alert regarding the realities of a Christian community to build up and to love, a faith to pass on, a commitment to pursue. We cannot hide the fact that if we are not continually mindful, temptation is great to forget the missionary character of the Christian faith and keep only the semblance of a relationship, a feel-good, individualistic relationship with God without any real link with the community, and with our brothers and sisters throughout the world. This would be tantamount to forgetting the vitality of the Christian faith, the Church’s mission, to betray the requirements of our baptism and hide God the Father’s very plan under a bushel basket, to hide the work of Jesus and neglect the calls of the Spirit to our Church.

### **A NEW PENTECOST**

Our diocesan priorities of family- and parish-based religious education, pastoral formation, and the implementation of family and youth ministry can be a very special opportunity, like a new Pentecost, to help us welcome the Gospel teaching to be or become once again missionaries whose hearts are set on helping those who have not yet heard the Word of salvation, and whose concern is for those who, once having heard the Word of God have walked away, whose concern, too, is to make communities into evangelizers. What I am asking you in the name of the Lord, you should not consider different realities and accidental ministries. What I am asking you in the name of the Lord is to intensify your community life, to pass on the faith and promote social justice. These are three aspects of the same mission: to be the sacrament of salvation, showing in this way the body of Christ, and carry to the poor the good news of salvation. One cannot pass on

the faith without increasing and strengthening community life and commitment to social justice. As Christians, we cannot be involved in social justice work without strengthening our community life and revitalizing the expression and transmission of the faith.

### **ONE WHOLE: A REFLECTION OF GOD!**

If we want to show that we are witnesses of the Gospel of salvation, if we want to show that the Church is a sign of the dead and risen Jesus, and that the Church is the Body of Christ, we must rediscover and bring together these three pastoral requirements into one whole. Our gathering in church is a sign that every man and woman of whatever age, from whatever place, at whatever time, and of whatever social condition, is called to form the Body of Christ. But for all these people to discover the face of God, the face of God revealed in Jesus, it is urgent that all Christian communities in the world, that our thirty-two parish communities continue to truly reflect the peace of Jesus, his mercy and love; it is urgent that we maintain our commitment to social justice in Jesus' name, especially at this time of such dangerous tensions in the world. If we want unbelievers or the distant to rediscover the face of God, it is urgent that they be able to discover it in parish gatherings that are alive, full of life; that men and women, youth and adults, workers, the disenfranchised and the marginalised feel at home in our Diocesan Church of Edmundston; that we witness by the quality of our fellowship, our commitments, our prayer and celebrations, to the presence of the living God manifested in Christ Jesus.

### **BECOMING ONCE MORE THE LAND OF GOD**

Our communities will all the more be faces of Jesus to the extent that they are faith-filled and communities of justice. Our communities shall be as alive as day by day they truly are the land of God, a land of peace and not war, a land according to God the Father's loving plan, a land where brothers and sisters feel kinship because of Jesus Christ who came to share our human nature. Our land shall be the land of God if human rights are respected and effective for everyone: right to life from conception, right to decent and affordable housing, right to healthy and balanced meals, right to education, health and social services, right to labour and fair wages, and right to respect, dignity, autonomy, and solidarity. Because of our faith, we want to proclaim with our very being, our very lives, that all people are brothers and sisters, children of God the Father, brothers and sisters of Jesus Christ... Then shall we do justice and act in faith. Justice is the virtue, the power in us which urges us to adjust to the will of God, to respect and promote the human rights of our brothers and sisters.

*+ François Thibodeau ym*

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

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