



## From A Bishop's Journal (664)

### Inaugurating the 2006-2007 Pastoral Year

Sunday, September 17 was an unforgettable day at the Diocesan Centre, when over 100 members of pastoral teams, councils, youth ministry teams, both francophone and anglophone, met together to inaugurate the 2006-2007 pastoral year. Since my coming to Edmundston in 1994 we had been holding this introduction of the new pastoral year in each of the five pastoral zones; this year, however, we decided to pick up a new challenge: pooling our energies so as to better reflect the reality of our diocese. According to comments made, the exercise was a total success. I wholeheartedly thank all those who helped make a success of this diocesan gathering. The Spirit who presided over our Pastoral Orientation Congress, in March, was still with us at this meeting.

#### “Make Disciples”

As we concluded the meeting I could not help but recall the words of Jesus at the Ascension, as they are recorded by Saint Matthew: “Go, therefore, and make disciples of all the nations. Baptize them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Teach them to carry out everything I have commanded you. And know that I am with you always until the end of the world!” This instruction was clear throughout the day: I must become more and more a disciple of Jesus, to lead others into discipleship. This is the great challenge of the new evangelisation. We can be justly proud of all that is done in our parishes in the area of family- and parish-based catechetics, sacramental preparation, and other pastoral initiatives: everywhere it is buzzing with activity! Major steps have been made, and we can be proud of the fact. This is not vainglory, but pride in the variety of gifts which the Holy Spirit does not cease giving us. The formation of pastoral teams required much work, but we are seeing their fruit. The opening up of parishes to each other, which had been promoted by the Diocesan Synod, and the Eucharistic congresses we had are still having an effect. Let us continue building together our beloved Church! Let us sow love, let us sow life, tomorrow is ours today!

#### Treasured Symbols

Each pastoral team had something to symbolise what it was experiencing in its parish or pastoral unit. It seemed to me that in their presentation there was a common desire to express the life that was felt in the milieu: a flower, a plant, a tree, a cross, a poster... Each symbol also gave expression to the challenge we want to continue facing, that of meeting our youth where they are in order to build

with them vibrant communities. The presentation of the pastoral teams helped us feel in communion with the total reality of our diocese. The francophone, anglophone, and native cultures have marked and will continue to mark our lives: this, too, is something to be proud of. This cultural richness incites us to share the great realities of faith, hope, and love. I do not believe that there is a Canadian diocese to compare with ours!

### **Youth Presence**

I especially note the presence of our youth at our pastoral year launching. Theirs was an exceptional presence, and brought so much life! Several of these young people had been together at the Village des Sources near Rimouski, and as members of the “Chanter la vie” choir, a group of 350 youths who performed in Edmundston in July, 2005. This year they were 650 at Cap-de-la-Madeleine. Others among the young people attending had taken part in the Teen Challenge weekends, while still others had joined in activities of the Diocesan Youth Ministry Office. It was exciting to hear these young people respond loud and clear to the gospel story of the rich young man. They, too, decided to be more and more “disciples of Christ” during the past year by visiting the sick and the elderly, and in taking part in parish and society events. Their presence among us was most beneficial. The unanimous desire was expressed that our young people take their place in our communities, and that they be made to be at ease. It is not a matter of having them make excessively long commitments, but of responding to their spiritual needs and, especially, to welcome them and listen to them.

### **Ongoing Formation**

In interviews with Mr. Donald D’Amours, coordinator of “Au rythme de l’Église” radio programme, the diocesan directors briefly presented their programmes. Besides a full programme of pastoral sessions, the 91 ways proposed are in direct line with our Pastoral Orientation Congress. A session has already been planned for March, 2007, to evaluate the “fruits” that have grown from the 2006 Congress. Youth ministry, family ministry, missionary outreach, catechetics, pastoral formation, School of Faith: all of these contribute in building a dynamic, vibrant, and fraternal Church.

### **A Culture of the Call**

“I have chosen you so that you may go and bear lasting fruit.” These words of the Lord remind us of our specialness, that we are “the beloved of God,” peacemakers, light of the world, salt of the earth, and yeast in the dough. The more we deepen our understanding of what baptism has made us, the more shall we discern God’s call to us. Everyone is special: if we realise that we have been chosen, that we are loved and called, we shall be able to respond to the many needs of our world. Our commitment will take the shape not of volunteer work but of a response in the name of our baptism. This is one of the major themes to come out of the launching of our new pastoral year. May this new year contribute in making our youthful Church even more beautiful and vibrant. Pastors, religious, pastoral agents, all of us baptised and confirmed, we are all children of the Light, and we are called to be witnesses of Christ.

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