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THE PIONEER CATHOLIC MISSIONARIES IN THE NORTHWESTERN PROVINCES AND BRITISH COLUMBIA.

In the preparation of any paper dealing with the activities of the Ambassadors of the Catholic Church, in the persons of her Missionary Priests in the Province of British Columbia, for the purpose of linking up their inception west of the Great Lakes, it will be necessary to go back to their starting point. In doing so, we find that practically all of the early Missionaries were drawn from the sons of De Mazenod, the Founder of the "Order of Mary Immaculate," and known as Oblate Fathers.

In a book entitled "Sketches of the Life of Monsigneur de Mazenod", we are given a glimpse of the hardships and privations endured by these Pioneer Missionaries in those desolate wilds in the north, and their zeal for the Indians who inhabited those frozen regions.

For the purpose of this paper, therefore, we will pick them up at Ottawa. In 1827, Rev. Father Guiges, O.M.I., was sent from Montreal to Ottawa, (then Bytown) for the purpose of creating a Parish, and where we said his first Mass in a poor Irishman's cabin. Later, Ottawa was created an Episcopal Diocese, and on the recommendation of Monsigneur Bourget, Bishop of Montreal, Father Guiges, O.M.I., was created his first Bishop. In 1832, the first wooden Chapel was built in Ottawa. In 1844, a number of Oblate Fathers from the Mother House Notre Dame, in the Diocese of Grenoble, France, arrived at Ottawa, the Order being now firmly established. The spirit of the founder, (it is stated) impelled them to branch out and give scope to their missionary zeal. They sought the Chantiers along the St. Lawrence, the Ottawa and other great rivers, spending their winter months in these logging camps and enduring all the hardships in common with these loggers.

The evangelizing of the Indians tribes on the Canadian border and the inhabitants of the icebound coast of Labrador was also undertaken soon after the arrival of these Oblate Fathers in Canada. Among the Fathers who chose these difficult and laborious fields we find the names of Father Durocher, Penit, Arnaud, Babel and Charpeney. The labors of these men were among the Indians of the Montagnais, Nasquapus, Seven Island and the Moisie Tribes. Some very interesting and thrilling accounts are given in the book of the life of bishop De Mazenod of the experience of these men in the frozen regions of the north.

Prior to these dates, however, regular French Canadian expeditions were undertaken into the wilderness of the northwest, which were stopped by the conquest of Canada by England.

The work of the Oblate Missionaries was, however, reassumed in 1818, and about which time, Lord Selkirk, being anxious to secure the Colony of Assinboine, the cooperation of the French Canadians in the country, requested of the Bishop of Quebec, the services of two Priests. His request resulted in the naming of Father J.M. Provencher, and Sevee Dumoulin, both French Canadians of the Diocese of Quebec. These two Priests started from Montreal in birch canoes and landed at Point Douglas, now Winnipeg, on the 16th of July, 1818. However, soon after, they crossed the River and began the settlement of St. Boniface. Three years later, in 1822, St. Boniface was created a Diocese, and Father Provencher was consecrated its first Bishop, where he lived until his death, which occurred on the 7th of June, 1853. Later, St. Boniface was raised to the dignity of an Archdiocese, and as such, embraced an immense extent of territory comprising the Archdiocese of St. Boniface presided over by Archbishop A. Tache, the Diocese of St. Albert and Saskatchewan, under Bishop Grandin, the Districts of Athabasca and McKenzie under Bishop Farand and Bishop Clute, and the Diocese of British Columbia under Bishop D'Herbomez; With Missionary Posts established over two thousand miles from St. Boniface, the fields of labour widened accordingly in these northwestern desolate regions. With no recruits offering themselves for missionary work, the situation became acute and alarming to the Bishop of St. Boniface. Monsigneur Provencher, therefore, lost no time in sending out an appeal

to both the fountain head in France, the Superior General of the Oblates of Mary, as well as to the Novitiate house at Longuiel. Sympathetic response was received from both the mother House in France and the Novitiate house at Longuiel. Applications for admission into the ranks of the Oblates for missionary work in the northwest Missions were received from divers points in France, from the shores of the Mediterranean, from Rhone and Brittany and La Vendee, from Alsace and Lorraine, as well as from the Novitiate House at Longuiel, near Montreal.

In the chapel of the Novitiate House at Longuiel, in 1845, we find the Father Peter Aubert and Brother Alexander Tache, receiving from their Superior, their obedience for the Red Rivers Mission. Starting out immediately, and after sixty two days of unbroken journey, the two young Missionaries reached St. Boniface on the Red River. It is related that when these two young Missionaries presented themselves to the Bishop, Monsigneur Provencher could not conceal his surprise at the youthful appearance of the then Brother Tache. (This mere boy, however, five years later, became the Coadjutor Bishop of St. Boniface, and still later its Archbishop.)

Brother Tache had reached his twenty second year of age in his two months' journey from Montreal, hence on the 12th day of October, 1845, he was ordained a Priest, and on July 8th, 1846, he received his obedience to proceed to L'Ile a la Crosse, at which point he arrived after another journey of two months. He established a Mission, remaining with the Indians two years, instructing them. In 1847 he journeyed father north, arriving at Lac Caribou, 350 miles northeast of L'Ile a La Crosse, and which he described as a most desolate spot, he being the first civilized person to set foot in that far off region.

Prior to the advent of the Oblate Fathers on the Pacific slope, or West of the Rocky Mountains, however, it appears that a Rev. Father P.J. De Smet, S.J. had visited these regions prior to 1843.

We find in the records of the American Catholic Historical Society, extract of a letter from Father Nobili, S.J. to a

Father Murphy, in which he states that he, Father Nobili, left Rome in September 1843 for Father De Smet's Mission, and reached Fort Vancouver, in Oregon, in August 1844, and in August 1845 Father De Smet assigned him to the task of exploring New Caledonia. In company with a Halfbreed he visited as far North as Fort Alexander, and that he returned in May the following year to Colville to give an account to Father De Smet, who sent him back.

Father Tachi remained in that country administering to the Montaignais and Cree Indians until 1849. In 1848 he was joined by Rev. Father Faraud, who afterward became the apostle of the lone North America.

In January, 1849, Fathers Tachi and Faraud left for the Athabasca, at which point they received the disquieting news of the probability of the abandoning their mission in consequence of lack of funds. This dreaded evil was, however, averted, and they were allowed to continue.

In the same year, 1849, Father Tachi was summoned to France by his Superior General. On arriving at the Mother House, he was informed of the decision of the Holy See to appoint him Coadjutor to the Bishop of St. Boniface, with right of succession. He received his Episcopal Consecration at the hands of the Venerable Founder, Monsigneur de Mazenod, and by whom he was also named Superior of the Red River Mission. Returning from Europe he was accompanied by Father Grollier and Father M. Lacomb joined him. When leaving Montreal for his northern Mission, Father Lacomb was then a young priest.

Bishop Provencher died on July 7th, 1853 and was succeeded by Coadjutor Bishop Tache.

During 1856 the Oblate Fathers stationed at Lac La Biche succeeded in opening a way through the thick forest which separated their beautiful lake from the Prairies that fringed the borders of the Athabasca.

This mission also included the Indians of Saskatchewan,

About 1854 the Diocese of St. Boniface was elevated to the rank of an Archdiocese with Bishop Taché as Archbishop. At these dates, the Oblate Missionaries had established themselves and erected missions far into the Arctic regions. They were to be found on the McKenzie bordering on the Arctic Ocean, along the Great Slave Lakes, Lac Vert, on Peel River, Lac Caribou, L'Ile La Crosse, Lac La Biche, Fort De Laird, Fort Sealkit, Fort Courant, Fort Norman, Fort MacPherson, Fort Rae, Fort Chepeywan, Fort Simpson, Fort Good Hope, Great Bear Lake, Athabaska, Red River, Alberta and Saskatchewan.

Amongst this noble army of Pioneer Missionaries we find the names of Archbishop A. Taché, Bishop Guiges, Bishop Grandin, Bishop Clute and Bishop Provencher, the Venerable Father La Comb, Fathers Telmon, Penit, Dundurand, Holley, Honorel, Durocher, Arnaud, Babel, Charpeney, Aubert, Farnud, Groilier, Tessot, Maisonneuve, Goiffon, Somonet, Mestre, Kynard, Gascon, Saquin, Petit, Grourard, Reuve, Sadet, La Crosse, Calligham, Scollen, Fourmond and Gendre, with Brothers Alexis, Regeen, and Pautier.

On the western slopes of the great mountain ranges, several bands of Missionary Oblates and Jesuit Priests were similarly occupied. Almost contemporaneously with the origin and establishment of the Missions on the Red River and the McKenzie Districts, other missionary fields extending westward from the Rocky Mountains to the shores of the Pacific Ocean, were also confided to the zeal of the Society of the Oblates of Mary.

The appearance of the Missionary Priest from the Order of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate in Canada, was the result of a request from Monsigneur Bourget, Bishop of Montreal, in 1841. In 1847, a similar request came to France from Bishop Blanchet, then at the head of the diocese of Walla Walla, Oregon. His wish was likewise acceded to and Rev. Father Pascal Record, as superior, was sent out with Rev. Father Casimir Chirouse, Charles Pandosy and Geo. Blanchet, accompanied by Brother Vernet. This small band of Missionaries reached Walla Walla on the 5th of September, 1847. These Fathers and Brother, it appears, were augmented at short intervals. The Mission of

Yakima was founded in October, 1847, that of Olympia in May, 1848. In March, 1852, a mission was established among the Cayenses and in September 1858 among the Snohomish. Rev. Father Chirouse, O.M.I., baptized old Chief Seattle and conducted the funeral service over his remains. In 1857, the Oblates were called to British Columbia. Their headquarters were transferred from Oregon to Esquimalt on Vancouver Island, after which the Fathers gradually withdrew their mission from the Sound, and began to labour with undiminished zeal in the diocese of Bishop Modeste Demers, titular of Vancouver Island. This diocese then comprised all that was then known as British Columbia. From Esquimalt, as centre, Rev. Father d'Herbomez, afterward Bishop d'Herbomez, directed the various missions and supplied both mainland and island with Priests and brothers.

The Mission on the Okanagan Lake was founded in 1857. In 1860 Father Fouquet, O.M.I., established the first Mission on the Fraser River, on which the thriving City of New Westminster has since sprung up. He also founded the Mission thirty miles farther up the Fraser, now St. Mary's Mission.

The first Indian school was started by the Fathers at St. Mary's Mission in 1862. In 1863, Father Pondosy was sent to start a mission at Fort Rupert. In the meantime, Bishop Demers had taken steps to divide the immense diocese.

It was his wish to erect the mainland into a separate Vicarate to be entrusted to the Oblate of Mary Immaculate, reserving to himself the Island of Vancouver. This plan was approved by Pope Pius IX, under date of December 14th, 1863. Father d'Herbomez O.M.I., was appointed Vicar Apostolic, and was consecrated Bishop October 9th, 1864 at Victoria. On the 16th of the same month, he took possession of his Vicarate by fixing his residence in New Westminster, after which they gradually relinquished their missions on the Island.

The teaching staff of St. Louis College, which was founded in Victoria in 1863, was transferred in 1866 to New Westminster, where it became, in the early days, an important factor in the education of the children of the white population.

In spite of the difficulties, great sacrifice and privations, Missions were established at Williams Lake, in 1867, at Stuart Lake in the far north, in 1873, in Kootenay at the foot of the Rockies in 1876, and at Kamloops in 1878.

Amongst the army of Pioneer Missionaries of the Order of Mary Immaculate, we find the names of Bishops d'Herbomez, and Durieu, Father C. Chirouse, Fouquet, Pondosy, LeJacq, Peytavin, Marechal, Grandidier, McGuckin, Martin, Richards, Gendee, Bandre, Pichard Guertin, Welch, Boyle, Bedard, Coccola, LeChesne, Michels, Connolley, Rocher, Necasson, Claessen, Wagner, Lambot, Maillard, Tavernier, Conan, O'Neill, Madden, McNeil, Duplanil, Salles, Panhateaux, Choinel, Jan, Plamondon, McGuire, Thayer, Dontanwill, now Archbishop, Morice and others.

It is recorded that Rev. Father Demers, (Afterwards Bishop of Vancouver Island) was the first Priest to visit Kamloops, which was in 1844, remaining with the Indians a short time. He was followed in 1846 by Father Nollie, S.J., whose first visit was on the 27th of July, 1846. During his stay, the Indians erected a log cabin, which was used as a Church. On the 11th of August, 1846, he made his way to what is now known as Adams Lake where he found the Chief of the Shuswap Band in camp. The Chief, who was previously baptized by Father Demers, and given the name of Adam. Father Nollie then named the lake after the Chief, Adams Lake.

He visited Fort Alexander, arriving there on the 25th August, 1845, where he found a frame Church. On the 2nd of September, he ascended the Fraser and arrived at Fort George on the 12th. On the 14th he ascended the River Nesqually, and on the 24th arrived at Lake Stuart, remaining eleven days. On October 24th, he visited the Chilcoten, and remained with them twelve days, returning to Shuswap. He remained among the Indians for six years, covering the above mentioned territory. Leaving this district in 1852, the Indians of the Shuswap and Kamloops Bands were not visited again until 1864, when they were visited by Father MacGuckin, during which visit he accompanied Bishop d'Herbomez.

The Okanagan Mission was established in 1857 and as adminis-

tered at different times by Fathers Durley, Richards, Grandre, Bandre and Pondosy.

After the establishment of the St. Louis Mission at Kamloops in 1878, these Fathers also visited this Mission. The first priest to reside permanently at Kamloops was Father Gardidier with Father Martin and Brother E. Devries as companions. In 1880, Father LeJacq was taken from the Stuart Lake Missions, where he had been for the previous thirteen years, and brought to Kamloops, were a community house was established in 1881, consisting of Fathers LeJacq, Grandidier and Peytavin. Father Grandidier was replaced by Father Coccola in 1882. Father Coccola was replaced by Father Bedard. During 1880 a piece of land was bought two and a half miles west of Kamloops and during 1880 and 1881 two large buildings were erected for the education of boys and girls. The girls building was placed in charge of the Sisters of St. Ann, the boys in charge of the fathers and hy teaching brothers.

With Father Coccola as Parish Priest, a church site was purchased in 1885, and a start was made in the Spring of 1886 in the erection of a Church which was completed in the fall of the same year. Early in 1887, Father Coccola was transferred to St. Eugene Mission in Kootenay. He was succeeded by Father Bedard.

In 1885 the Industrial School for Indian children was started across the river and completed in 1886, and was first placed under the management of Mr. M. Hagan. Six months later, Father A. Carion, O.M.I., was appointed principal.

In 1887, St. Ann's Mission School, west of Kamloops was removed and rebuilt on Lot 27, Nicola street. The boys' school at the same point, was later abandoned.

In 1890, Father Bedard, was succeeded by Father Guertin. In 1892, Father Lejacq was transferred to Williams Lake Mission and Father Peytavin was again brought back to Kamloops. He was succeeded by Father Michels in 1897. Father Thayer replaced Father Michels in 1908. Father Madden

replaced Father Thayer in 1912, remaining one year, being succeeded by Father Lardon in 1913. Father Lardon was followed by Father Boening in 1914, who was succeeded by Father Plamondon in 1916. Father McGuire succeeded Father Plamondon in 1917. Father Kennedy followed Father McGuire in 1918 and Father Madden returned in 1921 and has remained up to the present. The changes referred to have reference only to the Parish Priests of the Church of the Sacred Heart.

The Mission House is that of St. Louis Mission, and as such has always had three resident Priests in the Mission and one lay brother. The present house consists of the Rev. Father LeJeune, O.M.I., Rev. Father A. Madden, O.M.I., and Rev. Father J. McGuire, O.M.I.

It will therefore be seen that the activities of the Catholic Missionaries in this District and that of the Okanagan date back to 1844, and have been practically continuous since 1857. With the exception of Father Demers and Father Nolili, the Missionaries above named, were all drawn from the Society of the Order of Mary Immaculate, commonly known as the Oblate Fathers, O.M.I.

Yours truly,
"John F. Smith"
Kamloops, B.C.

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