

OBLATE BROTHERS AMID THE SNOW

Gaston Montmigney, O.M.I.



OBLATE
HERITAGE

10

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by
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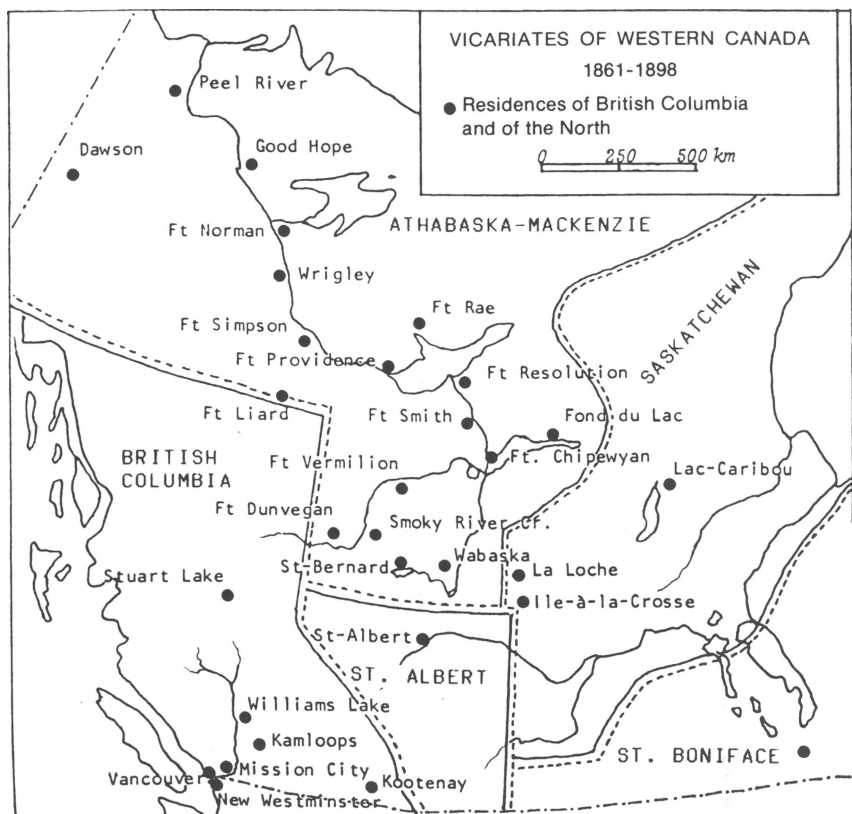
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It was Bishop Paul-Eugène Roy, Coadjutor of Quebec who stated in 1925:

“The evangelization of North-Western Canada is the most beautiful jewel in the crown that the sons of Bishop de Mazenod bear, and one of the most marvellous works of Catholic Apostolate in the world.”



Around the same time, while speaking of the Coadjutor Brothers, François Veillot exclaimed: *“It is not sufficient to admire in the colourful list of their efforts, their sufferings, their heroism and their apostolate, of these very humble, very efficacious and even quite necessary artisans, these dear Coadjutor Brothers. One must penetrate the secret of their merits, imitate from afar their virtues, and indirectly support their ministry. It is intentionally that I use this word ministry, for in truth these humble servants are the real apostles and sometimes powerful converters.”*

Father Duchaussois related that an old sea dog, run aground at Mackenzie, and who had just renounced Protestantism, declared to Bishop Breynat: *“If I am a Catholic today, it is thanks to your Brothers whose religious and devout lives have deeply convinced me.”*

The Oblate missionary epic of the last century and a half in North-Western Canada can be seen as a far from ordinary apostolic achievement in the history of the Church. In all this it was essential that the priests were always solidly supported in their apostolic work by the brothers, who, like them, were sons of Bishop de Mazenod. These unknown apostles, in the shadow of the priesthood, generously gave themselves to prayer, work and the edification of the Church. *“And I ask you, to be truly a ‘companion’ to help him in this,”* St. Paul said in his letter to the Philippians (IV,3).

In the present booklet we would like to present to you some of these religious Oblates who became giants of work, prayer and holiness; more precisely, seven Brothers of the Canadian Northwest. Some are well known but others have remained largely unsung.

Brother Joseph Kearney, O.M.I.	1834 - 1918
Brother Antoine Kowalczyk, O.M.I.	1866 - 1947
Brother Joseph Kerh��v��, O.M.I.	1869 - 1964
Brother Louis Crenn, O.M.I.	1879 - 1969
Brother Henri Guibert, O.M.I.	1885 - 1975
Brother Tugdual Mousset, O.M.I.	1896 - 1958
Brother Albert Bernard, O.M.I.	1903 - 1979

It need hardly be stated that the choice was not an easy task. We could have chosen dozens of others who would have been equally worthy of special mention, but it was necessary to limit ourselves while avoiding judging or comparing the sanctity of these excellent religious who are models for us all.

**Brother
Joseph
Kearney,
O.M.I.
1834-1918**



Brother Kearney was nicknamed “The unknown Hero of the Arctic”! How many Oblates can state that they have worked 57 years in the same mission? To whom could be attributed the eloquent words of Father Léo Deschâtelets, O.M.I., when he was Superior General of the Oblates: *“All his life Brother Kearney preached to us that nothing exists if we are not first and foremost men of God.”* This sums up the trait which vividly characterized the life of the “little Irish Brother” who, during his missionary life was cook, gardener, sacristan,

fisherman, hunter, dog trainer, teamster, altar clerk, a jack of all trades! He accomplished all his activities with Irish faith, deep humility, limitless devotion, great modesty, exemplary mortification, immense charity, displaying a great devotion to the Holy Sacrament and to the Virgin Mary, and a respectful attachment to his priestly companions.

Born in Coal Island in Ireland on July 15, 1834, Joseph Patrick Kearney went through the same experience as his fellow Oblates, entering the Novitiate of Lys Marie in England on June 20, 1855 and making his first religious profession on July 26, 1856. His intention was to become a priest, but during his novitiate he changed his mind and

became a Coadjutor Brother. He took his perpetual vows in Ireland a year later on July 16, 1857.

Having worked for some two years in Ireland at Inchicore in Dublin, he finally left his native soil in June 1857 for Western Canada. On his arrival at the Red River missions, winter was approaching and the snow had begun. Accordingly, the journey to Mackenzie had to be postponed. In 1858-59 at the Nativity mission of Fort Chipewyan he became a missionary apprentice, giving himself totally to the work of the harvest, farm maintenance and the work of collecting firewood for the winter. In the following spring he became gardener, carpenter, and general handyman.

In the summer of 1859 Brother left the shores of the Athabaska River to go to Great Slave Lake in order to help at Saint-Joseph mission at Fort Resolution. There he worked for two years as lumberjack, fisherman, gardener, builder, cook and catechist. In the summer of 1860 he built a little chapel. The following year on August 26, 1861, Brother Kearney arrived at the place of his final obedience, Fort Good Hope on the polar circle, for a life of sacrifice which was to last some 57 years.

Brother Kearney, a reserved and serious person, was an excellent companion for his superior, the missionary priest. All his life he showed total respect for the priest. This deep veneration for the priesthood, which, in the novitiate urged him to renounce that formidable honour, always inspired in him a sort of cult. Thus his last superior wrote of him: *“The way in which he respected and listened to me, a young priest, both edified and sometimes even humbled me. But I saw that it was purely his respect for my priesthood.”*

Father Breton in 1962 so well stated in a biography about Brother Kearney: *“He consecrated his life to the humble tasks which were allotted to him. A humble, laborious, monotonous life of ceaseless works without glamour, day after day, month after month, a lifelong martyrdom gaining the merit, but not collecting the glory.”*

“Faithful servant”! These two words aptly summarize the apostolate that the little Irish Brother, in turns foster-father, builder, sacristan, catechist, organist, dog handler, fulfilled in this polar mission that he was to never leave until his death. For 57 years he faced daily problems with admirable fidelity. On October 1, 1918, still at his beloved Good Hope, Brother Joseph Kearney, truly a man for all seasons and all tasks, finished his earthly mission, going to his God to continue his care of his Oblate confrères in their labours.

**Brother
Anthony
Kowalczyk,
O.M.I.
1866 - 1947**



The fame of Brother Anthony Kowalczyk is already known. On April 7, 1952, the Postulator of our causes of canonization arrived from Rome to Edmonton to undertake the establishment of a tribunal with the encouragement and advice of Archbishop MacDonald, Bishop of Edmonton, who chaired the opening meeting which took place on

April 14 at the Episcopal Palace. The 63 other meetings took place in the Saint-Jean Juniorate chapel. Some 42 witnesses, 21 Oblates and 23 non-Oblates, came to testify to his sanctity. They represented the five places where Brother Anthony had lived as a religious: Saint-Gerlach Novitiate, Saint-Charles' Juniorate, Holland, the mission of Lac la Biche, Saint-Paul, and finally Saint-Jean Juniorate Edmonton, where he passed the final 36 years of his life, fulfilling the functions of mechanic, porter, and gardener. On June 13, the tribunal heard the final witness, and declared the meetings ended. They met again a last time on July 13, to put a final touch to this diocesan process which had aimed at introducing the cause of the canonization of our good Brother Anthony to Rome. Three years later his

Cause was officially introduced in Rome, and at the same time “*Brother Ave*” became a Servant of God. In 1994 the study of the virtues of the Brother was completed and presented to the Congregation for the Causes of the Saints.



Oblate Cemetery, St. Albert, Canada.

Polish by birth, born of a deeply Catholic but very poor family, he began the difficult trade of a blacksmith at the age of eighteen. After his apprenticeship he obtained work for four years in a German military arsenal among faithless and lawless people. Stunned by this situation he fell one day on his knees crying out: “My God, I believe that you are in Heaven!” At the same moment he felt an almost unbearable burning pain in his eyes. The eye specialist of the neighbouring clinic could do nothing to help him. Anthony then returned to the nearby Church to do the Stations of the Cross. At the sixth Station, moved to tears on seeing the Lord spattered with blood, spittle and dust, and on admiring St. Veronica braving the crowd and executioners, he cried out: “*By the merits of St. Veronica, heal me Lord!*” At that moment his eyes were cured and he promised then to leave at once the world where God was so horribly scorned and blasphemed.

He set out for Cologne in Germany where he had one of the greatest graces of his life. He found lodging with a good

christian family whose older son was a student at the Juniorate of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate. He was received with open arms as a member of the family. For 18 months with daily Mass, weekly visits to different shrines, etc. he developed a life of piety and charity by which he moved closer and closer to Jesus and Mary.

After obtaining permission from his parents to enter a religious community, and with the help of his benefactor, Madame Prummenbaum, he entered the Oblate Novitiate at Saint-Gerlach in Holland. After his formation there he spent four years at Saint-Charles Juniorate and then received his obedience for South Africa - an obedience which was changed at the last minute by the Superior General, Father Louis Soullier, O.M.I., for the Vicariate of Saint-Albert (Canada).

Called to Lac-la Biche as a mechanic to work the sawmill, Brother Anthony became a victim of a terrible accident. He arm was mangled in the wheels of a large steam engine. It took six days by horse and cart to reach Edmonton where his arm was amputated. In October he got his obedience to Saint-Paul where he looked after the machines, was in charge of the pigpen and any other task needing to be done. In 1911 he received his final obedience to



The Loss of his Right Arm did not Slow Down Br. Anthony.

the Saint-Jean Juniorate at Edmonton. There he attended to the laundry and central heating, gardening, house cleaning and a thousand other minor functions such as regulator, sacristan, etc. ...

There from the time he began his work, Brother Anthony truly identified himself with it. He contributed greatly to the formation of the young students by his regularity, his perseverance, good advice, and also by the great help of his prayers and penance which remained so discreetly hidden. His devotion to Mary Immaculate was most moving.

His life was simple without any extraordinary events. However, it should be mentioned that in 1945 he was savagely beaten by an unknown assailant in his little bedroom in the Juniorate. It was August 17, and his absence from the refectory was noticed. A confrère knocked on his door but there was no reply. He entered and found Brother with a swollen injured face, blackened and covered in blood. He was questioned but he could not express himself. He was in a serious condition and he was brought at once to the hospital. After regaining the use of his senses, he



*Visit of Cardinal
Wojtyla
to the Grave
of Br. Anthony
Kowalczyk,
O.M.I.,
September 1969.*

asked to see Madame Kosakiewicz, a Polish woman and mother of an Oblate priest. On his arrival she could hardly recognize him and asked: “*Who did that to you Brother?*” He replied: “*I do not know, but I believe that it was the devil; I fought with him all the night.*” Following this occurrence the Brother remained affected by that night of terror and his memory became faulty. He became extremely nervous and felt his end approaching.

Brother Anthony died on July 10, 1947 during the Oblate annual retreat at Saint-Albert at the age of eighty one. Bishop Emile Légal, writing to the Superior General from 1899, i.e. 48 years before his death, described him in the following terms: “He is an excellent little Brother, very pious and edifying, even beyond the ordinary” - truly prophetic words.

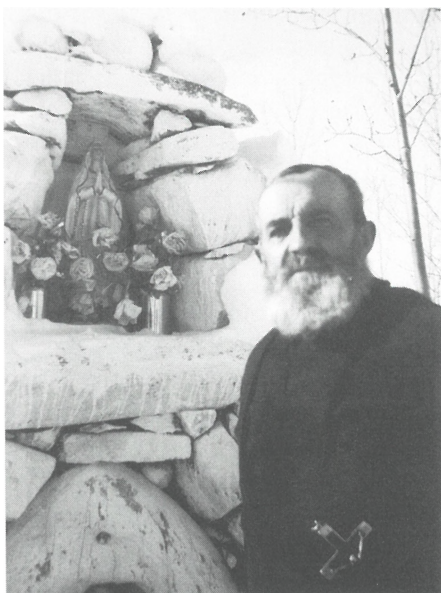
**Brother
Joseph
Kerkévé,
O.M.I.
1869-1964**

This little Breton from Morbihan, who by his perpetual vows had become a missionary Oblate for life, overcame many trials which demanded a strength of will and an uncommon supernatural virtue. But he was also famous for his extraordinary physical strength. One day, while at the Saint-Bernard mission (Grouard), someone dared to want to measure this



herculean strength. The mission then had a flour mill by the lake and the mission was half way up the hill. “*Brother Kerkévé,*” the man, a Métis named Beaudry, said to him, “*Which of us is the stronger? Can you carry two sacks of flour to the mission?*” In reply, Brother took two sacks, one under each arm, then two on each shoulder and finally a fifth on his head. Beaudry did likewise, and the two men started walking up the hill. Brother arrived at the mission without stopping, whilst Beaudry, came to a halt only half way up the hill.

Brother Kerh ev e had received the gifts of uncommon physical and moral strength from divine Providence and these were matched by his humility. The French military had refused him because he was too small, 1m. 52 (5ft.). The army of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate received him into its ranks, and never regretted it. He, himself, however had to struggle more than once against the temptation of leaving this religious family to which he had given himself entirely.



At the Grotto he built at Wabaska

When Father J. M. Dubot of the Vannes seminary wrote to the Novice Master of Lachine in 1893, he proved prophetic when he said: *"I have the honour to announce to you the arrival of a new postulant, Joseph Kerh ev e from our diocese of Vannes ... he is an excellent young man, obedient ... ready for any sacrifice necessary to serve God in your holy Congregation."* For more

than 60 years he was the faithful servant in more than a dozen missions of the Vicariate of Grouard, often alone and isolated, sometimes a farmer, sometimes a trapper or hunter, acting as builder, turning his hand to every task, his religious spirit asserting itself more and more by consummate humility, by charity in all situations, and an exceptional devotion to the Virgin Mary and her Divine Son.

This fifth child of a family of eleven became an Oblate and always worked with great fervour, and his ingenuity compensated later when necessary for his failing strength

or the lack of suitable tools. To lessen the heavy burden of solitude, he worked, read a lot, played cards, hunted, trapped, etc. ... and he sanctified his soul by meditation, prayer, and especially the Rosary.

At Wabaska on March 19-20, 1944 the Golden Jubilee of religious profession of the humble Brother was fêted, and these two days became for him a sort of “transfiguration on Mount Tabor”: well organized religious feasts, renewal of vows, speech in the Cree language (in syllabic characters) that the Brother could read and understand, the presence of confrères who were so dear to him, reading from a pile of letters and messages received from those who had not been able to attend the celebrations, etc. ...

If the transfiguration had just passed, his passion, following the example of Christ, was not going to be a long time coming and was to be long and painful. From 1949 tuberculosis took hold of this faithful servant, and for fifteen years he suffered in calmness and submission, going to the hospitals of Edmonton, McLennan and Whitelaw to end his earthly stay at the Mont-Joli Sanatorium in Québec (1961-1964). The three years of his stay at Mont-Joli were indeed the culmination of his sacrifice, united to that of the Saviour on the Cross. On Saturday, July 18, 1964, the Immaculate Virgin to whom he had so much prayed, took his soul to present it to her Divine Son, as the ultimate recompense.

**Brother
Louis Crenn,
O.M.I.
1879-1969**

Shortly before his death, the humble Brother Louis Crenn left us these words: *“My memory weakens! May the holy will of God be done ... I am good for nothing ... I have learned the true significance of suffering ... I thank God for it. Let us save souls at any cost. If poor sinners had the slightest idea of the sufferings*



of purgatory and hell they would change their plans immediately ... we must absolutely obtain for them this very special grace.” These are the words of a saintly apostle, of a missionary caught up by the desire of the salvation of souls, of a missionary who understood and lived his whole life for the conversion of all the children of God.

Brother Louis arrived at Fort Chipewyan in 1899 at the age of twenty after leaving Finistère in Brittany. Divine Providence was pleased to keep him in this mission for 67 years, devoting himself to the service of the mission of Nativity and its boarding school. Brother rarely left this mission where he was known and loved by all. In the parochial bulletin of Fort Chipewyan on the occasion of the death and funeral of Brother Crenn we read:

“Nowadays it is difficult to find a humble man! Without hesitation we can say that Brother Crenn really was a humble man. He could do anything. He threw himself into his work with all his energy, but in all things and everywhere he gave credit to his great Master. He was an extremely gifted Brother who succeeded in all



A Jack of all Trades, and Master of Most

his undertakings be it sailor, lumberjack, mechanic, cook, hunter, fisherman or sledge driver. For 67 years he devoted himself to our mission, working joyfully for God, for his people and his Church.”

Isidore Mercredi, a good Métis from Fort Chipewyan, gave the following testimony on learning that Brother Crenn was seriously ill: *“Brother Crenn has done a lot for us. We are so indebted to him for all his work but especially for offering his entire life for the mission and the good of the people that he so loved and in such a sincere manner. Sometimes I travelled with him by dog sleigh and I admired*



Br. Crenn asleep on his Sled.

him always in everything he did, for the good example he gave us and for his deep devotion towards the Virgin Mary and his total gift to the people of the North.”

The May 1968 information bulletin from Rome tells us:

“Brother Louis Crenn, O.M.I. has just been named Knight of the Legion of Honour by the French government. Through him it is all the Priests and Brothers of the Indian and Eskimo missions who are honoured. The choice was intentionally placed on a Brother to recognize and bring into the open the humble but effective cooperation of the Brothers in the missionary apostolate. That of Brother Louis Crenn is no ordinary missionary life .”

He never returned to France. Sixty-seven years without interruption in the same mission is probably unique in the Congregation. He was universally esteemed and venerated by the Indians of the region, knowing them all at school for more than 60 years. Even from afar these Indians came to him for advice and commended themselves to his good prayers.

An all rounder, his competence was remarkable in various spheres. The Indians themselves recognized him as the best dog handler - without having to use a whip or raise his voice. Up to his last years he supervised the heating of all the buildings of the mission, cooking on the boat in summer, using his free time repairing watches and clocks, a trade which he had inherited from his family.

It must be mentioned here that during his 67 years at the Nativity mission of Fort Chipewyan, Brother Crenn left it only three times. Once he went to Edmonton and Saint-Albert when Bishop Jean-Louis Coudert, O.M.I. his former superior from Chipewyan, was consecrated bishop for the Yukon in 1936. The other time he made a voyage by boat from the mission to Aklavik on the occasion of the fortieth anniversary of his entry into the religious life. In 1965 he returned to Edmonton for a surgical operation and left Fort Chipewyan for good on October 1966 to retire to the Foyer Youville at Saint-Albert where he died on January 29, 1969 at the age of ninety.

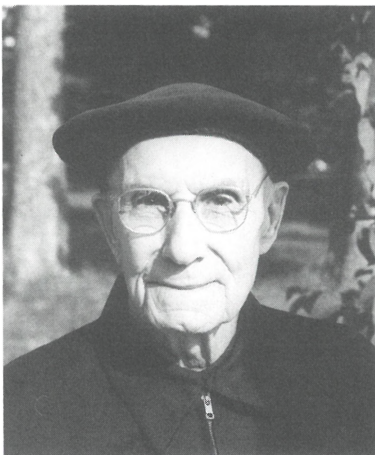
In conclusion, here is an excerpt from a letter that the Provincial received from the people of Fort Chipewyan:

“I, Victor Mercredi, and all the population of Fort Chipewyan, in full agreement and from the depths of our hearts come to thank you for according us the immense favour of seeing our dear Brother Crenn buried at Fort Chipewyan among the people he loved and served during his entire life. Brother Kearney, whom I have had the pleasure of meeting in 1917, worked and spent his life at Fort Good Hope and now

he rests among the people he loved so much. Brother Crenn is another Brother Kearney for Fort Chipewyan. Everyone knows what Brother Crenn did for us all. We owe him a great dept of gratitude. We shall always pray for him ...”

And the people of Nativity mission, Fort Chipewyan, were granted their wish. Louis Crenn lies among them.

**Brother
Henri
Guibert,
O.M.I.
1885 - 1975**



“It seems to me that during all my life as an Oblate of Mary Immaculate I have been a happy man in my vocation. No doubt, like everyone else, I have suffered and perhaps have caused suffering ... with all my heart I ask pardon. In the misfortunes of former times, in the ease of today, in experiences and successes, thanks be to

God, I have never ceased to keep in my heart the rest and tranquillity of peace. My mainstay has been my confidence in Divine Providence which kindly feeds the little birds but also takes great care of all its children.

Now in my seventy years of profession, I am beginning to understand that the beauty and magnificence of a religious life depends less on what one does, than on the intention with which one does it ... Is it not true that God does not need our zeal for work and our undertakings, but only our faithfulness to our duties and our full love and confidence in his goodness and his infinite mercy? Though our existence can appear so colourless, so banal, it can nevertheless harbour the richness and splendour of holiness. This multitude of acts of charity and faithfulness

to duty, sown in our ordinary life like grains of wheat in the furrows, constitute the basic framework of a beautiful religious life.”

That is how Brother Henri Guibert, O.M.I, two months short of his eighteenth year, expressed himself on December 8, 1972 before the Oblate community of Saint-Albert on the occasion of the dinner which closed the celebrations of the seventieth anniversary of his religious profession as an Oblate of Mary Immaculate made in Angers on December 8 1902. These words certainly incorporate no ordinary wisdom on the part of this son of Mainz who had studied five years in the Juniorate of Pontmain before entering the novitiate.

Before going to Western Canada, the little Brother used his zeal for four years in Notre-Dame de Talence, the Scholasticate of Liège and the General House in Rome. Arriving in Canada in 1906, he spent eleven years at Lac la Selle, and a short stay at Saint-Paul to end up in Hobbema where he continued to work as a printer for 38 years. Let us listen to Brother Guibert tells us of his work:



*The
Printing
Press:
Great
Apostolate
for Br.
Henry
Guibert,
O.M.I.*

“In May 1906 I received my obedience for Alberta at the request of Father Henri Grandin, O.M.I. (a nephew of Bishop Vital Grandin, O.M.I.). He had asked the Superior General for a young Brother to help Father Balter print a Cree journal in syllabic characters for our Crees from the North. I arrived at Lac la Selle towards the end of June and I began immediately to learn Cree and the syllabic characters. In September we began the monthly publication of the journal in earnest ...”

Along with 40 years of work on his Cree journal, he printed and hand bound several thousand volumes, such as the “Little Catechism” in Cree syllabics for the missions of Bishop Charlesbois

(3 000 copies), the “New Testament” in Cree (3 000 copies) of Father Beaudry, the “Book of Prayers”, the “Catechism and Hymns” (3 000 copies) for Alberta, Manitoba, Mackenzie and Keewatin, the book in Montagnais of Father Pénard (4 000 copies), the Cree book of Father Habay (3 000 copies), etc., etc. Brother Guibert expressed his thoughts in an article written for the Oblate magazine of Richelieu, “The Apostolate”:

“The little journal in the Cree language that we published at Hobbema, Alberta, for more than 40 years under the



*Two chief Indians
Chief of Hobbema and Br. Guibert*

name of “Kitchitwa-Mite”, is surely only a small faded star in the depths of the firmament among the varied multitude of the missionary magazines and publications. It is a sixteen page monthly publication, and entirely edited in syllabic characters. It has a circulation of 1, 200 copies. The humble effort, launched in 1906, did not seem in the wise eyes of the world to be able to last too long. Were the Indian people from Western Canada to survive longer? Some did not think so. They must, several maintained, lose their language before long. But the journal has already completed its 40th year, and there is still a people to read it, a people to find in its pages their mother tongue and who love to read it because of that.

The journal is the missionary for our Cree and Métis Indians in the vast plains. Where the missionary cannot go, the journal penetrates and missions in its own fashion. It instructs, strengthens, and brings to mind the great truths of religion and salvation. Consequently the faraway Indians who remain faithful to the religious practices are especially readers of the journal.”

This Brother, with a frank, gentle and sympathetic face possessed a deeply apostolic soul. All his writings show it: the salvation of souls, religious practice, religious knowledge, etc. ... so many expressions which readily come under his pen. Brother Guibert possessed a calm and joyful character at one and the same time. With his mocking little smile he disarmed the one who wished to bawl him out, reprimand him, or make him angry. He himself was never angry. He loved teasing. He often played tricks and was the willing recipient of jokes. He was never heard to criticize his neighbour.

During the final years of his life he became propagandist for the M.A.M.I. review in the province of Alberta-Saskatchewan. A new vocation indeed! Another Brother who had the good fortune to work with Brother Guibert for several years, wrote the following lines on the day of the death of this dear Brother Guibert:

“I knew Brother Guibert for twenty-five years, and for more than fifteen years we worked together in the distribution of our Marian, Oblate and missionary review, the “Message de L’Immaculée”. It was at the age when one generally retires that he began to cover towns and villages of Saskatchewan, Alberta and British Columbia to spread the good French and christian reading, and at the same time to request gifts from our parishes, business men and professionals in order to help finance our



***With his Trusty Bicycle,
“Henriette”
Br. Henry Guibert, O.M.I.***

publication. Thanks to his untiring devotion and his know-how we were never obliged to resort to a subsidy from the Oblate province, but, on the contrary the “Message de l’Immaculée” helped a good number of missionary works, especially in Africa and South America, not to mention its donations for vocations. In spite of his advanced age, Brother Guibert travelled the prairies to collect subscriptions, most of the time on his bicycle “Henriette” as he called it ...

It gives me pleasure to give witness to this confrère who edified me so much by his deeply religious spirit, his great charity, his exemplary devotion and his detachment from things of this world. His daily Way of the Cross and his innumerable Rosaries certainly helped him during his life and especially to open wide the great doors of heaven.”

In 1975, on August 26th, he died at a ripe old age and is buried with so many other missionary brothers and priests in the Oblate cemetery in St. Albert on the outskirts of Edmonton.

**Brother
Tugdual
Mousset,
O.M.I.
1896 - 1958**



He was seventeen years old, and one day while working outside his home in his beautiful Brittany, young Tugdual Mousset noticed two black soutanes not far from him. Without more ado the priests presented themselves: the parish priest and Father Constant Falher O.M.I. ...come to France from the North Canadian missions for a round of

preaching and recruitment. Their intention or suggestion was quickly made and quickly accepted: *“I also shall leave for Northern Canada.”* It was not too difficult to have doubts about his vocation since the two priests took the responsibility on themselves and Tugdual had only to say *“Yes”*.

On the eve of the First World War 1914-1918, Mousset left Grand-Champs never to return. He left behind him parents who loved him greatly but who showed only the greatest pleasure in the fact that the good God wished to bless their family so much by choosing a missionary from amongst its members.

During the two or three days that our traveller spent in Paris, he enjoyed the hospitality of a good priest of the city, at whose home an incident occurred which Brother Mousset loved to relate all his life.

“Having offered us some cheese among the rest at the table - I had never seen cheese before this occasion - I could not help making a grimace. The good priest burst out laughing saying: ‘Ah, the Bretons do not like cheese!’ It need not be remarked that even outside Brittany, I could never take to this strange dish, and I wonder if God really created it.”

After eleven days at sea, our travellers arrived at the large port of New York where the Statue of Liberty welcomed them to the new world. It was on June 20, 1913, exactly two months after leaving Grand-Champs that the Brother reached the Nativity mission of Fort Chipewyan where he began his novitiate on the following July 13, under the supervision of Father LeDoussal, a Breton also. It was obviously a novitiate in mission country, that is, if the occasion arose it was necessary to be ready for any kind of work that needed to be done. However, with a man of rules such as Father LeDoussal, he was able to make a very good novitiate year which he appreciated all his life.

For ten years the Nativity mission could benefit from his devotion in the following works: garden, hay, fish, workshop, maintenance, etc. ...and that under the supervision of two holy men: Father Letreste and Bishop Jossard. Then there was a stay of 13 years at Wabaska to do much the same jobs, as well as becoming engineer of the sawmill. Then during the last years of his life he received a variety of different postings.

Father Joseph Habay, a former superior of the Brother wrote in the Edmonton journal:

“Brother Mousset, a good example of charity, patience modesty, and obedience has had a long career, 45 years of religious and missionary life in the conquest of souls, in prayer, silence and sacrifice.”



*A Nice Catch at Wabasca
Br. Tugdual Mousset, O.M.I.*

The key word here is that in all his occupations, Brother Mousset showed himself truly religious and missionary. Never could one be more obedient to his superiors, a more faithful observer of the Rule. Never a word of complaint or criticism issued from his lips. He was moreover a man of few words, but words which were always wise and thought out, a man of devotion and charity, with whom it was good to live. He had the confidence of everyone. The example of his life was more powerful than any words.

What was more beautiful still, perhaps, in this delicate soul was his joy which he could hardly avoid showing. Among the final lines from his pen, addressed to his brother Oblates, are these which are revealing:

“Let me express my gratitude to the good God and to the Holy Virgin for the admirable protection with which they have always surrounded me, in the midst of peril and danger of all kinds among which I have lived: dangerous ice, falls from trees, teeth of animals, excessive cold, etc. ... Please thank them with me, and believe my good fortune in having replied to the Master to become his religious, his missionary, his Oblate.”

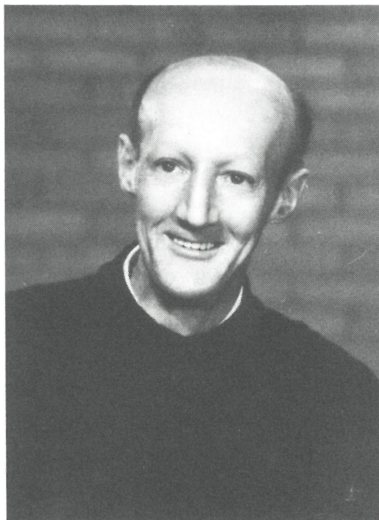
A final event of his life illustrates the reason for his signal gratitude. In the Assumption region Brother was involved in the timber business. It proved nearly fatal on one occasion, during the coldest days of winter in December 1950. Brother was cutting trees which a young Métis employee, Buddy Clarke, transported to the mission. During one of these trips a falling tree struck Brother on the forehead, cracking his skull without however crushing it. Buddy Clarke was frightened on seeing him on the ground unconscious and his face bloodstained. He ran to alert those at the mission, and the wounded man was transported there with great care. Despite every effort, he regained consciousness only very slowly and even then incompletely for a long time. A small plane some days later took Brother Mousset to McLennan and he received treatment again there. It was truly a wonder that he was not killed on the spot or died of cold.

His novitiate confrère Brother Valentin Dugas, O.M.I. has left us this fine testimony of Brother Mousset:

“I have never heard ill of him, never any criticism. I have heard on the contrary Fathers and Brothers render him praise. He was a man that one would like to have close by, and he always behaved as a true religious.”

He ended his days at Edmonton, where he died on November 15, 1958.

**Brother
Albert
Bernard,
O.M.I.
1903 - 1979**



It is in the following paragraphs that the director of the Marian Centre of Edmonton, where Brother Bernard often went to do voluntary help for the poor, expressed the sentiments of the personnel on the occasion of the death of the Brother on April 16, 1979.

“Please accept our profound sentiments of sympathy and our sincere prayers for your beloved Brother Albert Bernard and for all the members of your religious family. Never has a man personified the presence of Christ in our midst in a better manner than this humble man of God, Brother Bernard. He was an example for all of us.

Everyone at the Marian Centre had the good fortune to see real love, hidden and silent, for the less fortunate of our society that Brother Bernard had in heart and soul. We feel deeply all the sacrifices that Brother Bernard made in order to come here to accomplish the work of God. We have been literally

overcome by the extraordinary christian attitude of which he gave proof when, after serving meals to the homeless poor, he was brutally beaten in an alleyway by the same men for whom he had devoted himself a short time before. In these difficult moments of change in which the Church and the world live in general, we are blessed by the life of such a man in our midst. It was a privilege and an honour to have known Brother Bernard and we are all assured that he walks with the blessed in the eternal kingdom. He was an inspiration for us all, and a brilliant light of hope for our world.”

Albert Bernard, was born at Sydney Mines in Nova Scotia on November 15, 1903. A tinsmith by trade, he entered the Oblates of Mary Immaculate at the age of 49 and he left us at the age of 76 after more than twenty-five years of religious life sustained by intense prayer, generous mortification and humble and disinterested work. He was always an example of simplicity, humility, resignation and patience, calm and of a good humour. He was already 50 when the Novice Master wrote in his report to Rome:

“His moral qualities seem to be quite evident. His delicacy of soul, his deep spirit of faith and his docility render him without doubt pleasing to God and attracts others to him. He is attached to his vocation in the depth of his soul. He maintains a low profile, and a charitable reserve.”

One must realize the difficulties that Albert had to overcome during the novitiate year with a group of young candidates between 20 and 25 while he was more than double their age. In spite of that, he abided by the strictness of the life of the novice: punctual at work as at chapel, of a simple temperament, rich in hope, calm and regular ... The superiors could count on this conscientious and concerned soul, who was always faithful to his duty.

The religious life of Brother Bernard unfolded between Saint-Jean College of Edmonton (1953-1972) and the house of retreat “Star of the North” at Saint-Albert (1972-1978). Beside the work assigned to him Brother Bernard

always made regular visits to the patients of the hospitals, to the old people's homes and to the sick in our Oblate houses. Everywhere prayer was to the fore.

In October 1975 Brother Albert Bernard had the singular privilege of undertaking a pilgrimage to the Holy Land and attended the beatification of our venerated Founder Bishop de Mazenod in Rome. Fortunately he left us a magnificent journal of these days of grace and blessings. I shall let him speak so that we can have an insight into the importance that this religious journey had for him:

“My praise for the action of grace and my thanks to Divine Providence for such a special grace and such privilege for having acquiesced to the realization of my great spiritual desire. My gratitude and my prayers to our Mother in heaven for her protection and tenderness during all this pilgrimage. I wish equally to thank my former Provincial, Father Thomas Bilodeau who authorized me to make this pilgrimage; my Provincial, Father Joseph Régner, who encouraged me subsequently in this spiritual project, my Superior, Father Gaston Montmigny, for his help and generous support which rendered this voyage what it was, a marvellous trip. Also the good prayers from my Oblate confrères and from my friends have helped in the success of this journey. Finally, to the members of my family for their encouragement ...”

For Brother Bernard these days of pilgrimage became a culminating point in his religious life: the beatification of the Founder, to see the Pope in person, to visit the Holy Land and several shrines dedicated to the Virgin Mary, etc. ... so many things which would have deeply marked him. He gave thanks for this privilege up to the end of his life and he often shared the emotions that he had lived during these days of spiritual richness. He retired in failing health to the Foyer Grandin at St. Albert, and died there on April 16, 1979.

Father Georges Tétrault, O.M.I. had the good fortune in accompanying the saintly Brother Bernard during the final

months of his life while he was suffering from cancer, and here are some of his reflections:

“His poor body had been reduced to 75 pounds, but his soul was most beautiful. He was a man of God, a man extremely gentle especially for the invalids that he visited every month in the hospitals and old age homes. He was also a man of prayer. He confided to me one day that he spent four hours daily in the chapel, often hidden in the sanctuary, but within sight of the tabernacle. To pray for the priests was one of his favourite intentions. I am certain that he will continue his prayers from above, with and near Mary, his tender and well-beloved Mother.”

Truly from the religious point of view he was a model. Very mortified, detached from everything, an admirable spirit of faith, he was especially noticed by his great piety ... he would have spent his days and nights in the chapel. One of his superiors from Saint-Jean college wrote of him: *“The Brothe is a blessing for the house. We indeed love him.”*

Conclusion

We can now make ours the good words of dear Father Duchaussois in his work “Apôtres Inconnus” (“Unknown Apostles”):

“Who is therefore this hero who hides himself, and this apostle of silence, of obscure work, of prayer, who is not a priest, and who however shares the same martyrdom of duty and blood? It is the Coadjutor Brother ... In truth, these are the true apostles and sometimes the powerful converters, these humble servants. Their silent example is so often an eloquent sermon.”

These short biographies of the brothers show us that they were truly apostles. The brothers lived in close daily contact with the people of the country, and they thus exercised a profound moral and christian influence on those with whom they worked and with whom they often shared the harsh conditions of life. Their apostolate contributed greatly to the christian reality of many families.

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