



From A Bishop's Journal (754)

The Encouraging Vitality of Our Diocese

In the 754 accounts I have given you on a weekly basis since my coming to the diocese in 1994, I have always tried to inform you as honestly as possible on what our diocese was experiencing in every area of its activities, including the financial situation.

Evaluation of 2008

While 32 parishes, 12 pastoral units, and the parish and diocesan committees have been asked to evaluate their activities for 2007-2008 in order to better prepare their action plan for 2008-2009, I am pleased to point out the vitality of each sector of our pastoral ministry. The youth ministry has watched over the gradual establishment of youth ministry teams within the different pastoral units: there have been visits to parishes, and activities such as concerts, youth fast days, a visit to the Québec Major Seminary, a diocesan “You Can Change the World” youth day, meetings with youth preparing for Confirmation and the profession of Faith, support for the establishment of the Village des Sources Resmavic, Inc., implication in the “Chanter la Vie” youth choir, and the international humanitarian project Amistad NB-Guatemala. Family ministry has not been neglected: the Valentine’s Day supper for couples, sessions for parents and couples, and the diocesan “Fais-le savoir” (“Pass It On”) day are examples of this ministry’s activities. The pastoral agent formation programme and the adult faith education programme have seen new developments with sessions at the zone level rather than at the diocesan centre. I must also mention the sessions on baptism, the Eucharist, liturgy, liturgies of the Word in the absence of a priest, and sessions on personal growth. Family- and parish-based catechetics is more firmly established: in ten years it has known a very encouraging success, with over 300 groups formed to make our children more knowledgeable about Jesus and his message of love. Far from being discouraged, our parish committees for preparation to first confession, first communion, and confirmation tell of their enthusiasm in working with our children and their parents to help them experience better these sacraments of love. The Diocesan Catechetics Committee continues the revision of the manuals for both children and parents, so as to present the message of Jesus even more appropriately. The pastoral readjustments are being made in response to recommendations of the 2006 Pastoral Orientation Congress: there are twelve pastoral ministry units in our thirty-two parishes, and these units [french Sector] have ongoing training with sessions on the documents produced regarding pastoral ministry teams and pastoral councils. Another sign of diocesan vitality is the presence of our 25 missionaries in eleven foreign countries: these are excellent ambassadors!

In Good Hands

The bishop very seldom acts alone: he may have the last word, but he must consult his various councils before making a decision. There is even an organisation that continues after the death or resignation of the bishop: this is the College of Consultors. Here is the list of the particular councils for 2008-2009: College of Consultors to oversee the diocesan administration in cases of vacancy of the episcopal see. This council is composed of Fathers Roger Dionne, V.G., Whalen Bossé, I.V.D., Aurèle Godbout, C.J.M., Normand Godbout, Leo Grégoire, I.V.D., Laurent Nadeau, Joseph Numbi Phaku Mavambu, F.D., Ivan Thériault, Jacques Thériault, Rino Thériault, and Pierre Thibodeau. The Bishop's Council is composed of Father Roger Dionne, V.G., Sister Ronilla Sirois, R.H.S.J., Father William Rice, Ms. Ghislaine Clavet, and Sister Viola Côté, F.M.A.. The Presbyteral Council is composed of Fathers Roger Dionne, V.G., Whalen Bossé, I.V.D., Normand Godbout, Leo Grégoire, I.V.D., Laurent Nadeau, Joseph Numbi Phaku Mavambu, F.D., and Pierre Thibodeau. The Diocesan Pastoral Council is composed of Ms. Ghislaine Clavet, Sister Viola Côté, F.M.A., Father Roger Dionne, V.G., Mrs. Julie Arsenault, representatives of the five pastoral zones, and the directors of the diocesan services and committees. The Diocesan Council for Economic Affairs is composed of Mr. Jean-Yves April, Mr. Carmel Caouette, Mr. Gilles Couturier, Mr. Donald Lajoie, Mrs. Nicole B. Michaud, Mr. Dale Soucy, C.G.A., Ms. Jeannette Pelletier, Father William Rice, Mr. Ernest Sirois, Mr. Gaston Thériault, and two other members from names submitted at the annual meeting. A sub-committee of economic affairs, the Diocese of Edmundston Foundation, manages the funds received from our 2003-2004 diocesan financial campaign. This sub-committee is composed of Mrs. Rita Baker, Mrs. Pauline Christensen, Mr. Réal Dionne, Mrs. Majella Roy-Gallant, Mr. Michel Laroche, Mr. Gildard Lavoie, Mr. Gerard Lee, Mrs. Alice Lévesque, Mr. Ernest Sirois, and Mr. Gaston Thériault, chairman. To these are associated Ms. Jeannette Pelletier, Mrs. Martine Hudon, Ms. Ghislaine Clavet, and Mrs. Nicole B. Michaud.

A Few Statistics

As of December 31, 2007, the financial campaign raised \$3,380,701. \$1,834,705 have already been distributed as transfers to parishes (\$812,134), a contribution for repairs to the cathedral (\$800,000), financial support for diocesan pastoral projects (\$127,648). If there had not been any major financial campaign, it would have been impossible for us to open a youth and family ministry office and have a pastoral agents formation programme. The board of directors ensures that the funds are used according to the dictates of the diocesan financial campaign: the dream of the directors is not only to respond to our pastoral needs for the ten years to come, but to receive donations that would help them to go on for an even longer period. Regarding the Works of the diocese as such, revenue has increased to \$388,979, thanks to an extraordinary gift, while expenses were \$341,157, for a surplus of \$47,822. Periods of rejoicing are rather of short duration, since for 2008 the budget estimates revenues of \$294,200 and expenses of \$340,400. More of the extraordinary gifts would be welcome! Because of our Major Financial Campaign we cancelled the Group of One Thousand that brought in between \$30,000 and \$40,000 annually. We try very hard to keep expenses at a minimum, but there are fixed expenses that cannot be avoided, such as the ever-growing cost of heating, electricity, and food.

Gratitude

I cannot end this overview without expressing my deep gratitude to all those volunteers throughout the diocese who give of themselves to the diocese for the cause of Christ and his Church. I thank all those who have reached the end of their pastoral mandate, especially those who are retiring from their pastoral team: Mrs. Mona Albert, Mrs. Bernadette Beaulieu, Mr. Armand Bernier, Mrs. Ghislaine Bouchard, Mrs. Lynn Crawford, Mr. Alonzo and Mrs. Marie-Noëlla Desjardins, Sister Réjeanne Fortin, S.G.M., Mrs. Lucille Lagacé, Mrs. Huguette Laplante, Mrs. Stella Martin, Mr. Andrew P. Mayer, I.V.D., Sister Mavis McCluskey, N.D.S.C., Mr. Jean Pilote, Mrs. Lucille Pineault, Mr. Guildor and Mrs. Liza Poitras, Mr. Paul Roy, Sister Anne Russell, R.H.S.J., Mr. Edgar Savoie, and Mr. Donat Veilleux. May the Lord give one hundredfold to them for all they have done for him and for his Church.

+ François Thibodeau ym

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

06-18-08