



From A Bishop's Journal (717)

Outstanding Launching of the Pastoral Year

While the Youth Ministry Office occupied the premises of the Diocesan Centre with a whirlwind of activity throughout the summer, September had a national session of Katimavik, an A.A. provincial gathering, a Charismatic weekend, a Faith and Light meeting, and meetings of several committees. On September 14 it was the turn of members of [Francophone] parish pastoral teams to meet, together with members of their P.P.C.s. Over eighty people attended this memorable launching of the 2007-2008 pastoral year.

Wonderful Momentum

Eighteen months after the launching of the March, 2006 Pastoral Orientation Congress, we wanted to follow up on the recommendations received, so as to take part in a true new evangelisation and respond adequately to our Church's pastoral needs today. With the help for a fourth time of Mrs. Sylvie Latreille of the Dominican Pastoral Institute in Montreal, we were made more aware of the valuable input of all the collaborators in the wonderful work of pastoral ministry. Looking at St. Paul's Letter to the Romans who greets in a special way his twenty-seven collaborators who have dedicated themselves totally to evangelisation, we became better aware of how lucky we are to have so many collaborators in our daily work. The diocesan directory gives only a fleeting idea of those who contribute to building our Church on a daily basis. To this we would have to add all the parish lists of people dedicating themselves to religious education and spiritual animation in their milieu. And to these long lists we would have to add those who help through their daily prayer which is really the "propeller" which allows us to carry on the task of evangelisation. A grateful thank you to all of you who day and night offer prayer and, often, your suffering for the construction of our Church and the success of our pastoral projects.

Challenging Testimonies

People involved in pastoral ministry shared about their commitment, a consequence of their baptismal call and a generous response to the crying needs of those around them. They are devoted and attentive witnesses who listen and share a good news, witnesses who take time to analyse the different aspects of certain social and pastoral problems, so as to respond more adequately; pastors, too, who take upon themselves to develop action plans with their people in order to build together

vibrant communities energised by youth. And we feel that the input of young people is being felt more and more in our gatherings: they are in all simplicity signs of hope and friendship. In these testimonies and action plans, we feel that there will be something new in our Church. True, three new pastoral units have been created, and their energy is a given; new signs are bursting forth. We have a new Eudist priest, Father Guy Loisel who pastors St. Quentin and St. Martin, and there are a deacon and a pastoral intern – both of the Voluntas Dei Institute – ministering in Southern Victoria, the Reverend Gilbert Doddatto and Intern Andrew Mayer, as well as a new religious, Sister Ann Russell of the Hotel Dieu Sisters. Nearly a dozen “new” people are on the twelve pastoral teams. Nine moderators were given new pastoral units: along with their teams, they generously accepted the challenge. A new diocesan pastoral office on social issues, under the direction of Mrs. France Haché, a retired social worker, will shortly be set up. Sessions on adult faith education [in French] will be offered in the pastoral zones thanks to the participation of Mrs. Christiane Gaouette and Sister Paulette Turcotte, f.m.a. as animators, and Mrs. Patricia Cyr as coordinator. Sister Claire Lafrance, f.m.a. continues the formation of new [Francophone] pastoral agents. Youth ministry continues on with the setting up of teams in each of the pastoral units. In parish- and family-based catechetics in the French sector, we can be proud of the fact that the programme has been thoroughly revised thanks to the work of Sister Irène Pelletier, f.m.a. and her team; a thank you to the hundreds of catechists who introduce both children and youth to the secret marvels of the Father.

Exemplary Samaritans

Starting from Jesus’ parable in the Gospel, our resource person invited us, through the use of allegory, to look at what is being done in our milieus today. This was a very moving and challenging exercise. To the painful situations encountered in poor families or by suicidal people, to the needs of the chronically ill and the elderly, there are people who are dedicated to them generously; however, like the Good Samaritan, they try to find others to help them respond to the needy. If the Good Samaritan was able to count on the precious help of the hotel keeper, we must find collaborators according to their talents and aptitudes, to respond to the felt urgent needs of others. And there are hundreds around us, young and mature, who can respond to new social and personal needs arising in our communities.

Light of the World

When we were baptised we all received a burning candle, with the words, “Receive the light of Christ. Parents and godparents, this light is entrusted to you to be kept burning brightly. This child of yours has been enlightened by Christ. He (she) is to walk always as a child of light. May he (she) keep the flame of faith alive in his (her) heart. When the Lord comes, may he (she) go out to meet him with all the saints in the heavenly kingdom.” In a rite of Sending Forth, we gave thanks for the graces of the baptism we received. Baptism is truly a call of God, an election. That is when we are called by a special name: every human being is special to the Lord, and is forever under the gaze of God. Just as it was with Jesus, baptism marks the beginning of our commitment to God. It is in the name of our baptism that we are called to commit ourselves and continue to respond to God’s challenges, and make ourselves responsible by making our brothers and sisters responsible in service

to the mission. As the *Little Prince* would say: “You become responsible for ever for what you have tamed. You are responsible for the rose...” This commitment is not only individual but is also communitarian. It is through baptism that we are incorporated to the Body of Christ. The mission ahead is to build up the Body of Christ: Can there be any greater mission?

+ François Thibodeau *in*

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

10-03-07