
A History of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate

Toward a synthesis

DONAT LEVASSEUR, o.m.i.

1815-1898

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of the
Missionary Oblates
of
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DONAT LEVASSEUR, O.M.I.

Translated by
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**I
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Presentation

I am more than happy to welcome this latest work entitled *A History of the Oblate Missionaries of Mary Immaculate*. The Congregation has developed a great deal since the work of Father Théophile Ortolan, O.M.I., *Les Oblats de Marie Immaculée durant le premier siècle de leur existence*, was published. The Congregation has continued to spread across the world and knowledge of her past, especially of her Founder, has been considerably enriched. I have in mind, for instance, the research done by the Postulation, the organization of Oblate archives by several Provinces, the biography of Bishop de Mazenod by Jean Leflon, the periodical *Études Oblates* which is now *Vie Oblate Life*, and the many monographs, doctoral dissertations or memoirs published in different countries on some aspect or other of Oblate history.

The time had indeed come for a work of synthesis which would enable the Congregation as a whole to achieve a greater awareness of her own riches. Already in the December 14, 1838 entry to his *Diary*, Bishop de Mazenod expressed his dream for "a devoted, patient, zealous man who is capable of bringing together all these things (of our history)." Father Donat Levasseur, O.M.I., who for a long time has taught the history of the Congregation to the novices of Eastern Canada, was the person fully qualified to undertake this task.

He has succeeded marvellously. His is a sober, clear, well-informed synthesis, on a vast array of sources. I thank him in the name of the Oblates. I also thank Saint Joseph Province for having given him the necessary time and means to carry this task to its happy conclusion.

If the Congregation is to respond to the appeals of today's Church and world according to her own grace and in fidelity to her own charism, she needs to be well acquainted with her

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own history, her great missionaries and her saints. In striving to reach this objective, the Congregation will find a sure guide and help in this book.

*Fernand Jetté, O.M.I.
Superior General*

Rome,
March 25, 1983.

Introduction

Writing a general history of the Congregation of the Oblate Missionaries of Mary Immaculate, even in the form of an essay at a synthesis, runs the risk of serious difficulties. There is a vast field to cover, namely, the Congregation's life on every continent from her beginnings until our times. Furthermore, some monographs of certain Provinces, Mission Vicariates and other units are still lacking. Hence some sections of this history can be written only on the basis of sources that are rather general.

Nevertheless, encouraged as I am by the authorities of the Congregation and by my confreres who are in charge of Oblate formation, I am attempting this essay at a synthesis. I dare to hope that, in spite of its imperfections, it will be helpful to all who wish to acquire a first knowledge of a general history of the Congregation of the Oblate Missionaries of Mary Immaculate.

The present work does not intend to be a synthesis in the sense of general reflections on Oblate history, but rather as a general tableau portraying the Institute's concrete life both in terms of its apostolic activity and its community life. It does not develop or dwell either on key events or famous persons, but rather aims at describing as much as possible the overall life of the Institute. The beginnings of the Congregation are accorded a more ample treatment.

Within the major divisions made according to the chronological order, this work is generally divided according to the Provinces and Vicariates so as to present the Institute's life in its different milieux. Provinces are community and administrative units which usually cover a definite geographic milieu. Vicariates of missions or religious vicariates — which are not to be confused with apostolic vicariates — are the same units

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in regions where the Congregation's organization is less developed: this is especially the case in mission territories.

In the Documentary Notes at the end of this book are contained the texts of certain documents, extended treatment of certain special elements of Oblate history, as well as insights into the general history of the Church inasmuch as the latter is related to the apostolic activity of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate.

Using the sources available to me, I therefore intend to give in outline, quite simply, in a sober and as much as possible accurate way, without omitting the weaker points, an overall panorama of the life of the Congregation of the Oblate Missionaries of Mary Immaculate. I am aware that the limits of this effort do not do full justice to the vitality and elan of a missionary Congregation that has been serving the Church for over one and a half centuries.

Donat Levasseur, O.M.I.

Montreal
January 25, 1983

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PART ONE

The Beginnings

1815 - 1841

CHAPTER I

The Lord's Elect: Eugene de Mazenod - 1782-1808

I. Family origins: - A true native of Provence. **II. Exile:** - Nice and Turin - Venice; Don Bartolo Zinelli - Naples - Palermo; his personality revealed - End of exile. **III. Return to France:** - Disappointment and boredom - Fortune eludes him - A broken home - Nothing satisfies him - Return to Sicily is impossible. **IV. Priestly vocation:** - The Lord's call - A profound conversion - Committed to the apostolate as a layman - "I will be a priest".

Eugene de Mazenod was beatified by Pope Paul VI on October 19, 1975, Mission Sunday. Inspired by the Holy Spirit, Blessed Eugene had founded the Congregation of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate. His strong personality and spiritual gifts have definitely left their mark on this work which came forth from his heart and spirit. An overview of the human and spiritual growth which led him to be a founder will therefore be helpful.

I - *Family Origins*

A true native of Provence

By birth, Eugene de Mazenod belongs to the nobility of Provence. His father, Charles-Antoine de Mazenod, a brilliant lawyer, President of the Court of Accounts, Aid and Finances, was a member of the high nobility of Aix. He displayed his own coat of arms and family motto and lived in a grand style in his mansion which was located on the Cours of Aix-en-Provence. At 33 years of age, he married the 18-year-old

Marie-Rose Joannis, the daughter of a physician and a commoner.

A parliamentarian with a clear, methodical and refined spirit, the President is characterized by the magistracy and a great attachment to the royalist regime. Madame de Mazenod, born of a middle class family that was skilled in business matters, had received only a general education. She was a generous person, extremely sensitive, very devoted to her own people, quite impressionable and subject to influence. Eugene, the son born of this union on August 1, 1782 and baptized on the following day, was a lively child and a determined bundle; endowed with tenacious will and delicate goodness of heart, he was candid and abruptly frank, imperious and spontaneous. This child born at Aix, the capital city of Provence, inherited a great deal from the milieu of his birth. As Leflon remarks: "To Provence would he owe his generous and warm nature, his lively disposition and personality, his sparkling and effervescent vitality, his ingenious imagination, his somewhat combative zeal, his fluent, easy, colorful and musical manner of speech, his sensitive and ardent heart, his simple and demonstrative faith and his keen intuition."¹

Briefly stated, such is the heritage of family and from Provence which at least partially shaped the personality of the future founder of the Oblates.²

¹ Jean LEFLON, *Eugene de Mazenod*, I, pp. 3-4.

² Cf. "The Main Biographies of Bishop de Mazenod", Documentary Note 1, p. 297. The significant dates of Eugene's life are the following: 1791-1802: exile in Italy; 1808, enters seminary of St-Sulpice in Paris; 1811: ordination to priesthood; 1815-1816: founds the Society of the Missionaries of Provence; 1823: Vicar General of Marseilles; 1826: obtains papal approval of his Society under the name of Oblates of Mary Immaculate; 1832: appointed Bishop of Icosia and ordained in Rome by Cardinal Odescalchi; 1837: appointed to the See Marseilles; 1854: in Rome, takes part in the definition of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception; 1856: appointed Senator by Napoleon III; 1861, May 21: death.

II - *In Exile: 1791-1802*

An event of considerable consequence marked Eugene's youth, namely, his exile on Italian soil from 1791 to 1802, that is to say, from the age of 8 to 20 years.

Nice and Turin

President de Mazenod, outrightly opposed to the new order introduced by the 1789 Revolution and implicated in the machinations of a royalist counter-revolution, had to leave France in haste in mid-December of 1790 in order to avoid the vengeance of revolutionaries stirred up by Mirabeau. On December 11th, some of the President's colleagues had been executed in full view on the Cours. Mr. de Mazenod sought refuge in Nice, in Italy. His son, likewise threatened by the revolutionaries, is sent to him the following April at his request. Then in June, Madame de Mazenod, her daughter Eugénie (Eugene's only sister), and other members of the family reach Nice as well.

This is the first stage of a migrant life which will lead Eugene from one halting-place to another, from the north to the south of the Italian peninsula: Nice, Turin, Venice, Naples and Palermo.

Shortly after his mother and sister had arrived in Nice, Eugene became a boarder in the College of Nobles in Turin: here he was to pursue his studies which he had scarcely begun at Aix. He easily adapted himself to this institution's regime and was quite successful in his studies. Here he received his First Communion on April 5, 1782 and Confirmation on the following June 3rd. He had entered the college on September 1, 1791 and left it two and a half years later. The spiritual and altogether aristocratic formation he received in this setting, which was strictly reserved to children of the nobility, did leave a rather deep impression on him.

Venice; Don Bartolo Zinelli

Pursued by the revolutionary armies, the de Mazenod family emigrated a second time in May 1794. Their next set-

tlement was in Venice. The Queen of the Seas gladly offered foreigners her lagoons as well as her pleasures and even her licentiousness during the six-month annual carnival. Eugene, an adolescent, deprived of tutors due to the poverty of his parents, was left to himself in a situation of boredom and inactivity, an easy prey to the dangerous attractions of the milieu. This was noticed by Msgr. François-Marie Milesi, the parish priest. With the authorization of Mr. and Madame de Mazenod, he entrusted Eugene to Don Bartolo Zinelli, a young priest residing in a house next to that of the exiles. Sprung from a family of rich merchants, Don Bartolo was a zealous and spiritual man who readily accepted to take the adolescent into his personal care. He first won Eugene's confidence by lending him a book to read, and then welcomed him into his house where he was living with his mother and five brothers. Henceforth, Eugene was treated as the youngest member of the family and he spent the greatest part of each day with the Zinellis who had adopted him. For nearly four years the teenager studied, prayed, relaxed, joined in conversation with the Zinellis and the friends who visited them, and, in a climate of freedom, lived a regular life rather like that of a young monk.³

This welcome of the Zinellis was, among other things, especially an assistance from divine Providence. The warmth and sympathy of this adopted home would first of all fill the void in the young exile's own home: in October 1795 his mother and only sister Eugénie left and returned to France, and, one month later occurred the death of Father André de Mazenod, a great uncle whom Eugene held in great esteem. This left the young exile alone at home with his father, who was much involved in difficult business transactions, and with two paternal uncles. Father Fortuné and the Chevalier Louis, both displaced and deprived of funds.

³ Cf. "The Program of Eugene's Life in Venice", Documentary Note 2, p. 299.

The greatest benefit, however, of Eugene's stay in Venice was the excellent spiritual formation that he received under the wise direction of Don Bartolo. This formation, appropriate to his age, of a lasting and deep character, not only preserved him at that time from the dissipation of life in Venice, but inculcated in him principles which will apply during his entire life. Later on Eugene will write: "Will I ever sufficiently thank God, who is infinitely good, for having given me such help precisely at the most problematic phase of life, a time that was decisive for me?"⁴ Unreservedly he attributed to the Zinelli family "all the good" that he has been able to accomplish "in his life".⁵ He will also declare: "It is then that my vocation to the ecclesiastical state was born, and perhaps also my vocation to a more perfect state of life."⁶

⁴ "Souvenirs de famille", in *Missions*, 5 (1866), p. 128. The document referred to as *Souvenirs de famille* or *Mémoires* and is published in *Missions* 5 (1866), pp. 109-144; 265-304, and of which the original is lost to us, consists of two items written by the Founder: *Récit de l'enfance jusqu'à l'entrée en France* (Narrative of my childhood until my return to France) was composed around 1800; and *Extrait d'une relation rédigée sur les notes prises pendant le séjour à Palerme de 1789 à 1801* (Excerpt from a narrative composed on the basis of notes made during the stay at Palermo from 1789 to 1801) was drawn up around 1838-1845. These two documents, always quoted textually and between quotation marks, were edited by the one who published them: the latter probably was Father Tempier. Cf. Joseph PIELORZ, O.M.I., *La vie spirituelle de Mgr de Mazenod 1782-1812*, pp. vii-ix.

⁵ "Souvenirs de famille", in *Missions*, 5 (1866), p. 124. Cf. also Bishop de Mazenod's *Diary* for May 26, 1842, quoted by Toussaint RAMBERT, O.M.I., *Vie de Mgr Charles-Joseph-Eugène de Mazenod*, vol. 2, pp. 122-123.

⁶ "Souvenirs de famille" in *Missions*, 5 (1866), pp. 128-129. "One day my venerable grand uncle . . . asked me quite seriously, so it seemed me: 'Eugene, is it true that you wish to enter into the ecclesiastical state?' 'Yes, indeed, Uncle.' I replied without any hesitation, 'My child, how can you take such a decision? Don't you realize that you are the sole male descendant of our family which will die out if you do this?' Astounded to hear a remark like this come from the lips of such a venerable man, I replied with some warmth: 'Why, Uncle! Would it not be a great honour for our family to end with a priest?'" *Ibidem*, p. 129. Bishop de Mazenod also recalled that even at that period he felt an attraction for the missions. On October 2, 1855, he wrote to Father Tamburini: "I was only 12 years old when God engendered in me the first quite effective desire to devote myself to the missions and thus work at converting souls."

Naples

Venice, invaded by the French armies, turned against the emigrés. On November 11, 1797, the de Mazenods had to leave. It was a painful departure for Eugene. He was torn from his adopted home, separated from his venerated tutor whom he will see no more, and from Msgr. Milesi whom he loved. After 51 days of hardship and travelling, the family reached its new refuge on January 1, 1798, namely, Naples, the capital city of the Two Sicilies. They found lodging in the inn of the Red Hat, "a real flop-house whose only shining item was its sign outside".⁷

On his arrival in Naples, the President learned that the commercial firm of which he was a partner in Venice had been dissolved and that a situation of enormous debts now burdened him. He was thus confined to dire misery. Thanks to an allowance obtained from Maria-Carolina, the Queen of Naples, he could just manage to provide for his own and his peoples' subsistence.

The 16-year-old teenager was reduced to vegetating in Naples. He had neither tutor nor books; he was too young to undertake anything outside the house. He missed his good friends, the Zinellis. Only seldom was he comforted by letters from his mother and sister. As a distraction, besides some rare excursions with a friend, he would in the evenings accompany his father and uncles to the Baron de Talleyrand, the former ambassador, in whose entourage zealous partisans of France's fallen regime would gather together.

Briefly put, the disciple of Don Bartolo felt steeped in idleness and was swamped in a depressing atmosphere, sunk in the midst of people of the old nobility who longed with regret for the past, deplored the misfortunes of their native land and dreamed of an impossible turning back to what used to be. In his *Mémoires* Bishop de Mazenod noted: "My stay

⁷ Aimé ROCHE, O.M.I., *Le bienheureux Eugène de Mazenod*, Lyon, Éditions du Chalet, 1975, p. 24.

in Naples was a depressing year of the saddest monotony . . . I can say that I lost my time there.”⁸

Palermo; his personality revealed

The de Mazenod family left Naples on January 3, 1799. As in Venice, the approach of the French armies stirred up the city's people against the emigrés. The exiles, with the protection and assistance of Queen Maria Carolina, put to sea and found refuge in Palermo. Here Eugene will remain until his return to France at the end of the year 1802.

For the young man who had scarcely left his teens behind, the luxury of Palermo with its palaces, garden-parks and refined society was a strange contrast with Naples. He had entered into a milieu where life was easy and everything was charming. Moreover, right from his arrival he was adopted into the rich and noble Sicilian family of the Duke and Duchess of Cannizaro; thus he partly escaped from the poverty which he had endured in Naples and moved into the grand luxury of the family that had welcomed him.

Through the Cannizaro family, the young emigré joined the aristocratic life of Palermo; he met nearly all the noble families of the city and even Ferdinand IV, the King of Sicily.

Captivated by this new world, Eugene became aware that there was noble blood flowing in his veins. He considered nothing too much in order to cut a good figure within the society that he now moved. At times he exploits mercilessly his father's meager purse, inquires into his coat of arms, researches his genealogy, and awards himself the title of "Count". In this aristocratic context his strong personality developed, not without some sudden leaps: the stormy gusts of the Mistral wind carried him away now and then. The young count would brusquely assert his independence and be intransigent. He was always the enemy of half-measures. The

⁸ "Souvenirs de famille", in *Missions*, 5 (1966), p. 271.

president, a conciliatory and temporizing man, invited him to be more moderate, to correct his excessive pride, vivaciousness and self-love.

Even in the midst of this society of pleasure in which he was taking part, the disciple adhered to the principles of the Christian life inculcated by his teacher in Venice. He was supported by the inspiring example of the Duchess of Cannizzaro who had become his adoptive mother, his "saintly mother", as he called her.

According to the President's testimony, the Duchess made Eugene the "confidant of all her plans, the cooperater and distributor of all her good works".⁹ The young gentleman, the President testifies again, "lavished the most attentive and devoted care upon the sick".¹⁰ In Palermo, therefore, Eugene was also in close contact with a society that was other than that of the nobles, namely, that of the poor and unfortunate.

Alluding to "the depraved morals of Palermo's high society" which were manifest to his experience, Bishop de Mazenod will state in his *Mémoires* that the infinite goodness of God by his powerful grace "constantly preserved him in the midst of such great dangers".¹¹

End of Exile

The sojourn on Sicilian soil was to come to an end. Since the end of the year 1799, Madame de Mazenod had been insistently demanding that her son return to France and in May 1802 the President ceded to his wife's request. At that time, the procedure for the return of exiles had been clarified. Furthermore, an interested partner was already awaiting Eugene, a rich young girl whose dowry would regild the family's coat of arms.

⁹ Mr. de Mazenod to Mme. de Mazenod, May 14, 1802.

¹⁰ Cf. Mr. de Mazenod to Mme. de Mazenod, August 13, 1802.

¹¹ *Missions*, 6 (1966), p. 294.

Meanwhile a great trial had just struck Eugene. On May 1st died the Duchess of Cannizaro, his tender and much loved adoptive mother. He was totally shaken and disconsolate. "This is a wound which will never heal. I was not able to sleep a single wink all night," he wrote to his father on May 2nd.¹² His health was affected by this event.

He had not yet recovered from his grief when on August 17th he was struck down with an intestinal fever which he eventually got over but only with great difficulty. He came out of it exhausted, emaciated and at the end of his tether.

The last months of his exile were thus painful. He was suffering a depression, indulging in melancholy. His spiritual life slackened and became tepid.

Finally, on October 11, 1802, he could embark for the port of Marseilles and rejoin his mother and sister at Aix. It was with regret and great emotion, however, that he took his leave of his father and his uncles. Proof of this are the moving words he addressed to them after his departure: "My dear Papa and my dear Uncles, what a deprivation it is not to be with you any more! . . . All of you are present to me. Alas! I can no longer enfold you in my arms. How wretched I am! My tears are wetting the paper and impede me in my writing."¹³

III - *Return to France*

Disappointment and boredom

After an exile of eleven years, Eugene disembarked in the port of Marseilles on October 24, 1802. What a disappointment awaited him! Due to a misunderstanding, there was no one on the pier to welcome him, neither his mother whom he had

¹² Eugene de Mazenod to Mr. de Mazenod, May 2, 1802.

¹³ Eugene de Mazenod to Mr. de Mazenod, October 12-13, 1802.

not seen for seven years nor any other member of his family. After he had arrived at Aix four days later, he forthwith had to gain the castle of St-Laurent du Verdon, a family domain situated in the Lower Alps, so as to have his name inscribed on the list of citizens of that municipality and thus escape military service for a lower price. He returned to Aix in December, but he had to return to the castle the following June for five long months. This was a distressing and painful solitude where he was dying from boredom and stamping his feet at seeing himself in such idleness. "Worn out under the weight of my 21 years of age," he wrote to his father, ". . . I consider myself to be the oldest of men."¹⁴

The years from 1802 to 1806 were particularly difficult and irksome for President de Mazenod's son. The plans and best hopes of the young nobleman had resulted in disappointment and reverses.

Fortune eludes him

On returning to France, Eugene had the firm intention of settling his father's debts and thus facilitate his return home. The de Mazenod properties, which had been confiscated after the death of the grandfather Charles-Alexandre, had been cleverly recovered by the Joannis in 1801 to the advantage of Madame de Mazenod. Only the enormous debts were left to the President.¹⁵

Eugene tried, unsuccessfully, to have the loans, small credits and pensions owing to the de Mazenods reimbursed to him. The marriage plans already prepared by his mother, designed to regild the family crest, were about to materialize when the bride to be, a young lady Jauffret, fell ill and died.¹⁶ The President's son refused other marriage plans which were presented to him. Fortune was slipping away from him.

¹⁴ Eugene de Mazenod to Mr. de Mazenod, August 1, 1803.

¹⁵ Cf. "The de Mazenod family's financial situation", Documentary Note 3, p. 299.

¹⁶ Cf. Eugene de Mazenod to Mr. de Mazenod, February 12, 1803.



The Chateau of St-Laurent du Verdon

Eugene stayed here in 1802-1803 after returning from exile; in 1818 he will retire to this place to draw up the Constitutions of his Society.

A broken home

Eugene especially wanted to restore the union of his home shattered by the separation of his father and mother and especially by the fierce opposition of the Joannis to the de Mazenods.¹⁷ Under the domineering influence of her mother and of a certain cousin, Roze-Joannis, Madame de Mazenod gradually took on a dislike for her husband and for the de Mazenods. Being on the spot, Eugene fully understood the seriousness of the rupture. Nevertheless he tried to inspire his father with some hope. The latter, however, replied to him

¹⁷ Cf. "The Joannis' opposition to the de Mazenods", Documentary note 4, p. 300.

in a letter of October 3, 1805: "Rather than ten arguments, each one stronger than the preceding, it will suffice that I give you one only, namely, your mother does not want to see either her brothers-in-law or her husband near her. She has declared her mind to us too formally on this subject to allow us any doubt whatever in this matter."¹⁸ The President's son had to admit it: much to his personal dismay, his home was irreparably broken.

Nothing satisfies him

Although he loved his mother very much, the President's son could not get accustomed to the mentality of the Joannis who reigned as masters in the house on Papassaudi Street. Formed by his father in a spirit of freedom, peace and cordiality, he was suffocating in this narrow milieu. As Leflon notes: "No doubt they loved him much, but it was a far different kind of love from that of his father and uncles who were much more broadminded, calmer, and more generous. The Joannis affection was of the possessive type, overgenerous in reprimands and advice, petty in prohibitions and orders, autocratic and rather narrow-minded."¹⁹ Their intent was to bring him into line with the Joannis outlook and to detach him from his dear exiles in Palermo. Eugene, not being able to bear it any further, exploded in this letter to his father: "Is it possible that not a single person in this world knows me, is it conceivable that my mother does not know how to appreciate me? Yes, I am proud enough to say this, or rather, they force me to do so."²⁰

Besides, the social milieu of Aix did not suit him either. When he was confined to St-Laurent du Verdon in 1803, he already then admitted that he was "bored by the country and its inhabitants."²¹ After he had returned to Aix and for a time

¹⁸ Mr. de Mazenod to Eugene de Mazenod, October 3, 1805.

¹⁹ Jean LEFLON, *op. cit.*, vol. I, p. 250.

²⁰ Eugene de Mazenod to Mr. de Mazenod, September 3, 1805.

²¹ Eugene de Mazenod to Mr. de Mazenod, December 4, 1803.

tasted the pleasures the city had to offer, he quickly wearied of them. The worldly vanities of the social life opened his eyes to the meanness, selfish calculation, petty jealousies, and the all too human narrow-mindedness which clashed with his sentiments of integrity and generosity.²²

Profoundly marked by the aristocratic mentality and imbued with the sense of his nobility, he could not comprehend the political climate of his native land. All participation in or collaboration with the regime of Bonaparte, whom he still considered a tyrant and usurper, was repugnant to him to the very depths of his being. He did not at all feel at home in his own country. As he wrote to his father on March 9, 1804, "I have a strong dose of disgust for this country."²³

Return to Sicily is impossible

It is a fact that nothing was going well for him on French soil. The gentleman therefore made up his mind to return to Sicily and make his career there. He confided his decision to his father in September, 1804.²⁴

Upon her invitation, Eugene accompanied his aunt Dedons de Pierrefeu to Paris during the summer of 1805. Still keeping his plans to himself, he tried to obtain his passport for Sicily and requested Minister Portalis, a family friend, to intercede on his behalf. Portalis urgently tried to persuade him to accept a career in France in the Government administration. On the other hand, Minister Foucher, who was responsible for passports, categorically refused Eugene's request. Since he lacked "half a sheet of paper",²⁵ the President's son remained at Aix, where he was referred to only by the simple title of "citizen".

The great hopes and desires entertained by the young nobleman when he returned to France had thus dissolved in

²² Cf. Jean LEFLON, *op. cit.*, vol. I, p. 256.

²³ Eugene de Mazenod to Mr. de Mazenod, March 9, 1804.

²⁴ Cf. Eugene de Mazenod to Mr. de Mazenod, September 21, 1804.

²⁵ Eugene de Mazenod to Mr. de Mazenod, November 1, 1805.



Eugene de Mazenod at 24 years of age.

setbacks and disappointment. It was impossible to restore the de Mazenod fortune, impossible to reunite his home; he could not adapt to the family and social milieu, to the political regime of his country; and, finally, his plan to return to Palermo was thwarted.

IV - Priestly Vocation

The Lord's call

At these crossroads, Providence was waiting for Eugene. Providence had favoured him spiritually during his adolescence in Venice; at Palermo Providence had protected the awakening of his strong personality; then Providence had jostled him, confronted him with hard realities which foiled his plans for a future as a nobleman. Now Providence

aroused in him the desire for the priesthood and inspired a renewal of spiritual living.

Towards the end of the year 1806, Eugene again felt in his soul the vocation to the priesthood which he had already nourished as a teenager in Venice. Further, this vocation grace prompted an in-depth conversion which established him in God. In 1809 he wrote to his mother: "This coming Christmas . . . it will be three years that I am examining this matter . . . to know whether this vocation comes from God."²⁶ In another letter to his mother in March of the same year, he wrote her that "impelled more forcefully than ever by grace" to "devote himself totally to God's service", he was beginning "to break out of the state of tepidity" and was trying "by means of a greater fervour to merit new graces from the Lord."²⁷

A profound conversion

It would seem that Eugene's Christian life had slackened during the years 1802 to 1806. Later on, as a seminarian and with the absolutist manner so characteristic of him, he described himself as a great sinner who had been seeking his happiness elsewhere than in God.

Gradually a deep conversion occurred in his soul: the Lord was drawing him to himself with a gentle violence. In spiritual notes jotted down in 1814, Eugene, as a young priest, will dwell on the memory of a special grace of conversion he received on a certain Good Friday, that of the year 1807, it would seem. The sight of the Cross brought a flood of "bitter tears" which he could not control, and immersed him, a great sinner, into the infinite merciful goodness of God. In this condition, he recalls, "my soul was reaching for its final end, for God who is its one and only good".²⁸

²⁶ Eugene de Mazenod to Mme. de Mazenod, April 4-6, 1809.

²⁷ Eugene de Mazenod to Mme. de Mazenod, March 23-24, 1809.

²⁸ Eugene de Mazenod, *Retreat 1814*, 2nd meditation. Rome, Postulation Archives.

Committed to the apostolate as a layman

Eugene's interior renewal brought about a change in his external conduct. From the years 1805-1806 onward, he became more and more interested in religion and in the Church in France.²⁹

In 1805 he attempted to convince his dear exiles in Palermo of the advantages the Church in France gained from Pius VII's concordat with Bonaparte; he bitterly deplored the irreligion that sprang from the Revolution; he was much distressed by the bad situation of colleges, "several" of which, he observed, "have at their helm priests who are married or who are living scandalously with their concubines."³⁰

In 1805 and 1806 he entered into a spiritual friendship with some young people to whom he also gave advice, quoted a lot of Scripture and asked them to pray for him. We know of Emmanuel Gaultier, of Alexandre Aubry and Charles de Forbin-Janson. The latter was his future companion at the major seminary and the confidant of his apostolic projects.

During these same years he composed a refutation of the Jansenist errors. He wrote: "As a simple layman, I am concerning myself . . . with my religion, because I look at such a study as the first and most essential of my duties."³¹ At the end of December 1806, he accepted to become one of the directors of the Work for Prisons in Aix. In this ministry of charity which he performed until October 1807, he strove to better the deplorable material condition of the inmates and, as he put it, "to reduce their suffering in every way we can, but especially by the consolations that our religion brings".³²

²⁹ Cf. Giuseppe MORABITO, O.M.I., "Je serai prêtre", in *Études Oblates*, 13 (1954), p. 97.

³⁰ Eugene de Mazenod to Mr. de Mazenod, August 16, 1805. Eugene knew the religious situation of certain colleges in Paris because, together with his aunt Dedons de Pierrefeu, he was seeking ways and means to enrol her son Émile in a college of the capital city.

³¹ Eugene's study notes, quoted by Giuseppe MORABITO, *op. cit.*, p. 98.

³² Eugene de Mazenod to Mr. de Mazenod, January 19, 1807.

From March 1808 onwards, his relationships with his spiritual guide, Father Augustin Magy, a former Jesuit, brought him into contact with the pious Ladies de Glandevès, who were apostles of the Sacred Heart. He became an associate in their work of piety and became "in the city of Aix the promoter of the cult and devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus".³³ On June 19th following, one of these Ladies congratulated him for the way the Lord was sending him to the peasants, pointing out that he was instructing ordinary labourers.³⁴

"I will be a priest."

We have come to June 29, 1808, the day on which the young nobleman, after he had consulted spiritual guides, prayed and reflected at length,³⁵ informed his mother of his decision to enter the major seminary. He explained his reasons for this: 'What God wants from me is that I renounce a world wherein it is almost impossible to be saved, to such a degree does apostasy hold sway therein. He wants me to devote myself more particularly to his own service, to try and reanimate the faith which is dying out among the poor. Briefly put, he is asking that I make myself available to carry out all the commands that he can give me in view of his glory and of the salvation of the souls he has redeemed with his precious Blood.'³⁶

Such, in broad outline, is the journey made by Eugene de Mazenod, a son of Provence, along the road that led him to the priesthood.

³³ Achille REY, O.M.I., *Histoire de Monseigneur Charles-Joseph-Eugène de Mazenod, Evêque de Marseille*, vol. 1, p. 83.

³⁴ *Ibidem*, vol. 1, pp. 84-85.

³⁵ "Thus for one year I pondered the design that Providence inspired in me." Eugene de Mazenod to Mme. de Mazenod, March 23-24, 1809.

³⁶ Eugene de Mazenod to Mme. de Mazenod, June 29, 1808. Eugene was aware that his mother would be very much put out by his decision, and so, to dispose her favorably, he had her told in advance of his plans by the influential Roze-Joannis and the kind Eugénie (who was commonly referred to as "Ninette").

CHAPTER 2

Completely in the Church's Service: Eugene de Mazenod - 1808-1815

I. At the Major Seminary in Paris, 1808-1812: - The seminarian's life - Priest in a persecuted and neglected Church - Captivated by Christ the Saviour - Father Émery's collaborator - Works of zeal - Ordination to the priesthood - Director at the Major Seminary. **II. Activities at Aix, 1812-1815:** - Ministry at Aix - The Christian Youth Association - Choice in favour of the poor - Ardent defender of the Church - His project of a Society of missionaries for Provence.

I - At the Major Seminary in Paris - 1808-1812

The seminarian's life

With his mind firmly made up on his vocation, Eugene de Mazenod arrived at the Seminary of Saint-Sulpice in Paris on October 12, 1808. He was then a gentleman of 26 years of age, a slender and tall figure with a decisive style and a personality that stood out, a man vivacious in his reactions. To the astonishment of his fellow students no doubt, this man of noble birth, who still exuded an aristocratic air and who had led a man's life for a good number of years, now simply took his seat on the seminary benches like an ordinary pupil.

This man from Provence, so endowed with a natural ability to influence those around him, took his place among the lowly and adapted himself without ado and with great fervour to the seminary program. He became a poor man, gradually detached himself from the bourgeois spirit, and didn't claim any privileges. He prayed, studied, worked assiduously at his

own sanctification and even gave himself over to a great deal of mortification. It has been calculated that he fasted about 120 days per year.¹

Priest in a persecuted and neglected Church

We know quite clearly the motives which brought Eugene de Mazenod to the seminary, for he had to justify his entering to his own people, especially to his mother who had only agreed to an "experiment" and was always strongly opposed to it.

Shortly before receiving priestly ordination, Eugene still felt the need to tell his mother the reasons motivating his vocation, reasons he had already detailed several times before;² "Pure love for God's glory, the most ardent desire for the neighbor's salvation, the needs of the Church which is abandoned! Such," he wrote, "are the sole and only motives for my entering the ecclesiastical state."³

Of these motives, namely, God's glory, the salvation of the neighbor and the needs of the Church which is abandoned, it is the latter that he particularly underlined in the written account he sent his father on December 7, 1814:

"I dedicated myself to the Church's service because she was being persecuted; because she was being neglected; because for some 25 years now she could entrust the divine ministry — which was formerly sought after by all who belonged to the highest ranks — only to poor artisans and to

¹ Cf. "Eugene's Moral Self-portrait". Documentary Note 5, p. 301.

² Eugene de Mazenod to Mme. de Mazenod, June 29, 1808; February 28, March 23-24, April 4-6, September 15, and November 29, 1809. To his mother who was increasing the pressure to shake his resolve in his vocation, he declared with a certain impatience: "It is not the subdiaconate which commits me to the ecclesiastical state; it is my full, entire, free and well pondered will . . . And please note that I do not want to be an ecclesiastic only for a week, six months, a year or even ten years, but I want to be such for my whole life." Eugene de Mazenod to Mme. de Mazenod, November 29, 1809.

³ Eugene de Mazenod to Mme. de Mazenod, October 14, 1811.

wretched peasants; because, seeing that we were taking long strides towards a schism that I believed inevitable, I feared that there would be but few generous souls who would know how to sacrifice their comforts and even their lives in order to maintain the integrity of the faith, and because it seemed to me that God would give me sufficient strength to dare confront every danger. I was so convinced that we would soon be suffering a cruel persecution that when I left for the seminary in Paris I packed a complete set of lay clothes in my trunk because I was thinking I would be obliged to use them as a priest. Such are the motives which determined me: there are no others. There couldn't even be any others considering the character that God's goodness has deigned to grant me."⁴

The cause to which Eugene wanted to consecrate his life is indeed the Church herself, a Church that is being persecuted, a Church that is being abandoned and neglected, a Church threatened by schism, a Church which is, alas, too much deprived of worthy ministers for the divine services and even of priests who are capable of going to martyrdom in her defence. The ideal of this young man is grand, noble, even heroic. The Lord's grace had energized an entire temperament, a great and generous heart.

As a matter of fact, the Church Eugene saw before his eyes bore the scars left by the French Revolution. Vandalism, systematic violent hostility against religion and the determination of the sons of the Revolution to destroy the priesthood left the Church weakened, disorganized, and bereft of human appeal.⁵

⁴ Eugene de Mazenod to Mr. de Mazenod, December 7, 1814. Because the postal service between France and Sicily had been interrupted on account of the war, President de Mazenod learned of Eugene's entry into the major seminary only in 1810.

⁵ Cf. "The Church during the French Revolution, 1789-1799", Documentary Note 6, p. 302.

The Church he sees is still the Church that Bonaparte is violently persecuting. Napoleon is prepared to provoke a schism in his bid to dominate the Church.⁶

At the time that Eugene was being promoted to sacred Orders, the clergy of the dioceses in France totalled some 31,870 priests, more or less half the number that was in place in 1789; 10,613, that is, one third are over 60 years of age; only 933 are below 40 years of age, that is to say, an average of ten per diocese.⁷

Captivated by Christ the Saviour

Eugene de Mazenod became a priest in order to serve the Church. Moreover, a personal motivation played a role in his decision. Indeed, if we are to understand fully the young man from Provence's entry into Saint-Sulpice, we must keep in mind that a strong grace of personal conversion accompanied and strengthened his vocation. This grace of conversion, which we have already mentioned in the preceding chapter, became evident in Eugene around 1807 by a gradual return to a more fervent and more committed Christian life. This grace immersed him in love for the Saviour and continued to operate in the seminarian's heart by giving him a powerful apostolic dynamism.

In his seminary meditations and reflections, Eugene, in full fervour, deplored his own unworthiness in regard to the grace of the priesthood; he contemplated the infinite goodness of God, the Blood shed by the Saviour. With the greatest confidence he unreservedly cast himself into this love of God. "Speak, Lord," he exclaimed, "You will be obeyed, you will be obeyed in life and in death."⁸

⁶ Cf. "The Church under Bonaparte, 1799-1815", Documentary Note 7, p. 303.

⁷ Cf. Jean LEFLON, *La Crise révolutionnaire 1789-1846*, Paris, 1949, vol. XX of the History of the Church directed by Fliche and Martin, p. 213.

⁸ Retreat of 1811, text quoted by Giuseppe MORABITO, O.M.I., "Je serai prêtre" in *Études Oblates*, 13 (1954), p. 60.

This grace which was transforming him even gave him the courage for martyrdom. He asserts this several times in his spiritual notes, for example, in his 1812 retreat notes: "I shall persevere in the very urgent demand to pay off by martyrdom or at least by death in service of the neighbour the enormous debt I have incurred before divine justice."⁹

The basic motive for Eugene's vocation, namely, serving the Church, is thus amply fortified by these interior dispositions which are inspired by a strong grace of conversion.

Father Émery's collaborator

Right from his seminary days Eugene was led to involve himself very actively and concretely in the Church's service. At the time he entered Saint-Sulpice, the superior of the seminary, Father Jacques-André Émery, was in open conflict with Napoleon who was violently attacking the papacy and working to dominate the Church in France.

The Emperor, in fact, had already seized a part of the Papal States in 1805 and took over the city of Rome in 1808. From 1809 to 1811, his aggression became even more radical: he made the Pope a prisoner, brought him as a captive to Savona, then to Fontainebleau; he transplanted the College from Rome to Paris in order to influence it more easily; he convoked a National Council which, fortunately, was able to resist his ambitions.

Father Émery, who was the leader of the resistance to Napoleon, closely associated the seminarian de Mazenod to his struggle in favour of the Church. In September 1809 he introduced him to the secret desk of correspondence which was in charge of clandestinely distributing across the land news and documents related to Pius VII's captivity and the Emperor's intrigues. Moreover, he made Eugene his liaison agent to the Cardinals who had been brought to Paris.

⁹ Retreat of 1812, text quoted by Giuseppe MORABITO, *op. cit.*, p. 84.

Already acquainted with the Italian mentality and language, the seminarian was easily accepted by the Cardinals and in a discreet and effective manner established a communications link between them and Father Émery.



*Monsieur Jacques-André Émery (1732-1811)
Superior of the Seminary of Saint-Sulpice, Paris.*

Later he will write: “While yet a deacon and then as a young priest, I had the privilege, in spite of the closest surveillance of a suspicious police force, to dedicate myself to daily communications in the service of the Roman Cardinals who had been brought to Paris and soon afterwards were persecuted because of their fidelity to the Holy See.”¹⁰

Leflon notes: “The little priest whom the great Emperor admired and feared, found in the young Provençal cleric the most devoted, courageous, skillful, and dependable of all his trusted helpers.”¹¹

¹⁰ Eugene de Mazenod to Cardinal Gousset, July 21, 1852, quoted by Achille REY, *op. cit.*, vol. 2, p. 423.

¹¹ Jean LEFLON, *op. cit.*, vol. I, p. 367.

For the young cleric this was a grace. "I made my entire seminary under Father Émery," Eugene wrote, "and he always had a special affection for me He always made it possible for me to readily approach him and through our close association I was able to appreciate not only his kind-heartedness, but also his deep wisdom, keen discernment, priestly virtues and above all his love for the Church which at this time was being so cruelly persecuted."¹²

Works of zeal

Other activities, which we will only list, resulted from the seminarian's fervent zeal. He carried out a ministry of charity towards his own people in corresponding with his mother, his sister, and his grandmother.¹³ Early in 1809 he became a catechist to a difficult group of young paupers in the parish of Saint-Sulpice, and, the year following, he taught "the major catchism" to girls. From December 1810 to December 1811 he was a very active member of a strict secret association within the seminary, the aim of which was to stimulate piety and fervour among their fellow seminarians.

Ordination to the Priesthood

On December 21, 1811, Eugene de Mazenod received ordination to the priesthood from the hands of Bishop Jean-François de Demandolx,¹⁴ in the cathedral of Amiens. This was a day of intense fervour for which he had prepared by a retreat of almost one month. On the evening of his ordination, he wrote to his spiritual director in Paris: "There is no

¹² Eugene de Mazenod to Monsieur Faillon, August 29, 1842, quoted by Jean LEFLON, *op. cit.*, vol. I, p. 309.

¹³ Of Eugene's letters to his family during his seminary days, 60 letters to his mother, 10 to his sister, and 6 to his grandmother have come down to us. Cf. Joseph PIELORZ, O.M.I., *La vie spirituelle de Mgr de Mazenod 1782-1812*, p. 276.

¹⁴ Cf. "The Choice of Bishop de Demandolx for Ordination to the Priesthood", Documentary Note 8, p. 304.

longer anything but love in my heart . . . and if I think of what a great sinner I am, this love becomes all the greater."¹⁵

With this same fervour he celebrated his first Mass during the night of Christmas in the chapel of the boarding school run by the Sisters of the Sacred Heart of Amiens. The intentions he made are to some extent his program of spiritual and apostolic life as a priest and missionary. We underline the following: "Love for God above all else and the most perfect charity for my neighbour; . . . grace to atone for my faults by a life that is totally and solely spent in God's service and in the salvation of souls; the spirit of Jesus Christ; final perseverance and even martyrdom, or at least death while serving those ill with the plague, or any other death that is for God's glory and the salvation of souls."¹⁶

Director at the Major Seminary

Before leaving the seminary of Saint-Sulpice, the new priest will have to take on, together with four of his confreres, the post of Seminary Director until October 1812. In fact, in June 1810, Father Émery was expelled from the seminary by a decree of Bonaparte and, in the autumn of 1811, the other Sulpicians too had to leave. On the eve of his ordination, Eugene was named to replace one of the expelled Sulpicians. We have little information about his activity in this position. He was one of the seminary directors, master of ceremonies, confessor and spiritual director not only to the seminarians but also to the students of the minor seminary and the children coming to catechism.¹⁷

¹⁵ Eugene de Mazenod to Father Duclaux, December 21, 1811, quoted by Achille REY, O.M.I., *Histoire de Mgr. Charles-Joseph-Eugène de Mazenod*, vol. I, p. 130.

¹⁶ Father de Mazenod's intentions for the three Masses of Christmas, quoted by Jean LEFLON, *op. cit.*, vol. I, p. 393.

¹⁷ Cf. Joseph PIELORZ, O.M.I., *op. cit.*, p. 277.

II - *Activities at Aix - 1812-1815*

Ministry at Aix

Father de Mazenod definitively left the seminary of Saint-Sulpice and returned to Aix around October 23, 1812. With his spiritual guide, Father Antoine Du Pouget Duclaux, he had for a long time studied and pondered his plans for the future: he chose to dedicate himself to the poor and to the youth. The diocesan authorities looked favorably upon his plans and did not assign him to a regular post in a parish or elsewhere. The young priest took up residence in his mother's house, at no. 2 on Papassaudi Street. To do his housekeeping he brought with him from Paris a certain Brother Maurus, a monk who had been evicted from his monastery when it was dissolved by Napoleon. This Brother in regard to Eugene "played the role more of a friend than of a household servant."¹⁸ The daily schedule was meticulously determined from rising at 4.30 a.m. to retiring at 10.00 p.m.

The new priest was very soon in a whirlwind of activity. He was made confessor at the major seminary of Aix, founded an association of piety there, patterned on that at Saint-Sulpice. He brought together a number of priests for discussions on the duties of the priesthood. He daily visited the prisoners in the jail of Aix. In 1814, when the chaplain of the army camp died from typhus contracted from the 2000 Austrians who were crowded together there, Eugene volunteered to replace him. On March 10 he himself contracted the disease and on March 19th he was in the last extremity of life; his recovery seemed nothing less than miraculous.

¹⁸ Achille REY, O.M.I., *op. cit.*, vol. I, p. 176. Mr. Martin Bardeau, who as a religious bore the name of Brother Maurus, left Aix to re-enter the Trappists on September 18, 1815, at a time when Eugene was counting on him for the Society he was about to found. Cf. Joseph PIELORZ, O.M.I., "Nouvelles recherches sur la fondation de notre Congrégation" in *Missions*, 83 (1956), p. 209. Also cf. Joseph PIELORZ, O.M.I., "A propos du F. Maur", in *Études Oblates*, 13 (1954), pp. 248-249.

The main project Eugene had in returning to his native city, however, was to dedicate himself to the service of the poor and to the youth.

The Christian Youth Association

On Sunday, April 25, 1813, Father de Mazenod met with seven young people in the garden-park of the Pavillon de l'Enfant, near the city gates of Aix, and established the Christian Youth Association of Aix. There was another meeting the following Sunday and new members were added to the first. The Association's activities were camouflaged under the appearances of simple supervised recreation to deceive the vigilance of Bonaparte who forbade every youth association.

Through this Association which he would have liked to see spread right across the whole of France, the young priest wanted to counteract the ill-omened influence of Bonaparte. The Emperor, he wrote, "considers that he cannot succeed in corrupting France except by perverting the youth: it is towards the youth that he is directing his whole effort. Well, it will also be on the youth that I shall work and make my effort: I shall try to preserve it from the misfortunes threatening it, which it is already in part experiencing."¹⁹

The Association, which since the fall of the Empire in April 1814 was called the Congregation of the Christian Youth, was canonically established as a Congregation on the following November 21, the feast day of the Immaculate Conception in the diocese of Aix. It counted some 300 members in 1817, and 400 in 1822. In it a cobbler's son was as cordially received as a son of a high court official.²⁰

¹⁹ *Journal des délibérations . . . de l'Association de la Jeunesse . . .* quoted by Herménégilde CHARBONNEAU, O.M.I., *Mon nom est Eugène de Mazenod*, p. 49.

²⁰ Cf. Jean LEFLON, *op. cit.*, vol. I, p. 416. 30% of these young people came from the lower classes. Cf. Joseph PIELORZ, O.M.I., *Liste des Congréganistes d'Aix en Provence 1813-1822*, Ms.

Father de Mazenod, in the elan of these beginnings and with an ardor characteristic of southern France, animated these young people with quite a number of instructions and frequent exercises of piety; he succeeded to create an atmosphere of joy which generated fulfillment. These young people longed to have him and worshipped him.²¹

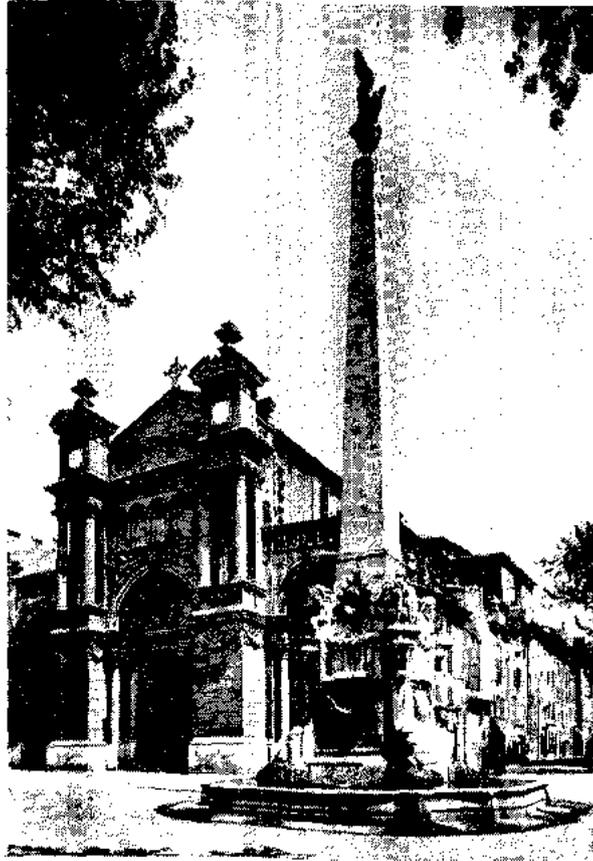
Choice in favour of the poor

He lavished special attention on the project of evangelizing the poor through preaching. During the first months after his arrival in Aix, the young priest was preparing to preach during the coming Lent. His first sermon was announced for Sunday, March 7, 1813, at 6.00 a.m. in the church of the Magdalene in Aix, and was to be in the dialect of Provence. It was addressed to the household servants, to the artisans and to the little people of the city. There was astonishment, even some murmuring in the salons of high society: the young nobleman was openly breaking with the aristocratic world: he was ministering to the poor and the lowly.

Here are some passages from the notes jotted down on paper, which the young orator then developed in the pulpit: "During this holy time, there will be many instructions for the rich Aren't there going to be any at all for the poor? The poor, who are a precious portion of the Christian family, cannot be neglected You, the Poor of Jesus Christ . . . you who are crushed by misery, my brothers, my dear brothers, my respectable brothers, listen to me. You are God's children, the brothers of Jesus Christ, the heirs of his eternal kingdom, the cherished portion of his inheritance."²²

²¹ Father de Mazenod had endowed his Association with a set of rules that comprised no less than 544 articles. His natural and supernatural dynamism gave sense to this massive collection of articles and gave life to this strict and heavy code. Cf. Jean LEFLON, *op. cit.*, vol 2, p. 15. The regulations and statutes of the Congregation of Christian Youth have been published in *Missions*, 37 (1899), pp. 19-107.

²² *Instructions familiares en provençal*, quoted by Herménégilde CHARBONNEAU, O.M.I., *op. cit.*, pp. 42-47.



*The Church of the Magdalene at Aix.
Here in 1813 Eugene preached his first lenten series to the poor.*

On each Sunday of Lent he preached to the same people who were always eager to listen to him and responded with enthusiasm and gratitude. The two main apostolates of Eugene at Aix, therefore, are in favour of the poor and the youth, two groups of people who at that time were generally not being reached by the parish clergy, two generations which for different reasons had an urgent need to receive the light of faith: the first was victim to the French Revolution and had been deprived of religious instruction; the second was exposed to the terrible influence of Bonaparte's regime.²³

²³ Cf. Jean LEFLON, *op. cit.*, vol. 2, pp. 12-13.

Ardent defender of the Church

At Aix as in Paris, Father Émery's disciple will prove to be an ardent and courageous defender of the integrity of the Church's rights.

Thus, shortly after he had returned to Aix, he energetically expressed his convictions. During the course of an official dinner given by Bishop Gaspar-Jean-André-Joseph Jauffret, when one of the canons pointedly called the latter "His Grace the Archbishop", Eugene, a young priest, rose and warmly protested against this title and even declared that he would have to leave the table if the Bishop himself did not protest, "because," he said, "I shall not adhere to a schism."²⁴ The Bishop agreed that Father de Mazenod was right. Bishop Jauffret had been transferred from the See of Metz to that of Aix by decree of the Emperor; like all the other bishops appointed by Napoleon, he had not received the canonical appointment from the Pope as Archbishop of Aix; in this latter see he was exercising his responsibilities only in the capacity of capitular administrator.

On April 14 and 15, 1814, the canonical Chapter of Aix withdrew the delegation of powers it had accorded Bishop Jauffret in 1811, and this gave rise to a heated debate between the partisans of two schools and two concrete attitudes, one led by Father Guigou and the other by Father Florens. The first was ultramontanist, anti-revolutionary and anti-bonaparte, acted with intransigence and excluded every compromise; the second, to the contrary, was gallicanist and had, under Napoleon's regime, lent himself to many arrangements.²⁵

Eugene, consequent to his own principles, sided with Father Guigou, the capitular vicar, and actively advocated the most regular and legal solution. By the same token he

²⁴ Achille REY, O.M.I., *op. cit.*, vol. I, p. 147.

²⁵ Cf. Jean LEFLON, *op. cit.*, vol. 2, p. 8.

worked at removing, together with Bishop Jauffret, the vicars general Florens and Boulard whose election had been imposed by the Prelate. Thereby Eugene got involved in a personality clash in addition to a conflict on the level of principles.²⁶

The young priest, always in his absolute manner, redoubled his activity when the debate was revived shortly afterwards by the intervention of Bishop Jauffret himself who wanted the powers of vicar general to be restored to Fathers Florens and Boulard. In his zeal, Eugene even wanted to obtain a Roman decision on what he referred to as "the attacks that have been allowed against the Church's discipline and the rights of the Holy See, all the while taking refuge behind so-called liberties."²⁷ To this end he sought the intervention of his friend Forbin-Janson who was at that time away in Rome.²⁸

During the one hundred days of Bonaparte, March-June, 1815, Eugene, without worrying about eventual reprisals on the part of the Emperor, publicly exhibited his convictions concerning the rights of the Church, and remained ever faithful to his duty, "solid as a rock and pure as gold", to use the expression of President de Mazenod, his father.²⁹

This radical involvement of Eugene, which included a conflict with persons, is the background to the strong opposition coming from a part of the clergy of Aix that he himself and his Society will have to contend with during the years

²⁶ Cf. *ibidem*.

²⁷ Eugene de Mazenod to Forbin-Janson, June 20, 1814, "Lettres choisies de Mgr de Mazenod", in *Missions*, 89 (1962), p. 140.

²⁸ Cf. *ibidem*, p. 140. His ardent zeal and stand opposed to all half-measures are typically expressed in the following passage of his letter: "How I love to see the Head of the Church deploy this noble firmness against those who are inexcusably guilty! That is a good omen: at last, everything will have to be put in order." *Ibidem.*, p. 142.

²⁹ Mr. de Mazenod to Countess Verac, May 6, 1815, quoted by Alexandre TACHÉ, O.M.I., *La vie spirituelle d'Eugène de Mazenod . . .*, Romae, 1963, p. 59.

from 1815 to 1826; it also explains the sympathy that the first capitular vicar, Father Guigou, always showed him.

His project of a Society of missionaries for Provence

Since his seminary days Eugene de Mazenod had been thinking of missions whose purpose would be to rechristianize Provence. However, engulfed as he was in overwhelming activity, taken up from morning to night with instructions, confessions, spiritual direction, and constant demands made on him, the young priest, firmly committed to seeking perfection, began to waver in regard to his choice of apostolate. In September, 1814, he wrote to his friend Forbin-Janson: "I cannot keep this up: it is always everything for others and nothing for oneself." A little earlier in that letter he admitted: "I yearn sometimes for solitude and those religious Orders which confine themselves to the sanctification of the individuals who follow their Rules without concerning themselves with people, other than by prayer, are beginning to be attractive to me Who knows! Perhaps that is how I shall end up."³⁰

The month following he returned to this same point: ". . . I am hesitating between two plans: either to go off and bury myself in some well regulated community of an Order that I have always loved; or to do in my diocese exactly what you have done successfully at Paris I was feeling more inclined to the first plan because, to tell the truth, I was quite sick of living solely for others The second plan, however, seems to me more useful, given the dreadful plight to which the people have been reduced."³¹

³⁰ Eugene de Mazenod to Forbin-Janson, September 12, 1814, "Lettres choisies de Mgr. de Mazenod", in *Missions*, 89 (1962), p. 198; OBLATE WRITINGS, vol. VI, p. 2. Cf. François-Xavier CIANCIULLI, O.M.I., "Aspirations au cloître dans l'âme du Fondateur, pages inédites du P. de Mazenod", in *Études Oblates*, 13 (1954), pp. 228-231.

³¹ Eugene de Mazenod to Forbin-Janson, October 28, 1814, "Lettres choisies de Mgr de Mazenod", in *Missions*, 89 (1962), p. 201. OBLATE WRITINGS, vol. VI, p. 3.

For the first time he elaborated a bit on his project of founding a Society of missionaries. He stressed that at that time this Society "in any event, only exists in my head,"³² would be established at his place, in the house wherein he was living alone, at the gates of the city at Aix, large enough to house eight missionaries. He does have "in his mind" some rules to propose to his associates because, he adds, "I insist that we live in a completely regular manner."³³

He refused to link his own Society to that of his friend and explains this refusal as follows: "What must be remembered is that our regions are without any help, that their peoples offer hopeful signs of being converted and must not therefore be abandoned We alone, and not you, can help them. We have to speak in their own tongue in order to be understood by them. We have to preach in Provençal."³⁴

Nevertheless, after this statement to his friend, Eugene remained undecided: "Despite all, a secret desire could draw me elsewhere."³⁵

In the following month he said to this same friend that he could not undertake the founding of a Society before the coming spring, for he was obliged to find accommodation for

³² *Ibidem.*, p. 201. OBLATE WRITINGS, vol. VI, p. 3.

³³ *Ibidem.*, p. 201. OBLATE WRITINGS, vol. VI, p. 3.

³⁴ *Ibidem.*, p. 202. OBLATE WRITINGS, vol. VI, pp. 3-4. Since the seminary Father de Mazenod held a different view from that of his friend Forbin-Janson. He wrote in *Mémoires*: "We differed . . . on an essential point. His zeal inclined him to concern himself with the heathens, and my attention was exclusively fixed on the deplorable state of our degenerate Christians." Quoted by Toussaint RAMBERT, O.M.I., *Vie de Mgr Charles-Joseph-Eugène de Mazenod*, vol. I, p. 162. Forbin-Janson gave himself over to the preaching of missions in France upon the advice of Pius VII: "Especially in France we need missions for the people and retreats for the clergy." Quoted by Achille REY, *op. cit.*, vol. I, p. 169. The Pope had thus taken the same view as Eugene.

³⁵ Eugene de Mazenod to Forbin-Janson, October 28, 1814. "Lettres choisies de Mgr de Mazenod", in *Missions*, 89 (1962), p. 202. OBLATE WRITINGS, vol. 6, p. 4.

his father and uncles who were soon to return from exile.³⁶ Besides, Bonaparte's return to Paris in June 1815, again prevented every foundation of a Society of missionaries: such Societies were strictly forbidden under his regime.

The part of the Founder's life that we have just seen clearly sets before us the deep choice he made and his spiritual dynamism. Eugene is a priest, and solely a priest: he is unconditionally committed to the Church, an apostle to the youth and to the poor. He was pondering the founding of a Society of missionaries for Provence.

The time of preparation has ended. Soon the Lord will launch him into the work that he has inspired in him and for which he has prepared him.

³⁶ Eugene de Mazenod to Forbin-Janson, November 21, 1814, *ibidem.*, p. 204.

CHAPTER 3

The Society of the Missionaries of Provence, 1815-1825

I. The Foundation, 1815-1816: - The intervention of Providence - Purchase of the former Carmelite monastery in Aix - Foundation of the Society - Its first members - Setbacks - Gathering in community - The very first community. **II. The First Developments, 1816-1825:** Conflict with the parish priests in Aix - Measures to assure the future - Confronting the failure of these measures - An establishment at Laus - The first Rules and the first vows - The Society's expansion - An internal crisis - Peace and unity - The Society in December 1825.

I - The Foundation - 1815-1816

In the strict sense, the history of the Congregation of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate opens with the foundation of the *Society of the Missionaries of Provence*.

The intervention of Providence

The urgent needs of the people of Provence who were deprived of the help of religion were ever present to Eugene de Mazenod's mind; still, he remained uncertain about his future. Providence undertook to impel him, as though in spite of himself, into the work which he considered most useful for his Provence.

To his friend, Father Charles de Forbin-Janson, Father de Mazenod in a letter of October 23, 1815, narrates how he has set in motion the founding of his society of missionaries in these terms:

“Now I ask you and I ask myself how I, hitherto unable to make up my mind in this matter, suddenly find myself setting wheels in motion, renouncing my comfort and risking my fortune by launching an enterprise of which I know the worth but for which I only have a liking negated by other and diametrically opposed views! This is a riddle to me and it is the second time in my life that I see myself moved to resolve something of the utmost seriousness as if by a strong impulse from without.”¹

Thus we have his decision. He clearly sees it is a result of God’s will, “When I reflect on it,” he adds, “I am convinced that it so pleases God to put an end to my irresolution.”²

Purchase of the former Carmelite monastery in Aix

Father de Mazenod details the course of events. The monastery of the Minimes at Aix is up for sale: it is a building that seems perfectly suited for the work he is planning. He set about trying to purchase it. As he writes: “To this end, I braved enormous difficulties, but all for nothing. The Blessed Sacrament nuns politely whisked it from me by sleight of hand.”³

His narrative continues: “In proceeding, I had broached the matter to some priests whom I believed suitable for the holy undertaking and who indeed are so. These did not think the cause was lost when my efforts had failed. I would have been ashamed and upset to let their enthusiasm be quenched and tried to obtain the only other place in the city wherein we could set up our community. My overtures were unexpect-

¹ Eugene de Mazenod to Forbin-Janson, October 23, 1815, “Lettres choisies de Mgr de Mazenod,” in *Missions*, 89 (1962), p. 210. OBLATE WRITINGS, vol. VI, p. 8. Cf. “The correspondence of Eugene de Mazenod with Forbin-Janson”, Documentary Note 9, p. 304.

² Eugene de Mazenod to Forbin-Janson, October 23, 1815, “Lettres choisies de Mgr de Mazenod”, in *Missions*, 89 (1962), p. 210. OBLATE WRITINGS, vol. VI, p. 8.

³ *Ibidem.*, p. 211. OBLATE WRITINGS, vol. VI, p. 9.

edly successful. In a single interview the affair was settled and I found myself proprietor of the major part of the old Carmelite convent situated at the top of the Cours with a charming church attached, somewhat the worse for wear, to tell the truth, but which we could restore for less than a hundred sovereigns. So much for my story. But the amusing thing is that all that was done without my being held back by the thought that I had not a single sou. To prove I was not mistaken, Providence immediately sent me twelve thousand francs, loaned to me without interest for this year.”⁴

Foundation of the Society

The chronological order of events is the following: Eugene’s decision or the “strong impulse from without” must have taken place in the beginning of September 1815, for he writes on October 23rd that “it is nearly two months now” that he is busy with this matter.⁵ The Vicars General to whom he submits his plans gave their approval and he “immediately”⁶ proceeds to implement them. Negotiations in terms of recruiting collaborators and acquiring the monastery of the Minimes and then of the Carmelites were going on at the same time. The interview which resulted in the purchase of the Carmelite monastery took place, as reliable tradition has it, on October 2, 1815.

This date of October 2, 1815, moreover, is the date indicated by the Founder himself as the day on which he and his companions laid down “the foundations of the Society of the Missionaries of Provence”.⁷ In the register of admissions into the Society, he and his four first companions dated their

⁴ *Ibidem.*, p. 211. OBLATE WRITINGS, vol. VI, p. 9.

⁵ *Ibidem.*, p. 210. OBLATE WRITINGS, vol. VI, p. 8.

⁶ Eugene de Mazenod to Archbishop de Bausset-Roquefort, December 16, 1819, quoted by Joseph PIELORZ, O.M.I., “Nouvelles recherches sur la fondation de notre Congrégation”, in *Missions*, 89 (1956), p. 220.

⁷ “Formules d’admission au noviciat, octobre 1815-décembre 1825” in *Missions* 79 (1952), p. 7.

membership in the Society from the month of October, 1815.⁸ The Society was thus founded, at least in principle. Vicar General Guigou made the news public in the Paris publication *Mémorial religieux, politique et littéraire*, which on October 31, 1815, carried the following item: "An association of missionaries has just been founded in Provence; it proposes to travel throughout the countryside, preaching the Holy Word Father de Mazenod heads this useful undertaking."⁹

Its first members

Before proceeding to the purchase of the former Carmelite monastery, Father de Mazenod had insisted on obtaining the consent of the co-workers who intended to join him in his Society. They were Fathers Jean-François Deblieu, Pierre-Nolasque Mye and Augustin Icard. How did he recruit them? We only know that he spoke about his plan of a Society of missionaries to whoever cared to listen to him, and that Father Icard, in coming forward of his own accord, pointed out his two companions as well as one other, a Father François-de-Paule-Henry Tempier, as suited for the work of the future Society.

The Founder no doubt personally knew this Father Tempier and realized how precious he would be for his foundation. He wanted to have him join him immediately. On October 9th, he addressed a letter to him which began with these words: "My dear friend, read this letter at the foot of your crucifix with a mind to heed only God and what is demanded in the interests of his glory and of the salvation of souls from a priest like yourself Well, dear man, what I say to you, without going fully into details, is that you are

⁸ *Ibidem.*, p. 7-10.

⁹ Quoted by Jean LEFLON, *Eugene de Mazenod*, vol. 2, p. 600, no. 1. Also cf. Joseph PIELORZ, O.M.I., *art. cit.*, p. 246.

necessary for the work which the Lord inspires us to undertake.”¹⁰

Moved by such confidence, Father Tempier, even though he considered himself unworthy of such an undertaking, replied on October 27th, “Count fully on myself.”¹¹ However, in spite of his repeated requests, he was refused permission to leave his post as assistant priest at Arles. Father de Mazenod, in a marvellous letter of December 13, reminds him that he is “necessary” for the work of the missions and that he himself would not proceed to form this community if Father Tempier was not part of it.¹² Furthermore, Father de Mazenod insisted to have him present from the very first gathering, because, as he said, “. . . we will draw up the Rule which we will have to follow. We will confer on the manner in which we will carry out our good work This will be a decisive step. I count on having you then.”¹³

Because he was held to his post, Father Tempier left Arles on his own accord and arrived at Aix on December 27th and joined de Mazenod. Together with the latter, he went to explain his action to the diocesan authority which finally gave its approval.

¹⁰ Eugene de Mazenod to Tempier, October 19, 1815, in *OBLATE WRITINGS*, vol. VI, p. 6. Due to an oversight, Father de Mazenod had forgotten to sign his letter; this made it necessary for Father Tempier to investigate its authorship and thus delayed his reply to the following October 27th.

¹¹ Tempier to Eugene de Mazenod, October 27, 1815, in *Circulaires administratives*, vol. I, p. 135.

¹² Eugene de Mazenod to Tempier, December 13, 1815, in *OBLATE WRITINGS*, vol. VI, pp. 12-13. He said to him: “I speak to you before God and openly from my heart. Were it a question of going out to preach more or less well the word of God, mingled with much alloy of self, of going far and wide for the purpose, if you wish, of winning souls for God without taking much trouble to be men of interior life, truly apostolic men, I think it would not be difficult to replace you. But can you believe I want merchandise of that sort? We must be truly saints ourselves.” *Ibidem*.

¹³ Eugene de Mazenod to Tempier, December 13, 1815, *Ibidem.*, p. 14.

Setbacks

During this time Father de Mazenod was encountering serious difficulties with the three first co-workers who had already enlisted. On October 23, 1815, he confided to his friend Forbin-Janson: "In the meantime the missionaries are on my back. They want to begin tomorrow. In vain I tell them we need to fix the rooms and make the house inhabitable. They cannot wait that long."¹⁴

He wrote to him again on December 19th: ". . . At times I have seen what I was building tottering from top to bottom My men dither, the few that they are. He on whom I was counting the most . . . I am dismayed at his indecision. Another who excels constantly in proclaiming the word of God to the people is only partially attached to our mission A third, who is too incensed and vexed with the slowness of the others, threatens to take off by himself A fourth — Father Tempier — who is an angel . . . was not able to obtain leave from his diocese."¹⁵

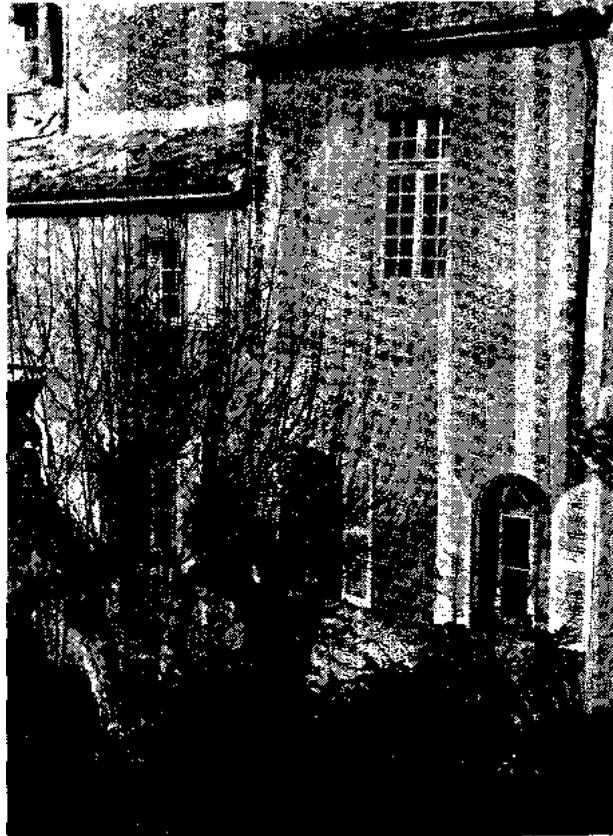
In addition, hostility against his work arose. Again he writes to his friend Forbin-Janson, on October 23rd: "It is nearly two months now that I fight on at my own expense, sometimes openly, sometimes discreetly. With trowel in one hand and sword in the other, I am like the good Israelites rebuilding the city of Jerusalem."¹⁶ On December 19th he admitted to him: "Everything has been put into motion to bring it down, and I cannot say it is solidly on its feet."¹⁷ Continuing his letter in January 1816, he speaks of a retreat for priests in the city which "should be arranged if only to teach priests that it is not permitted to calumniate and that it

¹⁴ Eugene de Mazenod to Forbin-Janson, October 23, 1815, *Ibidem.*, p. 9.

¹⁵ Eugene de Mazenod to Forbin-Janson, December 19, 1815, *Ibidem.*, pp. 14-15.

¹⁶ Eugene de Mazenod to Forbin-Janson, October 23, 1815, *Ibidem.*, pp. 8-9.

¹⁷ Eugene de Mazenod to Forbin-Janson, December 19, 1815, *Ibidem.*, p. 14.



Partial view of the former Carmelite monastery at Aix which became Eugene de Mazenod's property. The large and smaller windows on the upper floor light up the area occupied by the first community.

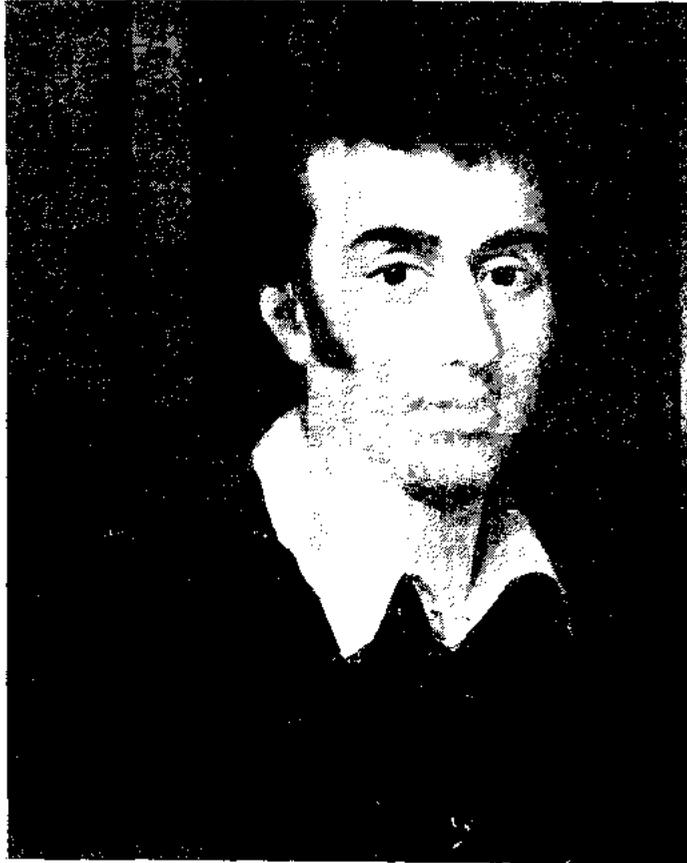
Photo: Noël Leca, O.M.I.

is hardly Christian to rage at and obstruct the good that others would wish to do.”¹⁸

Gathering in community

As soon as the purchase of the Carmelite monastery had been concluded, Father de Mazenod began to make the necessary arrangement of the premises to house his community. In January 1816 the house was ready and the first companions took possession. On the 25th of the same month, Fathers de Mazenod, Tempier and probably Icard moved into the former Carmelite monastery where they found, at this

¹⁸ *Ibidem.*, p. 16.



*Eugene de Mazenod at about 35 years of age (1816-1818)
according to an oil painting kept at the General House in Rome.*

time, a very narrow and poorly furnished dwelling.¹⁹ They will be joined by Fathers Deblieu and Mye only in February.²⁰

All signed a petition to obtain from the diocesan authorities recognition for the community they wanted to form and approval for the regulations governing the life they were adopting. Vicar General Monsieur Guigou in his own hand and in the name of his colleagues, wrote out on the fourth page the decree of approbation which authorizes "Fathers de

¹⁹ Cf. "The House of Aix", Documentary Note 10, p. 305.

²⁰ For some time Father Mye continued in the ministry of assistant priest at Salon. Cf. Letter of Fortuné de Mazenod to Mr. de Mazenod, May 23, 1819, quoted by Joseph PIELORZ, O.M.I., *art. cit.*, in *Missions*, (84) 1957, p. 161.



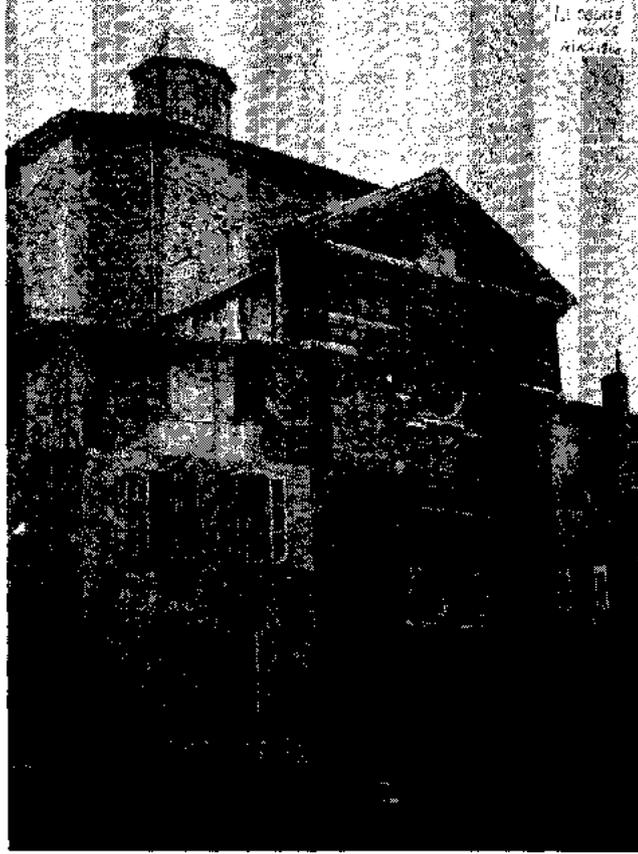
The rooms occupied by the Oblate community in January 1816.

Mazenod, Maunier, Deblieu, Tempier and Mye”²¹ to come together in community. The petition, which included the regulations adopted for their community life, is dated January 25, 1816; the decree of approbation is dated January 29 following.

The authorized regulations, besides stating the reciprocal rights and duties of the Society’s members, underlines the two principal aims that were being sought, namely, the personal sanctification of the Society’s members and the work of the missions. Moreover, it prescribes a life portioned out between prayer, meditation, living the virtues of religion, and the study of the Scriptures and theology.²²

²¹ Quoted by Joseph PIELORZ, O.M.I., *art. cit.*, p. 150. Note that Icard’s name does not appear in the decree of approval and, strange to say, Maunier’s does, even though the latter only joined the Society on March 18, 1816. We have no historical documents to explain this difference between the petition and the Vicar General’s reply.

²² Cf. “The Founder’s Intent regarding the Religious Life”, Documentary Note 11, p. 306.



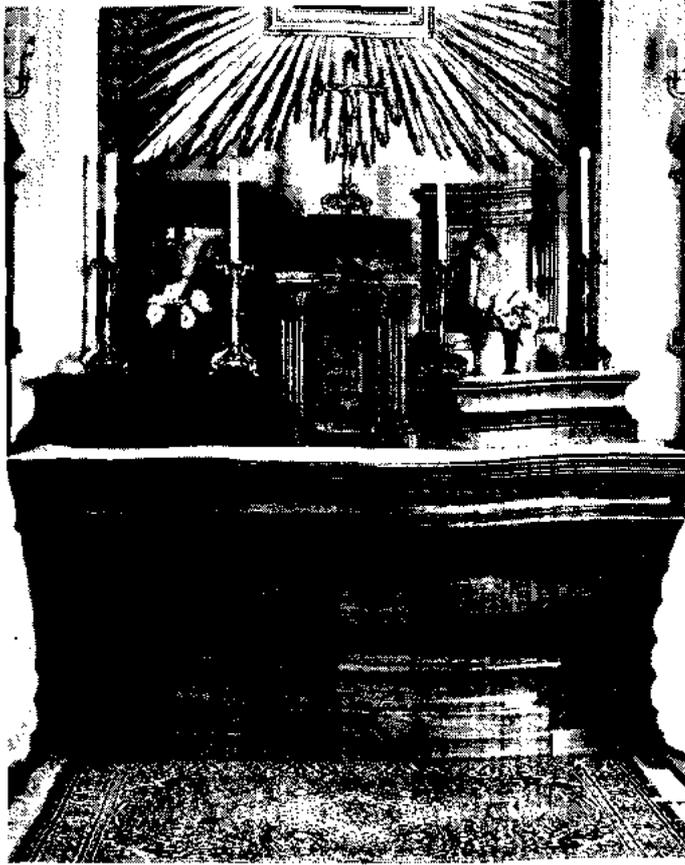
*The church attached to the former Carmelite monastery
which became the house of the Mission.*

Photo: Noël Leca, O.M.I.

Once constituted, the community “spontaneously and unanimously”²³ chose Father de Mazenod as its superior.

The Society of the Missionaries of Provence, ordinarily referred to as the *Mission of Provence*, having been founded on October 2, 1815, came together as a community on January 25th and was officially recognized by the diocesan authorities on January 29, 1816, so that it now enjoyed canonical status on the diocesan level. It was a regular community, made up of secular priests who did not take vows, but whose intent was to persevere for a lifetime under the approved regulations and in obedience to a superior.

²³ *Mémoires* of Father Tempier, quoted by Toussant RAMBERT, *Vie de Mgr Charles-Joseph-Eugène de Mazenod*, Vol. I, p. 177.



The altar before which Fathers de Mazenod and Tempier made their first vows on April 11, 1816.

The very first community

In January 1816, this very first community consisted of five members: Fathers de Mazenod, aged 33, with 4 years of priesthood; Deblieu, aged 27, with 2 years of priesthood; Mye, aged 47, with 18 years of priesthood; Icard, aged 25, with one year of priesthood — he was dismissed shortly after he had joined; and Tempier, aged 27, with one year of priesthood. On March 18, Father Emmanuel Maunier, aged 46, with 18 years of priesthood, entered the Society.

The community was totally taken up with its intense community living and apostolic activity. First of all, it went into a ten-day retreat in order to prepare for its first mission, that of the parish of Grans which was preached in February-March. The choir of the monastery chapel began to be fre-

quented by people immediately, and on April 7, the church attached to the monastery was opened for public worship. This church was henceforth referred to as the church of the Mission. When they were not taken up with missions in parishes, the missionaries were busy with Masses, confessions, pious exercises and retreats centered in this church.

In their desire to achieve perfection, Fathers de Mazenod and Tempier vowed in God's presence obedience to each other on April 11th. They made this mutual commitment in a discreet manner but with great fervour under the structure of the repository for Holy Thursday put up in the church of the Mission. Their companions were not as yet ready for such a commitment. From its very first days the Society chose as its patron and life model for its members the Blessed Alphonse de Liguori.²⁴

On May 13th the boarding school operated by Madame Gontier left the monastery. This made room for a better installation of the community, to perfect its original organization and, in particular, to receive six postulants. Others will follow. The Founder himself took on the task of novice master until 1820.

On September 1st, the missionaries launched the season for preaching missions.

With a pinch of pride the Founder could say to his friend Forbin-Janson on October 9, 1816: "Our community is very fervent. There are no better priests throughout the diocese."²⁵

²⁴ On May 1, 1816, Eugene wrote to his father who was still in exile at Palermo: "I beg you to go and see the missionaries of the Holy Redeemer and to ask them to give me a copy of their Constitutions and Rules, of the Office of their holy Founder, of his life I have studied his works a great deal and we have taken him as one of our patrons. We would like to walk in his footsteps and imitate his virtues. Request these things and send me as much information as you can about these good Fathers who are his disciples." Quoted by Achille REY, O.M.I., *Histoire de Mgr. Charles-Joseph-Eugène de Mazenod*, vol. I, p. 197.

²⁵ Eugene de Mazenod to Forbin-Janson, October 9, 1816, OBLATE WRITINGS, vol. VI, p. 24.

II – *The Society's First Developments – 1817-1825*

Three important events marked the development of the Society of the Missionaries of Provence: fierce opposition from the parish priests of Aix who, in 1817, endangered the existence of the Society of Missionaries; geographic extension which led to opting for the religious life; an interior crisis in 1823 which threatened to dissolve the Society.

Conflict with the parish priests in Aix

The brewing opposition of some parish priests in Aix against the mission became manifest especially with the opening of the church of the Mission. The great attendance of services in this church, fear that Father de Mazenod and his missionaries would encroach on the parochial domain which was reserved to the parish priests, the missionaries' pastoral innovations in favour of the faithful, especially of the youth, fear of the prestige and growing influence of the enterprising Father de Mazenod were already antagonizing the city's pastors against the Mission.

The conflict became public during an incident which happened in the cathedral of Aix in June 1817, during a confirmation ceremony. It took on new dimensions the following July on the occasion of measures taken by Father de Mazenod for a first communion service in the church of the Mission. After they had been approached to authorize some of the children of their parishes to make their first communion in the church of the Mission, five of the city's parish priests give their consent in a letter to Father de Mazenod on July 3rd: this collective letter was coldly polite in form but provoking in its content.²⁶

²⁶ The letter was signed by Honorat, the parish priest of Saint-Sauveur, Isnardon, the parish priest of the church of the Magdalene, Christine, the parish priest of St-Jean intra muros, Combe, the parish priest of Saint-Esprit, and Abel, the parish priest of St-Jean extra muros. Father Honorat did not sign the collective letter of August 18th. Father de Mazenod's reply to the parish priests is dated July 4th; the letter of the parish priests to the Vicars General is also dated July 4th.

Cut to the quick, Eugene gave a sound reply, but in a dry tone and manner. This letter became a damning piece of evidence. The parish priests felt they had been gravely insulted therein and now approached the Vicars General seeking reparation. When they did not receive satisfaction, four of the five parish priests denounce the Founder and his work in another collective letter, dated August 18th and addressed to the Minister of the Interior. An anonymous letter filled with bitter accusations had already been addressed to the latter on July 15th.²⁷

Measures to assure the future

There is no doubt that this conflict, quickly overheated by the southern temperament, led the Founder to speed up measures undertaken in August 1816 to acquire civil recognition for his Society. By giving legal status to his work, such recognition would accredit it to the public and give it strength in regard to its opponents. On July 9th, only a few days after the open conflict with the parish priests of the city, he took the road for Paris. Once he had arrived in the capital city, he discovered that the steps for the legal recognition of his foundation were in abeyance for purely political reasons, and he obtained only a concession of mere tolerance from the Minister.²⁸

During this same year 1817, the Government drew up the list of candidates for the restored episcopal sees, including that of Marseilles. On the morrow of his failure to obtain

²⁷ Cf. Joseph PIELORZ, O.M.I., "Les rapports du Fondateur avec les curés d'Aix 1813-1826" in *Études Oblates*, 19 (1960), pp. 147-171; 328-367; 20 (1961), pp. 39-60.

²⁸ Minister of the Interior to Father de Mazenod, August 4, 1817: "You may . . . together with your esteemed co-workers, continue the services you have so happily begun." Cf. Jean LEFLON, *op. cit.*, vol. 2, p. 62. "The liberal trend came more and more to the fore in the Houses of the Government; consequently, the climate in the capital city was hostile to religious congregations and priestly associations." Martin QUÉRÉ, O.M.I., *Monseigneur de Mazenod . . . et les missions étrangères*, Rome, 1958, p. 24 (typewritten work).

legal recognition for his foundation, Eugene put everything in motion to have his uncle Fortuné appointed to the see of Marseilles: Eugene was convinced Fortuné was worthy of this position and he was sure to find in him a protector for his Society, something the latter absolutely needed. His proposition was favorably received; however, towards the end of September, the entire matter of the episcopal sees and appointments to the same was postponed until later.

During the time that the Founder was negotiating to have his uncle named to the see of Marseilles, Bishop Ferdinand de Bausset-Roquefort was transferred from Vannes to Aix on August 8th. Eugene, who knew him, hastened to write to him and then to meet him as soon as he arrived in Paris. The goodwill of this Prelate was essential for the survival of Eugene's foundation. Archbishop de Bausset-Roquefort welcomed Eugene warmly and even told him of his intention to name him Vicar General. Suddenly however, while he was still in Paris, the Archbishop, influenced by the adversaries of the Mission and terrified by their denunciations, showed himself very cold and reserved toward the Founder who had tried to have another conversation with him. On October 14th, Father de Mazenod in his impatience demanded an explanation. The Archbishop upbraided him with the accusations of his enemies and unreservedly sided with them. The Founder was deeply indignant and had to do great violence to himself not to inveigh against the Prelate.

Confronting the failure of these measures

His Society had now fallen into a situation that was more precarious than ever: practically speaking, it was condemned by the Archbishop who was under the influence of Eugene's opponents. Father de Mazenod consulted his companions at Aix. On October 19th he wrote to Fathers Tempier and Maunier: "I beg you, my dear friends, to join in finding out before God what we must do I will go by what you decide. I am ready to drink the chalice to the dregs."²⁹

²⁹ Eugene de Mazenod to Tempier and Maunier, October 19, 1817. OBLATE WRITINGS, vol. VI, pp. 39-40.

Consoled and supported by the wholly supernatural response of his co-workers, he replies to them on the following October 31st: "I shall be worthy of you So let us continue to strive like good soldiers of Jesus Christ It would indeed be foolish for anyone to desire to do good but not to experience opposition."³⁰ He left Paris on November 24 for Aix, quite determined to pursue the work of the Mission regardless of the opposition and an uncertain future.

The fierce opposition of the parish priests of Aix gradually died down and good relationships with Archbishop de Bausset-Roquefort were re-established when the latter took possession of his see two years later on November 13, 1819.

An establishment at Laus

The year 1818 marks an important turning point in the existence of the Society of the Missionaries of Provence. The Founder's initial plan was changed though the original idea which had determined the foundation, namely, the salvation of the poor and neglected, still remained intact.

On August 16, 1818, Bishop de Miollis of Digne offered the Missionaries of Provence the direction of the shrine of Notre-Dame du Laus as well as the preaching of missions throughout his diocese which comprised the Departments of the Upper and Lower Alps. This offer at first caused the Founder some embarrassment. In the original concept of his Society, he had envisioned a single community in only one house.

He submitted the Bishop of Digne's offer to the 5 priests of the Society and to the 4 scholastics associated to it and explained to them the necessity of tighter bonds between the Society's members if this offer of a second establishment were accepted. All favoured the prelate's request and asked the

³⁰ Eugene de Mazenod to Tempier and Maunier, October 31, 1817. OBLATE WRITINGS, vol. VI, pp. 43-44.

Founder to complete the drawing up of the Rules, a project that had already been begun.³¹

The First Rules and the First Vows

Without any further delay, Father de Mazenod on August 23rd informed Bishop de Miollis that his offer was accepted. On September 1st, accompanied by Brothers Noël Moreau and Marius Suzanne, he proceeded to St-Laurent du Verdon in order "to work in solitude" at the task entrusted to him.³² As soon as the following 16th, the composition of the "main articles of the Rule"³³ was finished. He then went to Digne, assisted at the ordination of Brother Moreau to the priesthood and made the arrangements with Bishop de Miollis for the foundation at Laus.

He had returned to Aix by September 30th but he waited for the annual retreat — which had been scheduled for the end of October — to present the new Rules to the Society's members. The first part of the Rules was accepted with a few minor modifications. The second part, in which the vows of chastity, obedience and perseverance were introduced into the Society, stirred up vigorous protestations. Only two priests accepted them, namely, Tempier and Moreau. The others, that is, Mye, Deblieu, Maunier and Marius Aubert, were opposed. The Founder summoned the three scholastics already associated to the Society, namely, Alexandre Dupuy, Hippolyte Courtès and Marius Suzanne. These latter accepted

³¹ Already on December 15, 1816, the Founder wrote to Father Tempier: "Busy yourself with our Statutes Spend two hours every day at this occupation Read again St. Philip of Neri and the Petition that we have presented to the Vicars General." We do not know what elements were composed at that time. Cf. Achille REY, O.M.I., *op. cit.*, vol. I, p. 203. OBLATE WRITINGS, vol. VI, pp. 25-26.

³² *Mémoires* of Bishop de Mazenod, quoted by Toussaint RAMBERT, O.M.I., *op. cit.*, vol. I, p. 283.

³³ *Ibidem*, p. 283. Also see Jean LEFLON, *op. cit.*, vol. 2, p. 160; and Joseph PIELORZ, O.M.I., "Le séjour de Fondateur a St-Laurent du Verdon et la rédaction de nos Règles (août-octobre 1818)", in *Missions*, 84 (1957), pp. 297-322.

the vows and declared themselves disposed to make the proposed vows. As the Founder had given them a deliberative vote, the contested articles narrowly passed by 6 votes against 4.³⁴

Through the instructions he gave during the course of the retreat, the Founder strengthened the unity of minds and hearts so much so that Fathers Mye and Maunier decided to make their perpetual vows and Father Aubert made vows for one year. Only Father Deblieu begged for a year's delay in order to reflect on the matter. In 1819 he too made his vows.³⁵

After the necessary authorization had been received from Vicar General Guigou, the profession of vows took place on November 1, 1818, in the chapel at Aix. The Founder made his vows before the Mass, in the presence of Canon Fortuné de Mazenod; the rest made them during the Mass, at Communion time, in the presence of the Founder.³⁶ The vow of poverty was unanimously accepted in the Society at the following General Chapter on October 21, 1821.³⁷

The new Rules made of the Society an institute of a religious nature. Though substantially adopting the Rules of the Blessed Alphonse de Liguori as a framework, the Founder permeated them with his own spiritual and apostolic dyna-

³⁴ See the Acts of the First General Chapter, October 24, 1818: *Chapitres généraux de la Congrégation des Oblats de Marie Immaculée*, Rome, Oblate General Archives, vol. I, p. 3.

³⁵ See *ibidem*, vol. 2, pp. 184-185.

³⁶ The altar at which these first vows in the Society were made is now in the General House in Rome. At this same altar, Fathers de Mazenod and Tempier had made their vows on April 11, 1816.

³⁷ The General Chapter of 1821 voted unanimously in favour of the vow of poverty. Father de Mazenod, using his authority as Founder, then and there in the same session decided and inserted into the Rules that the vow of poverty was a necessary requirement for admission into the Society. The oblation of the Society's future members had to include this vow; those who already were in the Society could make this vow if authorized to do so.

mism, especially with his own impassioned love for the Church.³⁸

These new Rules had not been submitted as such for the approval of the Vicars General of Aix; however, at the Founder's request, Monsieur Guigou, in a second ordinance dated November 13, 1818, confirmed the provisional authorization he had given to the Society on January 29, 1816.

The Society's expansion

The Society's second house was opened at Notre-Dame du Laus on January 8, 1819, and placed under the direction of Father Tempier.

Two years later, in 1821, a third house was opened. It was in Marseilles where on May 6th the missionaries took charge of Le Calvaire, a place of popular piety located at the spot where had been erected the cross of the great mission that had been preached in the city the year before. They were also assigned to minister to the orphans of the Work of Providence. Father Maunier was appointed director of the community in Marseilles. He first resided at the Work of Providence, and then at the cloister of Les Accoules which was acquired in 1822 and where a large house was built thereafter.

Finally, in 1825, a fourth community of missionaries was set up at Nîmes and definitively established there in 1826, in a Protestant quarter of the city. It was put under the direction of Father Mye and was engaged in preaching missions in the diocese.

³⁸ In 1818, Father de Mazenod used the 1791 edition of the Redemptorists' Constitutions and Rules; this was a reprinting of text that was first printed in 1749. Now this text of the 1749 Redemptorist Rules was considerably different from the 1747 text that had been presented by Alphonse de Liguori himself. The 1749 text was "really a new composition drawn up by the Commission of Sacred Congregation of the Council which was responsible to study requests for papal approval". See Joseph RESLÉ, O.M.I., "Aux sources de nos Règles, le P. de Mazenod a-t-il copié s. Alphonse?" in *Études Oblates*, 25 (1966). pp. 231-249.

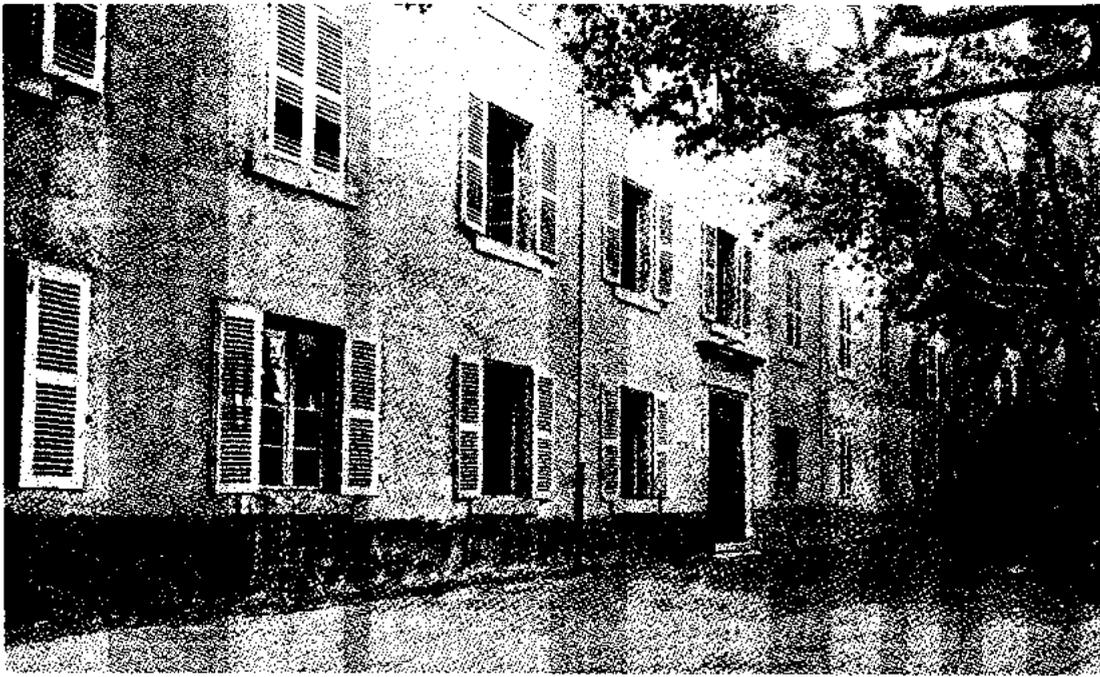


Notre-Dame du Laus
The Society's second house, from 1819 to 1842.

The Society's expansion was made possible thanks to a gradual increase in its number of personnel. There were 21 professed members in October 1824. Several highly qualified recruits had entered the Society, such as Hippolyte Courtès (1816), Marius Suzanne (1817), Jean-Baptiste Honorat (1818), Joseph Martin (1821), Bruno Guigues (1821), Adrien Telmon (1822), Hippolyte Guibert (1823) and Dominique Albin (1824). The Founder himself held the post of novice master from 1816 to 1820; it was then entrusted to Father Tempier at Notre-Dame du Laus from 1820 to 1822, and thereafter to Father Courtès at Aix from 1822 to 1826.

An internal crisis

The installation of Bishop Fortuné de Mazenod in the see of Marseilles in 1823 seemed to assure the future of the Missionaries of Provence by guaranteeing them an episcopal



*The house of Le Calvaire, Marseilles
The Society's third house. The Oblates lived in
this building from 1823 to 1903.*

support which was absolutely indispensable. However, what was to have saved them by protecting them against outside attacks almost resulted in the dissolution of their little Society by occasioning an internal crisis.³⁹

After having thought the matter over well, Father de Mazenod came to the conclusion that it was a good thing to accept the responsibility of being the vicar general of the diocese of Marseilles. This had been a formal condition Bishop Fortuné had laid down before he accepted becoming bishop of the diocese. To be able to accomplish his duty fully, the Founder asked Father Tempier to accept the post of second vicar general which the prelate was offering him.⁴⁰ On August

³⁹ See Jean LEFLON, *op. cit.*, vol. 2, p. 242.

⁴⁰ See the Founder's correspondence with Tempier, May 21 and 31 and June 1823, reprinted by Herménégilde CHARBONNEAU, O.M.I., *op. cit.*, pp. 88-93. Also see Joseph PIELORZ, O.M.I., *Les Chapitres généraux au temps du Fondateur*, vol. I, p. 29; Achille REY, O.M.I., *op. cit.*, vol. I, pp. 300-301. OBLATE WRITINGS, vol. VI, pp. 113, 115-116.

10, 1823, the day on which the new bishop was installed, Fathers de Mazenod and Tempier took up residence in Marseilles.

Accepting these positions as vicars general and the distance away from the rest that these posts imposed on the two first members of the family, who were also the mainstays of the whole group, weakened the cohesion of the little Society; furthermore, it provoked in addition "a spirit of opposition against ecclesiastical dignities, an opposition which went so far as to distort the noblest, purest and most generous intentions. Fathers de Mazenod and Tempier were openly censured for having accepted their new positions; they were accused of abandoning their brothers."⁴¹

The crisis reached its climax in mid-October, 1823. Fathers Maunier and Deblieu withdrew and returned to the diocese of Fréjus. The Archbishop of Aix declared his intent of recalling all the Society's members who came from his diocese: he as well as the bishop of Fréjus contested the validity of the commitments made in the Society. And there were other departures of missionaries being announced. "Nothing further was needed to throw panic into the community of Aix."⁴²

Peace and unity

The Founder went to Aix. He prescribed a rigorous fast on bread and water for November 1st. In the evening, he gave the community a stirring exhortation in which he depicted the dangers that were threatening the Society and offered himself as a victim to calm the storm. After all the

⁴¹ Achille REY, O.M.I., *op. cit.*, vol. 1, p. 315. In the chapter dealing *with the spirit of poverty*, the 1818 Constitutions and Rules laid down the obligation to refuse every offer of a dignity, benefice or post outside the Society, unless it was imposed under obedience by the Supreme Pontiff or by the Superior General.

⁴² Jean LEFLON, *op. cit.*, vol. 2, p. 247.

lights had been put out, he “inflicted a bloody flagellation upon himself in the midst of the tears and sobs of all his sons”.⁴³

On November 8th, an interview with the Archbishop of Aix resulted in satisfaction on both sides. In the same month, Bishop Richery of Fréjus gave assurances that he would not deprive the Society of members from his diocese who wanted to persevere therein.⁴⁴ Peace now returned to the Society which had been purified and achieved greater unity by this trial. The General Chapter held in October 1824 confirmed the complete accord of the Society’s members concerning the appointment of Father de Mazenod to the post of vicar general of the diocese of Marseilles.

The Society in December 1825

The Society of the Missionaries of Provence was now fully born. In December 1825 it numbered 18 professed members and 8 novices,⁴⁵ spread over 4 houses. It was devoting itself successfully to the work of preaching missions, as we shall see in a following chapter.

The Founder recognized God’s action on him in the founding of the Society. Moreover, on August 15, 1822, the day on which he had exalted with a rare happiness the greatness of Mary and in the church of the Mission had blessed a statue of the Immaculate Virgin, he attributed to this “good Mother” an exceptional grace which internally assured him of his Society’s excellence, of the great amount of good the Society was to do in the future.⁴⁶ This was a consolation which he deeply savoured.

⁴³ Achille REY, O.M.I., *op. cit.*, vol. 1, p. 319.

⁴⁴ Bishop Richery to Father de Mazenod, November 25, 1823. Father de Mazenod’s reply, dated November 11, 1823, is quoted by Achille REY, *op. cit.*, vol. 1, p. 320.

⁴⁵ According to “Formules d’admission au noviciat, octobre 1815 à décembre 1825”, in *Missions*, 79 (1952), p. 7-34. Also see Joseph PIELORZ, O.M.I., *op. cit.*, vol. 1, pp. 46-47.

⁴⁶ Cf. “The Virgin of the Miracle”, Documentary Note 12, p. 307.



The statue referred to as "The Virgin of the Miracle", blessed by Father de Mazenod on August 15, 1822, in the church of the Mission at Aix.

CHAPTER 4

The Oblate Missionaries of Mary Immaculate – 1825-1840

I. The papal approval of 1826: - Advantages and apprehensions - Revision of the Rules - The Founder's hesitations - The name Oblates of Mary Immaculate - Audience of December 20, 1825 - Approval of the Rules - Promulgation of the Rules. **II. The Congregation's growth:** - The major seminary of Marseilles - The major seminary of Ajaccio - A Marian consecration and mission - The first Marian shrines - Keen desire for foreign missions - The Oblates refused in Algeria - The desire for foreign missions approved by the General Chapter - Proposed foundation in America. **III. The state of the Congregation in 1840:** - Personnel - Houses - Works - The need to expand.

Father de Mazenod's foundation will reach its completion in the period extending from 1825 to 1840. To begin with, an event of major importance, namely, the papal approbation of 1826, will raise it to the rank of a religious Congregation in the Church under the label of Oblate Missionaries of Mary Immaculate. Then, during the course of this same period, the Institute will elaborate its internal life and develop its apostolic activities.

I – The Papal Approval of 1826

Advantages and apprehensions

In the Founder's mind and in that of his missionaries, there were several motives to justify obtaining papal approval for the Society. Unity in the community's ranks, quite shaken by the crisis of 1823, had been restored and was firmly con-

solidated by the General Chapter of 1824. The Society's recruitment and expansion had become inter-diocesan. The missionaries nourished the desire to respond to the broader needs in the Church. Furthermore, a canonical status received from the Holy See was necessary to counter and prevent outside opposition from bishops, such as was experienced in 1823.

The Society, however, was still very small. At the close of December, 1825, it counted only 18 professed members and 8 novices,¹ divided among 4 houses;² it was preaching missions in some six dioceses of southern France;³ it was in charge of two churches, one in Aix and the other in Marseilles, and of a shrine of the Blessed Virgin at Laus; it served the hospitals in Aix and the prisons of Aix and of Marseilles.⁴ But this ministry was locally limited; the missionaries wanted to extend it "to whatever part of the Catholic world" to which they may be sent either by the common Father of the faithful or by the bishops, as the Founder stated in 1826 to Cardinal Pedicini.⁵

Revision of the Rules

After it had been decided to seek papal approval, the Founder set to work on January 18, 1825, to revise, correct and complete the Society's Constitutions and Rules. He spent some three months at this task in which he was often inevitably interrupted by the many current commitments that were his. He entrusted the Latin translation of the French text to

¹ Cf. Joseph PIELORZ, O.M.I., *Les Chapitres généraux au temps du Fondateur*, vol. 1, pp. 46-48.

² The houses of Aix, Laus, Le Calvaire in Marseilles, and Nîmes.

³ The dioceses of Aix, Marseilles, Digne, Gap, Nîmes and Fréjus.

⁴ See Petition to Leo XII, December 8, 1826, in *Missions*, 79 (1952), p. 59.

⁵ De Mazenod to Cardinal Pedicini, January 2, 1826, *ibidem*, p. 85.

Fathers Courtès and Albini who were skilled Latinists.⁶ Father Jeancard made a fine neat copy which the Founder was to present to the Holy See.

The Founder's hesitations

Father de Mazenod was hesitating to go to Rome, however. From May to July he was in Paris, accompanying his uncle, Bishop Fortuné de Mazenod, who attended the coronation of King Charles X. After his return to Marseilles, it took him some three months more before he reached his decision. Bishop Jeancard, his confidant, interpreted the Superior General's problem in this way: "He kept telling himself, . . . that he was not the type of man to have himself recognized by the Church as a founder of a religious order; that it is presumptuous for him to go to the Supreme Pontiff and claim such a title; . . . that the work he had undertaken was only a rough draft On the other hand, he understood that if he did not succeed in his approach to the Holy See, such a setback, which would be publicly known, would cast disfavour upon his Congregation."⁷

For their part, the missionaries were urging the Founder to act. He himself wrote: "Father Albini ended up by telling me: 'Go! Father, go!' and, as he said this, he was pushing me with both hands on my shoulders."⁸ On October 30th, he finally set out for Rome, "out of love for the Society, but reluctantly," as he wrote to Father Mye.⁹

⁶ Other Fathers also had a hand in the Latin translation. See Leo DESCHÂTELETS, O.M.I., "Qui a traduit les saintes Règles?" in *Études Oblates*, 1 (1942), pp. 172-174.

⁷ Bishop Jacques JEANCARD, *Mélanges historiques sur la Congrégation des Oblats de Marie Immaculée*, pp. 227-228.

⁸ Bishop Jacques JEANCARD, *op. cit.*, pp. 229-230. Jeancard also adds that between Father de Mazenod and Father Albini "discussions . . . took place which were decisive for the Founder's attitude." *Ibidem*, p. 229.

⁹ De Mazenod to Mye, October 25, 1825, OBLATE WRITINGS, vol. 6, p. 187. The Founder kept a diary for the period covering his stay in Rome in 1825-1826. *Missions* 10 (1872), pp. 335-472 reprints the text of this diary, together with 40 letters written by the Founder from November 1, 1825 to June 10, 1826. *Ibidem*, pp. 153-332.

Before his departure for Italy but when he had already set out, he obtained letters of approval for his Society from the Bishops of Marseilles, Aix, Gap, Digne, Fréjus and Nîmes, where his missionaries were already at work, and also from the Bishop of Nice where an establishment of the Society was being planned.¹⁰ He passed through Turin to discuss a possible merger of his community with that of Father Lanteri, the Oblates of the Virgin Mary, whose goal was similar to that of the Missionaries of Provence.

The name Oblates of Mary Immaculate

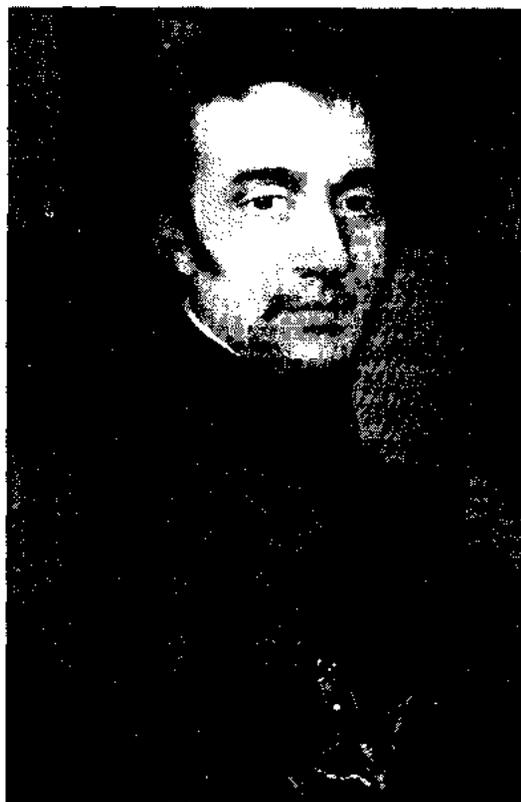
He arrived in Rome on November 26th and took up residence with the Lazarists at Saint Sylvester near the Quirinal. While awaiting his first audience with the Supreme Pontiff, he put the finishing touches to his petition for papal approval of his Society. The inspiration then came to him to give his Institute the name of Oblates of Mary Immaculate rather than that of Oblates of St. Charles: the latter name had been adopted several months previously.¹¹ Did not Mary Immaculate play an important role in his life and in that of his Institute? This new Marian name could also facilitate negotiations for merging his Society with that of Father Lanteri's Oblates of the Virgin Mary. In the Petition, however, the Founder gave only the following reason for the change of name: "in order to avoid confusion with the name of other congregations."¹²

Father de Mazenod was pleased with this happy inspiration. In informing Father Tempier of it on December 22nd, he exclaimed: ". . . Oblates of Mary Immaculate. But this is a

¹⁰ The text of these letters is published in *Missions*, 79 (1952), p. 410-420. Cf. Jean LEFLON, vol. 2, p. 256.

¹¹ The name of Oblates of St. Charles appears for the first time in the decree approving the Society given by Bishop Fortuné de Mazenod May 8, 1825. cf. *Missions*, 79 (1952), p. 411.

¹² *Ibidem*, p. 461. Cf. Joseph THIEL, O.M.I., "Relations du Fondateur avec le P. Lanteri", in *Études Oblates*, 5 (1946), pp. 136-137.



*Eugene de Mazenod at about 40 years of age (1820-1825)
according to an oil painting kept at the General House in Rome.*

passport to heaven! How have we not thought of it sooner? Avow that it will be as glorious as it will be consoling for us to be consecrated to her in a special manner and to bear her name. The Oblates of Mary! This name satisfies the heart and the ear.”¹³

Audience of December 20, 1825

On December 20th, the Founder was received by Pope Leo XII.¹⁴ He presented his petition to the Holy Father,

¹³ De Mazenod to Tempier, December 22, 1825, OBLATE WRITINGS, vol. VI, p. 223. See “Excerpt from de Mazenod’s December 22, 1825 letter to Tempier”, Documentary note 13, p. 308.

¹⁴ The chamberlain Msgr. Barberini had forgotten all about the request for an audience made by Father de Mazenod. The latter was impatiently waiting, the more so as he knew that the Pope, who had been informed of his arrival in Rome, had said he would see him “with the greatest pleasure”. That is why Father de Mazenod finally decided to present himself without a ticket. The Holy Father had him called in first after the audiences to the ministers of the curia. Cf. Jean LEFLON, *op. cit.*, vol. 2, p. 262.

explaining the Society's origins, principal rules and works to him. The Sovereign Pontiff showed him "an unutterable goodness,"¹⁵ greatly praised their resolution of embracing the evangelical counsels and expressed "his satisfaction most explicitly" on the manner they had adopted in preaching missions.¹⁶ Most kindly the Pope explained to the Founder the procedures that had to be followed in pursuing his purpose and, at the end, informed him that the brief which would be issued would be one of praise and not of approbation in the strict sense: such was the standing practice, the mode of approbation adopted because so many such requests were being received.

Father de Mazenod took the liberty of replying to His Holiness that this mode of approbation was not what the Society needed. In the concrete situation in which it existed, not to approve it formally would amount to destroying it, because the French bishops who were creating difficulties for it would feel themselves all the stronger if the Superior General were to suffer such a setback in Rome. The Pope said nothing, but the Founder's observation made its point, as we shall see below.

Approval of the Rules

Msgr. Adinolfi, whose task it was to make a preliminary report about this matter, recommended to the Sovereign Pontiff that a simple brief of praise be granted. On December 24th, he orally communicated to the Founder the Pope's reaction to his report. "'No,' said the Pontiff, 'This Society pleases me; I know the good it does, etc. . . . I wish to favour it. Choose a Cardinal, one of the mildest of the Congregation, to be the *ponent* of this cause; go to him on my behalf and tell

¹⁵ De Mazenod, "Journal . . . durant son séjour a Rome (1825-1826)", in *Missions*, 10 (1872), p. 365.

¹⁶ De Mazenod, "Notes made immediately after the audience with Pope Leo XII, December 20, 1825," in *Missions*, 79 (1952), p. 466.

him my intention is not merely that these Rules be praised but that they be approved.’”¹⁷

The Founder was overjoyed and exceedingly grateful. Encouraged by this first success, he was to obtain from the Holy Father on January 18th a simplification of the lengthy procedures used by the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars for the approval of religious institutes. Instead of 8 Cardinals, only three — Cardinals Pacca, Pedicini and Pallotta — were to examine the Rules, assemble in a simple meeting with Archbishop Marchetti, the Congregation’s secretary, and then forward their report directly to the Pope. When he informed Father Tempier about this new favour, Father de Mazenod exclaimed: “When I reflect how our enterprise is going forward, I am filled with admiration for the goodness of God.”¹⁸

A trial awaited the Founder. Shortly after, he learned that the Holy See had received a letter from Bishop Arbaud of Gap and a memoir signed by the Bishops of Aix, Digne and Gap designed to dissuade the Sovereign Pontiff from granting his approbation to Father de Mazenod’s work. These prelates, who had already given letters of recommendation, had changed their minds: they explained to the Holy Father that, after reflection, the statutes of the Oblates seemed unacceptable to them because they contained several provisions which were contrary to the rights of the bishops and to the civil laws of France.¹⁹ Yet, far from hurting the Founder’s cause, this intrigue, based as it was on the attitudes of Gallicanism, rather contributed to making the Pope and the Commission of Cardinals still more favorable.²⁰

¹⁷ De Mazenod to Tempier, December 22-25, 1825, OBLATE WRITINGS, vol. VI, pp. 222-223.

¹⁸ De Mazenod to Tempier, January 20, 1826, in *Missions*, 10 (1872), p. 227. Cf. OBLATE WRITINGS, vol. VII, p. 16.

¹⁹ Cf. the letter of Bishop François-Antoine Arbaud to Cardinal F. S. Castiglioni, December 8, 1825, and the memoir of P. Ferdinand de Bausset-Roquefort, Bienvenu Miollis, F. A. Arbaud to Leo XII, December 8, 1825, in *Missions*, 79 (1952), pp. 428-432.

²⁰ Cf. Jean LEFLON, *op. cit.*, vol. 2, pp. 267-268.

The meeting of the Commission of three Cardinals and the Secretary took place on February 15th. While it was in session, Father de Mazenod, awaiting its outcome, remained in prayer in the church of Santa Maria in Campitelli which was close to the meeting locale. The Commission declared itself unanimously in favour of the approbation of the Constitutions and Rules, after a few slight changes had been made in them. On Friday, February 17th, Pope Leo XII confirmed the Commission's decision and approved the Institute as well as its Constitutions and Rules.

The Founder was ecstatic with joy. In a warm letter he invited his spiritual sons to an attitude of gratitude, greater fervour and a renewed faithfulness to their vocation.²¹

Now there remained the formalities to comply with, and these were long drawn out and put the Founder's patience to the test. The copy of the Constitutions and Rules on which the Cardinals of the Commission had worked had to remain in the archives of the Holy See. As he could not find a copyist to his satisfaction, Father de Mazenod himself made a hand-written copy. This text, painstakingly reviewed and revised, became the official text. The Apostolic Letter or Approbation Brief was signed on March 21st and was delivered to him only on April 19th.

The Founder left Rome on May 4th. On the return journey, he passed by Chambéry in Savoy in order to discuss another merger with his Congregation, this time with the missionaries of Father Favre. These negotiations will continue until later; as in the case of Father Lanteri's missionaries, however, this merger did not take place either.²²

²¹ De Mazenod to Tempier, March 20, 1826, in *Missions*, 10 (1872), pp. 276-283. Cf. OBLATE WRITINGS, vol. VII, pp. 62-67.

²² Concerning the project of merging with the Oblates of the Virgin Mary, cf. Joseph THIEL, O.M.I., *art. cit.*, in *Études Oblates*, 5 (1946), pp. 129-142. Concerning the project of merging with Father Favre's missionaries, cf. Achille REY, *op. cit.*, vol. 1, pp. 450-451, and Jean LEFLON, *op. cit.*, vol. 2, pp. 273-274. In 1826 and in 1832 there was also a project of merging with the Missionaries of the Precious Blood founded by St. Gaspare del Bufalo, which also fell through. Cf. Fabio CIARDI, O.M.I., "Un projet de fusion avec les Missionnaires du Précieux-Sang", in *Vie Oblate Life*, 37 (1978), pp. 65-71.

Promulgation of the Rules

The Superior General returned to Marseilles on July 7th. On the 10th following, he opened the Congregation's 4th General Chapter in the house of Le Calvaire. With religious respect and the keenest emotion the Capitulars listened to the Founder who presented to them the recently approved Constitutions and Rules and promulgated the Apostolic Letter of Leo XII. In a climate of happiness and enthusiasm, all accepted Rome's decision without reserve.²³

In the morning of July 13th, the Capitulars, joined by "all the other priests and the simple Oblates from our different houses,"²⁴ renewed their vows before the Founder in the form approved by the Holy See and affixed their signature, probably on the same day, on the authentic manuscript of the Constitutions and Rules.²⁵

A decisive stage in the Institute's life had been crossed. After the renewal of vows, the Founder could say in his address: "This is the happy beginning of a new era for the Society."²⁶

II – *The Congregation's Growth: 1825-1840*

Stimulated by the happy outcome of the papal approbation, the Founder showed himself more alert than ever to take advantage of every opportunity to promote his Society's

²³ The 1826 Chapter unanimously decided that "on February 17th of every year the anniversary of the Institute's confirmation and the approbation of the Constitutions and Rules by our Holy Father, Pope Leo XII shall be celebrated." In 1827 the Constitutions and Rules were printed at a place which the frontispiece presented as "Galliopolis". This Galliopolis is the Latin for Villefranche-sur-Mer, at that time an Italian town, located about 5 kilometers from Nice. Cf. Auguste DUMAS, "Galliopolis?", in *Études Oblates*, 6 (1947), pp. 209-210.

²⁴ Acts of the 1826 General Chapter. Cf. Joseph PIELORZ, O.M.I., *op. cit.*, vol. I, p. 75.

²⁵ Cf. *Écrits du Fondateur*, fasc. 4, pp. 233-234.

²⁶ Acts of the 1826 General Chapter, *ibidem*, p. 227.



*François-de-Paule-Henry Tempier
(1788-1870) towards the end of
his life. He was the Founder's
principal assistant.*



*Hippolyte Courtès (1798-1863).
Superior of the house at Aix
from 1823 to 1863.*

growth. He was marvellously supported by his Oblates, who were nearly all in the prime of life and perfectly united, full of faith and confidence in the future. Among his best collaborators we can name, among others, Father Guibert, the future Cardinal Archbishop of Paris, Father Albini, who was already venerated as a saint, Fathers Tempier, Courtès, Suzanne, Guigues, Honorat, all men of talent and zeal who were very much attached to him.

The Congregation's development in the period following the papal approbation is marked by three activities or important simultaneous orientations: accepting the work of major seminaries, a new thrust of Marian cult and piety and an ardent desire for the foreign missions.

The major seminary of Marseilles

One of the major concerns that preoccupied the Founder at the beginnings of the Society involved reform of the clergy.

In the 1818 Rules he wrote that the missionaries, since they were still rather young, could only preach by their good example; once they were more experienced, however, they would apply themselves to do more in this field.²⁷

In 1824, Bishop Fortuné de Mazenod of Marseilles, after having in vain sought the Priests of the Sacred Heart, the Sulpicians and the Lazarists, offered the direction of his major seminary to the Missionaries of Provence. These showed an interest in the prelate's offer.²⁸ Nevertheless, the Founder was hesitant: he feared this would be detrimental to the Society's main work by reducing the number of apostolic workers who in 1824 were only 13 priests, two of whom were still novices.²⁹ He postponed the decision till later.

Yet, the following year, he was careful to include in the Petition for the papal approbation of the Institute that directing seminaries is one of the Society's works. This was explicitly retained in the Approbation Brief. In 1827, as the Congregation's personnel had increased by nine members in two years and recruitment for the next years seemed promising, the Superior General accepted the the direction of Marseilles's major seminary which the bishop was still offering him. Father Tempier was named its superior, and he was assisted by a few fellow Oblates: they took charge of this institution in October 1827.³⁰

²⁷ Cf. *Missions*, 78 (1951), p. 15.

²⁸ At the General Chapter held in October, 1824, the Capitulars modified an article of the Rules which excluded the work of seminaries from the activity of the Society's members by decreeing that the direction of seminaries is "rather contrary to the letter than to the spirit of our Constitutions". *Ibidem*, 79 (1952), p. 58.

²⁹ Cf. Toussaint RAMBERT, O.M.I., *Vie de Mgr Charles-Joseph-Eugène de Mazenod*, vol. 1, p. 478.

³⁰ The number of seminarians fluctuated between 40, 60 and 80, and sometimes fell to 30. The Oblate scholastics, who resided at the seminary from 1827 to 1854, numbered between 5 and 8 until 1841, then 20, 30 and even 44 in 1848-1849. Cf. Yvon BEAUDOIN, O.M.I., *Le grand séminaire de Marseille*, p. 58-59.

The major seminary of Ajaccio

Several years later, in 1834, Bishop Casanelli d'Istria of Ajaccio in Corsica also offered the direction of his major seminary to the Oblates. He even sought their assistance in completing the ecclesiastical formation of young priests who were already in the ministry, and he also wanted them to preach missions on the island.³¹

The Founder was enthusiastic and immediately discussed the proposal with the Oblates near him. He wrote to Father Guibert, whom he wanted to place at the head of this establishment: "A vast horizon is opening up before us, my dear friend. We are perhaps called to renew the clergy and the entire population of Corsica. The Bishop is calling us to direct his seminary and he is disposed to entrust to us the missions to be preached in his diocese."³²

The work was accepted. Father Guibert, now only 32 years old, was appointed superior and he took passage to the island on March 9, 1835. On April 25th Father Telmon and Brother Ferrand joined him in Ajaccio. On the following May 10th, the major seminary opened with 14 students. After the summer holidays, the seminary personnel was completed with the arrival of Fathers Albini and Sicard. There were 70 seminarians. Their number grew to 125 the next year.³³

³¹ Bishop Casanelli d'Istria presented his request orally when passing through Marseilles. After some reflection and choosing the men qualified for the offered task, the Founder replied favorably to the prelate in a letter dated September 19, 1834. In a letter of the following October 7th, the Bishop eagerly accepted the Oblates put at his disposal. Cf. Achille REY, O.M.I., *op. cit.*, vol. 1, pp. 609-610.

³² De Mazenod to Guibert, October 18, 1834, quoted by Achille REY, O.M.I., *op. cit.*, vol. 1, p. 610.

³³ Cf. *Ibidem*, vol. 1, pp. 629-631, 700. When the Founder was in Rome in 1833, he drew up a memorandum in view of establishing a major seminary common to the suburban dioceses of Rome. His project was praised by Cardinals Barthélemy Pacca, Odescalchi and others. The Founder proposed Father Guibert as superior of this major seminary. Cf. Bishop de Mazenod letters of September 12 and October 31, 1933, quoted in Alfred YENVEUX, O.M.I., *Les Saintes Règles de la Congregation des Missionnaires Oblats de Marie Immaculée*, vol. 2, pp. 6-8; also see Achille REY, O.M.I., *op. cit.*, vol. 1, p. 575.



*Charles-Dominique Albini (1790-1839).
The Holy See in 1967 recognized the heroicity of his virtues.*

In accepting the two major seminaries of Marseilles and Ajaccio, the Congregation was taking on a new apostolate.

A Marian consecration and mission

The papal approbation of the Congregation under the label of Oblates of Mary Immaculate instilled new fervour in the spiritual sons of Father de Mazenod; from the very outset of the Society they had professed an ardent Marian devotion. For the Founder and the Oblates, this new name meant a very special belonging to Mary, a “consecration” to this Good Mother, and it required, as one of the Institute’s particular ends, the obligation of propagating devotion and cult to the Blessed Virgin.

The Founder insisted on the word “consecration”. He wrote to Father Tempier: “Avow that it will be as glorious as it will be consoling for us to be consecrated to her in a special manner and to bear her name.”³⁴ And again a little later:

³⁴ De Mazenod to Tempier, December 22, 1825, OBLATE WRITINGS, vol. VII, p. 223.

“Does it not seem to you that it is a sign of predestination to bear the name of Oblates of Mary, that is, consecrated to God under the patronage of Mary . . . ?”³⁵ He expressed himself in similar terms at the end of the 1826 General Chapter: “The glorious name of the Most Holy and Immaculate Mary has become our own, for it is to the Blessed Virgin that we are consecrated.”³⁶

Furthermore, from 1826 onwards the Founder many times stated that the Oblates had received from the Sovereign Pontiff a special mission to propagate cult and devotion to the Mother of God conceived without the stain of original sin. He wrote to the Bishop of Gap: “The Church has laid upon us the duty — a very pleasing one, to be sure, but a duty nonetheless — to propagate the cult to the Mother of God.”³⁷ In 1837, upon the acceptance of the shrine of Notre-Dame de Lumières, he noted in his Diary that this was “the third famous shrine to the Blessed Virgin that we have been charged to restore, serve, maintain . . . to reinstate the honour of cult to our holy Mother and to spread devotion to her, according to the ends of our Institute.”³⁸ In 1856, in a petition addressed to the Holy See requesting the privilege of giving the blue scapular of the Immaculate Conception, he again declared: “Our Congregation has the special aim of spreading and propagating the cult to the most blessed and immaculate Mother of God, especially in regard to the privilege of her Immaculate Conception.”³⁹

³⁵ De Mazenod to Tempier, March 20, 1826, OBLATE WRITINGS, vol. VII, p. 63.

³⁶ 1826 General Chapter, *Écrits du Fondateur*, fasc. 4, p. 227. At the 1837 General Chapter, the Congregation gave itself “a sign which is proper to us and which reminds us of the august Patronness of our Institute”, namely, the wearing by each one of its members of a scapular of the Immaculate Conception. See Joseph PIELORZ, O.M.I., *Chapitres généraux*, vol. 1, p. 153.

³⁷ Bishop de Mazenod to Bishop Arbaud of Gap, May 10, 1828.

³⁸ Bishop de Mazenod, *Diary*, June 2, 1837, quoted by Toussaint RAMBERT, O.M.I., *op. cit.*, vol. 1, p. 757.

³⁹ Petition to the Holy See, September 2, 1856, reprinted by Joseph PIELORZ, O.M.I., *op. cit.*, vol. 2, pp. 100-101.

The first Marian shrines

As a matter of fact, the Oblates, who were already in charge of the shrine of Notre-Dame du Laus since 1819, were happy to accept other places of cult dedicated to the Virgin Mary: the shrine of Notre-Dame de l'Osier in the diocese of Grenoble in 1834, and that of Notre-Dame de Lumières in the diocese of Avignon in 1837. Zealously and lovingly they restored these places of cult and renewed Marian piety there. In them, as on missions, they preached the Word of God, reconciled sinners and applied themselves to bring back "to the bosom of the Mother of Mercy those whom Jesus Christ on his cross willed to give her as sons."⁴⁰

Keen desire for foreign missions

During the period extending from 1826 to 1840, the Oblates clearly made an option in favour of a commitment to the foreign missions. Was it not written in the Rules that "their ambition must embrace, in their holy desires, the vast expanse of the entire earth"?⁴¹

These "holy desires" will seek to be transformed into reality. In 1830 the French armies had not yet conquered Algeria; nevertheless the Congregation was already aspiring to exercise its zeal in that country. Father Rey writes: "They cherished the hope that the cross would take possession, under the flag of France, of this African land. The Founder spoke with the scholastics and novices about future plans which made all their hearts throb. A breath of foreign missions was blowing over the heads of these young men."⁴²

The Oblates refused in Algeria

After the conquest of Algiers, which occurred on July 5th, these desires become quite acute. In an elan of enthusi-

⁴⁰ Apostolic Letter approving the Constitutions and Rules, *Missions*, 79 (1952), p. 573.

⁴¹ *Missions*, 79 (1952), p. 573.

⁴² Achille REY, O.M.I., *op. cit.*, vol. 1, p. 485.

asm, the meek and calm Father Tempier wanted "to be included in the first group going overseas";⁴³ Brother Ricard was exuberant with hope and wrote: "I think only of Algiers and long only for Algiers."⁴⁴ On July 26th the Founder replied to Father Tempier: "The Lord will manifest his will to us when it pleases him, we will try to aid his plans but I am alarmed at the smallness of our numbers when considering a colony."⁴⁵

Unfortunately, at the end of that same July, a revolution instigated by the liberals in Paris overthrew the throne of Charles X and all missionary projects were suspended. In 1832 and in 1833 the Founder sought from the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda Fide the favour of sending Oblates to Algeria; he even proposed Father Guibert as bishop of Algiers. The French Government, however, refused the Oblates entry to Algeria, first because the young Congregation had not been legally approved, and then because of prejudices against the person of the Founder himself, who was judged to be too Roman.⁴⁶

⁴³ Tempier to De Mazenod, July 20, 1830, quoted by Théophile ORTO-LAN, O.M.I., *Les Oblats de Marie Immaculée*, vol. 1, p. 379.

⁴⁴ Ricard to De Mazenod, July 1830, quoted by Achille REY, O.M.I., *op. cit.*, vol. 1, p. 486.

⁴⁵ De Mazenod to Tempier, July 26, 1830, quoted by Achille REY, O.M.I., *op. cit.*, vol. 1, p. 486. cf. OBLATE WRITINGS, vol. VII, p. 201. Bishop Fortuné de Mazenod, under pressure from the Oblates, on July 11th offered to the Grand Almoner the services of de Mazenod's sons for Algeria. The next day, the 12th, he addressed a similar request to Prince Polignac. Cf. Jean LEFLON, *op. cit.*, vol. 2, p. 333. Also see E. LAMIRANDE, O.M.I., "Les Oblats en Algérie", in *Études Oblates*, 14 (1955), p. 156.

⁴⁶ Cf. Albert PERBAL, O.M.I., "Eugene de Mazenod reste marqué par sa vocation missionnaire", in *Études Oblates*, 19 (1960), pp. 40-41. On April 10th, the Founder had offered Cardinal Maria Pedicini, then Prefect of the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda Fide, the services of his Oblates for Algeria. Father Tempier, who had been entrusted with transmitting this request in Rome, did not succeed in having it accepted. The year following, the Founder, now a bishop, again in a memorandum proposed the Oblates for the missions of Algeria. Cf. "Les Oblats et l'Algérie", in *Missions*, 72 (1938), pp. 391-395.

*The desire for foreign missions
approved by the General Chapter*

The General Chapter, held at the end of September 1831, ratified this vivid missionary elan in the Society. Unanimously the members of the Chapter asked the Superior General to send some of the Society's members to the foreign missions as soon as he will judge the occasion to be favorable. The Superior General, in his turn, manifested his full accord during the Chapter session itself.⁴⁷

Proposed foundation in America

Less than a month after this General Chapter, another field of missions captivated the Oblates, namely, America. Father Guibert, the confidant of the Founder, became its promoter. After Bishop Jean Dubois of New York had been unsuccessful in his effort to recruit priests in France, Father Guibert wrote to the Founder on October 17th: "What a shame for a clergy of 36000! They produced not a single missionary It is a worthy undertaking for our Society to blot out this shame by responding to the destinies which God has reserved for it of late. Could we not offer ourselves to the Bishop of New York to found and direct the seminary that he is proposing? That would be our first toe-hold and we would thereafter spread further afield in the measure that circumstances and number of our members allow. This would be an extremely favorable situation."⁴⁸

In other letters this keenly discerning Father assured that all members of the Society are disposed to support this undertaking and that once this establishment is made, new members will flock in.⁴⁹ The Founder awaited the moment of

⁴⁷ See Acts of the 1831 General Chapter, in Joseph PIELORZ, O.M.I., *op. cit.*, vol. 1, p. 104.

⁴⁸ Hippolyte Guibert to De Mazenod, October 17, 1831, quoted by Achille REY, O.M.I., *op. cit.*, vol. 1, p. 534.

⁴⁹ Guibert to De Mazenod, November 8 and 24, December 6, 1831, quoted by Achille REY, O.M.I., *op. cit.*, vol. 1, pp. 534-536. See Albert PERBAL, O.M.I., *art. cit.*, in *Études Oblates*, 19 (1960), pp. 51-52.

Providence. This project fell through. In 1832, Archbishop Castragane, Secretary of the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda Fide, explained to the Founder in Rome that America did not have any urgent need for missionaries.⁵⁰

III - *The State of the Congregation in 1840*

What was the condition of the Congregation of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate in 1840, now that it was twenty-five years old?

Personnel

In December 1840, the Institute's personnel consisted of 55 professed members. The average age was 32.7 years. Of these 55 professed members, one is a bishop,⁵¹ 40 are Fathers, 6 are scholastics and 8 are Brothers.⁵² This increase came about with a constant rhythm. The Brothers, whose presence in the Society was desired in the Society from the very

⁵⁰ Cf. Achille REY, O.M.I., *op. cit.*, vol. 1, p. 548; Jean LEFLON, *op. cit.*, vol. 2, p. 450.

⁵¹ Cf. "Eugene de Mazenod as a bishop, the victim of fierce persecution", Documentary Note 14, p. 309.

⁵² See the lists drawn up by Joseph PIELORZ, O.M.I., *op. cit.*, vol. 1, pp. 115-118; 166-169. In his *Diary*, under the date of December 29, 1839, the Founder takes stock of the state of his religious family. Since the beginning, 17 have been riddled by Satan; 8 have been dispensed for good or weak reasons. "That is a total of 25 to be subtracted from 83. That leaves 58, ten of whom have already received the reward due to their perseverance. Thus the actual strength here on earth: 48, 41 of whom are priests, 3 are Oblates in minor orders and 4 are lay Brothers (perpetually professed)." Quoted in Achille REY, O.M.I., *op. cit.*, vol. 2, pp. 79-80. Also see James B. MACGEE, O.M.I., "The State of the Personnel of the Congregation of Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate January 1840", in *Études Oblates*, 20 (1961), pp. 61-78.

outset,⁵³ though still not very numerous, were taking their place in the Oblate ranks from 1828 onwards.⁵⁴

The community life of the young Congregation gradually gained strength. Nearly all the Oblates came from the south of France and from a modest social milieu. Not only was unity perfectly maintained, but the family spirit grew stronger. The General Chapters of this period, held in 1826, 1831 and 1837, concerned themselves, often in great detail, with community life, prayer, poverty, obedience. In visiting the communities, the Superior General knew how to sustain the fervour and zeal of his spiritual sons.⁵⁵

Following the Founder's lead, the little Society was devoted to the Pope and frankly ultramontane. To Rome it owed its constitution as a religious Congregation against the viewpoint of bishops of a Gallicanist mentality. Several of the Society's members fervently shared the teachings of Félicité de Lamennais as long as the latter championed the freedom of the Church and respect for the rights of the Pope.⁵⁶

Houses

In 1840 the Congregation had 8 houses: three shrines of the Blessed Virgin Mary: Notre-Dame du Laus, Notre-Dame de l'Osier and Notre-Dame de Lumières, each situated in a

⁵³ The first candidate accepted in the novitiate in 1822, Ignace Voitot, did not persevere. The first to persevere was Jean-Bernard Ferrand who entered the novitiate in 1827.

⁵⁴ The works of Oblate formation in 1840: a juniorate was opened with 2 or 3 juniorists at Notre-Dame de Lumières in the autumn of 1840 itself; the novitiate, after it had passed several times from Aix to Notre-Dame du Laus and to Marseilles, and after it had been at Billens in Switzerland in 1830-1831, was established at St-Just near Marseilles in 1836, and counted 5 scholastic novices and one Brother novice; the scholasticate was housed in the major seminary of Marseilles from 1835 on.

⁵⁵ The defections of Fathers, scholastics and Brothers number 24 from 1826 to 1837, and seem to decrease in number thereafter; there were only 3 in these last years. Cf. Joseph PIELORZ, O.M.I., *op. cit.*, vol. 1, p. 166.

⁵⁶ Cf. Achille REY, O.M.I., *op. cit.*, vol. 1, pp. 494-495; Robrecht BOUDENS, O.M.I., *Mgr de Mazenod et la politique*, pp. 172-302.

different diocese; three houses of missionaries, again in three different dioceses: the Mission of Aix, the house of Le Calvaire at Marseilles, and the house of Vico in Corsica; and two major seminaries, that of Marseilles and of Ajaccio.

The house of missionaries founded at Nîmes in 1825 had to be closed under the blow of the 1830 Revolution. In the same year a house was opened at Billens in Switzerland to receive the scholastics and novices, who were thus removed from the revolutionary upheaval. The house at Billens, where a group of missionaries was also housed, will remain until 1837.⁵⁷

Works

The next chapter in this book deals with the young Congregation's apostolic life, especially with its ministry of predication, namely, the preaching of missions. Here we will simply point out that the direction of major seminaries, not foreseen as an activity of the Congregation, was introduced in 1827 and that, on the other hand, the direction of youth which, according to the Rule, was to be "considered an essential duty of our Institute,"⁵⁸ did not find any notable apostles. The Youth Congregation at Aix itself gradually lost its vitality after Father de Mazenod left in 1823 and disappeared altogether in 1840; the one founded around 1821 in Marseilles by Father Maunier was in a precarious condition. "It is evident that this kind of apostolate was not favoured by the Oblates."⁵⁹

The Need to Expand

Geographically, in 1840 the Congregation is limited to some southern dioceses in France and to the island of Cor-

⁵⁷ The Oblates definitively left Billens on July 15, 1837. The chateau was sold in 1840.

⁵⁸ *Missions*, 78 (1951), p. 39.

⁵⁹ Yvon BEAUDOIN, O.M.I., *La réponse des Oblats de France à la vision et à la pratique de l'évangélisation du Fondateur*, manuscript, p. 16.

sica. Full of life and zeal, it was languishing in these restricted limits. It looked for the needed challenges that would promote its expansion. Father Guibert, a man with clear foresight, wrote in 1832: "A Congregation in its first beginnings needs an element of zeal; repose would be the death of us."⁶⁰ Several years later the Founder wrote that branching out was absolutely necessary "so that we do not die a fine death".⁶¹

Such is the state of Bishop de Mazenod's Institute in 1840. Its work of evangelization carried on during the first years, from 1815 to 1840, remains to be seen. This is the topic of the next chapter.

⁶⁰ Guibert to De Mazenod, 1832, quoted by J. PAGUELLE DE FOLLENAY, *Vie du Cardinal Guibert, archevêque de Paris*, Paris, 1896, vol. 1, p. 272.

⁶¹ De Mazenod to Courtès, January 4, 1845, quoted by Jean LEFLON, *op. cit.*, vol. 3, p. 124.

CHAPTER 5

Missionaries to the Poor – 1815-1840

I. The ministry of the missions: - An adaptation of a traditional formula - Innovations - The missions from 1815 to 1823 - Partial and complete successes - The Mission at Marseilles - The Mission at Aix - New missionary fields, from 1823 to 1840 - Switzerland - Corsica - In France - An apostolic field to be enlarged. **II. Other Ministries:** - Churches and shrines - Receiving priests and seminarians - Works in the cities of Aix and Marseilles.

I – The Ministry of the Missions

To revive the faith which was dying out among the poor and, in the first place, among the poor of Provence, was the objective or “thought” that Eugene de Mazenod had constantly nourished in his heart during the course of his clerical education and his first three years as a priest.¹ Hence, in founding his Institute, his determination was foremost to preach God’s Word to the poor and to attend to the spiritual needs of the poor people scattered over the rural areas.² His missionaries will apply themselves to this task by means of missions, catechetical instructions, retreats or other spiritual exercises.³

¹ Cf. *Mémoires* of Bishop de Mazenod, quoted by Toussaint RAMBERT, O.M.I., *Vie de Monseigneur Charles-Joseph-Eugène de Mazenod*, vol. 1, p. 161.

² Cf. 1818 Rules, art. 1, in *Missions*, 78 (1951), p. 13.

³ *Ibidem.*, p. 13.

The work of missions will therefore have a privileged place in the Society's apostolate. The Missionaries of Provence had scarcely come together when they undertook their first mission. This mission was begun on February 11, 1816, at Grans, in a fully rural and de-christianized milieu. Grans was a town of some 1500 people wherein "no one fulfilled his Easter duties . . . , where before long the church could be closed, so little was it frequented": thus we read in the report of the mission.⁴

An adaptation of a traditional formula

The formula of missions which again came into its own during the Founder's time was none other than that transmitted by the missionaries of the 17th and 18th centuries and begun by Saint Vincent de Paul in 1618. The mission in this traditional sense was a work of some three to six weeks in a parish, preached by a few missionaries, the aims of which were to instruct the faithful in the ensemble of the truths of religion, to revive religious practice and Christian living. Its means were the teaching of the great truths, catechetical instructions, great ceremonies and processions designed to touch hearts, and the practice of confession repeated during the mission in order to assure firmness in conversion.

The missions preached by the Missionaries of Provence rejoin this traditional method, though in a manner that was entirely free. Intuitive and spontaneous as he was by temperament, the Founder had a keen sense of adaptation. At a glance he could measure the potential and drawbacks of the terrain; and so, to meet concrete needs, he will make innovations he considered opportune and at times even suppress

⁴ Cf. "The Missions during the period of the Restoration", Documentary Note 15, p. 310.

exercises which were ordinarily included in the mission program.⁵

Innovations

Besides this flexibility in adaptation, the method of Father de Mazenod's missionaries was original in terms of either adding new elements or insisting on certain points.

First, a new important element⁶ was introduced into the traditional mission. At the beginning of the mission, the missionaries visited the families in order to invite the people to come to the church, to know the people they were to evangelize and their background. As soon as they arrived and in the subsequent days, the missionaries visited the homes, with "all the warmth of a charity that makes itself all things to all men",⁷ in order to win over the people's hearts. Not a single home was to be omitted, "not even those where it could be foreseen that one would be badly received".⁸ The Founder notes that "these visits are not very entertaining, but they are very important because they bring the missionaries closer to the people they have come to evangelize."⁹

Secondly, when necessary the Founder modified the traditional penitential procession. After "sufficient reflection" in God's sight and when minds had been well prepared, he did this procession in the following way: the director of the mission took upon himself the sins of the people and offered himself as a victim to God's justice. With a thick rope tied

⁵ Cf. Jean LEFLON, *Eugène de Mazenod*, vol. 2, p. 90. Also "Ceremonial pour les missions", in *Missions*, 78 (1951), pp. 157-160; Alfred YENVEUX, O.M.I., *Les Saintes Règles de la Congrégation des Missionnaires Oblats de Marie Immaculée*, vol. 1, pp. 171-172.

⁶ Studies on the missions of this period, and in particular the recent comprehensive study of Canon Sevrin do not mention that this means of approach used in Provence was applied elsewhere. Cf. Jean LEFLON, *op. cit.*, vol. 2, p. 92.

⁷ "Journal de la mission de Marignane", in *Missions*, 4 (1965), p. 279.

⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 279.

⁹ *Ibidem*, pp. 278-279.

around his neck and in bare feet, he led the procession, carrying the cross of penitents through the streets of the village and then back to the church, then handed over the cross and prostrated himself at the foot of the altar and continued to pray for the people's conversion. This was a bold initiative which, as the Founder put it, resulted not only in an explosion of emotivity but also drew down an abundance of graces. The missionaries had recourse to this way when it was necessary to make a great effort to arouse consciences that had become too lax.¹⁰

Thirdly, the Missionaries of Provence paid special attention to confession. They saw in it an excellent method to complete and apply to each one personally the instructions that were addressed to the entire parish. "If grace has touched a soul through the power of God's Word, it is in the tribunal of penance that grace shapes this soul and makes it just," the Rule noted.¹¹ On missions, therefore, the missionaries, when not occupied with other exercises, were to be constantly available to the faithful for confessions. They spent long hours in this ministry.

Fourthly, the missionaries' preaching must be simple, clear and completely within the comprehension of the faithful. "We must not be content with breaking the bread of the Word for them, but we have to chew it for them as well," is how the Founder figuratively expressed it.¹² The teaching was to be positive and straight forward; it was to aim at solid doctrine rather than at an elegant style. The Founder's instruction was clear-cut: "Instruct, instruct! Ignorance is the greatest plague of our times!"¹³ So that they may be fully understood by these people from the south of France, the

¹⁰ Cf. Jean LEFLON, *op. cit.*, vol. 2, p. 94.

¹¹ 1818 Rules, Ière partie, chap. 3, in *Missions*, 78 (1951), p. 37.

¹² *Ibidem*, p. 36.

¹³ De Mazenod to Courtès, January 19, 1839, quoted by Achille REY, O.M.I., *Histoire de Monseigneur Charles-Joseph-Eugène de Mazenod*, vol. 2, p. 63.

missionaries would use, save for some rare, well justified exceptions, the provençale tongue, the language the people understood and in which it had learned its religion.¹⁴

Fifthly, from the very beginnings of the Society, the missionaries adopted the principles of moral theology taught by the Blessed Alphonse de Liguori. This teaching was at that time new in France and less rigorist than that commonly held by the whole of the French clergy.¹⁵ In their ministry, they reacted against Jansenism and its consequences of extreme rigorism. The clergy will sometimes accuse the Oblates of "laxism" and cause them difficulties.¹⁶

Sixthly and lastly, the missionaries are to form a team that is closely united and strong in their witness. On a weekly basis and under the guidance of the director of the mission, they are to review the mission's course and search for means to improve it. During the whole time of the mission, they are to live an exemplary community life. A deep interior spirit and acts of penance are meant to make their activity fruitful.¹⁷ Each mission, furthermore, had to be carefully prepared by acquiring knowledge of the parish that was to be evangelized and by a time of personal retreat made by the missionaries.¹⁸

The missions from 1815 to 1823

The missions from 1815 to 1823 were nearly all directed by the Founder himself and are, in a sense, the model-types

¹⁴ Cf. Robrecht BOUDENS, O.M.I., "Mgr de Mazenod et le provençal", in *Études Oblates*, 15 (1956), pp. 5-16.

¹⁵ Cf. Yvon BEAUDOIN, O.M.I., *Le grand séminaire de Marseille*, pp. 100-103.

¹⁶ Cf. Jean LEFLON, *op. cit.*, vol. 2, pp. 129-134.

¹⁷ De Mazenod to Father Mille, January 20, 1837: "Work in such a way that you will not only do much good, but also that you will leave a true sense of holiness behind you. Otherwise, people will say that you are only carrying out your occupational profession."

¹⁸ After four or five months, some missionaries would return to the parish they had evangelized to solidify the fruits of the mission by offering some spiritual exercises. Cf. Alfred YENVEUX, O.M.I., *op. cit.*, vol. 1, p. 132.

of the Society's missions: they will greatly inspire and guide those which are to follow.

Minute and careful study of the documents of the time has allowed us to identify the dates, places and names of the missionaries for the 40 missions given during the course of this period from 1815 to 1823.¹⁹ Thirty of these missions were given in towns or villages with 500 to 2000 inhabitants; the rest were given in more populated parishes of cities such as Marseilles, Aix, Arles, Barjols, Brignoles, La Ciotat. To these forty missions at least a dozen others have to be added about which our documentation is incomplete.²⁰ These fifty missions or so were preached in the southern dioceses of France, especially those of Aix and Digne, which then included the dioceses of Marseilles, Arles and Fréjus: these latter were restored in 1823.

Partial and complete successes

Most of the time these missions lasted four or five weeks and were given by a team of 4 or 5 missionaries who conducted them with an ardent zeal. At times they carried on in spite of great fatigue. God alone is able to judge the good they accomplished in the people's hearts. To be sure, they at least apparently were not equally successful: some just managed to avoid failure, others had moderate successes, and others succeeded completely, even beyond all expectations.

Thus, the documentation pertaining to these missions reveals the following facts.

¹⁹ Cf. Joseph PEILORZ, O.M.I., "Premières missions des Missionnaires de Provence 1816-1823", in *Missions*, 82 (1955) pp. 549-561, 641-655. This list includes that of Pignans, from the end of December 1815 to the beginning of January 1816, the very first one that was preached. It was given by two of the Founder's companions, Fathers Mye and Deblieu or Icard.

²⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 654-655. Already on December 13, 1815, the Founder had written to Father Tempier: "Even if we were twenty, we would not suffice for the work there is to do. We are requested on all sides." cf. *Circulaires administratives*, vol. 1, p. 138. Also OBLATE WRITINGS, vol VI, p. 14.



*Father de Mazenod during the mission at Remollon, in 1819.
An alabaster medallion made by a town-dweller of that locality.*

The attendance at Meyrarques was one morning reduced to "eight persons, a man and some women"; they considered cancelling the mission, and at Aix the whole community "was fasting on bread and water, begging the Lord to have compassion on these people who had gone astray." At Rognac, the people and the parish priest himself begrudgingly accepted the preachers who had been imposed on them by the diocesan administration. Nothing had been prepared, not even living quarters. At Éguyère, many of the town people remained aloof.

In other localities, getting the mission properly started proved to be difficult. At Tallard, more than a week was needed to raise the population out of their "unbelievable

apathy". Once the mission had caught on, the eagerness of the people was such that "a wedding was celebrated by singing hymns". At Barjols and Marignane, on the contrary, the almost unanimous eagerness became an enthusiasm. At Barjols, the arrival of the missionaries was "truly a triumph for religion. An immense crowd of people, led by the pastor, the mayor and prominent townspeople . . . came out to meet them."

Very often, villages close to the parish that was being evangelized were represented by sizable contingents at the mission exercises. At the Remollon mission, a village "half a league distant came every evening with their pastor to attend the exercises"; two other villages followed this same example. One could see at Barcelonnette "numerous groups of people daily wending their way down the mountains and come a distance of several leagues to hear the Word of God." The church could not accommodate all who had come to hear, and so the missionaries had to preach in the public square. The same thing occurred at Fuveau where people came from all directions and as early as three o'clock in the morning were waiting for the church to open.²¹

The general missions, however, preached conjointly with the Missionaries of France²² at Marseilles and Aix in 1820, merit special mention because of their size and importance.

The Mission at Marseilles

The general mission of Marseilles was given simultaneously in the city's eleven parishes during January and February 1820. Father de Mazenod's missionaries were responsible for three parishes of thickly populated sectors: Saint-Laurent,

²¹ Cf. Jean LEFLON, *op. cit.*, vol. 2, pp. 145-146.

²² The Missionaries of Provence joined forces with the Missionaries of France for missions in the cities of Arles in 1817, Marseilles and Aix in 1820; they also teamed up with the Jesuits for the mission in the city of Forcalquier in 1821. Cf. *Ibidem*, vol. 2, p. 89.

The Carmelites and Saint-Victor. Huge crowds flocked to hear them; more than ever they won the favour of the little people. Father de Mazenod, for his part, spent himself totally, preaching at the Carmelites and at Saint-Laurent giving catechism to a group of 50 poor fishermen, some of whom had reached the age of 60 without having made their First Communion; on top of that, assisted by Father Forbin-Janson, he gave a retreat to the dock-workers of St. Ferreol.²³

Bishop Jeancard stated that in the three parishes assigned to the Missionaries of Provence, "the religious response went beyond all expectations and strongly influenced the entire city."²⁴

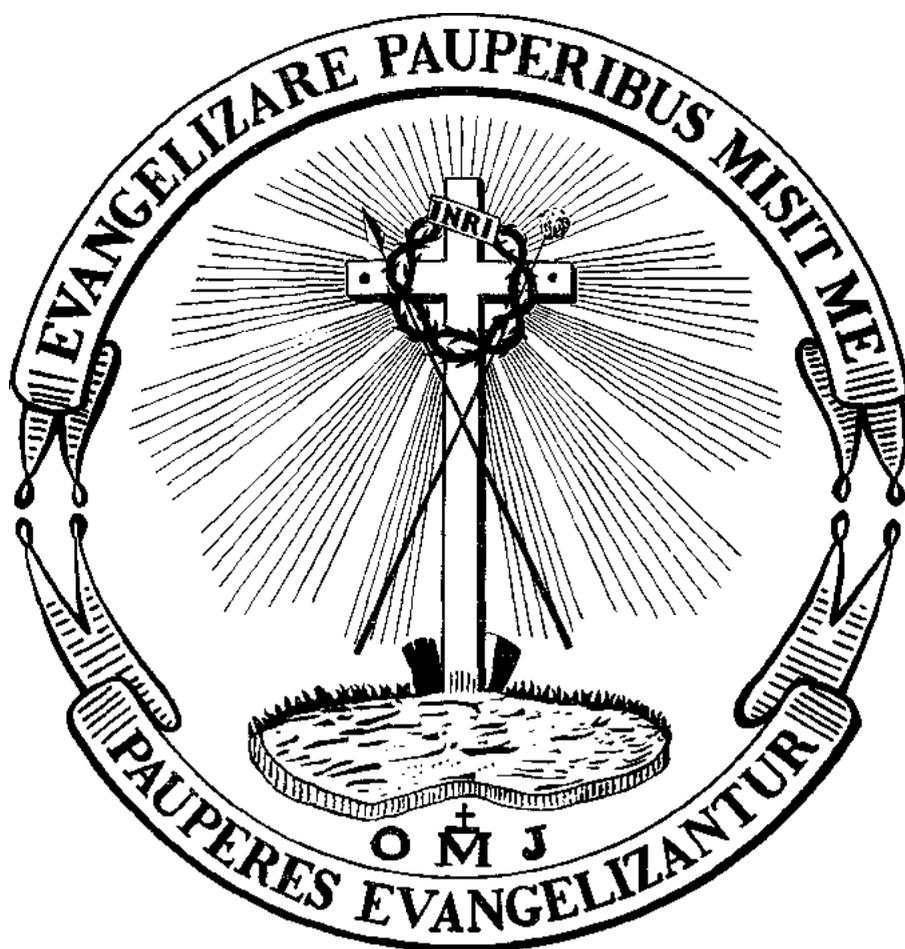
Two impressive processions marked the greatness and religious fervour of this mission: the procession to Notre-Dame de la Garde on February 2nd, which covered the hill of the shrine with 50,000 enthusiastic people from Marseilles, singing and acclaiming their "Good Mother"; the procession of the cross, borne in triumph along the famous Canebière street and on down to the dock of the port, accompanied by tambourines, and music by the National Guard and the military garrison. Father de Mazenod, scheduled to speak to the crowds at the port, "moved all his listeners to tears and enraptured the Archbishop of Aix."²⁵

A stone grotto-work in the form of a minor hill to symbolize Calvary and a chapel dedicated to the Holy Sepulchre were set up during this mission. The huge monumental mission cross was erected at this site which was soon frequented by many of the faithful. The following year, to prolong the fruits of the mission, Father de Mazenod's missionaries were called to serve this place of prayer.

²³ *Ibidem*, vol. 2, p. 111.

²⁴ Bishop Jacques JEANCARD, *Mélanges historiques sur la Congrégation des Oblats de Marie Immaculée*, p. 115.

²⁵ Jean LEFLON, *op. cit.*, vol. 2, p. 114.

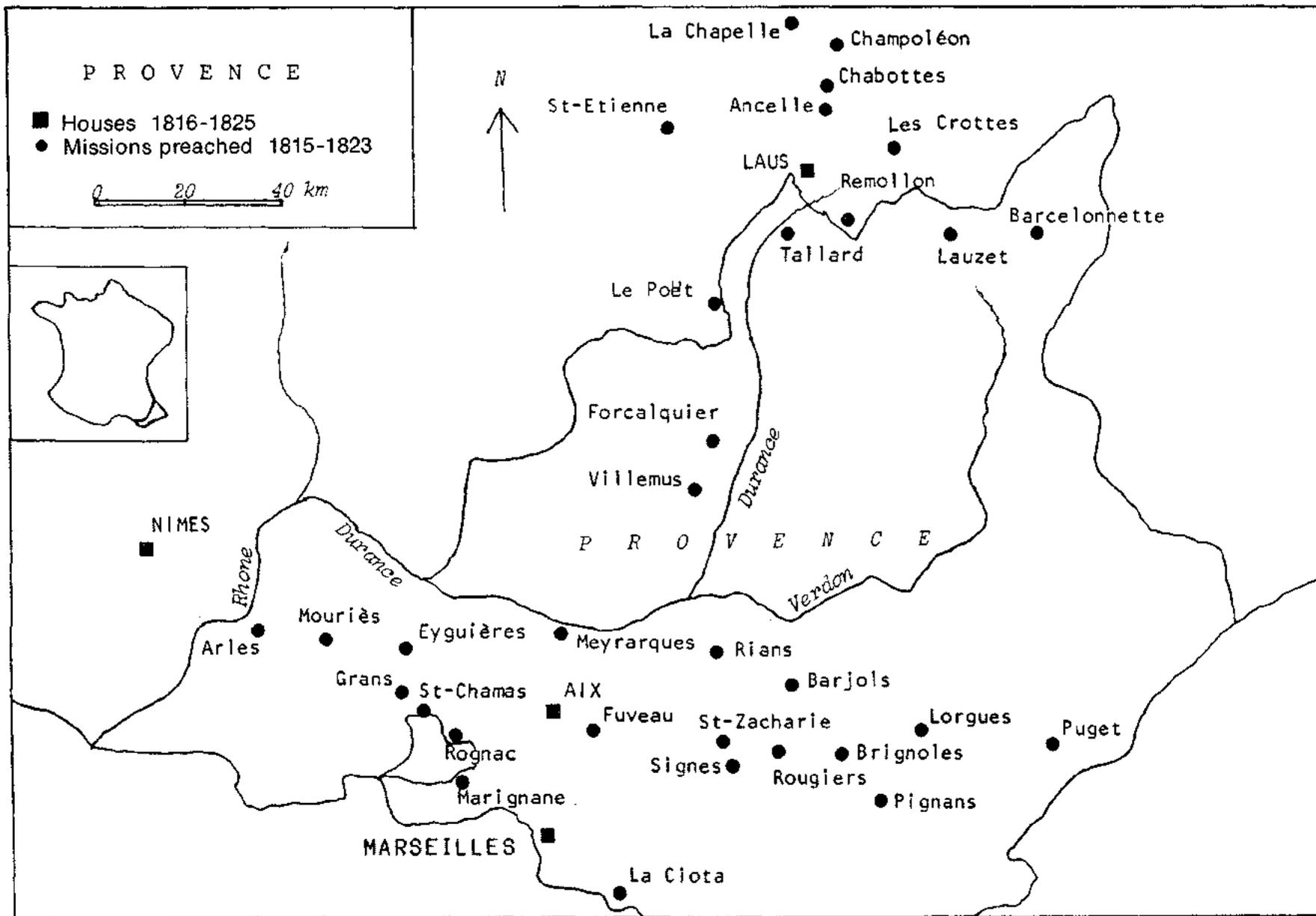


The Congregation's coat of arms.

The mission at Aix

The general mission at Aix lasted six weeks and was held shortly after that in Marseilles, namely, in March and April. In this city with a population of 22000, Father de Mazenod's missionaries were given two churches situated in heavily populated and poor sectors: the cathedral church of Saint-Sauveur and the church of St-Jean-du-Faubourg; they were also responsible for the church of the Mission as well. As in Marseilles, here too the general mission will completely succeed.

However, an incident occurred in the cathedral which almost jeopardized, in part, the mission's success. As a reprisal against the Founder, who had obtained from the Bishop permission to take off the doors, partition and grills which separated the choir from the nave in order to better accommodate the men in the choir of the church, the canons had



countermanded the closing sermon the Founder was scheduled to give at the return of the procession of the cross. When the cancellation of the sermon was announced, the crowd's reaction was most lively, even violent, against the Chapter to whom they rightly imputed this as an insult addressed to Father de Mazenod. Threatened, the poor Canons, who were in the choir, fled to the sacristy and from there scurried through an inner passageway to the archbishopric itself.

When the Founder arrived on the scene, he set about to save the situation and succeeded to calm down the crowd who acclaimed him and accompanied him to the church of the Mission. There, standing on the top step of the church and using his loudest and most persuasive voice, he harangued these over-excited people of Provence and managed to appease them.

The Archbishop, who had been absent from Aix when this incident occurred, asked that on the following Sunday the procession be repeated and that Father de Mazenod's sermon for the closure of the mission be given. This was a difficult and delicate occasion for the orator. A memory black-out made him forget the text of his carefully prepared sermon. Guided by the inspiration of the moment, Father de Mazenod proclaimed the charity of Christ. It was a total success.

New missionary fields, from 1823 to 1840

The missionary elan given by the Founder and his first missionaries, of which we have just given a brief sketch, will continue and grow in the next years. The only exception is during the years from 1830 to 1833 when the July 1830 Revolution came and suspended every kind of mission in France.

Switzerland

First of all, shortly after the July Revolution, the Founder opened a house at Billens in Switzerland²⁶ where the

²⁶ Cf. Achille REY, O.M.I., *op. cit.*, vol. 1, p. 489.

works of Oblate formation were to be established. In this house he also installed a team of missionaries who from 1830 to 1837 evangelized a large number of parishes in the Cantons of Fribourg, Vaud, Geneva and the land of Gex. Even the famous village of Ferney, where in the previous century Voltaire had his chateau, a region that remained scarred by the irreligion of this apostate, was evangelized by our missionaries. In these Swiss territories, where Catholics were often in the minority, the Oblates in a great number of cases registered good success in giving spiritual exercises, retreats and missions.²⁷

Corsica

In 1835, the island of Corsica²⁸ began to benefit from the apostolic zeal of Father de Mazenod's spiritual sons. The Bishop of Ajaccio entrusted to the Oblates, not only the work of his major seminary and the ecclesiastical formation of his young clergy, but also the work of missions in all the parishes of the island.

The prelate, who attached great importance to this work of the missions, gave the former monastery of the Franciscans at Vico as a gift to the Oblates, who could establish a community of missionaries there. During the period of 1836 to 1839, the superior of the house of Vico, Father Albini and his companions covered the island, preaching missions in the villages and towns, missions that were rich in results. They obtained sincere reconciliations between sworn enemies and

²⁷ When Bishop de Mazenod announced the closing of the house at Billens to the General Chapter of 1837, he stated that the missionaries had "according to our manner evangelized nearly the whole country that was open to being evangelized." He gave the following testimony: "From the Bishop of Lausanne down . . . to the last peasant of the land . . . all with one voice are expressing regret at our leaving, a departure that was so little expected and a separation that is so keenly felt." cf. Joseph PIELORZ, O.M.I., *Les Chapitres généraux au temps du Fondateur*, vol. 1, p. 124.

²⁸ Already in 1817, Mr. Laine, the Minister of the Interior, had taken the initiative and proposed the Society of the Missionaries of Provence for the mission of Corsica. See the Minister's letters of June 16 and 30 July, 1817, in Achille REY, O.M.I., *op. cit.*, vol. 1, p. 207, 209.

accomplished a whole quantity of marvels. The memory of Father Albini, who is remembered as a thaumaturge and a saint, remains very much alive in this region, even though he was a missionary there only from 1836 to 1839. It was Father Étienne Semeria who succeeded to Father Albini and took charge of the missions.

In France

In 1834, the diocese of Grenoble called for the preaching of the Oblates. The Bishop, who was offering them the direction of the shrine of Notre-Dame de l'Osier, asked them to conduct missions over his whole diocese. A team of missionaries, based at the shrine of the Blessed Virgin, did not delay in undertaking this task, even extending their influence into Valence, the neighboring diocese.

Finally, in 1837 the diocese of Avignon welcomed the Oblates of Mary Immaculate. Again it was a shrine of the Blessed Virgin that was their gate of entry, the shrine of Notre-Dame de Lumières, which the Bishop entrusted to the Oblates. The closing of the house at Billens in Switzerland in that same year made it possible for the Congregation to form a new team of missionaries based in this shrine. In addition to serving the entire diocese of Avignon, this team will also extend its activities to the diocese of Valence.

An apostolic field to be enlarged

There is no doubt that the Society of missionaries founded by Father de Mazenod did achieve its primary purpose during the period from 1815 to 1840, namely, evangelizing the poor, mainly through missions. All the Oblates, the talented as well as the less talented, gave themselves to these missions with joy, great devotedness, and without complaint. Even those who were directed into other ministries experienced a nostalgia for this kind of apostolic activity which lay at the very heart of their vocation.²⁹

²⁹ Cf. Yvon BEAUDOIN, O.M.I., *La réponse des Oblats de France à la vision et à la pratique de l'évangélisation du Fondateur*, manuscript, pp. 4, 13.

This ministry, however, was carried out in only 9 dioceses located in the southeast of France,³⁰ while the other 78 dioceses of the country still remained closed to the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate.³¹ And yet, the Founder had been attentive to take advantage of opportunities favorable to extending his Society to new territories inside and outside of France. His repeated efforts to establish his spiritual sons at Nice, in Savoy, Piedmont encountered the refusals of the King of Sardinia; and, as we have already seen, his steps to found a mission in Algeria were fruitless, nor could he comply with the request for an establishment in America.

II - *Other Ministries*

The service of the Church, a concern that was very much alive in the hearts of Father de Mazenod's missionaries, could not be limited only to the work of the missions. Other apostolic activities, secondary in terms of the Institute's first end, were part of the missionaries' program and were generously carried out. We can only enumerate them briefly here.

Churches and shrines

The 1818 Constitutions and Rules foresaw the exercise of certain ministries in churches or public chapels attached to our houses:³² Masses, confessions, devotions, retreats.

The church of the Mission, opened in 1816 and adjoined to the house at Aix, gave the example of a regular and intense ministry to the benefit of many faithful.

Since their arrival there in 1821, the missionaries of the house of Le Calvaire at Marseilles carried on a regular ministry in the little chapel of the Holy Sepulchre where people from all over the city would gather. On August 2, 1826, they

³⁰ Aix, Marseilles, Fréjus, Grenoble, Valence, Avignon, Ajaccio, Digne, Gap and Nice.

³¹ Cf. Jean LEFLON, *op. cit.*, vol. 3, p. 124.

³² 1818 Rules, in *Missions*, 78 (1951), pp. 42-43.

opened a new and larger church dedicated to Notre-Dame du Bon Secours.

These same missionaries at Marseilles looked after many Italians in the city who were deprived of religious assistance. Towards 1827, they founded the "Work for the Italians" for this purpose, a work which will also have its own church.³³

The house at Nîmes from 1829 onwards and that opened at Vico in Corsica from 1836 onwards also had a much frequented public church attached to them.

The shrines of Notre-Dame du Laus, Notre-Dame de l'Osier and Notre-Dame de Lumières are centres of Marian piety. Those in charge of these shrines and the missionaries during the time when they were not on mission carried on a ministry here similar to that which is done in our public churches.³⁴ The Founder was always full of praises when he spoke of these Marian shrines and even saw in these places "a perpetual mission",³⁵ an exceptionally favorable opportunity to evangelize the poor, to reconcile sinners, to administer the Eucharist, while at the same time striving to make our Good Mother known and loved.³⁶

³³ Cf. Louis DELARUE, O.M.I., *Le Père Charles-Dominique Albini, O.M.I., 1790-1839*, Paris, Nouvelles éd. latines, 1970, pp. 103-104. The Founder actively concerned himself with the "Work for the Italians" in 1835 to help young Father Semeria who had succeeded in this to Father Albini. This ministry brought the Founder the decoration of "Commander of the Order of Saints Maurice and Lazarus" which the King of Sardinia awarded him during this same year of 1835. Cf. Achille REY, *op. cit.*, vol. 1, p. 454, 685-686.

³⁴ Cf. Émilien LAMIRANDE, O.M.I., "La desserte des sanctuaires de la T. S. Vierge" in *Études Oblates*, 17 (1958), pp. 97-118.

³⁵ Act of Visitation of Notre-Dame de l'Osier, July 16, 1835. See Act of Visitation of Notre-Dame du Laus, October 18, 1835, in Achille REY, O.M.I., *op. cit.*, vol. 1, pp. 667-670.

³⁶ Yvon BEAUDOIN, O.M.I., *art. cit.*, *La réponse des Oblats . . .*, p. 6.

Receiving priests and seminarians

In fidelity to another prescription of the Rules,³⁷ the communities of the Institute showed themselves warm and open to ecclesiastics who were seeking days of rest and of recollection. One of the most active in this regard was Notre-Dame du Laus which became a centre of retreats for priests. It received some 150 in 1831. During one of his stays there in 1835, the Founder was amazed at "this frequentation by priests and ecclesiastics from all the surrounding dioceses"³⁸ who were continually coming to spend several days in retreat there. He wrote: "We have seen a large number in our midst during the three months we have spent in Laus; several times we counted up to ten at once."³⁹ The major seminaries of Marseilles and Ajaccio required the zeal of ten Oblates.

Works in the cities of Aix and Marseilles

Finally, there are other works which sought the apostolic dedication of the Oblates, particularly in the cities of Aix and Marseilles.

At Aix, nearly from the very beginning the missionaries are chaplains in the prisons,⁴⁰ the city's hospital,⁴¹ and the Conferences of Saint Vincent de Paul.⁴² For many long years they did ministry at the training college for governesses ;⁴³

³⁷ 1818 Rules, in *Missions*, 78 (1951), p. 43: "When feasible, we will give . . . a number of special retreats, within our house to ecclesiastical or lay persons who come to this seclusion in order devote themselves with greater recollection to the great matter of their salvation."

³⁸ Cf. Act of Visitation of Notre-Dame du Laus, October 18, 1835, quoted in Achille REY, O.M.I., *op. cit.*, vol. 1, p. 668.

³⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 668.

⁴⁰ Cf. *Ibidem*, p. 227. At first voluntary chaplains for the prisons of Aix, the missionaries became the official chaplains in 1821. The Founder attached a very special importance to the ministry to those condemned to death.

⁴¹ Emilien LAMIRANDE, O.M.I., "Aumôneries acceptées au début de la Congrégation", in *Études Oblates*, 24 (1965), pp. 11-13. For nearly 25 years the Oblates were the chaplains of the hospital of Aix.

⁴² Necrological sketch of Father Courtès, in *Notices nécrologiques*, vol. 1, p. 102.

⁴³ *Ibidem*, p. 102.

and for some time they ministered to the Ladies of the Sacred Heart and their boarding school;⁴⁴ finally, they also served the secondary school of the city from 1827 to 1830.⁴⁵

At Marseilles, from the time of their arrival the missionaries provided spiritual care to the orphanage of Providence, where Father Maunier, moreover, began catechetical instructions for young people and founded an association for Christian Youth.⁴⁶ From 1823 onwards they accepted the chaplaincy of the Ladies of Saint Charles,⁴⁷ then, a little afterwards, that of the Sisters of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary.⁴⁸ From time to time they did ministry at the hospice of charity for the aged, the incurably ill, foundlings and other needy people.⁴⁹ From the time of their arrival they assured the service for the prison.⁵⁰ From 1835 onwards, an Oblate was chaplain at the famous shrine of Notre-Dame de la Garde.⁵¹

Let us add that the young Society collaborated greatly in restoring the diocese of Marseilles, not only by preaching many missions there, by accepting the direction of its major seminary and by carrying out a variety of pastoral activities

⁴⁴ Émilien LAMIRANDE, O.M.I., *art. cit.*, p. 18-19.

⁴⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 14-15. Cf. also Achille REY, O.M.I., *op. cit.*, vol. 1, p. 420.

⁴⁶ *Ibidem*, vol. 1, p. 270.

⁴⁷ *Ibidem*, vol. 1, p. 553. Cf. Émilien LAMIRANDE, O.M.I., *art. cit.*, p. 20-21. Jean PIETSCH, O.M.I., "Notre Fondateur et les communautés religieuses de Marseille", in *Études Oblates*, 7 (1948), pp. 263-264.

⁴⁸ Émilien LAMIRANDE, O.M.I., *art. cit.*, pp. 26-27; Jean PIETSCH, O.M.I., *art. cit.*, pp. 273-279. This community was founded with collaborations of Fathers De Mazenod and Tempier. It ceased to exist in 1903.

⁴⁹ Émilien LAMIRANDE, O.M.I., *art. cit.*, p. 14.

⁵⁰ Petition, December 8, 1825, in *Missions*, 79 (1952), p. 459.

⁵¹ "The first Oblate chaplain was Rev. Father Eymard, named in December 1835, then came Rev. Father Semeria and Rev. Father Rollet who were named in March 1837; Rev. Father Bernard was appointed in August 1841." "Notre-Dame de la Garde at Marseille", in *Vie Oblate Life*, 33 (1974), p. 210, note 15. At Nimes, the Oblates from 1828 to 1830 gave spiritual care to prisoners: there were about 1100 of these. Cf. Achille REY, O.M.I., *op. cit.*, vol. 1, p. 440.

in the city of Marseilles, but also by making available to the Bishop two of its key members, the Founder and Father Tempier, both of them vicars general of the diocese. In 1832 the Founder will be ordained bishop in order better to assist his uncle, Bishop Fortuné de Mazenod, the residential bishop of Marseilles. Then, in 1837, the Founder will himself be appointed bishop of the diocese: he took on this responsibility while retaining that of Superior General of the Congregation.

This ends our treatment of the history of the Institute's beginnings. Father de Mazenod's Society of missionaries, which became the Congregation of the Oblate Missionaries of Mary Immaculate, took its place in the Church among religious congregations at a time when most of the local communities of missionaries, that had come together during the period of the Restoration for a purpose similar to his, were disappearing.⁵² It had developed in its internal life and in its activities by which it served the Church. It was young, full of life, and its zeal was seeking a larger outlet.

⁵² Cf. E. SEVRIN, *Les Missions religieuses en France sous la Restauration*, Paris, 1948-1959, 2 vol. During the time of the Restoration other societies similar to the Oblates sprang up in other dioceses, at Besançon, Toulouse, Lyons, Tours, Poitiers, etc. Cf. also Jean LEFLON, *op. cit.*, vol. 2, p. 18.

PART TWO

An Era of Foundations

1841 - 1861

CHAPTER 6

Expansion in France and Implantation in England 1841 - 1861

I. Expansion in France. New establishments: - Five houses of missionaries - Six Marian shrines - The milieux that were evangelized - Three major seminaries - The scholasticate of Montolivet, a house in Paris - In the already existing works - Dismissal from Notre-Dame du Laus - Full novitiates - Two new Provinces established. **II. Implantation in England:** - The first steps - A foundation at Penzance - The foundations from 1845 to 1849 - Bishop de Mazenod's visit in 1850 - Financial crisis - Stabilization 1850-1861 - 3 foundations in England - 3 foundations in Ireland - 2 foundations in Scotland - Bishop de Mazenod's visit in 1857 - Apostolate among the poor - Personnel, houses.

During the years from 1841 to 1861, the Congregation of the Oblate Missionaries of Mary Immaculate took on vast fields of apostolate in the Church. In its rapid expansion, it came into contact with many groups of Catholic people who were deprived of religious assistance and with the world of non-Christians. Its activities were extended to England, over the whole of Canada, to Oregon, Texas, Ceylon, today Sri Lanka, and to Natal. Under the guidance of its Founder Bishop de Mazenod himself, the Congregation experienced an era of great foundations.

I - Expansion in France - New establishments

The Oblates, who up to now were known only in the southern dioceses of France, were receiving more and more

requests from other bishops to preach missions in their dioceses, to restore and promote Marian piety at shrines, or to direct major seminaries. The Founder accepted these openings, so fully in conformity with the apostolate of his spiritual sons, with joy and eagerness.

Five houses of missionaries

Four houses and one residence of missionaries were founded in as many episcopal cities for the purpose of preaching missions in the dioceses: the houses of Limoges and Nancy in 1847, of Autun in 1858, of Angers in 1860, and the residence of Romans from 1853 to 1857: the latter was dependent on the major seminary of Romans which had been entrusted to the Oblates.¹ The first four establishments introduced the Oblates into central, eastern and western France.

Six Marian shrines

The Oblates were given the direction of six Marian pilgrimage places.

In July 1842, the ancient shrine of Notre-Dame de la Croix de Parmenie, whose origins date back to the 10th century, was accepted as a responsibility of the house of Notre-Dame de l'Osier. Because of its isolation and difficult access during winter, the Oblate residence there was abandoned in 1857.

At the invitation of Bishop Guibert of Viviers,² the Oblates in February 1846 took on the direction of the shrine

¹ These houses of missionaries also carried on secondary apostolic activities. Thus the house at Autun was in charge of a parish, and that of Nancy served a public chapel and was a novitiate from 1847 to 1849, and then again in 1856. Cf. "Codex historicus de Nancy pour les années 1847-1848", in *Vie Oblate Life*, 33 (1974), pp. 277-300. The area for missions looked after by the house at Angers covered not only the diocese of Angers but also that of Laval. Cf. *Missions*, 1 (1862), pp. 570-577 for a complete history of the missions preached by the missionaries of Angers.

² Father Joseph-Hippolyte Guibert was named bishop of Viviers on January 14, 1842. He was promoted to Archbishop of Tours on February 4, 1857 and then to Archbishop of Paris on July 19, 1871. On December 22, 1873, he was made Cardinal. He died in Paris on July 8, 1886.

of Notre-Dame de Bon Secours. Under the leadership of the enterprising Father Dassy, and then the untiring missionary preacher Father Joseph-Alphonse Martin, the shrine was promptly restored, the pilgrimage to this shrine prospered, and the diocese was renewed by the preaching of missions. At Notre-Dame de Bon Secours, the Oblates in 1846 opened a retreat house and a juniorate.³

In 1850 a community was established near the shrine of Notre-Dame de la Garde. Its purpose was to house the chaplains of this famous shrine so dear to the hearts of the Marseilles people. This shrine had already been served for a number of years by the Fathers of the House at Le Calvaire. Besides sustaining a Marian piety that was already intense in the hearts of the Marseilles people, the missionaries were active in the construction of the magnificent temple to the Virgin we see and admire today on the summit of the hill of Notre-Dame de la Garde. The first stone was solemnly blessed on September 11, 1853 and the temple was inaugurated in 1864. Father Jean-Antoine Bernard, who had been in charge of the shrine since 1841, left his mark on this work. He had been dubbed "the Blessed Virgin's man",⁴ and also "the priest of our Good Mother".⁵

The Oblates were in exceptional circumstances put in charge of Notre-Dame de Sion, the famous shrine of Lorraine. Those who had been in charge of this shrine, three priests who all went by the name of Baillard, declared to the faithful at the height of the feast of September 8, 1950, their adherence to the false mysticism of the neo-prophet Vintras. To counteract the influence of these heretics, Bishop Alexis-

³ Cf. Yvon BEAUDOIN, O.M.I., "Chronique de Notre-Dame de Bon Secours", in *Études Oblates*, 24 (1965), p. 181. Also cf. Fernand LEPAGE, O.M.I., "Aux origines de nos juniorats", in *Études Oblates*, 12 (1953), pp. 158-163.

⁴ Cf. Achille REY, O.M.I., *Histoire de Mgr Charles-Joseph-Eugène de Mazenod*, vol. 2, p. 368.

⁵ Cf. Théophile ORTOLAN, O.M.I., *Les Oblats de Marie Immaculée*, vol. 1, p. 410.

Basile Menjaud of Nancy, appointed Father Louis-Toussaint Dassy, the superior of the house at Nancy, administrator of the shrine and gave the Oblates the mission to restore order and peace among the pilgrims and the parishioners of the shrine. Peace was restored by June 1851. Some time later, in 1853, the Oblates were requested to take on permanently the direction of the shrine: they opened a residence there which depended on the house of Nancy.

At the request of Cardinal Ferdinand Bonnet, the Archbishop of Bordeaux, the Founder in 1851 established a community of missionaries at Bordeaux. This community was in charge of the shrine of Notre-Dame de Talance and was expected to preach missions in the diocese.⁶

Finally, Bishop Felix-Antoine Dupanloup of Orleans requested Bishop de Mazenod to establish his Oblates at the very ancient shrine of Notre-Dame de Cléry, a shrine founded in the 6th century, one of the most prestigious on account of its temple built in the 15th century by King Louis XI. He asked the missionaries to revive religious fervor in this shrine which was "quite neglected", to be in charge of a rather important parish, and to preach missions, for which the diocese was much in need.⁷ The missionaries arrived at Cléry in February 1854 and began their work immediately. Already the following September 8th, which was the patron feast day of the shrine, the celebration "surpassed in magnificence everything that within the memory of man had been seen in this place."⁸

Three of these six establishments in shrines of the Blessed Virgin, namely, Notre-Dame de Bon Secours, Notre-Dame de

⁶ The rectory of the parish attached to the shrine of Notre-Dame de Talance was not free in 1851; the missionaries temporarily established themselves at St-Delphin, just outside the city of Bordeaux. In 1853, they took on the direction of the shrine and the parish attached to it.

⁷ Cf. Bishop Dupanloup to Bishop de Mazenod, November 22, 1852, quoted by Théophile ORTOLAN, O.M.I., *op. cit.*, vol. I, pp. 472-473.

⁸ *Ibidem*, vol. I, pp. 175-176.

Talance and Notre-Dame de Cléry, included teams of missionaries responsible for preaching in the local diocese and sometimes also in the neighbouring dioceses. The missionaries who were in charge of the shrine zealously dedicated themselves to the faithful drawn there by devotion to Mary and the feasts organized in her honour. These missionaries, too, fulfilled a mission of evangelization and conversion, and, at the same time, they promoted, lovingly and fervently, cult and piety to the Virgin Mary.⁹

The milieux that were evangelized

In the new areas of France that they were evangelizing, the missionaries found a variety of religious situations. In Ardèche, the Oblates of Notre-Dame de Bon Secours achieved successes which rivaled those of "former times";¹⁰ in Maine-et-Loire, the missionaries of Angers reported "marvels of grace and salvation",¹¹ whereas those of the house of Autun found in Saone-et-Loire a population whose religious dispositions vary from place to place. Their success was more or less complete. The Oblates of Bordeaux, on the other hand, encountered a people blessed with material prosperity but quite indifferent to religious matters. In the diocese of Orleans, the missionaries of Notre-Dame de Cléry often felt they were in a completely pagan territory and had to modify the traditional formula of their missions. Finally, in the diocese of Limoges, in Haute-Vienne and in Creuse, the missions at times succeeded and sometimes failed.¹²

Three major seminaries

The Oblates accepted the direction of three major seminaries in addition to those of Marseilles and Ajaccio of which

⁹ Cf. Émilien LAMIRANDE, O.M.I., "La desserte des sanctuaires de la T. S. Vierge", in *Études Oblates*, 17 (1958), pp. 97-111.

¹⁰ *Missions*, 1 (1962), p. 430.

¹¹ *Ibidem*, p. 576.

¹² Cf. Jean LEFLON, *Eugène de Mazenod*, vol. 3, pp.

they were already in charge. These are the major seminaries of Fréjus in 1851, of Romans in 1853 and kept until 1857, and of Quimper which they were in charge of only in 1856-1857. It was with regret that the Oblates left these two latter major seminaries. In regard to the first, the Bishop had decided to entrust it to the Jesuits.¹³ They left the second at the request of the Bishop who undoubtedly feared that the Oblates were too influential, for five seminarians entered the novitiate during the course of that year.¹⁴

And so, the work in major seminaries in France was thus limited to those of Marseilles, Ajaccio and Fréjus. It must be admitted that the attraction for preaching missions to the people and for foreign missions possessed the Oblates' hearts. Even those committed with dedication and a good spirit of obedience to the work of seminaries were not exempt from this attraction.¹⁵

The scholasticate of Montolivet, a house in Paris

To the fourteen new establishments in France favouring apostolic works that we have just mentioned, two others have to be added: these were put in place to provide for the present and future growth of the Institute. October 20, 1854, saw the opening of the scholasticate at Montolivet, a suburb of Marseilles, a fine and large house which in the Founder's

¹³ Cf. Yvon BEAUDOIN, O.M.I., "Les Oblats au grand séminaire de Romans 1853-1857", in *Études Oblates*, 23 (1964), pp. 291-324; 24 (1965), pp. 30-45.

¹⁴ Cf. Jean LEFLON, *op. cit.*, vol. 4, pp. 246-253. Also cf. Yvon BEAUDOIN, O.M.I., "Un essai décevant: la direction du grand séminaire de Quimper 1856-1857", in *Études Oblates*, 23 (1964), pp. 210-228.

¹⁵ Cf. Yvon BEAUDOIN, O.M.I., "Le réponse des Oblats de France a la vision et à la pratique de l'évangélisation du Fondateur", manuscript, pp. 12-13.

mind was also meant to become the General House of the Congregation.¹⁶

Paris became an important centre for the Institute since it was now involved with the whole of France and even overseas. In 1859, a house was temporarily set up at the gates of Paris, in the quarter of Batignolles. The following year, the Founder bought a property in Paris itself, rue St-Pétersbourg, where this house would be permanently established. The house and public chapel that were built there were only opened after his death.

In the already existing works

Even though they were taking on a number of new works, the Oblates did not fail to maintain and develop the ministries of zeal they had taken on from the beginning of their Society in the south of France.

At Aix they continued their fruitful work of missions and did all kinds of charitable work in the city itself.

In Marseilles, the missionaries of the house of Le Calvaire evangelized especially the dioceses of Marseilles and Fréjus. In 1856, to the important work for the Italians which they had been in charge of for a number of years, they added a similar work for the Germans in the city, calling it the "Work for the Germans". It developed rapidly due to the special dedication of Father Théodore Martens.¹⁷ In 1857, the Oblates of Marseilles also accepted the direction of the "Work for the Youth" that had been founded by Father Allemand; the Institute he had founded to be in charge of this work was

¹⁶ Because the number of seminarians had increased and the number of scholastics had doubled, it became impossible to keep the two groups together in the major seminary of Marseilles. Cf. Yvon BEAUDOIN, O.M.I., "Les étudiants et la vie du séminaire de Marseille (1827-1862)", in *Études Oblates*, 25 (1966), p. 50.

¹⁷ Cf. *Missions*, 1 (1862), pp. 579-580. In November 1861, this work for the Germans became the responsibility of a diocesan priest.

affiliated to the Oblates.¹⁸ Father Joseph Rouillet was its discreet and zealous director until 1862 when it was handed over to the diocese.¹⁹

In Corsica, the missionaries of the house of Vico opened, in 1853, in their own dwelling, an apostolic school for day students. It remained open until 1865.²⁰

The shrines of Notre-Dame de l'Osier and Notre-Dame de Lumières continued to flourish.

Dismissal from Notre-Dame du Laus

A most painful event was the forced departure in 1842 from the establishment at Notre-Dame du Laus, the Congregation's second house and the central base for preaching in the Upper and Lower Alps. With grief and regret the Oblates left this shrine of the Blessed Virgin at the formal request of the Bishop who wanted to set up a diocesan work there. The prelate even provoked a painful conflict by inconsiderately breaking the contract that had already been made between the diocese and the Oblates. Bishop de Mazenod waived his rights out of love for peace and to avoid the scandal of a suit before the courts.²¹

¹⁸ Cf. Yvon BEAUDOIN, O.M.I., "L'affiliation aux Oblats de l'Institut de l'Oeuvre de la Jeunesse dite de M. Allemand, a Marseille (1857-1862)", in *Études Oblates*, 22 (1963), pp. 145-168.

¹⁹ Cf. *Notices nécrologiques*, vol. 4, pp. 505-506.

²⁰ Cf. Émilien LAMIRANDE, O.M.I., "Les oeuvres d'enseignement dans la Congrégation du vivant du Fondateur" in *Études Oblates*, 25 (1966), pp. 9-12.

²¹ Cf. Achille REY, O.M.I., *op. cit.*, vol. 2, pp. 114-115; 129-130; Jean LEFLON, *op. cit.*, vol. 4, p. 368, note 47. The acts of visitation of the house of Notre-Dame du Laus of 1821, 1828, 1831, 1834 and 1835, signed by Bishop de Mazenod, are published in *Circulaires administratives*, vol. 1, pp. 305-324. For the history of the Oblates at Laus, cf. Jean-Marie SALGADO, O.M.I., "L'installation des Missionnaires de Provence au Laus", in *Études Oblates*, 22 (1963), pp. 121-144; "Notre-Dame du Laus du temps de la gestion des Oblats", *Ibidem*, 23 (1964), pp. 229-257; "Les relations des Oblats avec les évêchés de Digne et de Gap, de 1818 a 1836", *Ibidem*, 24 (1965), pp. 66-76; 153-171; 289-307.

Full novitiates

Thanks to an exceptionally abundant recruiting, the Congregation consolidated its existence in France and became capable of reaching out to new fields of apostolate.

Until 1847, recruiting was limited to the territories of southern France and brought in an average of 12 candidates a year, about 6 of whom would persevere until oblation.²² The development of this recruiting is due to an Oblate from Canada, Father Léonard Baveux, a former Sulpician and missionary to the Indians at Oka, not far from Montreal, who had joined the Oblates at Longueuil in 1842. Father Baveux came to Europe for a recruiting tour in the major seminaries of France and Belgium.

His long tour began at the end of December 1846 and lasted until the summer of 1848. It was extraordinarily successful. In 4 months there were 24 entries into the novitiate and the number rose to 53 in 1848.²³ Father Tempier was at wits end as to how he was to nourish all these people, and Father Vincens, the superior, was at a loss as to where he could give them lodging. Bishop de Mazenod, however, encouraged the Father still further. "Continue casting your nets," he wrote to him.²⁴ A second novitiate had to be opened

²² Cf. Henri VERKIN, O.M.I., "La tournée de propagande du P. Léonard", in *Études Oblates*, 26 (1967), p. 83.

²³ Cf. Jean LEFLON, *op. cit.*, vol. 4, p. 243.

²⁴ Bishop de Mazenod to Father Léonard, August 15, 1847, quoted by Jean LEFLON, *op. cit.*, vol. 4, p. 243. He had written to him on June 10, 1847: "You go from conquest to conquest and the houses which are to receive your recruits now have to be enlarged completely. Let me assure you that the trouble your success is causing us does not make me shed tears. I chuckle over the concern which our good Father Tempier feels; he keeps telling me: 'Stop this bully who has us in desperate straits, he'll be the ruination of us!' I assure you, I simply laugh in his face when he wipes his brow. He always ends up by laughing himself and by agreeing that you have taken him at his word." Cf. Jean LEFLON, *op. cit.*, vol. 4, p. 243. Father Verkin estimates that some 50 are the Oblates who persevered and owed their vocation to Father Léonard. Cf. *art. cit.*, pp. 87-88.

at Nancy in 1847, and the juniorate at Notre-Dame de Lumières was closed, for it was no longer needed.

In the years 1847-1848, the two novitiates of France recorded a total of 155 who took the habit. This marvellous influx of vocations was providential. It enabled the Congregation to respond to a great number of requests for missionaries.

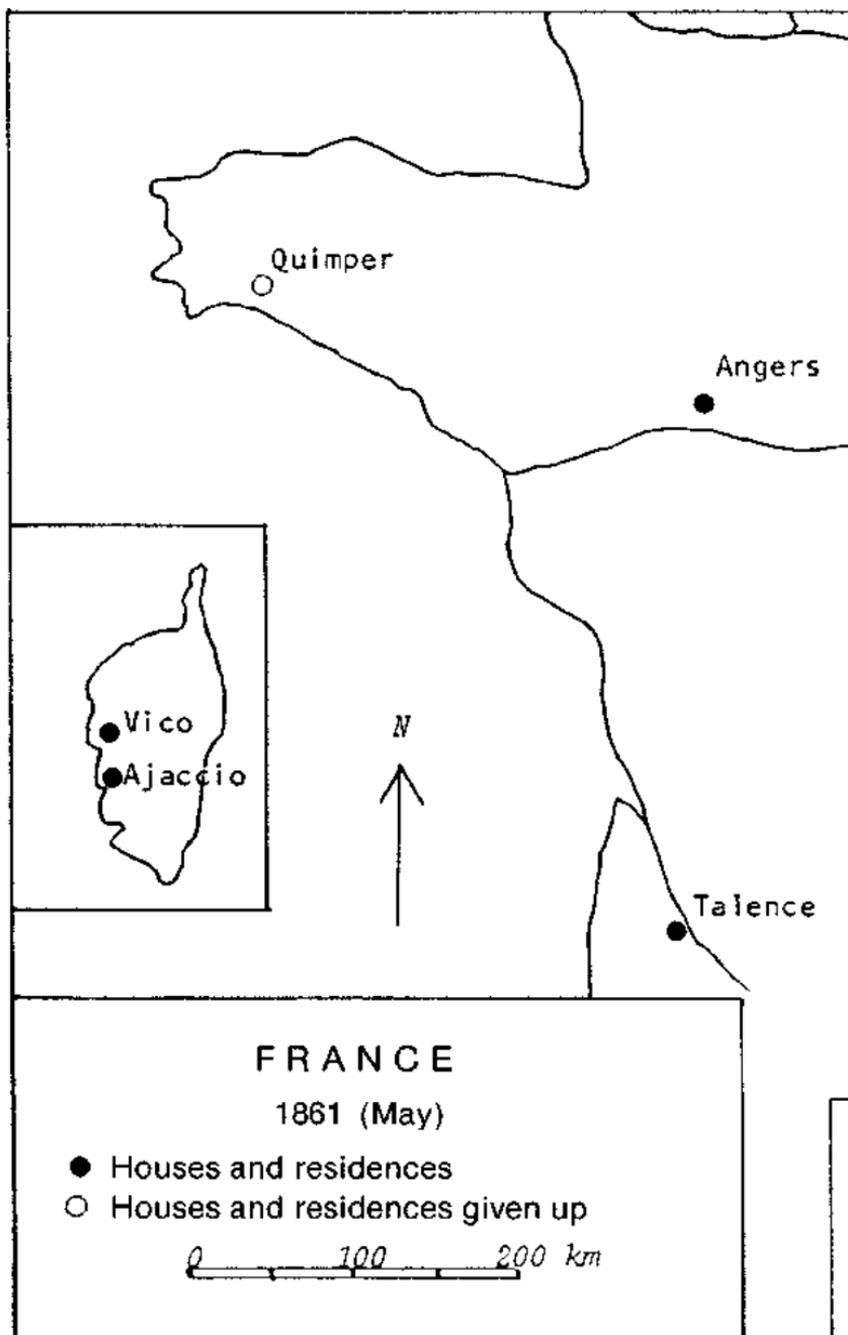
Thus, during the period from 1841 to 1861, the Congregation in France registered a considerable broadening of its field of activity, a sustained faithfulness to the work of the missions and the Marian apostolate, and by an exceptional increase in its recruitment.

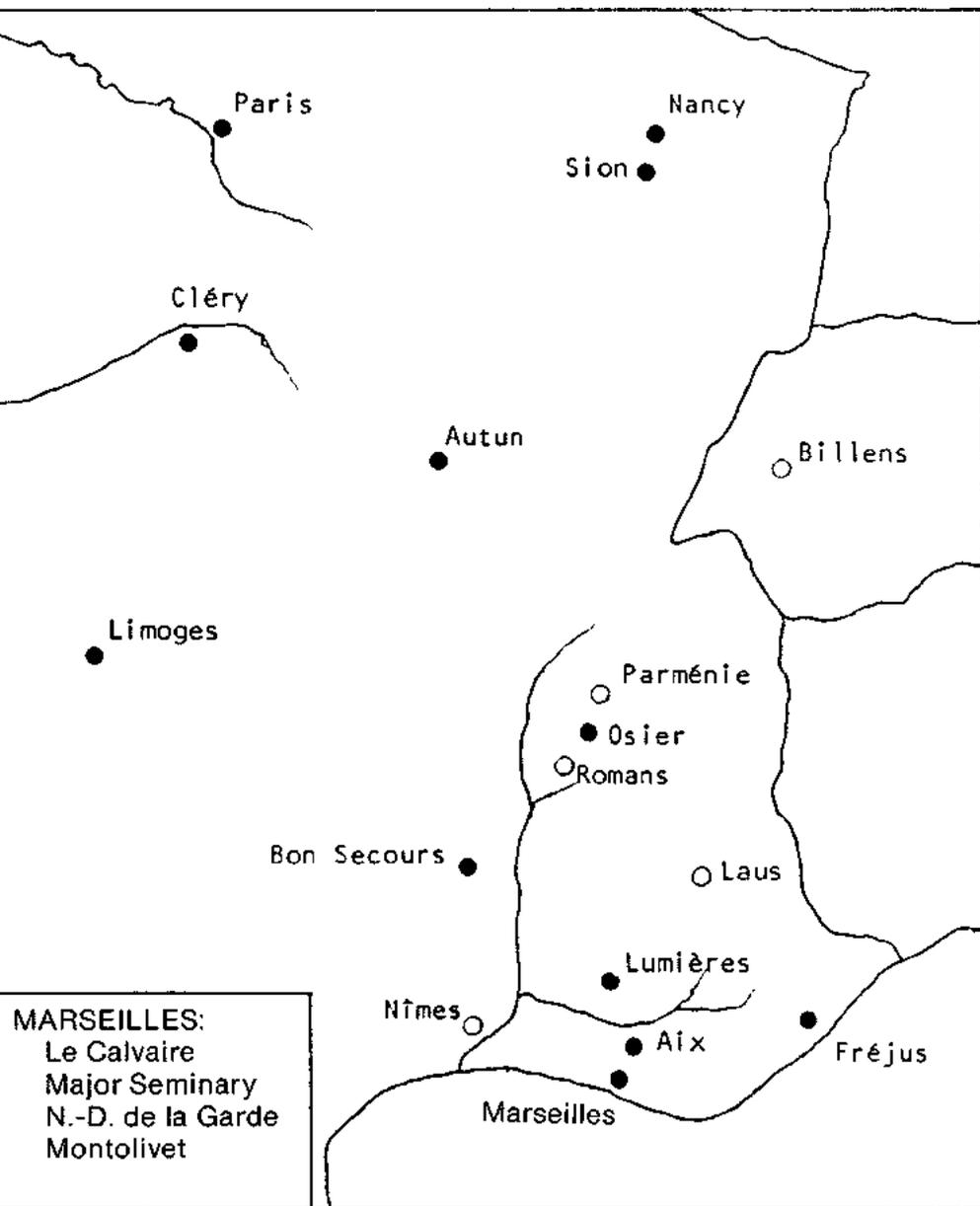
Two new Provinces established

In 1851, the personnel, houses and works of the Congregation in France were divided into two religious provinces, one called the Province "du Midi"²⁵ and the other the Province "du Nord".²⁶ At the Founder's death ten years later, the Province "du Midi" had 10 houses and 150 Oblates, including the scholasticate at Montolivet; that of "du Nord" had 8 houses and one residence and some 60 Oblates.

²⁵ When it was established, the Province "du Midi" consisted of 76 Oblates, 17 of whom were Brothers. It had 7 houses: Aix, Le Calvaire (Marseilles), the Major Seminary of Marseilles, Ajaccio, Vico, Notre-Dame de Lumières and Notre-Dame de Bon Secours. The Founder and his Council looked after the administration of the Province until September 12, 1854, with Father Casimir Aubert filling the role of vice-provincial; then the same Father was named provincial and remained in this post until his death on January 17, 1860.

²⁶ When it was established, the province "du Nord" consisted of 43 Oblates, 9 of whom were Brothers. There were 3 houses and one residence: Notre-Dame de l'Osier, Nancy, Limoges and Notre-Dame de Parménie. It was entrusted to Father Joseph-Ambroise Vincens until September 25, 1855; then to Father Charles Bellon from 1855 to 1856; then again to Father Vincens until July 1860.





II – *Implantation in England*

The first steps

An ensemble of unexpected circumstances which were considered to be providential inspired Bishop de Mazenod to make an attempt to establish the Congregation in the British Isles. In 1837, a young Irishman named William Daly, 22 years of age, arrived in Marseilles “as someone who has fallen down to us from heaven”.²⁷ A second one came in 1840: his name was William Naughton. Furthermore, in 1841 an English family offered to transport Father Daly to Liverpool gratis.²⁸

Nothing more was needed to prompt the Founder to make a decision: he was already very hopeful in seeing a restoration of the Church in England. On May 3, he sent Father Daly, who had been ordained priest the day before, to the British Isles “to examine at close quarters if it might be possible to form an establishment of missionaries of our Congregation able to work for the conversion of the English heretics.”²⁹ In his vision, this establishment, if recruitment was sufficient, could mean the expansion to the colonies and the new conquests made by the British Empire. In England, Father Daly had a sympathetic meeting with Bishop Nicholas Wiseman, then coadjutor in the Vicariate of the Centre (or the district of the Midlands). Through the intervention of

²⁷ *Diary* of Bishop de Mazenod, July 16, 1841, quoted by Toussant RAMBERT, o.m.i., *op. cit.*, vol. 2, p. 97. William Daly began his novitiate on February 16, 1837. According to ORTOLAN, *op. cit.*, vol. 1, p. 512, William Daly was directed to the Oblates by a Father O'Reilly, an Irish priest who had met Bishop de Mazenod in 1835 and had promised him to send him the young man he was presently directing. The document, “Les Chroniques de la province d'Angleterre” gives a somewhat different version. The young Daly was en route to Rome in order to pursue his ecclesiastical studies there; he stopped at Marseilles, where he met Father Casimir Aubert and then decided to enter the Oblates. “Chroniques de la province d'Angleterre” in *Vie Oblate Life*, 33 (1974), p. 190.

²⁸ *Ibidem*, pp. 190-191.

²⁹ *Diary* of Bishop de Mazenod. Cf. OBLATE WRITINGS, vol. III, p. xix.



Casimir Aubert (1810-1860)
Founder of the British Province

Archbishop Daniel Murray of Dublin, he met the Bishops of Ireland assembled in meeting at the seminary of Maynooth. The bishops assured him of their benevolence. Then he began a recruiting campaign for Oblates.

Relying on the enthusiastic reports of the young Oblate and encouraged by the arrival at the novitiate of Notre-Dame de l'Osier of two Irish postulants, the Founder delegated Father Casimir Aubert to establish a house in Ireland and to organize recruiting.

A foundation at Penzance

When he arrived in Dublin, Father Aubert realized that the hopes aroused by Father Daly's reports could not be achieved immediately. His first two attempts to establish a foundation failed: in each case, he could not obtain the consent of the bishop concerned. The first setback related to accepting works of charity and the plan of opening a college which a Father O'Sullivan of the diocese of Cork wanted to entrust to the Oblates. The second involved integrating into

the Congregation of the Oblates a group of teaching Brothers, named after St. Patrick, from the diocese of Tullow, who wanted to link up with a religious congregation that was already approved by the Holy See.

The third attempt succeeded, but it was in England. Towards the end of 1842, a priest named William Young, who had opened a mission at Penzance in the county of Cornwall in England, came to Dublin to promote the interests of his Foundation. In his meetings with Father Daly and then with Father Aubert, he expressed his desire of ceding his mission to them. This proposal delighted the Oblates. Father Daly left immediately for Penzance, whereas Father Aubert returned to Cork where he was teaching since September in a college. By correspondence he approached Bishop Baines, the Vicar Apostolic for the Western District, for the proper authorization. He had to go to the prelate in person, who then generously granted him the needed authorization, and even allowed him to work in the whole county of Cornwall.

In the spring, Father Aubert joined Father Daly at Penzance, bringing with him Brothers Robert Cooke, Edward Bradshaw, Louis Keating and Peter Grey, all young men who had just entered the Oblates.³⁰ And so the first establishment of the Oblates in the British Isles had been founded, not in Ireland as originally foreseen, but in England.

In July of the same year, Father Aubert presented to the General Chapter of the Congregation the first results of his mission in the United Kingdom. He stated that the establishment at Penzance was serving some hundreds of dispersed Catholics and was open to some 400,000 Protestants living in the county of Cornwall. A church built recently was opened at Easter; the faith of the Catholics was being renewed and

³⁰ Besides William Daly and William Naughton who were Oblates already, there were other recruits who entered the novitiate: John Noble (1841), John Samuel Walsh (1842), Robert Cooke (1843), Edward Bradshaw (1843), John Peter Grey (1843) and Louis Keating (1843).

the prejudices of the heretics were beginning to recede. Soon afterwards, in 1844 and in 1845, four outposts were opened.³¹ Thus the Oblates' apostolate was well launched in England. Bishop de Mazenod was filled with admiration. "As for the good Fr. Daly, he is doing marvellously well." He saw his church filled every Sunday with "never less than three to four hundred Protestants of all denominations."³²

The Foundations from 1845 to 1849

The first apostolic successes achieved by the Oblates gave them credibility with the Bishops and with rich Catholic families³³ who were sensitive to the renewal movement that existed in England. A series of foundations followed: Grace-Dieu in 1845, Everingham in 1847, Aldenham and Ashbourne in 1848, Maryvale and Manchester in 1849.

In the first three, Grace-Dieu, Everingham and Aldenham, the Oblates benefited from the protection of rich Catholics and exercised their ministry in chapels and outposts, plying their zeal among Catholics but also among the separated brethren. Fathers Cooke and John Noble even gave,

³¹ These outposts of Penzance were: St. Just and Goldsithney, opened in 1844; Helston and Prussiacove, opened in 1845. Cf. Théophile ORTOLAN, O.M.I., *op. cit.*, vol. 1, pp. 531-532.

³² De Mazenod to C. Aubert, June 11, 1844. cf. OBLATE WRITINGS, vol. III, p. 13.

³³ The immense apostolic effort of the Oblates in the British Isles "would not have been possible . . . without some very important patronage. On the spiritual and moral side, the support given by the bishops, and of Bishop Wiseman in particular, must be singled out before all others. The prelates encouraged and furthered the missionaries' efforts, and through their reputations and recommendations, gained benefactors for the Oblates who provided for their material needs. Their apostolate which was devoted so exclusively to the poor had its own Maecenases, recruited from among the aristocracy; people such as Phillipps de Lisle at Grace-Dieu, William Maxwell at Everingham, the Acton family at Aldenham, the Norfolks, the Shrewsburys, and the descendants of Sir Walter Scott in Scotland." Jean LEFLON, *op. cit.*, vol. 4, p. 281.

as was the custom, conferences on public squares, discussing religious matters.³⁴

The establishment at Maryvale served as a novitiate and scholasticate, whereas the one at Manchester plunged the Oblates into a population of 90,000 Catholics who were served by only fifteen priests. The Oblates in October 1849 preached their first mission in the United Kingdom here.

In 1848 the General Council felt that the time had come for the Congregation to establish itself in England in a more definite manner. It entrusted this task to Father Casimir Aubert, who was appointed Visitor.³⁵

Bishop de Mazenod's visit in 1850

In June and July 1850, Bishop de Mazenod, accompanied and guided by Father Aubert, had the joy of visiting the Oblates beyond the English Channel. In the Act of Visitation he addressed to them, he thanks God when he considers "the pitch of prosperity" achieved by the Congregation in England during the few years it had been established there. He has nothing but praise for the apostolate exercised in the Congregation's six establishments.³⁶ In his faith and daring he encourages the zeal of his sons and wrote: "You are not called on to preserve timidly, as heretofore, the small number of faithful souls, who in the midst of most cruel persecution, had not bent the knee to Baal. At the present day, there is question of reconquering the empire snatched from Jesus Christ, by an incessant attack on all the errors which divide the enemy." And he added: "Prepare by profound study the arms which you shall have to wield."³⁷

³⁴ Cf. Robert COOKE, O.M.I., *Sketches of the Life of Mgr de Mazenod*, vol. 2, p. 142.

³⁵ *Registre des Conseils généraux 1844-1857*, August 7, 1848.

³⁶ Maryvale, Aldenham, Everingham, Penzance, Manchester. Liverpool.

³⁷ "Act of Visitation of the Province of England", in OBLATE WRITINGS, vol. 3, p. 190.

Financial crisis

Everything seemed to be working well when suddenly, towards the end of 1850, the "horrible" news reached the Founder that the Congregation's goods and possession in England were seriously compromised.³⁸ Father Daly had acquired in his own name a fine property at Ashbourne at the high costs of 220,000 francs; as security for payment, he had given the property at Penzance. Now he could not meet his liabilities. After delaying two years, the vendor brought an action against him.

Personally compromised by the purchase made in his own name and without the required prior authorization, Father Daly withdrew from the Congregation in 1851 and joined the secular clergy.³⁹ In 1852, the properties of Penzance, which had also been acquired in Father Daly's own name, were surrendered as compensation to the vendor.

The Founder restored the courage of Father Aubert who had been sent to the spot to settle this unhappy matter; he also encouraged the Oblates of England who were deeply shaken, so much so that they began to think they had to leave the country. The Founder asked them to accept the situation, to pay the price for it, since they had no choice in the matter, and to continue their apostolic work.⁴⁰

³⁸ Cf. Achille REY, O.M.I., *op. cit.*, vol. 2, p. 368; Théophile OROTLAN, O.M.I., *op. cit.*, vol. 1, pp. 572-574.

³⁹ In 1851, the Congregation gave back to the local bishop the mission Manchester, leaving Father Daly there; he had joined the secular clergy. Cf. De Mazenod to Tempier, May 27, 1851, in OBLATE WRITINGS, vol. III, pp. 74. Considering the good intentions which had always motivated Father Daly and the countless services he rendered, the Congregation readmitted him to membership as soon as he petitioned it in 1892. Cf. *Missions*, 66 (1952), pp. 587-589.

⁴⁰ On December 6, 1850, the Founder wrote to Father C. Aubert: "So the position is frightful but nevertheless not as desperate as you represent it to me. Since there is no remedy, let us pay the price of our happy-go-lucky mien while enduring the shame which more or less falls upon us as well as the loss of our properties. But look at the extent of our misfortune. Nothing has to change in our establishments." Cf. OBLATE WRITINGS, vol. III, p. 65.

Stabilization 1850-1861

Although the first six Oblate establishments in England that were opened from 1843 to 1849 had to be abandoned for one reason or another,⁴¹ those opened between 1850 and 1860 will, with but one exception, still be in existence in 1861.⁴² Until about 1850, the Congregation's efforts were directed to adapting itself to the English milieu and even to working towards the return of the separate brethren to the Catholic Church. But from 1850 onwards, the apostolic activity of the Oblates is nearly exclusively directed to the very considerable groups of Irish immigrants in England and Scotland, people who were deprived of religious assistance. From 1856 onwards, the Congregation will be working also in Ireland itself.⁴³ They concentrated their activity in urban milieux, in the suburbs of the big cities.

Three foundations in England

Three foundations were made in England. At Liverpool, Bishop George Brown in 1850 entrusted to the Oblates the church of Holy Cross which was located near the waterfront of the great seaport. The missionaries set to work most zealously in this poor area, which up to then had been religiously neglected, among a population of some 10,000 Irish. They preached missions, concerned themselves with a huge school of 1500 students, and founded a newspaper, *The Catholic Citizen*.

⁴¹ The establishments abandoned were: Ashbourne in 1850, Manchester in 1851, and Penzance in 1852, each because of the financial difficulties incurred by Father Daly; Grace-Dieu in 1848 and Everingham in 1852 in order to take on larger apostolic fields; Maryvale in 1852, with the departure of the novitiate, and Aldenham in 1853.

⁴² Liverpool in 1850, Leeds in 1851, Sicklinghall in 1852, Glen Mary and Leith in 1860, and Galashiel in 1852. This last establishment was abandoned in 1860.

⁴³ Ireland's population was estimated to be 6,548,000 in 1841. It diminished to 2,145,000 in the next 20 years because of famine and emigration. *Nouvelle Encyclopédie du monde*, Montreal-Toronto-Paris, Éd. Leland Ltée, 1962, *Irlande*.

In July 1851, Father Cooke founded an establishment at Leeds.⁴⁴ The Oblates built a church there, involved themselves with schools and an orphanage, and served a number of chapels in the city.

At Sicklinghall, in 1852, the Congregation received as a gift a fine house and a church.⁴⁵ It transferred its novitiate and scholasticate, up to that time at Maryvale, to this location.

Three foundations in Ireland

Three foundations were also made in Ireland. The first was at Inchicore, a workers' quarter in Dublin. The provincial, Father Cooke, went to Dublin in December 1855 seeking to make a foundation there. In May he was invited to preach a mission in the church of St. Augustine. Archbishop Paul Cullen was present at the closing of the mission. After a brief conversation, the Archbishop made a point-blank offer to Father Cooke, namely, to choose a quarter on the outskirts of Dublin and set up a foundation of his Congregation there.⁴⁶ The following June some property was acquired at Inchicore, a temporary chapel was built in four days, and the Oblates' ministry began among this population of workers. A Catholic school was opened there and entrusted to Brother Laurent Biggan. They also opened a retreat house and, in the autumn of 1861, a college for day scholars opened its doors in Dublin. This latter was an Oblate residence attached to Inchicore.

⁴⁴ Leeds was an active centre of the Oxford Movement where, shortly before the Oblates' arrival, on April 2, seven Protestant ministers — George Crawley, who will become an Oblate in 1863, among them — made their profession of the Catholic Faith in the presence of Newman. Cf. Robert COOKE, O.M.I., *op. cit.*, vol. 2, pp. 173-174.

⁴⁵ This gift was made by Mr. Middleton, who even added a gift of revenue thereto.

⁴⁶ Cf. Robert COOKE, O.M.I., *op. cit.*, vol. 2, pp. 211-213; Émilien LAMIRANDE, O.M.I., "Les Oblats en Irlande depuis 100 ans", in *Études Oblates*, 15 (1956), pp. 283-286.

At the invitation of the civil authorities, the Oblates opened at Glencree in 1859 their second establishment in Ireland: a house of correction for Catholic boys. Oblate Brothers were largely in charge of it.

Finally, in 1860, a property was purchased at Hoeyfield near Dublin, as a location for the novitiate. The Oblates gave it the name of Glen Mary.



Robert Cooke (1821-1882)
Provincial of England: 1851-1867; 1873-1877.

Two foundations in Scotland

Two establishments were opened in Scotland. The first, in 1852, was at Galashiels — it was abandoned in 1860 —and included responsibility for a parish and serving several outposts where Irish immigrants needed the Church's ministry. The second, in 1860, was at Leith, the port of Edinburgh: this was to minister to a throng of Irish who had come to this seaport, looking for work.

Bishop de Mazenod's visit in 1857

The Founder made a second visit to his Oblates beyond the English Channel, both to encourage them and to see for himself the state of their works, especially that of Dublin to which they intended to transfer the novitiate and the scholasticate.⁴⁷ During this visit, which lasted from July 10 to August 10, 1857, he also paid special attention to the communities of Liverpool and Leeds. He wrote to Father Tempier on August 2nd: "In all, I have been very pleased with my journey up to now. The Congregation is quite well planted in England and in Ireland and is doing much good."⁴⁸

Apostolate among the poor

The Oblates' work in the British Isles is clearly with the ordinary people. The Oblates worked almost entirely with the Irish, either in Ireland itself — and here mainly in the working-class section of Inchicore at Dublin — or in the suburbs of the industrial cities of England and Scotland. In these latter places, they were serving immigrants who had come in search of work, who were often reduced to salaries that were a mere pittance, who were plunged into the midst of a Protestant population, deprived of religious assistance, with no places for cult and nearly completely without priests.⁴⁹

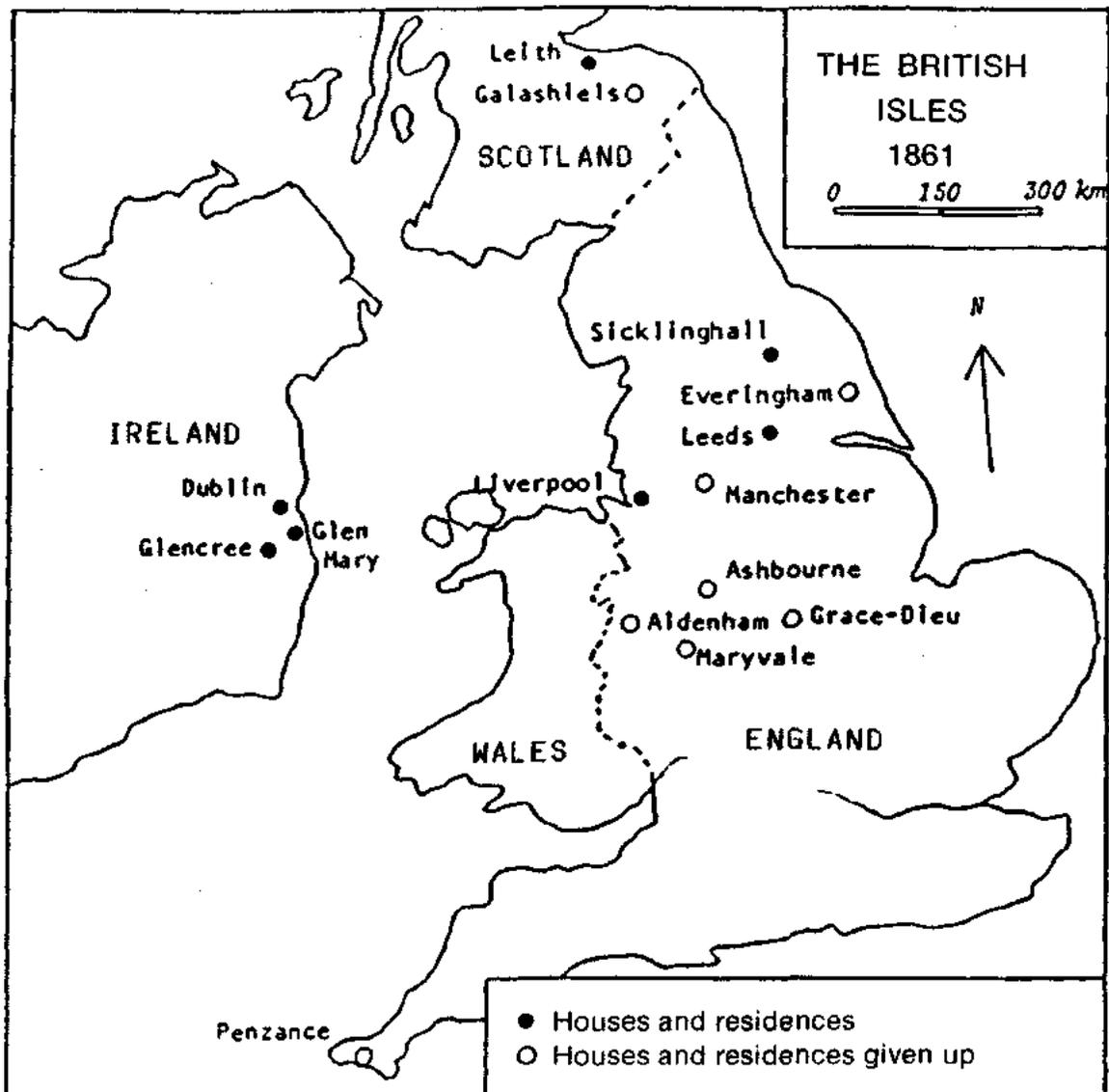
The Oblates' apostolic activity, which was quite successful, consisted especially in preaching, in directing parishes, all of which were in a poor or working-class milieu, in the work of reform schools wherein the Brothers were especially active. To some extent it also consisted in trying to bring our separated brethren back to the Catholic Church: this was the apostolate that the Founder originally had in mind for his Oblates in England.⁵⁰

⁴⁷ Cf. *Journal du Conseil général*, June 10, 1859.

⁴⁸ OBLATE WRITINGS, vol. III, p. 134.

⁴⁹ Cf. Jean LEFLON, *op. cit.*, vol. 4, p. 280.

⁵⁰ Cf. "The religious situation in mid-19th century England", Documentary Note 16, p. 311.



Personnel, houses

The Congregation is thus firmly implanted in the British Isles. Even though its first establishments were in a specifically English area, as a matter of fact, it took root in an Irish milieu. Its recruitment was rather abundant during the period from 1842 to 1861: besides a few Englishmen, 154 Irishmen entered the Congregation, 91 of whom made their oblation.⁵¹ A certain number of them were even sent to foreign countries.⁵²

⁵¹ OBLATE WRITINGS, vol. III, p. xxii.

⁵² The novitiate and scholasticate of England received some French candidates who were destined for English-speaking missions.

The Oblate establishments in the British Isles were given the status of a religious province in 1851. Father Casimir was named the first provincial and was replaced, several months later, by an Irish Oblate, Father Robert Cooke. At the end of 1861, the province counted seven houses and one residence,⁵³ and had a personnel of 60 Oblates.

⁵³ In England: Liverpool, Leeds, Sicklinghall; in Scotland: Leith; in Ireland: Inchicore, Glen Mary, Glencree and the residence of the college of the Immaculate Conception at Dublin, attached to the house of Inchicore. Cf. "Rapport adressé par le R. P. Cooke, provincial d'Angleterre at T.R.P. Supérieur général" in *Missions*, 1 (1862), p. 6.

CHAPTER 7

Implantation in America – 1841-1861

I. In Eastern Canada: – The appeal of Bishop Bourget – Foundation – First activities, Longueuil, Montreal – Bytown, Indian missions, lumber camps – Diocese of Bytown – In the diocese of Quebec, Indian missions, St-Alexis, Quebec – Missions and foundations in the United States – Province, personnel. **II. In the Canadian West and North:** – Missionaries sent – Among the Saulteaux – Among the Montagnais and the Cree, in the Far North – In the West – Results of these first labours – The Vicariate in 1861. **III. In Oregon and in British Columbia:** – Foundation – In Oregon – In British Columbia – The Mission in 1861. **IV. In Texas:** – Foundation at Brownsville – The foundation taken up again – Galveston, Brownsville, the ranchos, in Mexico – Trials, personnel.

The implantation of the Congregation in America opened a vast attractive field of action to the sons of Bishop de Mazenod. In the span of six years, from 1841 to 1847, the Oblates established stations from the Atlantic to the Pacific. They came to assist dispersed groups of Catholics who were religiously neglected and to inaugurate their ministry to the Indians.

I – *In Eastern Canada*¹

The appeal of Bishop Bourget

On May 3, 1841, Bishop Ignace Bourget of Montreal, then 41 years of age and full of energy, an enterprising man,

¹ Cf. "Canada in 1841", Documentary Note 17, p. 312.

burning with zeal for the good of his diocese and even for the entire Church in Canada, made a trip to Europe seeking religious help for his diocese. He passed through Marseilles, and on Sunday, June 20th, he made the "unexpected discovery"² of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate.

Bishop Bourget was kindly and cordially received by Bishop de Mazenod. He explained to the latter his urgent need for missionaries, and, in particular, his wish for at least four Oblates to evangelize the faithful and even the Indians.³ The Bishop of Marseilles was fascinated by this offer; nevertheless, he felt he could not commit his sons to a mission that was so far away and so demanding in dedication without consulting them first.⁴

Although the consultation results had not yet reached him, he nonetheless submitted this offer to the local superiors of the nearest houses and to the Oblates of the city of Marseilles. All showed themselves favorable to the proposal and assured him that such would also be the opinion of their confreres. Relying on this view, and so as not to let "the opportunity of forming under such auspices so interesting an establishment slip away",⁵ Bishop de Mazenod hastened to give Bishop Bourget a favorable reply.

² Cf. "Relation du voyage de l'évêque de Montréal en Europe", in *Registre des lettres*, Montréal, Archevêché, vol. 9, pp. 399-400.

³ Cf. *Diary of Bishop de Mazenod*, July 15-16, 1841, quoted by Gaston CARRIÈRE, O.M.I., *Histoire documentaire de la Congrégation des Missionnaires Oblats de Marie Immaculée dans l'Est du Canada*, vol. 1, p. 79.

⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 79. The response from the communities and the Oblates were all strongly in the affirmative and apostolic in character. The Founder was proud of this. Cf. his *Diary*, July 24, 1841, in Toussaint RAMBERT, O.M.I., *Vie de Mgr Charles-Joseph-Eugène de Mazenod*, vol. 2, pp. 95-96.

⁵ *Diary of Bishop de Mazenod*, July 16, 1841, quoted in *Études Oblates*, 1 (1942), p. 105. On October 9, 1841, Bishop de Mazenod wrote to the superior, Father Honorat: "Montreal is perhaps only the gateway leading the family to the conquest of souls in several countries." Cf. *OBLATE WRITINGS*, vol. I, p. 16.



Jean-Baptiste Honorat (1799-1862)
First superior of the Oblates in Canada.

Foundation

The founder chose one of the first volunteers, Father Jean-Baptiste Honorat, to be the superior of the mission. To him he associated Fathers Adrien Telmon, Jean Baudrand, Lucien Lagier and Brothers Basile Fastray and Louis Roux. The average age of the missionary team was 32.5 years, and it was burning with zeal and dedication.

The Oblates left Marseilles on September 30th and arrived on December 2nd at the bishopric in Montreal. Bishop Bourget gave them a happy and warm reception. The following December 7th, they left the Bishop's residence to take possession on the morrow — the feast-day of their Patroness — of the parish of St-Hilaire on the Richelieu which was entrusted to them. Attached to this parish was the

responsibility for a place of pilgrimage located nearby, on Mount Beloeil, dedicated to the Cross.⁶

Shortly after the little community had settled in, it received some Canadian recruits and, the year following, other Oblates from France came to increase their number. Its apostolic zeal was immediately in demand, and almost simultaneously they were asked for different services in several areas.

First Activities, Longueuil, Montreal

To begin with, there was the diocese of Montreal. Already in December 1841, the Oblates undertook to preach three missions, one at St-Hilaire itself, another at Beloeil and the other at St-Vincent-de-Paul. They adopted, with successful results, the form of missions they had been using in France. On January 30, 1843, Bishop Bourget wrote to Bishop de Mazenod: "In a period of 13 months, your dear Oblates have given 14 missions. . . . At the end of each of these missions we can scarcely count 3 or 4 persons who did not go to confession."⁷ To prolong the fruits of the mission, the Oblates introduced in most of the parishes they had evangelized a Society for Temperance and the Congregation of the Daughters of Mary Immaculate.⁸ This was the beginning of an intense preaching ministry in the diocese: missions, retreats, temperance crusades, etc.

⁶ A monumental cross and, at its foot, a chapel dedicated to the Holy Sepulchre had been set up under the care of Bishop Charles de Forbin-Janson, who had been in Canada on a preaching tour in 1840-1841. They had been solemnly blessed on October 6, 1841. Both have disappeared: the cross was torn down by the wind on October 13, 1846, and the chapel burned down on October 23, 1877.

⁷ Bishop Bourget to Bishop de Mazenod, January 30, 1843. Montreal, Archbishop's residence.

⁸ Father Telmon introduced in this country the Congregation of the Daughters of Mary Immaculate. This Congregation was first of all definitively established at Beloeil on May 26, 1842. Cf. Gaston CARRIÈRE, *op. cit.*, vol. 1, pp. 114-115, note 37. Also Rhéal LAURIN, O.M.I., "Aux origines de la Congrégation des Enfants de Marie au Canada", in *Rapport 1953-1954 de la Société Canadienne d'Histoire de l'Église Catholique*, pp. 111-127.

From the time of their arrival in the land, the Oblates began giving itinerant missions to serve Canadian and Irish Catholics scattered over a vast region dominated by Protestants and deprived of religious assistance: these areas were called the townships or cantons of the East. Father Lucien Lagier, accompanied by a priest of the area, gave the first mission here on January 24, 1842. The Oblates were responsible for these missions from 1843 to 1845.⁹

To respond to an urgent need for school teachers, Brother Roux taught at St-Hilaire, and then at Longueuil; and Father Telmon brought together in this latter place some ladies who, under the direction of Eulalie Durocher, the future Mother Marie-Rose, dedicated themselves to teaching. This was the beginning of a flourishing Canadian religious congregation, the Sisters of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary.¹⁰

St-Hilaire was rather far removed from Montreal and difficult to reach. That is why the Oblates did not hesitate in August 1842, to proceed to Longueuil, just opposite Montreal, where a benefactor, Mr. Olivier Berthelet, had given them a house.¹¹ A few years later, in 1848, Bishop Bourget

⁹ These eastern townships or cantons had four centres from which the missionaries worked: Granby, Standstead, Dunham and Stanbridge. Several stations were attached to each of these centres. Father Baudrand was responsible for these missions. Cf. Gaston CARRIÈRE, O.M.I., *op. cit.*, vol. 1, pp. 151-164.

¹⁰ The original project of Fathers Honorat and Telmon, supported by Bishop Bourget, had been to bring religious of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary from Marseilles. Since it was impossible to have these religious come, Bishop de Mazenod wrote to Bishop Bourget on August 10, 1843: "If you have people who are capable, virtuous and of goodwill, what is to prevent them from banding together and beginning the work themselves?" (Montreal, Archbishop's residence. OBLATE WRITINGS, vol. 1, p. 53). This advice was followed. The future Mother Marie-Rose, Eulalie Durocher, and her first companions, made their novitiate under the direction of Father Jean-François Allard, O.M.I., and made their religious profession on December 8, 1844. On the same occasion, the letters constituting the new religious congregation, given by Bishop Bourget, were officially promulgated.

¹¹ Father Lagier remained in charge of the parish of St-Hilaire until May 22, 1843.

established them in a poor area of Montreal, the suburb of Ste-Marie, where they opened a public chapel dedicated to Saint Peter the Apostle. This house of St-Pierre-Apôtre became a central house for the Oblates in Eastern Canada. In 1855, Bishop Bourget also entrusted the Iroquois mission of Caughnawaga, near Montreal, to the Oblates.

Bytown, Indian missions, lumber camps

The Bishop of Montreal easily enlisted Bishop de Mazenod's consent to an establishment of Oblates in the budding city of Bytown, today Ottawa, located in the diocese of Kingston but bordering on that of Montreal. It too was destined to become the centre of a vast apostolate.

Father Telmon arrived at Bytown at the end of January 1844 and thus became responsible for a population of several thousand French and Irish Catholics living in the city and environs.¹² Soon other Oblates came to join him and also some Grey Nuns of Montreal who, responding to his appeal, in 1845 founded at Bytown, under the direction of Sister Élizabéth Bruyère, the congregation of the Grey Nuns of the Cross, dedicated to works of charity and education.

In the month of May, 1844, Bishop Bourget gave young Father Nicolas Laverlochère jurisdiction for missions to the Indians¹³ scattered from Bytown to Temiscaming and Abitibi. The Abbé Moreau accompanied him to initiate him into this ministry. Every year he was to resume, with some fellow Oblates, his long and dangerous expeditions to these missions. From 1847 onwards, he went even as far as Moose Factory, to James Bay, and, from 1848 onwards, he went to Fort Albany. In 1849, an establishment for the missionaries was opened at Maniwaki to serve the Indians of the North and of

¹² In March 1844, Father Damase Dandurand came to assist Father Telmon and in September 1845 Father Michael Molloy arrived. The latter remained attached to the parish until 1890. The church, dedicated to the Immaculate Conception, became a cathedral in 1847.

¹³ Cf. "The Indian missions in Canada", Documentary Note 18, p. 313.



*Bishop Joseph-Eugène-Bruno Guigues, O.M.I. (1805-1874)
Superior of the Oblates in America (1844-1851) and Bishop of Ottawa.*

Saint-Maurice as well as the Indians and Whites in the surrounding areas.

In the beginning of 1845, Fathers Eusèbe Durocher and Alexandre-Auguste Brunet began the ministry to the lumber camps, that is to say, itinerant missions addressed to many groups of men who had come from the parishes of the south to work in the forest industry. They began in the lumber camps of the Gatineau, and then of the Ottawa River. They and their fellow Oblates, the legendary Father Louis Reboul among them, continued this apostolate in the years that followed.

Diocese of Bytown

In 1847, Bytown became the seat of a new diocese of which the first pastor was none other than the superior of the Oblates in America, Father Eugène-Bruno Guigues. He had

been chosen by the Bishops of Canada.¹⁴ In 1848 the new Bishop asked the Oblates to found the college of Bytown, and then to take on the direction of his major seminary. In an agreement¹⁵ made with Bishop de Mazenod in 1856, he entrusted these works to the Oblates permanently; included was the service of the church of St. Joseph and of the cathedral. Oblate residences were opened in the area: at South Gloucester from 1848 to 1855, and at Orignal from 1849 to 1855 to provide for the spiritual care of these parishes and the numerous stations being visited by the Oblates.

In the diocese of Quebec, Indian missions, St-Alexis, Quebec

The Oblates had scarcely been established at Bytown when Archbishop Joseph Signay of Quebec requested them for his diocese in April 1844. They were to serve the Indian missions of St-Maurice, the Saguenay and the North Shore of the St. Lawrence River. Father Honorat joyfully accepted the prelate's request.¹⁶

Without delay, two young Oblates who had been ordained to the priesthood on May 5th, set out from Longueuil on their way to these missions. The first, Father Pierre Fisette, left on May 8th for the Montagnais missions on the North Shore; the second, Father Médard Bourassa, left on June 1st for the Têtes-de-Boule or Attikamagen Indian missions of the St-Maurice. For this first missionary expedition, the two were accompanied by Fathers François Boucher and Pierre-Anselme Maurault respectively.

¹⁴ Cf. Nicolas KOWALSKY, O.M.I., "L'érection du diocèse de Bytown selon les documents des archives de la Propagande", in *Études Oblates*, 11 (1952), pp. 179-187.

¹⁵ This agreement made the Oblates the owners of the College founded in 1848 and of the church of St. Joseph which was under construction. It obliged the Oblates to assume in perpetuity the obligations inherent in these works, the direction of the diocesan major seminary and the service of the cathedral. The text of this agreement is reprinted in *Études Oblates*, 15 (1956), pp. 360-364.

¹⁶ Cf. Honorat to Bishop de Mazenod, May 10, 1844.

By decree of October 4, 1844, the Archbishop of Quebec officially entrusted to the Oblates the Indian missions of his diocese, an apostolate for which he had already requested them. He also gave them the responsibility of serving the Whites along the Saguenay and the North Shore. Thus a whole empire was open to Oblate zeal.

The residence of St-Alexis-de-la-Grande-Baie, opened on October 15th of the same year on the Saguenay, became the missionaries' key base in the diocese. Father Honorat, the superior, busied himself with untiring zeal in serving the Whites of the Saguenay, striving even to protect these colonists who were too often the victims of the lumber bosses.¹⁷ Intrepid apostles like Flavien Durocher, Charles Arnaud, Louis Babel and others looked after the Indian missions and ministered to the Whites, colonists and men of the lumber camps, making tiresome and never-ending trips along the Saguenay and the North Shore, from Tadoussac to Blanc-Sablon. Three times, in 1853, 1855 and 1858, Father Arnaud tried to reach the tribe of the Naskapis in the interior of Labrador, for they had been asking for a missionary for a long time. Father Bourassa and other missionaries of the Upper Saint-Maurice visited the Indians of Weymontaching and, farther to the north, those of Kikendatch, Megiscane and Waswanipi.

To be closer to their spiritual flock, the missionaries of the North Shore in 1851 opened a residence at Escoumins.

In 1853 the Archbishop of Quebec gave the Oblates the important parochial ministry of Saint-Sauveur in Quebec

¹⁷ Father Honorat built the first churches for the people of Chicoutimi and of St-Alphonse. He organized the parish of Notre-Dame de Laterrière, where he built a flour-mill and a saw-mill. These still exist and have been declared historical monuments under the name of *Moulin Honorat*. In his devotedness, he concerned himself with colonists who had no support, raised the courage of many, acted as judge in many cases, launched and directed development projects, and opposed certain encroachments of colonists rights by the powerful Companies. Cf. Victor TREMBLAY, "Les Oblats au Saguenay", in *Études Oblates*, 3 (1944), p. 13.

itself. The residence of St-Alexis was transferred here and the ministry to the colonists along the Saguenay was discontinued: only serving the Indians in their spiritual needs there was retained.

Missions and foundations in the United States

From Longueuil, then from St-Pierre-Apôtre in Montreal, the Oblates preached a number of retreats and missions to Canadians who had emigrated to the United States and were dispersed among a Protestant population. The first was given at Corbeau (Cooperville) already in 1842, from October 10th to November 8th, for the benefit of about 500 families in that area. It was quite successful, and so were those that followed.

The urgent religious need of emigrants from Canada led the Oblates of Canada, at the request of the bishops, to take on the responsibility for French-speaking parishes at Plattsburgh in 1853, and at Burlington from 1854 to 1856. They also served several stations and outposts dependent on these parishes. In 1851 they accepted the English-speaking parish of Holy Angels in Buffalo, and in 1861 the French-speaking parish St-Pierre (today Our Lady of Lourdes) in the same city. At the great insistence of the Bishop of Texas, the Oblates of Canada in 1849 began to do ministry in the city of Brownsville which, till then, was without all religious care.

Finally, the zeal of the Oblates of Canada was also requested for works of education, but their presence in some of these was passing at best: the major seminary of Pittsburg in 1848-1849, of Buffalo from 1851 to 1857, a college at Buffalo from 1851 to 1855, and another at Detroit in 1853. In fact, the Oblates never did assume effective charge of the latter.¹⁸

¹⁸ Cf. Gaston CARRIÈRE, O.M.I., *op. cit.*, vol. 4, pp. 135-245. Also cf. "The needs of the Church in America in the 19th century", Documentary Note 19, p. 313.

Province, personnel

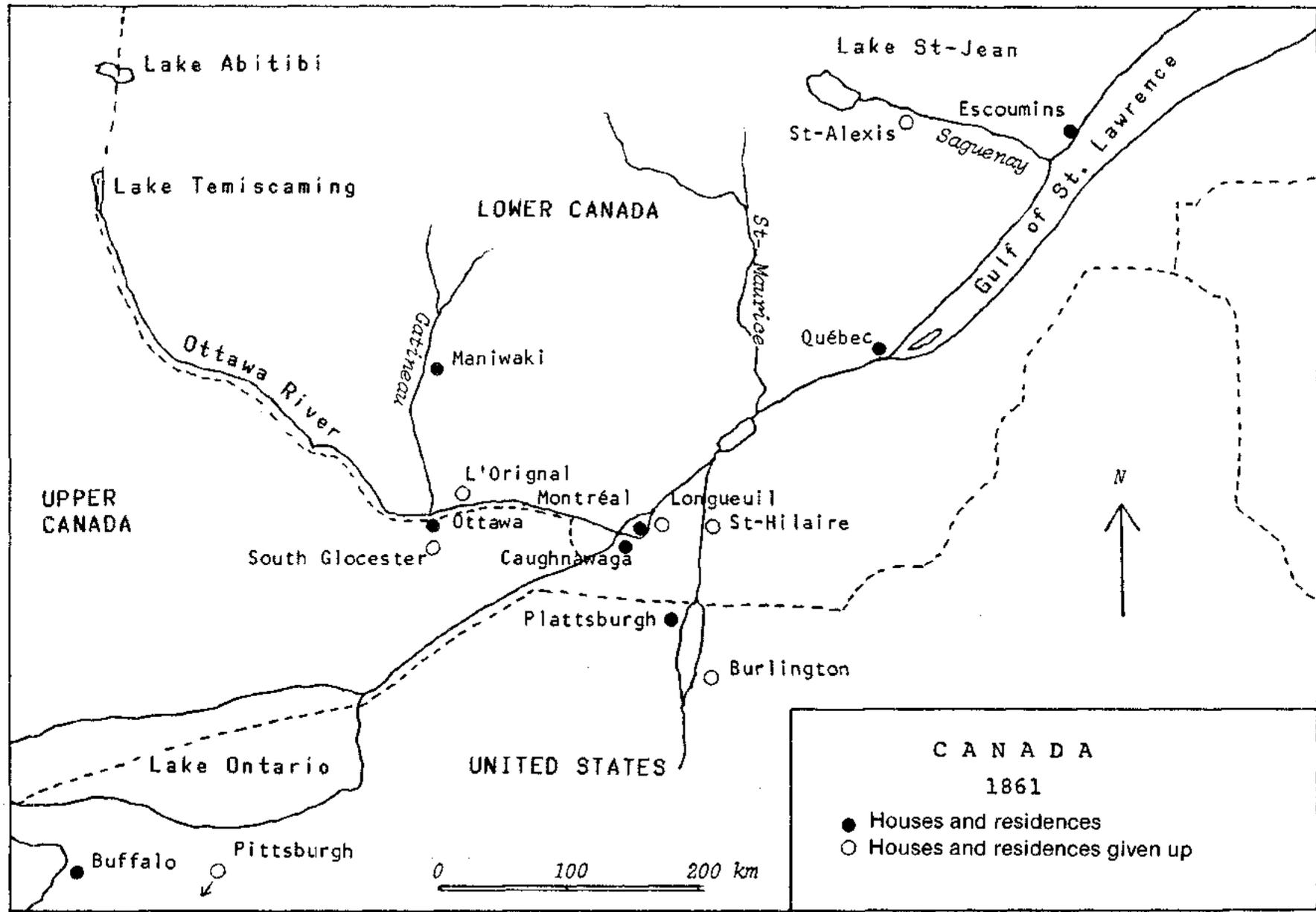
By 1861, therefore, the Congregation was firmly implanted in Canada. It had been faithful to preaching parish missions and retreats; it had devoted itself generously in serving scattered groups who were without religious care; with love and daring it dedicated itself, at the price of heroic sacrifices, to the work of the Indian missions; it had extended its zeal to serving parishes whose people were badly off in temporal and religious aspects; it had accepted works of education, colleges and major seminaries. Everywhere the Oblates remained close to the people and to the clergy, and they were everywhere loved and respected.

The Congregation in Canada was governed by Father Honorat until the arrival on August 8, 1844, of Father Guigues. The latter had been appointed permanent Visitor and was endowed with the broadest powers enabling him to take decisions in the whole of America. A religious province was established in Canada in the General Council of April 24, 1851 and, on the following September 12th, after he had made a general visitation of the houses in Canada, Father Tempier installed Father Jacques Santoni as provincial superior.

Recruitment in Canada did not meet the Founder's expectations. He complained a number of times that a people as Catholic as that of Canada was not furnishing more vocations for the Congregation. In fact, from 1841 to 1861, there were only about 60 entries to the novitiate and some 26 oblations.

At the end of 1861, the Province's personnel consisted of 53 Oblates, that is, 1 Bishop, 43 Fathers, 8 Brothers and 1 scholastic. These were resident in 7 houses and 2 residences.¹⁹

¹⁹ The houses were: St-Pierre-Apôtre, the Bishopric of Ottawa, the College of Ottawa, Maniwaki, St-Sauveur of Quebec, Plattsburgh, Buffalo; the residences: Escoumins and Caughnawaga.



II - In the Canadian West and North

Missionaries sent

Bishop Norbert Provencher, Vicar Apostolic of Hudson Bay and James Bay, with the support of Bishop Bourget,²⁰ requested help from the Oblates. Bishop Provencher had only 4 or 5 priests for a territory which extended from the United States to the Arctic Ocean and from James Bay to the Pacific. His request was favorably received in the General Council of December 16, 1844, which decided to send him two Oblates the following spring. Father Guigues was given the responsibility of carrying out this decision.²¹

The grave and distinguished Father Pierre Aubert and the amiable and joyful Brother Alexandre Taché, still a sub-deacon, set out from Lachine near Montreal on June 25, 1845, on board a birch-bark canoe paddled by six men, for a trip of 1800 miles by way of rivers and lakes, interrupted by 144 portages and enhanced with some 50 rapids to be run. They were accompanied by two Grey Nuns from Montreal who were going to join their fellow Sisters who had been sent to the Red River the year before. The travellers arrived at St. Boniface on August 25th and were gladly received by the colourful and sympathetic prelate, Bishop Provencher.

²⁰ Cf. Bishop Bourget to Bishop de Mazenod, October 10, 1844. After he had detailed Bishop Provencher's need, Bishop Bourget added: "Like St. Paul's, your heart cannot resist this urgent invitation." Montreal, Archbishop's residence, *registre des lettres*.

²¹ Father Guigues, who had at first been enthusiastic in regard to this project, now became quite afraid of it. He was taking into account the great distance that would separate these Oblates from the rest, the difficulties of communication, the isolation, and all kinds of dangers the missionaries would encounter. On February 14, 1845, he wrote to the Founder: "I consider this foundation imprudent and consequently contrary to God's will." (Quoted by Théophile ORTOLAN, O.M.I., *Les Oblats de Marie Immaculée*, vol. 2, p. 151). The Founder replied rather strongly on March 24th: the carrying out of this mission "was not to suffer any sort of delay" (*Ibidem*, p. 151). Father Guigues had no other choice but to comply.

The two Oblates²² spent the winter at the bishopric at St. Boniface, dividing their time between ministry to the Metis people and studying Indian languages.

Among the Saulteaux

The first missionary activities were simultaneously carried out in two different regions.

Father Aubert put forth his efforts among the Saulteaux Indians in the region of St. Boniface. In 1846 and 1847 he visited those of Wabassimong, a mission founded in 1838 by the Abbé Georges-Antoine Belcourt and located 50 kilometers east of St. Boniface. From there, he also went to La Pluie Lake. In 1847, Father François-Xavier Bermond, who had come to St. Boniface the year before, contacted the Indians of the same tribe at Baie-aux-Canards, founded in 1841 by the Abbé Jean-Baptiste Thibault some 300 kilometers to the north of St. Boniface, on the shores of Lake Winnipegosis. The Gospel message brought by these two apostles encountered rejection from these Indians.

Faced with this setback and the difficult conditions of the apostolate in these immense and deserted territories, one or the other influential missionary painted the missions of the Canadian West in such unfavorable colours to the Founder that the latter decided to recall all his missionaries. The appointment of Father Taché to Coadjutor to Bishop Provencher in 1850 made him reverse this decision and saved the missions of the West.²³

²² Alexandre Taché was ordained deacon on August 31st, one week after his arrival; on the following October 12th, he was ordained priest. He was then 22 years old.

²³ Cf. letters of Bishop de Mazenod to Bishop Bourget, April 16, 1850; (Montreal, Archbishop's residence. OBLATE WRITINGS, vol. 1, pp. 239-242) and to Father Guigues, October 8, 1852 (Alfred YENVEUX, O.M.I., *Les Saintes Règles*, vol. 1, suppl. 125, manuscript, General Archives, Rome. OBLATE WRITINGS, vol. 2, pp. 44-45). Bishop Provencher's letter consulting the Founder remained at Quebec through a misunderstanding. Bishop de

After these beginnings, the Oblates at St. Boniface served the cathedral parish, and the Metis and Whites in the surrounding parishes. They looked after the College of St. Boniface, and accompanied the buffalo hunters on their expeditions to the prairies: these latter usually lasted several weeks.

Among the Montagnais and the Cree, in the Far North

While Father Aubert was contacting the Sauteaux, Father Taché and Father Louis-François Laflèche travelled westward some 1500 kilometers and in 1846 founded at Ile-a-la-Crosse a mission for the Montagnais and the Cree. This mission flourished from the very beginning. From this post, where he was a missionary until 1851, Father Taché in 1847 founded the mission at Cariboo Lake some 500 kilometers to the north; and then he founded that of the Nativity at Fort Chipewyan 600 kilometers to the west. From 1853 onwards, this latter mission had attached to it the mission of Fond-du-Lac, founded by Father Henri Grollier.

Father Henri Faraud arrived at the mission of the Nativity in 1849, visited the Peace River region, went to Fort Vermilion and then all the way to Fort Dunvegan. In 1856 he established the mission of Fort Resolution to the south of Greater Slave Lake. From this mission, Father Grollier, who arrived there in 1859, and Father Zéphirin Gascon, who arrived in 1860 and remained there for nearly 20 years, undertook the founding of a series of missions which extended beyond the Arctic Circle.

In 1859 Father Gascon founded the mission of Fort Liard and in 1862 that of Fort Providence, the location of

Mazenod could say to the new bishop who presented himself to him for ordination: "It is true that your appointment took place without my knowing it, but it seems completely providential to me and it saves the missions in which you have worked so much." Bishop Alexandre Taché, O.M.I., *Vingt années de Missions dans le Nord-Ouest de l'Amérique*, p. 42. Cf. Gaston CARRIÈRE, O.M.I., "Mgr Provencher à la recherche d'un coadjuteur", in *Rapport de la Société canadienne d'Histoire de l'Église catholique*, 37 (1970), pp. 71-93.



Archbishop Alexandre Taché, O.M.I. (1823-1894)
Archbishop of St. Boniface.

which had been visited and approved by Bishop Grandin in 1860. Father Grollier opened four stations attached to Fort Resolution: Grande Ile and Fort Simpson in 1858, Fort Rae in 1860, and Fort Halkett in 1861. In 1859 he founded the mission of Good Hope near the Arctic Circle and attached two stations to it: Fort Norman, opened the same year, and Fort MacPherson in 1860. The latter was situated in the Mackenzie delta, at the boundary of the Eskimo territory. Father Grollier, competing with the Protestant minister, wanted to be the first to occupy posts that were strategic for evangelizing the Indian tribes of the Mackenzie basin.

In the West

The immense territory south of the Far North, an area formed by the Peace River basin, Lesser Slave Lake and the North Saskatchewan River was also partially the concern of the Oblate missionaries. The central mission of this territory was situated at Lac-Ste-Anne and had been founded by secular priests in 1843. This mission received Fathers Albert



Albert Lacombe (1827-1916)

A missionary who became a legend among the Indians and Metis.

Lacombe²⁴ in 1852 and René Rémas in 1853. In 1853 the latter became the first resident missionary at Lac-la-Biche. These two missionaries and those who joined them in the following years, Fathers Jean Tissot, Augustin Maisonneuve and others, served outposts of Whites, Indians and Metis along the Saskatchewan, Athabaska and Peace Rivers. Like the missionaries of the Red River colony, they regularly accompanied the buffalo hunters to their camps in the midst of the great prairies.

Results of these first labours

Vast distances, isolation, cold and often scant means of subsistence was the lot of these missionaries dispersed over

²⁴ Father Albert Lacombe arrived in the Canadian West immediately after his ordination to the priesthood in 1849, returned to eastern Canada in 1851-1852, and then offered his services to Archbishop Taché. He began his novitiate at Lac-Ste-Anne in 1855 and made his perpetual profession on September 28, 1856.

these immense territories of the West and the North. "Without the assistance of the Hudson Bay Company, at times given somewhat grudgingly, their work would have been absolutely impossible."²⁵ Not only did this Company open trading-posts where the Indians came together and organize routes of transport across this immense country, but its stores at these posts assured necessary provisions to the missionaries.

Everywhere the missionaries learned the Indian languages and spoke it, and even published works of piety in these tongues. The missionaries in their ministry concerned themselves with Indians, Whites, and Metis. The Grey Nuns of Montreal, who were established in St. Boniface since 1844, at Lac-Ste-Anne since 1859 and at Ile-a-la-Crosse since 1860, were a priceless help to their missions.

"The most salient fact of this missionary epic is not the number of conversions, but rather the occupation, in less than 15 years, of all the strategic points of a country as large as a continent. This apostolic marvel was accomplished by a mere handful of missionaries who had available but very primitive human means and very limited resources."²⁶

Around the year 1861, the Catholics in the diocese of St. Boniface are estimated as numbering 20,000. The total population numbered 50,000 Indians, 15,000 Metis (nearly all of them Catholic), 4000 Eskimos and 4000 Whites.²⁷

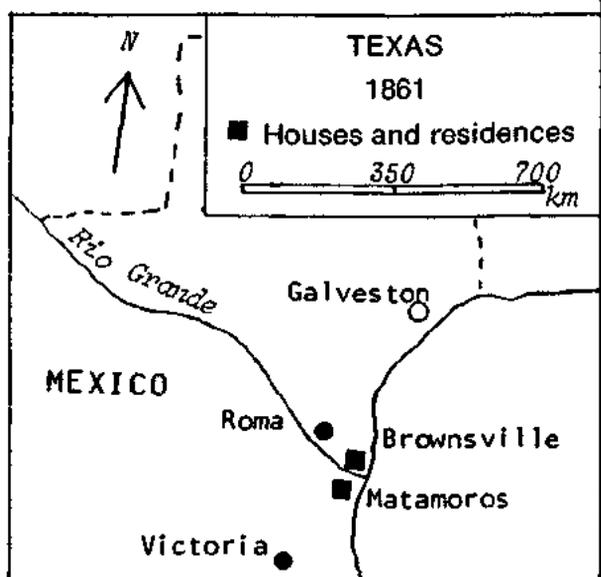
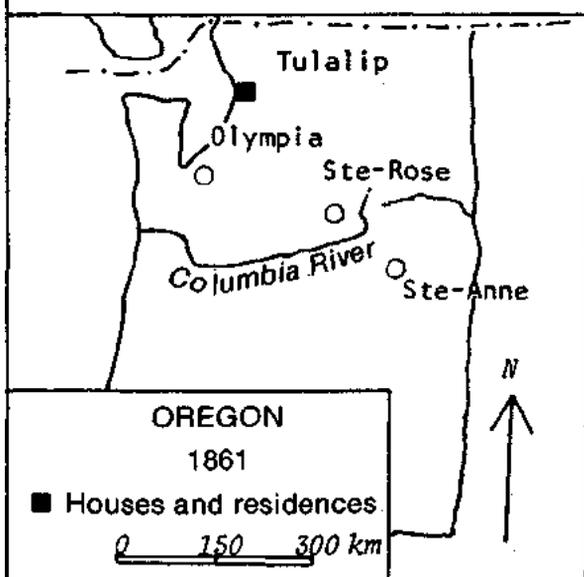
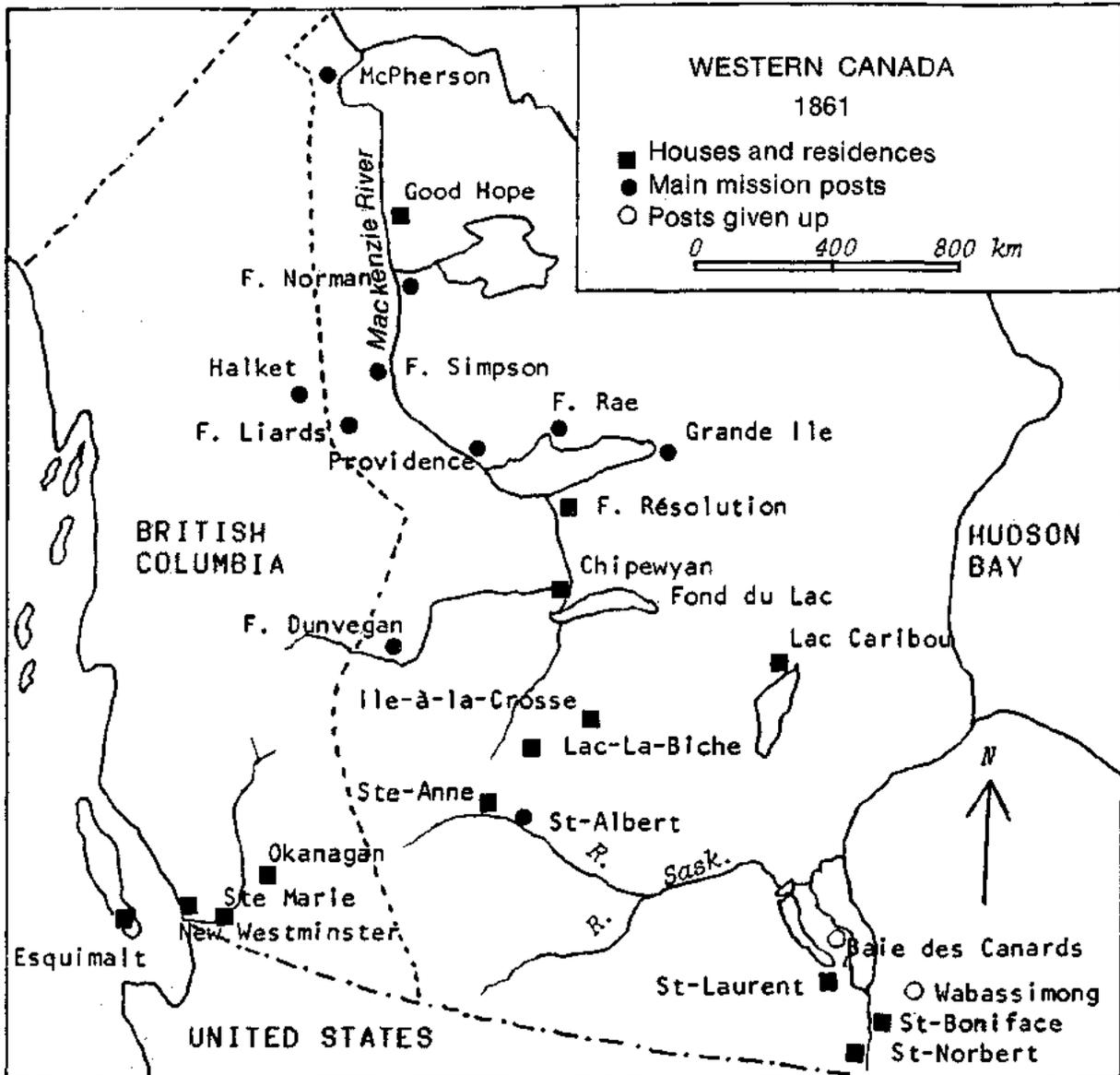
The Vicariate in 1861

Father Taché, who at 27 years of age had been named Coadjutor to Bishop Provencher in 1850, became three years later the residential bishop of St. Boniface. In 1857 he

²⁵ Cf. Gaston CARRIÈRE, O.M.I., *La réponse des Oblats de l'Ouest canadien à la perception de la "mission" chez Mgr. de Mazenod*, manuscript, p. 6.

²⁶ Joseph-Étienne CHAMPAGNE, O.M.I., *Les missions catholiques dans l'Ouest canadien*, p. 98.

²⁷ *Ibidem*, pp. 131, 133.



received a Coadjutor in the person of Father Vital Grandin who, established at Ile-a-la-Crosse, concerned himself with the missions of the West and the Far North.²⁸

At the end of 1861, the Vicariate of St. Boniface²⁹ consisted of 30 Oblates, that is, 2 Bishops, 20 Fathers, and 8 Brothers; 8 parishes or missions in the Red River colony itself,³⁰ and, outside the colony: 7 missions with resident missionaries³¹ and two in the process of being established, namely, Fort Providence and St. Albert.

III - *In Oregon and in British Columbia*

Foundation

Two requests for missionaries for Oregon were simultaneously addressed to the Oblates. The first was addressed to Bishop de Mazenod himself by Archbishop Norbert Blanchet of Oregon City³² in 1845 and 1846. The second was addressed

²⁸ Cf. Gaston CARRIÈRE, O.M.I., "L'élévation du père Vital Grandin à l'épiscopat", in *Études Oblates*, 32 (1973), pp. 100-134.

²⁹ The superiors of the Oblates in the West: Pierre Aubert (1845-1850), François-Xavier Bermond (1850-1851), Archbishop Alexandre Taché (1851-1887).

³⁰ The parishes and missions of the Red River colony: St. Boniface, St. Norbert, St. Laurent, St-François-Xavier, St. Charles, Ste-Anne-des Chesnes, St. Vital, and St-Alexandre. The first three had resident priests.

³¹ The missions outside the Red River colony: Lac-Ste-Anne, Ile-a-la-Crosse, Cariboo Lake, Lac-la-Biche, the Nativity at Lake Athabasca, Fort Resolution and Good Hope.

After the arrival of the Oblates in the West, the following priests remained in the diocese of St. Boniface: The Abbés Georges-Antoine Belcourt until 1859, Joseph Bourassa and Louis-François Laflèche until 1856, and Jean-Baptiste Thibault until 1872. Cf. Alexandre TACHÉ, O.M.I., *Vingt années de missions dans le Nord-Ouest de l'Amérique*, p. 4. Also cf. Lionel DORGE, "Thibault, Jean-Baptist", in *Dictionnaire biographique du Canada*, vol. X, p. 74. Before 1845, 16 missions or outposts had been opened by the secular clergy. Cf. Dom BENOIT, *Vie de Mgr Taché*, the map at the end of the first volume.

³² On December 1, 1843, the territory of Oregon was made into an apostolic vicariate and entrusted to Father Norbert Blanchet who was appointed bishop. On July 24, 1846, Bishop Blanchet managed to have his immense terri-

to Father Bruno Guigues, the superior of the Oblates in America and residing in Montreal, by Bishop Magloire Blanchet, the brother of the former, who had been recently named bishop of the new diocese of Walla Walla in Oregon.

Although Bishop de Mazenod did not comply with Archbishop Blanchet's request, in order to honor the commitment made by his representative in America to send missionaries to the bishop of Walla Walla, he did accept to send missionaries to Oregon. In 1847, Oregon was a vast territory. It embraced the area presently covered by the states of Oregon and Washington and the ecclesiastical territory of Oregon reached right into British Columbia.

The following were chosen for this mission: Father Pascal Ricard, superior, the scholastics Félix Pandosy, Eugène-Casimir Chirouse and Georges Blanchet³³ and Brother Célestin Verney. They set sail from Le Havre on February 4, 1847 and only arrived at their destination in Walla Walla the following September 5th.

In Oregon

The newcomers were first given the mission to the Yakimas Indians north of the Columbia and Snake Rivers. That same autumn they opened here a mission dedicated to St. Rose; the next year they established two out-stations, one

tory divided into three dioceses: the archdiocese of Oregon City of which he remained the residential bishop, the diocese of Walla Walla of which his brother Magloire became bishop, and Vancouver Island and British Columbia confided to the Abbé Modest Demers who was made its bishop. Fathers Norbert Blanchet and Demers were the first two Canadian missionaries sent to Oregon, in 1838, by Bishop Provencher on whom the territory of Oregon depended. Cf. Émilien LAMIRANDE, O.M.I., "L'implantation de l'Église catholique en Colombie Britannique 1838-1848", in *Revue de L'Université d'Ottawa*, 1958, pp. 213-225; 323-363; 453-489.

³³ The scholastics Chirouse and Pandosy were ordained priests when they were already in their missions: the first on January 2, 1848, and the second on April 21st following. The scholastic Blanchet wanted to remain a scholastic and was ordained to the priesthood only on November 1, 1872.

dedicated to the Immaculate Conception and the other to St. Joseph. In 1851 a station opened by Father Chirouse was dedicated to the Holy Cross. In 1848 Father Ricard installed the central Oblate house, named St. Joseph, in the diocese of Oregon City, near the Indians of Puget Sound, about one kilometer and a half from the spot where a little later the city of Olympia developed.

In 1852 Father Casimir Chirouse established himself in the midst of a second Indian tribe, the Cayouses, in the Umatilla River valley, south of the Olympia River. He reopened the mission of St. Anne which had been founded by the Abbé Jean-Baptiste Brouillet in 1847 and closed shortly thereafter.

The activity of the missionaries in Oregon was paralyzed, however, by several factors: poverty of resources, strong propaganda against the missions on the part of the Protestant ministers, and the 1855-1858 war between the Indians and the Americans which occasioned the destruction of the main missions of St. Rose and St. Anne. Moreover, the Indians offered "little hope"³⁴ that a flourishing Christianity could be formed among them. The greatest trial, however, came from the two prelates of Oregon who stubbornly insisted on treating the missionaries like diocesan priests without recognizing the rights proper to them as religious.³⁵ Because of this situa-

³⁴ Bishop de Mazenod to d'Herbomez, November 11, 1853, in *OBLATE WRITINGS*, vol. II, p. 61. The General Council came to a similar assessment on April 14, 1858. *Journal du Conseil général . . . depuis le 17 janvier 1857 jusqu'au 28 mai 1859*.

³⁵ Jean LEFLON, *op. cit.*, vol. 4, pp. 103-113, describes this conflict between the two bishops and the religious, both Oblates and Jesuits. When the creation of the diocese of Nesqually was broached, the Founder proposed as a solution to the conflict the appointment of Father Pascal Ricard as bishop of the new diocese. The Oblates would then be regrouped in this latter diocese. The Holy See, however, only transferred the see of Walla Walla to Nesqually, leaving Bishop Magloire Blanchet as its bishop. Cf. Gaston CARRIÈRE, O.M.I., "Le père Pascal Ricard évêque en Oregon?" in *Études Oblates*, 30 (1971), pp. 241-288; Jean LEFLON, *op. cit.*, vol. 4, pp. 103-110. The Oblates also tried to establish themselves in California, cf. Émilien LAMIRANDE, O.M.I., "Project de fondation oblate en Californie 1849-1853", in *Études Oblates*, 22 (1963), pp. 3-38.

tion, the Oblates decided not to reopen the missions to the Yakimas and to the Cayouses but rather to direct their main apostolic effort to the diocese of Bishop Modeste Demers. The latter's territory included Vancouver Island, the Queen Charlotte archipelago and continental British Columbia.

The Oblates' apostolate among the Yakimas and Cayouses of Oregon was not without fruit, however. There were some baptisms and religious instruction was given to a number of Indians. Their apostolate was continued by the mission of St. Francis Xavier located at Tulalip, established in 1858 in a district which the following year became an Indian reserve. In 1861, under the auspices of the American Government, the missionaries opened an industrial school for boys there, the first such school to be officially recognized in the United States. Another was opened for girls in 1868 and entrusted to the Sisters of Providence. From this mission, which had been founded by Father Chirouse who was its superior until 1878, the Oblates served four other reserves. They had to leave this flourishing mission in 1878 in order to respond to the urgent needs in British Columbia.

In British Columbia

Father Louis d'Herbomez, Vicar of Missions, opened the first house in the diocese of Bishop Demers at Esquimalt on Vancouver Island in 1858. He immediately organized the opening of a mission on continental British Columbia. This mission was founded in 1859 at Okanagan Lake by Fathers Charles Pandosy, Pierre Richard and Brother Philippe Surel.

The missionaries of Esquimalt first of all concerned themselves with the Whites of the locality and the Indians surrounding them. In 1860, Fathers Chirouse and Leon Fouquet made from April to June a first great expedition across the Island towards the north. A little later, Fathers Paul Durieu and François Jayol undertook a similar excursion on the Island's west coast. In September of the same year, Fathers Fouquet, Charles Grandidier and Brothers Georges Blanchet and Gaspard Janin founded a second mission in

British Columbia at New Westminster. From this mission the missionaries worked among the neighboring Indians and even reached as far as Fort Hope and Fort Yale.

Through an agreement signed on September 1, 1860, Bishop Demers entrusted the Oblates with the evangelization of the Indians of British Columbia and with the spiritual care of the Whites in different localities of his territory. Already in 1858 the Founder set things in motion so that the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda Fide would establish an apostolic vicariate which would be entrusted to the Oblates, one of whom would be its pastor. These steps would attain their purpose only at the end of 1863.

The mission in 1861

At the end of 1861, the missions of Oregon³⁶ and of British Columbia had 12 Oblates, that is, 8 Fathers and 4 Brothers, divided among 4 residences located in as many missionary districts; one in Oregon, one on Vancouver Island, and two in continental British Columbia.³⁷ The Oblates were orienting their activity towards British Columbia, an area of the future where large Indian tribes were awaiting them and to which a strong immigration of Whites seeking their fortunes had begun.³⁸

IV - In Texas

Foundation at Brownsville

Father Telmon of Canada offered his assistance to Bishop Jean-Marie Odin, a Lazarist, Bishop of Galveston,

³⁶ The missions of Oregon were constituted into a vicariate of missions in 1851, and placed in Father Ricard's care; thereafter, in 1856, Father Louis d'Herbomez became responsible for it.

³⁷ Esquimalt, Tulalip, Okanagan Lake, New Westminster, St. Mary's founded in 1861, later called Mission City, and then simply Mission.

³⁸ Cf. George M. WAGGETT, O.M.I., "The Oblates of Mary Immaculate in the Pacific Northwest of U.S.A.", in *Études Oblates*, 6 (1947), pp. 7-88.

Texas,³⁹ who had come to Montreal in search of priests for the people of Brownsville. On December 5, 1849, he himself together with Fathers Alexandre Soulerin and Auguste Gaudet, the scholastic Paul Gélot and Brother Joseph Menthe⁴⁰ installed themselves at Brownsville.

The rough and ready population there, largely made up of adventurers, for whom "thefts and killings were the order of the day",⁴¹ had asked for the presence of priests only for the purpose of restoring their marketing credit which had slipped badly.⁴² The missionaries were received with sympathetic courtesy and then immediately ignored and left to their own devices.

The missionaries installed themselves in a tolerable fashion and built a chapel. Their zeal among the indifferent population of this city did have some good results. Father Soulerin, for his part, began a rewarding ministry when he visited the mission of Santa Rita which was frequented by Mexicans. It was located some 10 miles from Brownsville on the Rio Grande. The living conditions, however, were difficult and dangerous; the missionaries' health could not endure the tropical summer. In September 1850, the General Administration recalled Fathers Soulerin and Gaudet to Canada. Father Telmon, completely exhausted, also left several months later, on January 22, 1851, and returned to France. The scholastic Gélot and Brother Menthe had left the Congregation and so, after the departure of Father Telmon, there were no more Oblates left in Texas.

³⁹ Bishop Odin's diocese extended over the vast territory of Texas which had been annexed by the United States in 1845. Besides the Mexican people in the area, a growing number of Americans were moving in to seek their fortune. The prelate had only a few priests in his diocese.

⁴⁰ Cf. Bernard DOYON, O.M.I., *The Cavalry of Christ on the Rio Grande 1849-1883*, p. 17, note 9.

⁴¹ Letter of Father Soulerin, s.d., published in *Missions*, 1 (1862), p. 461

⁴² The citizens of Brownsville had insisently requested, by letter addressed to Bishop Odin, the assistance of religion. Cf. *Ibidem*, p. 461; Jean LEFLON, *op. cit.*, vol. 4, p. 139. On the apostolic activity of the first foundation in Texas, cf. letter of Father Soulerin in *Missions*, 1 (1962), pp. 454-467.



Adrien-Pierre Telmon (1807-1878)
Founder of the missions in Texas.

The foundation taken up again

Bishop Odin passed through Marseilles in 1851 and intervened personally with Bishop de Mazenod, requesting the Oblates for his diocese. On November 14th, according to the terms established in an agreement, Bishop de Mazenod committed himself to two foundations, one in the city of Galveston and the other at Brownsville.

Fathers Jean-Marie Verdet, superior, Pierre-Fournier Parisot, Étienne Vignole, Yves Keralum, Jean-Marie Gaye and Rigomer Olivier, and Brother Jean-Pierre Rondet were the members of the second foundation team. They arrived at Galveston on May 20, 1852.

Galveston, Brownsville, the ranchos, in Mexico

As the terms of the agreement required, some of the missionaries at Galveston laid the foundations of a seminary-college. This work flourished so well that the State in 1856

granted it the title of St. Mary's University.⁴³ Since, however, the institution ceased being a seminary, the Oblates left it the next year.⁴⁴

The other missionaries⁴⁵ proceeded to Brownsville where they zealously and lovingly again took up the difficult ministry begun there in 1849 by the Oblates. Their apostolate was extended to numerous *ranchos*, that is, large farms located in the Rio Grande valley which were owned by Americans and employed a large number of Mexican families. The missionaries visited these latter, who were all of them poor and deprived of religious assistance. These visits were made on horseback and at the price of great fatigue. A residence opened at Roma grouped these missionaries together from 1853 to 1856.⁴⁶

The Texas missionaries penetrated into Mexico.⁴⁷ In 1858, some established themselves in the little shrine of Our Lady of Refuge from which they gave a helping hand to the main parish of Matamoros which was entrusted to them three years later. Others successfully preached missions in that land. Put in charge of a parish at Victoria in March 1860, they

⁴³ Bishop de Mazenod could write to the superior of the college on March 14, 1855: "But now at last you are on the road, your college opened, your courses have begun, you have already more than sixty pupils all told. This is truly a good beginning, and I doubt whether even the most flourishing colleges of the United States were able to gather together a similar number of students when they began." OBLATE WRITINGS, vol. II, p. 91.

⁴⁴ Cf. Jean LEFLON, *op. cit.*, vol. 3, pp. 615-617; Bernard DOYON, O.M.I., "Early Years of the Oblate Missions in Texas and Mexico" in *Études Oblates*, 8 (1949), p. 336.

⁴⁵ Fathers Verdet, Olivier, Keralum, Gaye and Brother Rondet left Galveston for Brownsville in October 1852.

⁴⁶ In 1857 Father Gaudet divided the territory into three districts which were entrusted respectively to Fathers Olivier, Keralum and Parisot.

⁴⁷ Bishop de Mazenod "even planned to extend its (the Texas mission) activity into Mexico in spite of the political troubles and religious persecutions destroying that unfortunate country. It would be the last bold undertaking of the old patriarch who was still at heart the dauntless missionary of his young days. From the very beginning, he looked upon Brownsville as but a springboard for new apostolic conquests. In spite of all the obstacles, he kept forging ahead to the very end." Jean LEFLON, *op. cit.*, vol 4, p. 155.

were expelled therefrom at the end of the following December. The violent anti-religious crisis that broke out at that time reached as far as Matamoros: only two Oblates were able to remain at their post.

Trials, personnel

The missions of Texas experienced hard ordeals: revolutionary troubles, frontier skirmishes, destructive cataclysms, but the most terrible was yellow fever which mowed down several Oblate lives. The Founder exclaimed: "Cruel Texas mission, what terrible wounds you are inflicting on my soul! This is the fifth victim you devoured and what has become, I repeat, of the sixth⁴⁸ whom you have struck with such fierce blows?"⁴⁹

At the end of December 1861, the Congregation in Texas had 13 Oblates, that is, 11 Fathers and 2 Brothers; there were two establishments, Brownsville and Matamoros.

Implanting the Congregation in Canada, in the Canadian West, in British Columbia and in Texas is the result of the marvellous expansion that Bishop de Mazenod's work took in North America from 1841 to 1861. The posts the Oblates occupied were far from each other, it is true; nevertheless, filled with faith and daring, the Oblates were courageously at work, sowing the earth with the Gospel seed so full of promise.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ Father Gaudet. The 5 victims were: Fleury Baudrand in 1853, Barthélemy Duperray in 1855, Brother Joseph-Marie Garcia in 1858, Hippolyte de Lustrac in 1858: these four died of yellow fever and the fifth, Jean-Marie Verdet drowned in 1856.

⁴⁹ Bishop de Mazenod to Father Gaudet, November 26, 1858. OBLATE WRITINGS, vol. II, p. 202.

⁵⁰ On April 24, 1851, the General Administration raised the missions of the Canadian West and North into a vicariate of missions, named the Vicariate of the Red River Missions (and later, of St. Boniface). Archbishop Alexandre Taché was named Vicar of Missions. On the same date it made the missions of Oregon into a vicariate of missions, named Vicariate of the Oregon Missions; Father Pascal Ricard was named Vicar of Missions. On December 27, 1861, the missions of Texas were made into a religious provicariate under the direction of Father Gaudet who was already superior, having succeeded to Father Verdet in 1856.

CHAPTER 8

In Asia and in Africa - *The General Government* *1841-1861*

I. Ceylon: - In "one of the most beautiful missions" - A situation of conflict; an unforeseen orientation - Father Semeria, Vicar Apostolic - In the Vicariate of Colombo - Beyond intrigue - The state of the mission in 1861. **II. Algeria:** - In a desired mission - Why it was relinquished. **III. Natal:** - An unexpected request from the Holy See - Foundation, first ministry - Lack of success among the Zulu: St. Michael, Our Lady of the Seven Sorrows - An element of hope: Basutoland - The state of the mission in 1861. **IV. The General Government:** - Concern for the foreign missions - 1850 General Chapter: provinces, changes to the Rules - Affiliation of the Holy Family of Bordeaux - Bishop de Mazenod, Superior General. **V. The Congregation in 1861:** - Personnel, works.

I - Ceylon¹

In "one of the most beautiful missions"

Bishop Orazio Bettachini, recently named coadjutor to the vicar apostolic of Colombo and in charge of the district of Jaffna, the northern part of the island, came to Europe to recruit for his missions. He knocked on the door of the Bishop of Marseilles. The zealous ardent heart of the Founder was won over very quickly. "His Excellency, the coadjutor of

¹ Cf. "An Outline of the Religious History of the Island of Ceylon", Documentary Note 20, p. 314.

the vicar apostolic of Ceylon, has just spent two days with me," he wrote to Father Ambroise Vincens on August 12, 1847. "Our conversations were prolonged until after eleven o'clock at night. What a field is opening up before us! One and a half million Gentiles to be converted in the most beautiful country in the world! One hundred and fifty thousand Christians to be instructed; that whole huge population, disposed by its goodness of character and a certain attraction towards religion to hear with docility the voice of the messengers of God. . . . Furthermore, there is the task of counteracting heresy right at the very moment when it is planning to establish its headquarters in that beautiful land. How can one resist so many powerful reasons. . . . And so I have accepted this new mission, one of the most beautiful on earth, and I predict that one day this large island will be given over to our Congregation and that our Congregation will make the whole island holy."²

These missions, accepted on August 10, 1847, received their first apostolic workers in the persons of Étienne Seme-ria, superior, Louis Keating, Joseph-Alexandre Ciamin and Brother Gaspard de Stefanis. These Oblates arrived on the island on October 21st and in Jaffna the following November 28th.

A situation of conflict, an unforeseen orientation

The small team of Oblates tackled an apostolic field that was teeming with disputes and conflicts of all kinds, particularly among the ranks of the clergy. The Founder had to some extent had some foreboding of this and wrote to the Bishop of Ajaccio: "This is an infinitely delicate mission for several reasons."³

² De Mazenod to Father Vincens, August 12, 1847, quoted by Jean LEFLON, *Eugène de Mazenod*, vol. 4, p. 167; OBLATE WRITINGS, vol. IV, p. xxiii.

³ De Mazenod to Bishop Toussaint Casanelli d'Istria, October 7, 1847, quoted by Yvon BEAUDOIN, O.M.I., in OBLATE WRITINGS, vol. IV, p. xxiv.

As a matter of fact, the Goan priests in Ceylon found it very difficult to accept the decision made by the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda Fide in 1834 separating the island of Ceylon from the Archdiocese of Goa in India. There was even talk of a schism. There was opposition between the Goan priests and the priests from Europe, and even the latter group viewed the arrival of the Oblates, who belonged to a French Congregation, with a biased eye. Antagonism developed between the district of Jaffna⁴ and the rest of the apostolic vicariate whose see was at Colombo. There followed many complicated conflicts in which the Oblates were at times inevitably involved.⁵

From the moment of their arrival on the island, the new missionaries experienced disappointment. They had hoped to establish themselves in the province of Kandy where they would have had a field of apostolate especially suited for them. The province of Kandy, however, had just been removed from Bishop Bettachini's jurisdiction.⁶ They then made for the city of Jaffna. Because he was so short of priests, Bishop Bettachini did not attach any value to the missionaries' plan of preaching missions and opening a seminary to train catechists and, as a long-term objective, a native clergy; rather, he employed them in various stations of Christians, quite like the other priests of the vicariate.

⁴ The appointment of Bishop Bettachini as coadjutor of the vicariate apostolic of Colombo was not well accepted by the Goanese priests. When he took the direction of the district of Jaffna with which the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda Fide had entrusted him, the 6 Goanese priests left him. The prelate thus disposed only of 2 Spanish Benedictines, 3 priests from Lombardy and 1 Oratorian. Once Jaffna was erected into an independent apostolic vicariate in 1849 and Joseph-Marie Bravi, an intriguer, had become coadjutor of Colombo, there was real conflict between Colombo and Jaffna. Twice, in 1854 and in 1860, an inquiry by an Apostolic Visitor became necessary.

⁵ Cf. Jean LEFLON, *op. cit.*, vol. 4, pp. 167-218. In a masterly manner the author unravels the imbroglio of intrigues and conflicts among the hierarchy and clergy of Ceylon in the period from 1847 to 1860.

⁶ The November 17, 1847 decree of the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda Fide had detached the province of Kandy from the district of Jaffna and integrated it into the apostolic vicariate of Colombo.

From 1847 to 1856, the Oblates exercised an apostolate, with some success, among Christians who had great need for religious assistance. At Jaffna as well as in other missions, there was a noticeable progress in religious practice, especially in the reception of the sacraments which up to that time were little frequented because of the Goanese priests' excessive rigorism.

Everywhere, according to the line of conduct laid down by Father Semeria, "the European missionaries had to make careful allowance to the local mentality and psychology in order not to provoke, by what they themselves thought to be a trifling matter, regrettable incidents leading to schism. . . . On the other hand, the missionaries had to devote themselves to basic work and provide a sound Christian education for a population left for too long a time without any instruction. Hence the need to train catechists and establish schools."⁷

Bishop de Mazenod, fully in agreement with this wise orientation, was quite unhappy that the missionaries' activity was being restricted to the Christians on the island. "When will you begin to win the unbelievers?" he wrote to Father Semeria. "Are you only on your island as parish priests of old Christians?"⁸

Father Semeria, Vicar Apostolic

To enable his sons to work more effectively and with more initiative and method, the Founder in 1856 obtained from Propaganda Fide that Father Semeria be named coadjutor to Bishop Bettachini. When the latter died the next year, Bishop Semeria succeeded to him.⁹ At this time the vicariate of Jaffna had about 50,000 Christians scattered here and

⁷ Cf. Jean LEFLON, *op. cit.*, vol. 4, p. 183.

⁸ De Mazenod to Semeria, February 21, 1849. OBLATE WRITINGS, vol. IV, p. 32.

⁹ The apostolic vicariate of Jaffna was officially entrusted to the Congregation of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate in 1861, even though Bishop Semeria had been its pastor since 1857.



Bishop Étienne Semeria, O.M.I. (1813-1868)
Founder of the Ceylon missions.

there, making up about 240 different Christian communities. Access to these was more or less difficult. The vicariate was served by about 13 or 14 missionaries.¹⁰

The new Vicar Apostolic organized a team of preaching missionaries made up of Fathers Constant Chounavel, Christophe Bonjean and of himself; and thus he began the work of missions along the style of those that were being preached in France. The first one was given in Kayts in September 1857. Others followed thereafter, and were given in the main Christian centres.¹¹ “Everywhere, as grace acted powerfully in the

¹⁰ Cf. Bishop Semeria’s report of November 28, 1861, in *Missions*, 1 (1961), pp. 186-187.

¹¹ Valigamme, Trincomalie, Batticoloa, Jaffna, Mantotte, Chilaw, Battawatte, and several small islands of Ceylon.

hearts of these poor Christians," Bishop Semeria reported, "we have had the happiness of seeing them renewed, changed, sanctified."¹²

The prelate opened a school program whose objective was the education of lay Christians, of lay auxiliary apostles to the missionaries and, for the long term, aspirants to the priesthood.¹³ The opening of a boarding school at Jaffna, directed by two Oblate Brothers who had come from England, marked the beginning of this program. The Sisters of the Holy Family of Bordeaux accepted to come for the young ladies' school and to provide other works of charity. Bishop de Mazenod, for his part, did not hesitate to send him new missionaries to support him.

In the Vicariate of Colombo

Bishop Joseph-Marie Bravi, coadjutor to the vicar apostolic of Colombo, after he had tried in vain to recruit missionaries for his vicariate which stood in dire need of them, accepted as a last resort and by necessity four Oblates whom the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda Fide asked Bishop de Mazenod to give him.¹⁴

Bishop de Mazenod, though little confident about the good welcome and lot that would be extended to his Oblates, nonetheless accepted to send them there. As a matter of fact, the vicariate of Colombo was governed by an Goanese prelate, Bishop Gaetano-Antonio Musulce, and a crafty coadjutor. Both of them were openly hostile to the vicariate of Jaffna. Rather than consider the disadvantages of the present situation, Bishop de Mazenod considered the future. Canon Leflon

¹² Cf. Bishop Semeria's report of November 28, 1861, in *Missions*, 1 (1862), p. 191.

¹³ Cf. Jean LEFLON, *op. cit.*, vol. 4, p. 194.

¹⁴ Cf. *ibidem*, vol. 4, pp. 189-200; Yvon BEAUDOIN, O.M.I., OBLATE WRITINGS, vol. IV, p. xxvi.

writes: "To him, introducing the Oblates into the South of Ceylon seemed indispensable for realizing later the desirable uniformity of action throughout the whole island when it would be placed under their direction and for putting an end to the rivalry and annoying discord between the two vicars apostolic to the detriment of God's work."¹⁵

The four Oblates sent, that is, Dominique Pulicani, Adrien Duffo, Laurent Lallement and Jean Perreard, arrived at Galle on July 22, 1851, and at Colombo on the following July 25th.

Beyond intrigue

Bishop de Mazenod and Father Semeria showed themselves conciliatory in regard to Bishop Bravi's attitude who demanded that the Oblates of Colombo be completely separated from those of Jaffna and not have any contact with them. This was to spare the susceptibility of the Goanese clergy of Colombo who were totally opposed to anything that came from Jaffna. Father Pulicani was named vice-superior, with Father Semeria remaining the superior of all the Oblates on the island.

The tensions and difficulties with the clergy, the vicar apostolic and his coadjutor notwithstanding, the missionaries put forth an untiring zeal in the mission that had been confided to them. Bishop Semeria particularly stressed the influence wielded by Father Pulicani. He had gained the confidence of both the indigenous and foreign Christians and was respected by Protestants and Buddhists alike. Many, and at

¹⁵ Jean LEFLON, *op. cit.*, vol. 4, p. 200.

times, remarkable conversions took place because of his zeal.¹⁶

The state of the mission in 1861

At the end of 1861, the number of Oblates on the island was 24, that is, 1 Bishop, 20 Fathers and 3 Brothers. The vicariate of Jaffna, which was in the Congregation's care, had 8 missions or districts.¹⁷ In the vicariate of Colombo, two missions were in the charge of Oblates.¹⁸

II - Algeria - 1849-1850

In a desired mission

Bishop de Mazenod joyfully perceived the realization of one of his dreams, namely, an apostolate among the Arabs, when Bishop Louis-Augustin Pavy of Algiers asked him for Oblates to serve in his diocese. In December 1848 he sent Father Tempier to Algiers to settle the conditions under which the missionaries would be established there.

¹⁶ On March 1, 1853, Bishop de Mazenod wrote to the Prefect of the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda Fide: "It would truly seem that the Lord is helping them in a very special way. I am convinced that they have been gifted with a certain participation in the miracle of Pentecost. How would it otherwise be possible to explain that in such a short time, they have been able to know enough of those difficult languages to instruct and confess the natives of that country. The last missionaries to arrive in the vicariate of Colombo have perhaps done too much in the opinion of the Goans who do nothing at all. In any case, one Father alone has converted 110 protestants to our holy faith and another has converted 22 Buddhists. There is very much I could tell you about the opposition they have encountered on the part of the Goans who worked up the elderly bishop G. Antonio (Musulce) against them. Their great crime was to have dedicated too much attention to poor abandoned youth. . . ." OBLATE WRITINGS, vol. V, pp. 65-66.

¹⁷ Jaffna, Trincomalie, Batticaloa, Mannar, Mantotte, the districts of Point Pedro, Valigamme, and Kayts.

¹⁸ Kandy and Sina Coorle. Cf. *Missions*, 1 (1962), pp. 193-194. The Oblates on the island of Ceylon were constituted as a vicariate of missions in 1851, with Father Semeria being named Vicar of Missions.

In February of the next year, Fathers Dominique Pulicani, Jean Sabon, Ferdinand Grenier and Brother Augustin Chalvesch, with Father Jean Viala at their head as superior, settled into Blidah from which they served 7 neighboring villages. At the end of 1849, they opened a second foundation at Philippeville to which 5 neighboring villages were attached.

Eight missionaries devoted themselves to these missions. The Founder's dream, however, was not achieved: these missions were given up some 18 months after they were begun.

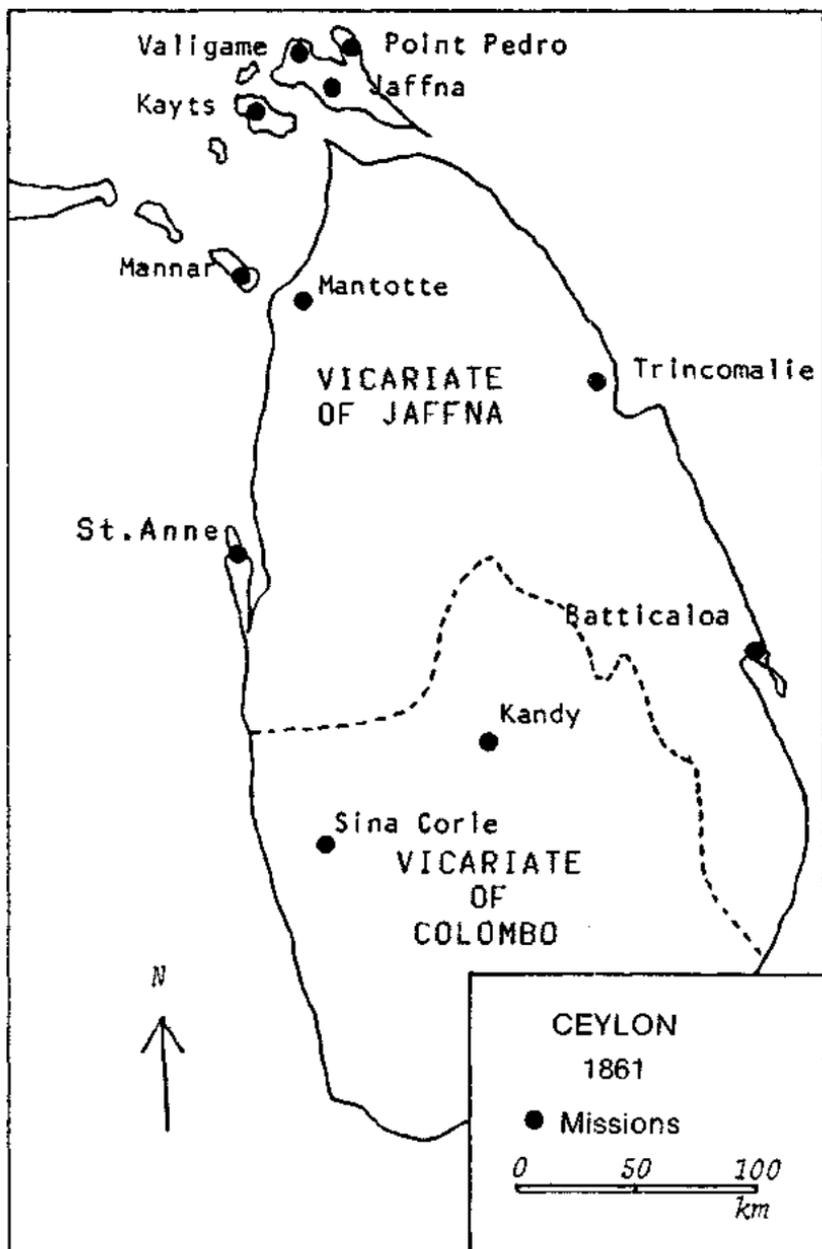
Why it was relinquished

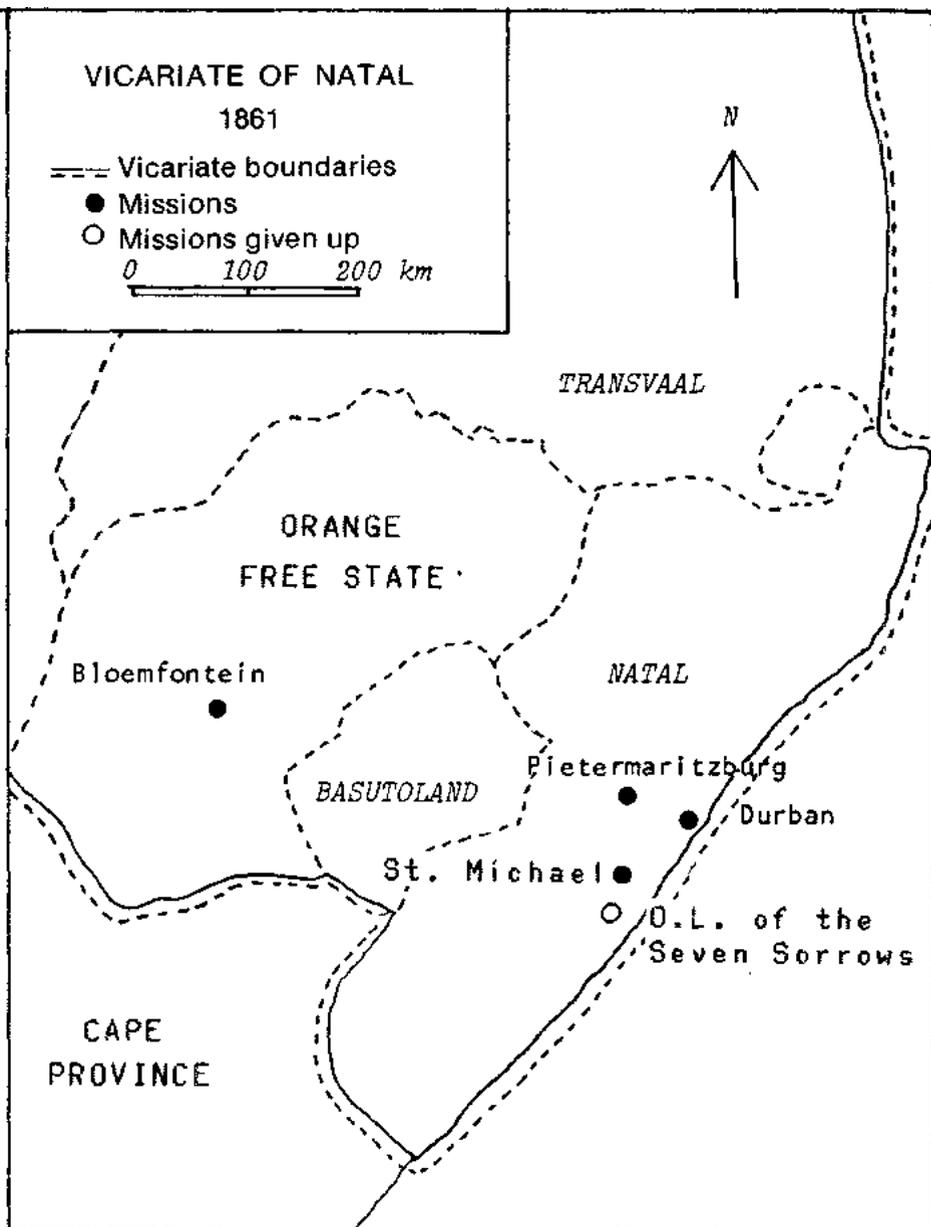
On June 20th, the Founder definitively recalled his missionaries from Algeria. The reasons for recalling them are clearly stated in his *Diary* under the date of the previous March 28th: "We have recognized that the ministry assigned to our ministry in Algeria is not the one we ought to be doing.¹⁹ The bishop has a way of looking at things that is little in conformity with our spirit. He had committed himself to give our men at Blidah a situation such as community men essentially require. He has reversed this decision and has reduced our Fathers to being nothing else than mere parish priests of small villages where there is nearly no good to be done. . . .²⁰ In short, our Fathers are not in their proper place

¹⁹ When accepting the missions of Algeria, the Founder entertained as essential the objective of converting the Arabs. He had left it to Bishop Pavy to judge when would be the opportune moment to undertake that task. Cf. Jean LEFLON, *op. cit.*, vol. 4, p. 220.

²⁰ Contrary to what had been agreed upon, the Oblates had to close their public chapel at Blidah. The hospital of the city was not entrusted to them and they were limited to taking care of the 7 small villages of the vicinity. Cf. Jean LEFLON, *op. cit.*, vol. 4, pp. 220-221.

We must add that a certain Father Jean-Marie Bellanger, the bursar of the community, who suffered from a seriously unbalanced personality, brought about discord between the superior of the house and the bishop . . . this by his intrigues, indiscretions, eccentricities and inconceivable lack of judgment. He had to be expelled from the Congregation. Cf. Bishop de Mazenod to Bishop Pavy, February 4, 1850, in OBLATE WRITINGS, vol. IV, pp. 175-185.





in Algeria, and since another alternative is opening up for us — the missions of Natal offered to the Oblates — we will be able to take it by leaving this post.”²¹

In July 1850, the Oblates of Algeria returned to France.²²

III - Natal

One of the more impressive fields of apostolate accepted by the Founder was the vicariate apostolic to be established in the British colony of Natal. The extent of this vicariate surpassed the boundaries of the colony and took in a large part of southern Africa.

An unexpected request from the Holy See

After unsuccessfully approaching the Jesuit Fathers and Father Libermann's missionaries of the Sacred Heart,²³ the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda Fide offered the Oblates an apostolic vicariate that was to be established in the colony of Natal in South Africa.²⁴ When the Founder received this request from the pen of Archbishop Barnabo, the secretary of

²¹ *Diary of the Founder*, March 28, 1850, quoted in Achille REY, O.M.I., *Histoire de Mgr Charles-Joseph-Eugène de Mazenod*, vol. 2, pp. 331-332.

²² Cf. Jean LEFLON, *op. cit.*, vol. 4, pp. 219-224. Émilien LAMIRANDE, O.M.I., “Les Oblats en Algérie (1849-1850)”, in *Études Oblates*, 14 (1955), pp. 154-183; Albert PERBAL, O.M.I., “Eugène de Mazenod reste marqué par sa vocation missionnaire”, in *Études Oblates*, 19 (1960), pp. 45-49.

²³ “On February 9, 1850, Father (Jean) Rootham and, on February 21, 1850, Father (François-Marie Paul) Libermann declined Propaganda's request because of lack of personnel.” Nicolas KOWALSKY, O.M.I., “L'érection du vicariat apostolique de Natal selon les documents des archives de la Propagande”, in *Études Oblates*, 10 (1951), p. 284. On March 18th, Propaganda Fide approached Bishop de Mazenod. *Ibidem*, p. 284.

²⁴ A first limited apostolic vicariate was erected in South Africa on June 6, 1837 in the province of the Cape of Good Hope; on July 30, 1847, a second one took in the eastern part of this province. Bishop Aidan Devereux, the apostolic vicar of this latter vicariate, having been requested to make a report about his territory, described the religious situation in the colony of Natal and suggested that an apostolic vicariate be established there and entrusted to a religious congregation. Cf. Nicolas KOWALSKY, O.M.I., *art. cit.*, pp. 283-284.

the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda Fide, he wrote in his *Diary*: "Here we have a major matter under consideration which requires reflection and light from on high. . . . None of us had thought of it and it reaches us by the channels that the Church uses. We must therefore really place ourselves into God's presence before we respond."²⁵

It is in these circumstances that he had the inspiration to withdraw the Fathers from Algeria where they were doing little good and send them to a mission offered "by the agency of the Head of the Church, a mission which is moreover eminently in conformity with the spirit of our Institute and the end our Congregation has in view" . . . this is how he put it in his *Diary*.²⁶ On March 30th he informed Archbishop Barnabo that he was accepting the mission of Natal. He then presented Father Jean-François Allard as the vicar apostolic.²⁷

On the following October 5th, Propaganda Fide forwarded the decrees erecting the Vicariate of Natal and appointing Father Allard to the post of Vicar Apostolic.²⁸ There were no churches at all in this new and vast vicariate; the Catholic population in it amounted to no more than 500 scattered Europeans, at Durban, Pietermaritzburg, Bloemfontein and localities in the vicinity of these centres.²⁹ There was no resident missionary there. At the most, a priest from the vicariate of Port Elizabeth, a Father Thomas Murphy of

²⁵ *Diary* of Bishop de Mazenod, March 28, 1850, quoted by Father Achille REY, O.M.I., *op. cit.*, vol. 2, p. 331.

²⁶ *Ibidem*, vol. 2, p. 332.

²⁷ Father Charles Bellon had originally been proposed to Propaganda Fide for the position of apostolic vicar of Natal; he could not accept, however, for reasons of health.

²⁸ Cf. Nicolas KOWALSKY, O.M.I., *art. cit.*, p. 286. "The boundaries were established . . . : Key to the south, Quelimane to the east (this obviously means the district and not the city situated on the Indian Ocean), the Tropic in the north; no boundary is indicated in the west." *Ibidem*, p. 286. Also cf. "Premier document officiel sur l'érection du vicariat du Natal (5 octobre 1850)", in *Missions*, 73 (1939), pp. 165-166.

²⁹ Cf. Bishop Allard to Bishop de Mazenod, July 14, 1852. Rome, General Archives, O.M.I.



Bishop Jean-François Allard, O.M.I. (1806-1889)
Founder of the missions of Natal

Grahamstown, had been in Pietermaritzburg from November 1850 to May 1851. In January 1852, however, a missionary from the Premonstratensian Order, Father Jacques Hoenderwangers, established himself at Bloemfontein.³⁰ He was the sole priest in the vicariate when Bishop Allard came there a few months later. No mission had been founded among the natives.

Foundation, first ministry

The apostolic vicar and his first missionaries, Fathers Jean Sabon and Laurent Dunne, the scholastic deacon Julien-Maurice Logegary, and Brother Joseph Compin left Marseilles on November 13, 1851 and by sea reached Durban four months later, on March 15, 1852.

³⁰ Father Jacques Hoenderwangers continued his ministry at Bloemfontein until 1869. Cf. John BRADY, O.M.I., *Trekking for Souls*, p. 119. He served the following posts of the area: Sommerset East, Gradok, Richmond, Burgersdrop, Aeval North and Colesberg.



Jean Sabon (1819-1885)
Missionary at Durban from 1852 until his death.

Fifteen days after they had arrived at Durban, the missionaries came to Pietermaritzburg, the colony's capital, where they were welcomed with joy by the 200 some Catholics of that locality. By the next Christmas, a church had been built.³¹ The Bishop dedicated it and his apostolic vicariate to the Immaculate Conception. The Oblates' first ministry was serving the Catholics of the locality.

In response to the hundred Catholics of Durban who were insistently asking for a priest, Bishop Allard sent them Father Sabon, at first from time to time and then, in December 1852, he assigned Father Sabon to them permanently. At Durban this missionary had a church built which was blessed and opened on July 24th of the following year; he also opened a school for Catholics. After 1860, he took charge of a group of some 1600 Indians, 300 of whom were

³¹ Land for this chapel had been set aside by Father Thomas Murphy.

Catholic, who had come from Madras and Calcutta to settle in the colony of Natal. He even learned their language, which was Tamil. Father Sabon, the pioneer missionary of Durban, remained on this frontier until 1885, a good pastor to the people, esteemed by all.³²

*Lack of success among the Zulu:
St. Michael, Our Lady of the Seven Sorrows*

During the first years after his arrival in Natal, Bishop Allard found it impossible to inaugurate his apostolate to the Zulu. He had had to place Father Sabon at Durban and in the summer of 1852 he witnessed Father Dunne and Brother Compin leave and go back to Europe. He himself had to fulfill the duties of parish priest at Pietermaritzburg.³³ In January 1854, Father Justin Barret and the deacon Joseph Gérard arrived, together with Brother François Bernard.³⁴ Deacon Gérard was ordained to the priesthood in the following month. After spending four months learning English, Fathers Barret and Gérard stayed in a native village to become acquainted with their language, customs and way of life. This immersion into the Zulu milieu taught them that the two major obstacles to the evangelization of this people were the powerful sorcerers and polygamy, in addition to drunkenness and their proud nature.³⁵

The two missionaries left on February 27, 1855 to found the first mission among the Zulu, a mission they dedicated

³² Cf. "Le R.P. Sabon" in *Notices nécrologiques*, vol. 6, pp. 80-109.

³³ Father Logegaray left on his own accord in August 1856. Cf. Jean LEFLON, *op. cit.*, vol. 4, p. 234.

³⁴ For thirty years Brother Bernard devoted himself in a number of mission posts in manual work and especially in teaching catechism to the Zulu and the Basothos. He had a gift for languages and thus learned English, Zulu, Sesotho and even initiated himself to Portuguese in view of the missions Bishop Allard was considering to found in Mozambique. Brother Ferdinand Manuel, who arrived in Natal in 1856, spent his life at Pietermaritzburg and Durban in hidden but most useful labour.

³⁵ Cf. Father Joseph Gérard to Bishop de Mazenod, August 6, 1859, in Marcel FERRAGNE, O.M.I., *Le P. Gérard vous parles . . .*, vol. 1, p. 25.

to St. Michael. Their zeal encountered a total indifference, a refusal of grace. This mission, located some 100 kilometers south of Pietermaritzburg, was closed in July 1856: the small tribe of the locality had just been driven away by their enemies.

Bishop de Mazenod, who from Marseilles followed his missionaries in far away southern Africa, deplored this want of success, but stimulated their courage nevertheless. He reminded Bishop Allard that he had been sent for the benefit of the natives. "It is to the Kaffirs that you have been sent," he wrote, "it is their conversion that the Church expects from the holy ministry she has entrusted to you."³⁶ He urged him to travel across his vicariate himself, and thus be at the head leading his missionaries.³⁷

At Bishop Allard's request, the English administration granted to the vicariate a property of 522 acres at the very location of the first mission of St. Michael. Furthermore, this administration attached a reservation of some 6000 acres thereto and pledged protection to the people seeking refuge thereon. Fathers Joseph Gérard and Victor Bomport reopened the mission of St. Michael in 1858. Bishop Allard himself came to join the missionaries. A church was built under very difficult circumstances; it was blessed on July 17, 1859. Once again, unfortunately, the missionaries' zeal resulted in failure. Father Gérard even wrote: "Everything seems lost for good in this place. The Kaffirs are becoming more and more hard of heart."³⁸ Hope of founding a religious centre in this spot was given up.

The Founder, ever attentive to his sons in Natal, wrote to Father Gérard on September 4, 1860: "After so many years not a single conversion; it is awful! You must not lose heart

³⁶ Bishop de Mazenod to Bishop Allard, May 30, 1857, in *OBLATE WRITINGS*, vol. IV, p. 206.

³⁷ Cf. Bishop de Mazenod to Bishop Allard, November 10, 1857, in *OBLATE WRITINGS*, vol. IV, 208-210.

³⁸ Father Gerard to Bishop de Mazenod, June 10, 1860, quoted in *Missions*, 1 (1962), p. 357.

because of it. The time will come when the merciful grace of God will produce a sort of explosion and your Kaffir Church will be formed. You ought perhaps to penetrate deeper among these savage tribes in order to bring this about."³⁹

When the Founder was writing these encouraging words, his addressee had already gone to found a new mission. As a matter of fact, Bishop Allard, Father Gérard and Brothers Bernard and Terpend had left St. Michael's to establish a mission dedicated to Our Lady of Seven Sorrows, located further to the south in the Evete valley, 32 kilometers from the mouth of the Umzimkulu River, where the tribe that had been driven away from St. Michael in 1856 had taken refuge. Here, too, they experienced another failure. The mission was abandoned in July 1861 when the tribe had been dispersed by an epidemic.

An element of hope: Basutoland

The launching of the missions to the natives in Natal was thus marked by failure. We cannot form an idea of the courage and daring of these first missionaries who penetrated a milieu where the way of life, the custom and the mores were unknown to them. These pioneers had to be impromptu missionaries: learn the language, little by little discover the manners and ways of thinking and acting of these peoples, encompass the roots of their paganism, find effective approaches and create suitable methods of evangelization. Moreover, they had to endure poverty, isolation, primitive lodging and food. The regime of community life imposed by the rather rigid Bishop Allard did not help to maintain a spirit of relaxation. These were pioneers in the strictest sense of the word.⁴⁰

³⁹ Bishop de Mazenod to Father Gérard, September 4, 1860, in OBLATE WRITINGS, vol. IV, p. 221.

⁴⁰ Cf. Letters of Father Gérard of September 29, 1856, August 6, 1859, June 10, 1860, in Marcel FERRAGNE, O.M.I., *Le P. Gérard vous parle . . .*, vol. 1, pp. 19-22, 25-26, 27-28; also cf. Bishop de Mazenod to Bishop Allard, November 10, 1857, in OBLATE WRITINGS, vol. IV, pp. 208-210.

Hope of success was to rise soon. In November 1861, Bishop Allard and Father Gérard went to Bloemfontein, and then to Basutoland, which is the Lesotho of today. In this latter place, they were in February 1862 welcomed by the nation's great chieftain, Moshoeshoe himself. In March they returned to Natal, but with the plan of establishing themselves among the Basothos without delay. This happy decision was to result in a great missionary success.

The state of the mission in 1861

At the end of the year 1861, the mission of Natal, raised to a religious vicariate already in 1851, had 9 Oblates, that is, 1 Bishop, 5 Fathers and 3 Brothers, divided among 3 establishments: Pietermaritzburg, Durban and St. Michael. Bishop Allard simultaneously was the religious superior of the Oblates and the ecclesiastical superior of the vicariate.

IV - *The General Government*

Concern for the foreign missions

The new fields of apostolate overseas, of whose history we have just given a brief outline, obligated the General Council to take many important decisions and imposed a variety of concerns upon it. Among these were: the acceptance or refusal of missions that were being offered, the choice and sending of missionaries, organizing new foundations, regular relationships with the Works of the Propagation of the Faith in Lyons and in Paris to obtain the needed grants for the missions, for all requests of this sort passed through the General Council.⁴¹

The Founder himself was in frequent contact with the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda Fide,⁴² not only to dis-

⁴¹ Cf. Nicolas KOWALSKY, O.M.I., "Mgr de Mazenod et l'Oeuvre de la Propagation de la Foi", in *Études Oblates*, 11 (1952), pp. 239-260.

⁴² Cf. "The Orientations of the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda Fide", Documentary Note 21, p. 315.



*Bishop Eugene de Mazenod
Bishop in 1832, Residential Bishop of Marseilles
from 1837 until his death.*

cuss the acceptance of mission fields and mission business, but also at times to defend vigorously the rights of his Oblates, for example, in their conflict with the prelates of Oregon and of Ceylon.

We should point out the main mission fields which the General Administration had to refuse: a mission in Australia in 1845, another in Bengal in 1849, an apostolic vicariate in Oceania in 1850, another in Malabar in 1851, a mission in the Seychelles Islands in the same year, the vast area of Sengambia which included Senegal, in 1854.

1850 General Chapter: provinces, changes to the Rules

The 1850 General Chapter surpassed those of 1843 and

1856⁴³ because of the important character of its decisions. It admitted the principle of administrative decentralization in the Congregation by setting up Provinces and Vicariates of missions as intermediary organisms between the General Administration and the local administration of houses and missions. Consequently, this Chapter changed the Constitutions and Rules. Moreover, to these it added a long paragraph on the work of major seminaries. From Pope Pius IX the General Administration obtained a new approval of the Constitutions and Rules and thus it published a second edition of these in 1853.

As an appendix to this edition, the Founder added an excellent instruction on the foreign missions: these had not as yet been entered into the very text of the Constitutions and Rules. In this instruction, he shows that he considered missionary activity an essential task of the Church; he indicates the signs and dispositions of a missionary vocation; he expresses his mind on community life, on collaboration with the bishops, on his preference to serving in apostolic vicariates entrusted to the Congregation, and, finally, on an apostolate which does not exclude social work.⁴⁴

Affiliation of the Holy Family of Bordeaux

With the consent of his Council, the Founder on January 14, 1858, signed a contract of affiliation with the Association of the Holy Family of Bordeaux,⁴⁵ which contract was ratified

⁴³ The most striking feature of the 1843 Chapter was the hope for the future raised by the reports of the Congregation's first developments in Canada and in England. The 1856 Chapter, the last one presided over by the Founder, also paid close attention to the detailed reports on the Congregation's Provinces and Vicariates of Mission across the world.

⁴⁴ Cf. Willi HENKEL, O.M.I., "L'esprit et le coeur du Bx E. de Mazenod à la lumière de l'instruction sur les missions étrangères", in *Vie Oblate Life*, 36 (1977), pp. 171-185; Emilien LAMIRANDE, O.M.I., "Les Oblats hommes des évêques", in *Études Oblates*, 16 (1957), pp. 302-320; Martin QUERE, O.M.I., "Mgr de Mazenod et le missionnaire oblat" in *Études Oblates*, 20 (1961), pp. 237-270.

⁴⁵ Cf. "The Association of the Holy Family of Bordeaux", Documentary Note 22, p. 317.



*The Bishopric of Marseilles in the time of Bishop de Mazenod.
This building was modified and is today a police station.*

by a consultation of the Congregation's membership and thereafter by the 1861 General Chapter. This affiliation created a spiritual sharing between the two Institutes; the Superior General of the Oblates became the Director General of the Association together with the Association's Directress General; the Oblates pledged their ministry to the religious women of the Association and these latter pledged to support the Oblates in their apostolic works.

Bishop de Mazenod, Superior General

In all these activities of the General Administration, Bishop de Mazenod, in spite of his responsibilities as the pastor of a diocese, directed his Institute with care and was at the helm of its development. In his decisions as Superior General, he acted in concert with his General Assistants,⁴⁶

⁴⁶ The Assistants General from 1818 to 1861 were: François-de-Paule-Henry Tempier, 1818-1861; Jean-François Deblieu, 1818-1823; Emmanuel Maunier, 1818-1823; Pierre-Nolasque Mye, 1818-1841; Hippolyte Courtès, 1824-1861; Marius-Jacques-Antoine Suzanne, 1824-1829; Jean-Baptiste Honorat, 1829-1831; Louis-Hippolyte Guibert, 1831-1850; Vincent Mille, 1841-1843; François Noël Moreau, 1843-1846; Casimir Aubert, 1846-1850, 1856-1860; Ambroise Vincens, 1850-1861; Charles Bellon, 1850-1856; Joseph Fabre, 1860-1861. The Bursars General from 1818 to 1861 were: François-Noël Moreau, 1821-1824; Jean-Baptiste Honorat, 1824-1841; Vincent Mille, 1843-1850; Joseph Fabre, 1850-1861.

with men who had his confidence such as Tempier, Guibert, Casimir Aubert, Bellon, Courtès, Vincens. On the other hand, he kept up a personal contact with each of his spiritual sons, at least by correspondence, and especially with those who were farthest away from him, those in countries overseas. He manifested a great affection for them, sustained them, enlightened them, oriented them, often with an astonishing intuition. He assured a unity of mind and heart, the cohesion of his Society which suddenly found itself spread across the four continents.

Eugene de Mazenod died on May 21, 1861, and left this message to his spiritual sons: "Practice among yourselves charity . . . charity . . . charity, and, outside, zeal for the salvation of souls." Father Tempier, his faithful and close companion since the beginnings of the Congregation, was designated Vicar General and in this capacity administered the Institute until the election of Father Joseph Fabre as Superior General on December 5, 1861.

V – *The Congregation in 1861*

Personnel, works

From 1841 until the Founder's death, the number of Oblates increased sevenfold, passing from 59 to 414. Of these 414 professed members living in 1861, 6 are bishops, 267 are Fathers, 53 are scholastics and 88 are Brothers. Their average age is 35.7. Nearly half of them⁴⁷ are working outside of France and nearly one quarter originate from countries outside of France.⁴⁸

⁴⁷ At the Founder's death, 91 Oblates were working in the missions of Red River, Oregon, British Columbia, Texas, Natal and Ceylon; 48 belong to the Province of Canada and 60 to the Province of England. Cf. Joseph PIELORZ, *op. cit.*, vol. 2, p. 141.

⁴⁸ There are 52 Anglo-Irish, 19 Italians, 14 Canadians, 5 Belgians, 4 Swiss, 1 German, 1 Dutchman, 1 from Luxembourg, 1 American, 1 Spaniard . . . in all a total of 99 Oblates of nationalities other than of France. This adds up to

Besides preaching missions, the work of major seminaries and serving chapels and shrines — all of these were ministries carried on already in 1841 — the Congregation's apostolic activity from that date had extended to ministry to numerous groups of Catholics scattered here and there, who were deprived of religious assistance, and even among our separated brethren and non-Christians. Evangelizing the poor and the abandoned had become a considerably diversified reality.

The great foundations from 1841 to 1861 inserted the Congregation of the Oblate Missionaries of Mary Immaculate into the Church's missionary fields. Henceforth, the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda Fide relied on it as an important missionary Congregation for the work of missions.

26.3% of the Congregation. Cf. Jean LEFLON, *op. cit.*, vol. 4, p. . The dioceses which furnished 10 Oblates or more to the personnel living in 1861 were: Grenoble 38, Valence 19, Quimper 18, Gap 16, Avignon 15, Fréjus 15, Marseilles 15, Viviers 13, Ajaccio 12, Nancy 12, St-Dié 11, Montreal 10.

PART THREE

Taking Root and Growing

1861 - 1898

CHAPTER 9

In Europe - 1861-1898

I. The General Government: - Joseph Fabre - Louis Soullier - Painful conflict with Bishop Cruice - Family bonds - A procurator to the Holy See - Scholasticates - The Holy Family of Bordeaux. **II. The Provinces of France:** - Zeal for parish missions - The shrines of Tours and Pontmain - The work of Montmartre - Trials of 1871 and 1880 - New foundations - Some personalities - State of the two Provinces. **III. The Anglo-Irish Province:** - New works - Foundation in Australia - Apostolic activities - The Province in 1898. **IV. Origins of the Province of Germany:** - Foundation. The young Province.

The Congregation of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate was alive and well and had been implanted in different areas of the world. Up to this point, it was sustained and animated by the strong paternal authority of the Founder himself.

It now faced two challenges. One was immediate: choosing a leader who was capable of pursuing the Founder's work; the other was to organize and promote the apostolic tasks only just begun in its immense mission territories. It is this latter challenge that underlies the history of the period from 1861 to 1898.

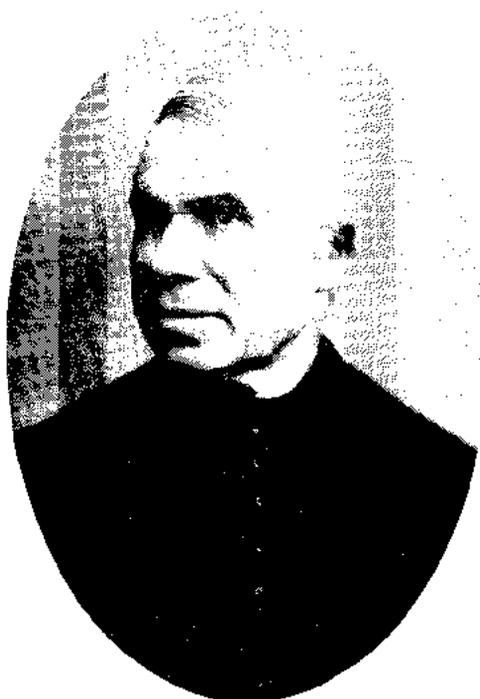
I - *The General Government*

Joseph Fabre, Superior General

On December 5, 1861, the General Chapter held in Paris, unanimously elected Father Joseph Fabre to the post of



Joseph Fabre (1824-1892)
Superior General: 1861-1892



Louis Soullier (1826-1897)
Superior General: 1893-1897

Superior General.¹ He was 37 years of age. At the time he was fulfilling the posts of assistant general and bursar general of the Congregation. He was known and esteemed by all and had the reputation of being imbued with the Founder's spirit and very devoted to the Congregation. He was considered to be an exemplary religious and a man of order and organization. His election was the occasion of universal rejoicing throughout the Institute.²

He had inherited an important and difficult mission: succeeding to the Founder, who "was everything and sufficed for

¹ Father Joseph Fabre was born on November 24, 1824, at Cuges in the diocese of Marseilles. After two years in the major seminary at Marseilles, he entered the novitiate at Notre-Dame de l'Osier. On May 29, 1847, he was ordained to the priesthood by Bishop de Mazenod. The following year he was assigned to the major seminary at Marseilles where he was a professor and the superior. From 1850 onwards, he was procurator general of the Congregation and in 1860 he became assistant general. Cf. *Notices nécrologiques*, vol. 7, pp. 481-546.

² Cf. Yvon BEAUDOIN, O.M.I., "L'élú du chapitre de 1861 et la joie des Oblats", in *Études Oblates*, 21 (1962), pp. 97-120; Robrecht BOUDENS, O.M.I., "Le centenaire de l'élection du T.R.P. Fabre", *ibidem*, 20 (1961), pp. 303-313.

everything” — to borrow Father Tempier’s expression³ — and who, in his ardent and invincible faith in the future, had thrust the Congregation to the very front lines of the Church. It was now the task of Father Fabre and his Council to establish the normal regular life which guarantees and perpetuates growth, to guide the Congregation at a great turning point in its history.

Louis Soullier, Superior General

The generalate of Father Louis Soullier,⁴ the successor to Father Fabre, was of short duration: it lasted scarcely four and a half years, from May 11, 1893 to October 3, 1897. He was first assistant general for 25 years, and had visited nearly all the provinces and mission territories of the Institute. He was looked upon as the “Superior General for the outside”,⁵ especially during the last years of Father Fabre when the latter could not because of ill health carry on external relationships. He was certainly well prepared to continue the work of his predecessor and even to give it a new impulse.⁶

³ *Missions*, 2 (1863), p. 140.

⁴ Father Louis Soullier was born on March 26, 1826, at Maymac in the diocese of Tulle. A seminarian in the major seminary at Tulle, he was attracted to the Oblates by Father Léonard Baveux, a missionary from Canada who visited the seminary in 1848. Louis Soullier completed his theological studies at Marseilles and was ordained priest by Bishop de Mazenod on May 25, 1850. He was a mission preacher, and also superior of the houses at Limoges and Nancy, as well as the founder of the houses of Autun and Angers. In 1861, he became vice-provincial of the Province “du Nord” and pro-director of the Association of the Holy Family of Bordeaux. He became assistant general in 1867. Cf. Marius DEVES, O.M.I., “Le T.R.P. Soullier” in *Missions*, 35 (1897), pp. 422-431; *ibidem*, 46 (1908), pp. 113-122.

⁵ Joseph-Eugène ANTOINE, O.M.I., in *Circulaires administratives*, vol. 2, p. 304.

⁶ The General Council under Father Fabre was as follows: Assistants General: François-de-Paule-Henry Tempier (1861-1867), Ambroise Vincens (1861-1863), Hippolyte Courtès (1861-1863), Florent Vandenberghe (1861-1867), Alexandre Soulerin (1863-1867), Jean Lagier (1863-1867), Louis Soullier (1867-1893), Pierre Aubert (1867-1887), Charles Jolivet (1867-1874), Aimé Martinet (1867-1893), Marc de L’Hermite (1875-1890), Joseph-Eugène

Painful conflict with Bishop Cruice

Immediately after the death of Bishop de Mazenod, a grave conflict broke out between his successor to the see of Marseilles and the Oblates. The new bishop, Bishop Patrice-François-Marie Cruice,⁷ prejudiced by some influential members of the Marseilles clergy, showed himself ill-disposed towards the Oblates. While still in Paris before his installation in Marseilles, he undertook the unusual measure of demanding detailed accounts of the diocesan funds covering the period of Bishop de Mazenod's episcopate, for he "nourished the suspicion that the Oblates had used them for their own advantage".⁸ The conflict broke out on the occasion of the reading of the Founder's will which bequeathed all his goods to Fathers Tempier and Fabre.⁹

Without any prior discussion of the matter, Bishop Cruice practically refused to recognize Bishop de Mazenod's will, maintaining that the latter had bequeathed as personal possessions the goods of the diocese. Fathers Tempier and Fabre, both convinced of Bishop de Mazenod's honesty and of the justice of his administration, protested vigorously; they were constrained, however, to consent to and sign two private agreements, both to the advantage of the new bishop.

Antoine (1887-1893), Cassien Augier (1890-1893); Bursars General: Alexandre Soulerin (1861-1863) and Marc Sardou (1863-1893).

The General Council under Father Soullier was as follows: Assistants General: Aimé Martinet (1893-1894), Joseph-Eugène Antoine (1893-1897), Cassien Augier (1893-1897), Alfred Voirin (1893-1897) and Charles Tatin (1894-1897); Bursar General: Marc Sardou (1893-1897).

⁷ Patrice-François-Marie Cruice was born in Ireland in 1815 and came to France when he was still very young. In 1843 he was director of the ecclesiastical Normal School in Paris where professors for minor seminaries were being prepared. He held this post until he was appointed to the see of Marseilles by the Government decree of June 18, 1861. He died in 1866.

⁸ Jean LEFLON, *Eugène de Mazenod*, vol. 4, p. 375.

⁹ Cf. Yvon BEAUDOIN, O.M.I., "Les relations entre Mgr Cruice et les Oblats en 1861-1862. Le Renvoi du grand séminaire de Marseilles", in *Études Oblates*, 21 (1962), pp. 281-317.

The first agreement was signed on November 30, 1861. It granted to the prelate a clear net sum of 615,000 francs. On the following January 9th, Bishop Cruice, under the unheard of threat of immediate closure of all the Oblate houses of Marseilles, demanded the signing on that very day of a second agreement which ceded to him three of the four Oblate properties in Marseilles,¹⁰ a total value of 310,000 francs. Faced with the firm protestations of Fathers Fabre and Tempier, he compromised by promising a rebate of 110,000 francs. However, he refused to give a legal guarantee of this and it seems he never did fulfill this pledge.¹¹

On account of the climate of extreme tension with the bishop and the multiplied ill-timed interventions of the latter, the General Council on April 28, 1862, decided that Fathers Fabre and Tempier would not reside in Marseilles, that all relationships with the bishop would be carried on in writing only, and that the conflict would be submitted to the arbitration of the Archbishop of Aix. Bishop Cruice refused this arbitration. Since the bad situation persisted, the General Council on the following June 25th decided to transfer the General House to Paris where Fathers Fabre and Tempier were already staying. Other unhappy consequences followed. In July, the Oblates lost the direction of the major seminary of Marseilles. In September, the scholastics had to leave Montolivet¹² and were established at Autun. In the following months, the Work of the Youth of M. Allemand and several chaplaincies in the city were abandoned. In this way, most of the Oblate bonds with the diocese that they had served so much were broken.

¹⁰ The house of Alger, which was in Bishop de Mazenod's name; the building on rue St-Michel, which was in Father Tempier's name; land at Notre-Dame de la Garde, which was in the names of Fathers Tempier, Fabre, Bernard and Lagier.

¹¹ Cf. Yvon BEAUDOIN, O.M.I., *art. cit.*, in *Études Oblates*, 21 (1962), p. 196, note 68.

¹² The house of Montolivet, sold to the Government in 1864, became the major seminary of Marseilles.

The intensity of this crisis abated after 1862. A general trend set in that was favorable to the memory of Bishop de Mazenod and to the work of the Oblates in the diocese. Moreover, the episcopate of Bishop Cruice was brief, lasting barely five years. Father Fabre could declare at the 1867 General Chapter: "The person who set himself up as the instrument of these unjust passions is now before God. . . . He was the first to have been duped; he partially recognized this before his mind was overly weakened."¹³

Bishop Cruice's successors, Bishop Charles Place (from 1866 to 1878) and Bishop Louis Robert (from 1878 to 1900) highly appreciated the colossal work accomplished by the Founder of the Oblates as restorer and organizer of the diocese; they also esteemed the precious collaboration of his sons in this work.

On the other hand, the Oblates were always in demand for preaching missions in the diocese of Marseilles. On May 2, 1864, Father Sardou wrote to Father Fabre: "At this time there are twenty Oblates preaching in the diocese."¹⁴

Family bonds

Father Fabre, in the spirit of the Founder, took great pains to strengthen the ties binding the family's members together, to bring together the Oblate traditions, to exploit the riches of the first beginnings, and to develop the spirit proper to the Institute. He is the prime mover of several initiatives towards this end: some complete what had already been begun whereas others are new.

He introduced regular circular letters of the Superior General to all the members of the Institute. In a number of these he expressed in a marvellous way topics dealing with

¹³ *Chapitres généraux 1861-1904*, copy of minute-books, Archives Deschâtelets, Ottawa, p. 23.

¹⁴ Quoted in Yvon BEAUDOIN, O.M.I., *La réponse des Oblats à la vision et à la pratique de l'évangélisation du Fondateur*, manuscript, p. 5.

the Oblate religious life, fidelity to the Rule and to evangelizing the poor, love for the Oblate family, charity and fraternal oneness.¹⁵ He arranged the regular composition and publishing of the necrological sketches of deceased Oblates, a value that the Founder insisted upon very much.¹⁶ He decided to print every three months the reports and letters received by the General Administration, and thus in 1862 he founded the periodical commonly referred to as *Missions*,¹⁷ which appeared regularly for the next 110 years. In 1864 he initiated the custom of general annual retreats in the Provinces with the hope of thereby strengthening the bonds of charity and promoting family unity.

To establish and assure unity of prayer within the Institute, he in 1865 issued the first manual of prayers and ceremonies for Oblate usage.¹⁸ In order to maintain traditional values and to promote unity in preaching missions and in all the works of Oblate formation, he published directories on missions, juniorates and scholasticates.¹⁹ Finally, in order to

¹⁵ Cf. especially circular letters nos. 11 (1862), 13 (1863), 14 (1864), 15 (1865), 24 (1872) and 26 (1876). The Founder's circular letters of 1853 and 1857, which were particularly important, were reproduced in circular letter no. 14 of Father Fabre. Father Soullier wrote two outstanding circular letters: no. 59 (1895) on preaching and no. 61 (1896) on studies.

¹⁶ In 1898, six volumes of these sketches had already been published. The history of Oblate necrology has been studied by Father Georges COSENTINO, O.M.I., "Le 'Nécrologe' de la Congrégation", in *Études Oblates*, 20 (1961), pp. 20-38.

¹⁷ *Missions de la Congrégation des Missionnaires Oblats de Marie Immaculée*. The *Notices historiques et statistiques sur la Congrégation des Missionnaires Oblats de Marie Immaculée et Compte rendu de l'année 1853-1854* was published during the Founder's lifetime. This first brochure was followed by two others for the years 1854-1855 and 1857-1858. Cf. Émilien LAMIRANDE, O.M.I., "Le centenaire des 'missions'" in *Études Oblates*, 21 (1962), pp. 274-279.

¹⁸ The history of the prayer manuals for Oblate use had been studied by Father Georges COSENTINO, O.M.I., "Le Manuel de Prières de la Congrégation", in *Études Oblates*, 23 (1964), pp. 148-157.

¹⁹ The history of directories has been studied by Father Georges COSENTINO, O.M.I., "Les 'Directoires' de la Congrégation", in *Études Oblates*, 20 (1961), pp. 271-298.

keep everyone informed, in 1880 he began to publish every three years the state of the Congregation's personnel.²⁰

This ensemble of initiatives, designed to promote communications within the Institute and to maintain its own spirit and unity, came at an opportune moment when the Oblates were already dispersed over four continents and young Oblates were more and more being formed in different places within the Institute.

A procurator to the Holy See

The Congregation's development made the presence of a representative in Rome necessary. In conformity with the Church's common law and upon authorization through a Rescript from the Roman Curia dated February 20, 1863, the General Council on the following March 6th named a Procurator to the Holy See. His task was to be the Congregation's agent in all its business dealings with the Holy See. Father Ambroise Tamburini was appointed to this post and he took up residence in Rome on the following March 19th.²¹ However, the Procurator had to leave Rome and return to France from 1873 to 1881 on account of the political troubles in Italy.²²

Scholasticates

The four full-fledged scholasticates of the Congregation were under the General Administration's responsibility. Montolivet, the first one in the Congregation and still under the

²⁰ The Founder had published the *État général du Personnel des Missionnaires Oblats de Marie Immaculée (janvier 1854)*, Marseilles, 8 pages. Cf. Georges COSENTINO, O.M.I., "Les 'Personnels' de la Congrégation", in *Études Oblates*, 19 (1960), pp. 242-248.

²¹ The first General Procurators were: Ambroise Tamburini, appointed in 1863; Jean Corne, appointed in 1869; Cassien Augier, appointed in 1881; Charles Tatin, appointed in 1890; and Joseph Lémus, appointed in 1894.

²² Cf. Aristide PHILIPPOT, O.M.I., "Conférence historique sur la Maison de Rome (1825-1931)" in *Missions*, 66 (1932), pp. 677-693; Cassien AUGIER, O.M.I., "Maison de Rome", in *Missions*, 24 (1886), pp. 157-192.

immediate direction of the General Administration, was transferred to Autun in 1862. During the time of the expulsions of 1880, it found a haven in the house of Inchicore in Ireland, and then in the house of Belcamp Hall acquired in 1885 and which was six kilometers north of Dublin. In 1888 it was transferred to a house rented from the Franciscans at Bleyerdeide in Holland and which was named St-François. In 1891, finally, it was installed in permanent fashion in a house acquired at Liège. This was the first Oblate establishment in Belgium.

The scholasticate at Ottawa, originally opened in a part of the Bytown College building in 1848, received its own building in 1885. It was then that it became the responsibility of the General Administration. The scholasticate of Rome, opened in the Procurator's house and definitively established near the Coliseum in 1887, as well as that of Huenfeld in Germany, opened in 1897, were both from their very beginnings under the immediate responsibility of the General Administration. The General Administration had to provide for the personnel of Fathers and Brothers needed in these four houses, as well as for all the maintenance costs. In 1899, the four scholasticates had a personnel of 31 Fathers, 37 Brothers and 260 scholastics.

The Holy Family of Bordeaux

Father Fabre, in his capacity as director general of the Holy Family of Bordeaux, strove to promote the spiritual life of their members and to strengthen the bonds linking the various branches of the Association. He was himself a much sought after spiritual counsellor to these religious women; he gave them many instructive conferences and for ten consecutive years, from 1864 to 1875, he preached their common annual retreats.²³

²³ His instructions, collected by these religious, were published: *Instructions pour les dimanches et les fêtes de l'année et les retraites mensuelles a l'usage des Soeurs de la Ste-Famille*, Bordeaux, 1915, 4 vols., 356, 344, 389 and 265 pages; *Instructions pour retraites annuelles*, Rome, 1917, 556 pages.

In 1868, he united to the Association two groups of the Oblate Sisters of Mary Immaculate founded by Father Bruno Guigues, the group that had remained at Notre-Dame de l'Osier and the other group established in England. In 1869 he favoured the acquisition of the vast abbey of Royaumont as the central house for the Association.²⁴ For their part, the Sisters of the Association of the Holy Family of Bordeaux, who numbered some 3600 in 1898, had been working in the missions of Ceylon since 1862, of South Africa since 1864, and in several of our works in England.²⁵

The General Administration opened three residences for the chaplains of the Holy Family, one at Bordeaux in 1862, another at Royaumont in 1869, and a third in Madrid in 1882. This last one was transferred to the Province "du Midi" of France in 1895. The Oblate Superior General was represented at Bordeaux in their General Council by a pro-director.²⁶

II – *The Provinces of France*

Zeal for parish missions

The Oblates in France, in fidelity to the first end of the Congregation, with zeal and success pursued the work of

²⁴ The ancient abbey of Royaumont in the diocese of Versailles was purchased by the Oblate General Administration in 1864 for the purpose of establishing an important formation house there, namely the scholasticate of Autun as well as the novitiate and juniorate of France. Cf. *Chapitres généraux 1861-1904*, copy of the Minute Books, Archives Deschâtelets, Ottawa, p. 258. In 1865, the General Administration placed there a community of missionaries for the diocese of Versailles. However, because of the great expense it would require to renovate the building, it decided, after lengthy deliberations, to abandon the project, and in 1869 it sold the building to the Association of the Holy Family of Bordeaux.

²⁵ Liverpool, Leeds, London, Kilburn, Sicklinghall and Leith. Cf. *Missions*, 17 (1879), p. 357.

²⁶ The following succeeded each other in the post of pro-director: Charles Bellon, appointed in 1859; Louis Soullier, appointed in 1861; Joseph-Vincent-Roulet, appointed in August 1867; and François-Xavier Anger, appointed in November 1879.

preaching missions and retreats. The reports, given on almost a yearly basis, from the different houses of missionaries and published in *Missions*, manifest an extraordinary activity in this field. "We can state," Father Yvon Beaudoin notes, "that there was never any need to beg the Oblates to preach missions. Doing this was their great occupation and concern. All the correspondence of that period reveals this."²⁷

Houses of missionaries were opened in seven new dioceses: Versailles,²⁸ Rennes, Tours, Nevers, Laval, Lyons, Nice; also in two other dioceses where the Oblates were already established: Bordeaux and Paris.

The Shrines of Tours and Pontmain

The work of shrines was likewise continued with love and zeal. The Province "du Nord" accepted three new shrines, each remarkable for their importance and the renown they brought to the Congregation. There was the shrine of St. Martin of Tours to which Archbishop Guibert had called them in 1867 and where the Oblates restored the cult to St. Martin and spread it to the neighboring dioceses. There was the shrine of Pontmain dedicated to Notre-Dame de l'Espérance which Bishop Casimir Wicart of Laval entrusted to the Oblates in 1873. This shrine quickly became a centre of Marian devotion for the north-eastern part of France. One of the seers of the Virgin of Pontmain, Joseph Barbedette, became an Oblate.

The work of Montmartre

The third shrine, the Work of France's national Vow to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, was that of Montmartre at Paris.

²⁷ Yvon BEAUDOIN, O.M.I., *art. cit.*, "La réponse des Oblats de France . . . , p. 4.

²⁸ The house of missionaries of Royaumont (1865 to 1868) was under the responsibility of the General Administration.

There can be no doubt that it was the most important and influential of all the shrines and thus deserves to be given a special treatment.

The national Vow of France to the Sacred Heart of Jesus was proposed by a group of laity who wanted, by erecting a material monument dedicated to the Sacred Heart on the hill of Montmartre in Paris, to set in motion a movement of reparation by the whole of France to appease the divine wrath in the unhappy times that France was experiencing. Archbishop Guibert, who in 1871 had become the archbishop of Paris, made this enterprise his own and officially established it by a letter of June 18, 1872, which he addressed to its promoters. In June 1875 he solemnly blessed the temple's cornerstone and, the next year, he called upon the Oblates to undertake the direction of the Work of the national Vow.²⁹

Under the Oblates' direction, pilgrimages were organized in each parish in Paris and then in each diocese of France; thus the arch-confraternity of the Sacred Heart and the marvellous work of the perpetual adoration of the Blessed Sacrament at the shrine of Montmartre came into being. Parishes, dioceses, religious institutions all across France, in union with Montmartre, consecrated themselves to the Heart of Jesus.

The Work of the national Vow, under its different forms of adoration, arch-confraternity, consecration to the Sacred Heart, to a great degree overflowed the boundaries of France. The Oblates also become apostles of the Sacred Heart by means of the pen: they cooperated in the *Bulletin de l'Oeuvre du Voeu national au Sacré-Coeur de Jesus* and they published important works on the Sacred Heart.³⁰

²⁹ Cf. Edmond THIRIET, O.M.I., *Le père Yenveux*, pp. 81-82.

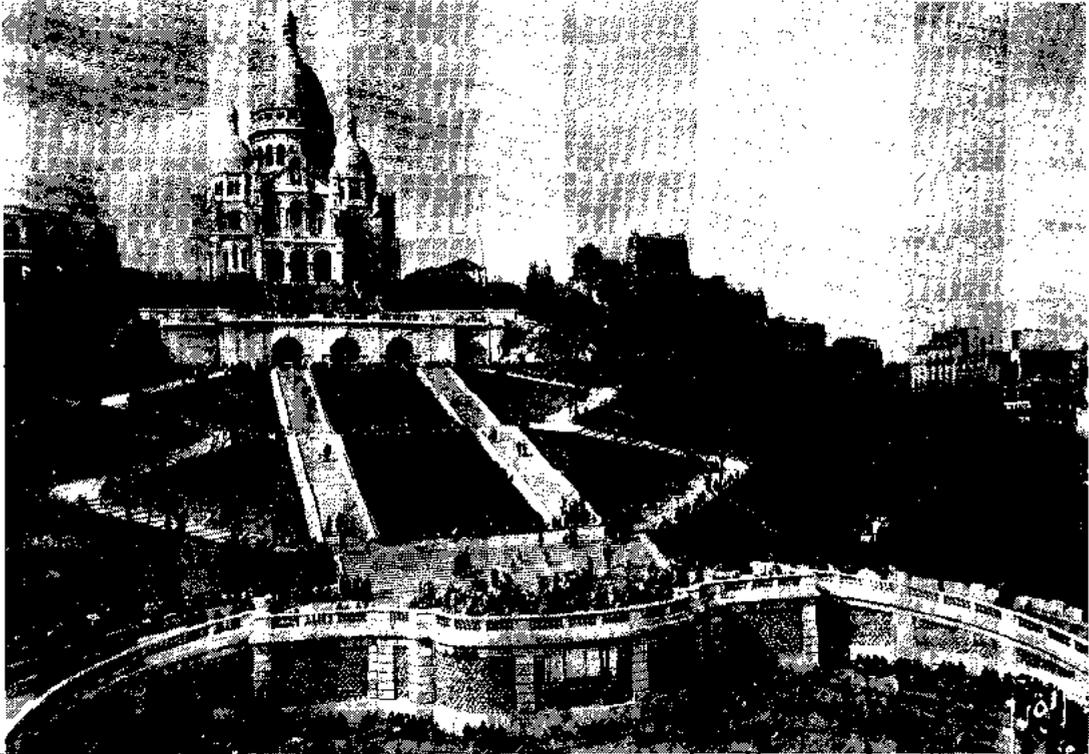
³⁰ Father Alfred Yenveux, among others, chaplain at Montmartre from the very outset, was such an apostle of the press. Cf. Marcel BERNARD, O.M.I., *Bibliographie des Missionnaires Oblats de Marie Immaculée*, t. 1, 1816-1915, pp. 91-92.



*Cardinal Joseph-Hippolyte Guibert, O.M.I. (1802-1886)
Archbishop of Paris, created Cardinal in 1873.*

Montmartre wielded a definite influence on the Oblates' own ministry and piety, and this right across the Congregation. It raised up zealous apostles of the Sacred Heart. A proposal made at the General Chapter of 1898 is very significant in this regard: "to establish a union of prayer, zeal and adoration between all the Congregation's houses and Montmartre; to extend universal adoration to all our houses; to establish the arch-confraternity of Montmartre in the provinces and vicariates; to add to the directory of missions special exercises in honour of the Sacred Heart; to celebrate the first Friday of each month with special solemnity."³¹ The

³¹ *Chapitres généraux 1861-1904*, copy of the Minute Book, Archives Deschâtelets, Ottawa, p. 767.



*The Basilica of the Sacred Heart at Montmartre, Paris,
entrusted to the Oblates of Mary Immaculate from 1876 to 1903.*

measure adopted as a consequence of this proposal associated the movement of piety at Pontmain to that of the Sacred Heart Montmartre: "In order to have all the members of the Congregation and all the souls entrusted to our care benefit from the good which flows from these blessed places, the Chapter has expressed the wish that a union of prayer, zeal and adoration be established between all the houses of the Congregation and the shrine of the Sacred Heart at Montmartre, and that all our churches and chapels be affiliated to the Arch-confraternity of Our Lady of Prayer at Pontmain."³²

While plying their zeal in building a spiritual temple to the Sacred Heart, the chaplains were actively busy constructing the basilica. For his part, Brother Félix Viossat, porter of the house of Montmartre from 1876 to 1903, collected all by

³² Cf. *Circulaires administratives*, vol. 2, circ. no. 70. March 19, 1899, p. 28.

himself, sou by sou, the sum of half a million francs in gifts for the Basilica.³³

Trials of 1871 and 1880

In France, both the Congregation's internal life and apostolic life experienced severe trials which came from political events or from religious persecutions carried out by the State.

During the Franco-Prussian War of 1870, the houses of Nancy and Notre-Dame de Sion had to give lodging to German soldiers, and the houses of Saint-Jean and the scholasticate of Autun were invaded and pillaged by Garibaldian hordes who were bluntly impious. The house in Paris was happily preserved from disasters, but the Oblates were isolated during the seige of the city, from September 1870 to January 1871, and then at the mercy of the Commune's impious fanaticism from March to May, 1871. A large number of Brothers were enrolled into the army and a number of Fathers voluntarily went as chaplains on to the battlefields or into the camps of the sick and wounded.³⁴

In virtue of iniquitous Government decrees suppressing non-approved religious Congregations, the Oblates were in the month of November, 1880, violently expelled from 17 of their houses.³⁵ Only a few of them could stay on the spot as guardians of the evacuated houses. However, the major seminaries

³³ The superiors of the chaplains at Montmartre were: Achille REY, from 1876 to 1885; Alfred Voirin, from 1885 to 1893; Jean-Baptiste Lémius, from 1893 to 1901; and Edmon Thiriet, from 1901 to 1903.

³⁴ Cf. Théophile ORTOLAN, O.M.I., *Les Oblats de Marie Immaculée*, vol. 3, pp. 125-155.

³⁵ The General House in Paris, the scholasticate at Autun, the houses Le Calvaire and Notre-Dame de la Garde at Marseilles, of Aix, St-Andelain, Tours, Notre-Dame de Lumières, Nancy, Angers, Talence, Bordeaux (the chaplaincy on rue de Berry), Notre-Dame de l'Osier, Limoges, Notre-Dame de Bon Secours, Angers (the house on rue Toussaint and the residence in the suburb of St-Jacques). The story of these expulsions is narrated in *Missions*, 19 (1881), pp. 5-111; 129-184.

of Fréjus and Ajaccio, the houses of Montmartre, of Notre-Dame de Sion, the novitiate at l'Osier, the house of St-Jean at Autun and the residence of Royaumont were spared. At Vico in Corsica, the Government agents had to withdraw before the threats of the angered population who had taken sides with the Oblates.

Those who were expelled took up refuge in hospitable lodgings in the vicinity, remained in contact with their superiors and continued their apostolic works. In the measure that the governmental vigilance diminished, the communities were little by little reconstituted. The General Administration resumed its regular life in Paris in 1886. At this time, the normal life of all the houses had resumed pretty well everywhere, even though the expulsion decrees remained in force.

These expulsions, however, in spite of their painful and even savage character, and notwithstanding the fears they inspired for the Congregation's future, hastened the time of a welcome expansion of the Institute into the neighboring countries and territories: Holland, Italy, Spain, the island of Jersey, and Alsace Lorraine.

New Foundations

The very list of new foundations in the two Provinces of France from 1861 to 1898 unmistakably shows a tremendous apostolic vitality.

The Province "du Midi" in France opened two houses of missionaries, one at Lyons (1888) and the other at Nice (1894).³⁶ It spread into Spain by accepting a chaplaincy at Madrid (1895)³⁷ and a juniorate and novitiate at Soto (1893).³⁸ It implanted itself in Italy by transferring the juniorate of Notre-Dame de Lumières to Diano Marina (1884) and

³⁶ The house in Nice was founded thanks to the invitation of the Oblate Bishop Mathieu Balain of Nice.

³⁷ The chaplaincy of the Sisters of the Holy Family of Bordeaux, served by the General Administration since 1882.

³⁸ In 1893, the Oblates accepted the direction of the ancient shrine of Notre-Dame de Bocage, at Soto. A novitiate was established here in 1894 and

then to Rome (1887).³⁹ On the other hand, in 1862 it lost the direction of the major seminary of Marseilles in circumstances with which we are familiar.

The Province "du Nord", besides the three famous shrines of Tours, Pontmain and Montmartre mentioned above, opened at the bishops' request houses at Rennes (1865-1869), Arcachon (1869) — which was also a shrine of the Blessed Virgin — , and at St-Andelain (1869).⁴⁰ It re-established the juniorate of Sion,⁴¹ founded that of Pontmain (1891) and inaugurated a novitiate at Angers (1895).

Going beyond the territory of France, it took charge of three parishes on the island of Jersey: St. Thomas (1880), St. Matthew (1881) and St. Martin (1884).⁴² It also opened some new houses: in Holland, the juniorate of St. Charles (definitively established in 1885) and the novitiate of St. Gerlach

a juniorate the year after. Because of the heavy maintenance costs of these buildings, the house of Soto was transferred to Urnieta in 1898. Cf. *Missions*, 37 (1899), pp. 189-211.

³⁹ In spite of the decrees of 1880, the juniorate of Notre-Dame de Lumières remained until 1882, and then found shelter in the minor seminary of Beaucaire. At Diano Marina, Italian juniorists were accepted. After the house was demolished by a violent earthquake February 1887, the French juniorists returned to France and the Italian ones were housed first in the Roman Scholasticate until they had their own house in Rome in 1892; thereafter, these latter went to Santa Maria à Vico near Naples, in 1892.

⁴⁰ The Oblates arranged in the church a place of cult dedicated to Our Lady of LaSalette, which attracted many pilgrims.

⁴¹ At the time of the expulsion of religious in 1880, out of prudence a juniorate was opened at Meggen in Switzerland, which lasted for only two years. Another was opened at Heer in Holland for those who in Sion were in the rhetoric year; once this was transferred to Fauquemont (Valkenburg) in 1885, it became the juniorate of St. Charles.

⁴² Fathers Robert Cooke and Victor Fick from the Province of England in October 1880 undertook an apostolic work among the French-speaking population on the island of Jersey. Father Victor Bourde arrived the next month as the superior of the community that was being formed there. Father Donat Michaux in 1883 opened a juniorate at St-Héliier which was called the "Work of Late Vocations" and which stayed open until this Father died in 1895. Cf. *Missions*, 31 (1893), pp. 287-288; 36 (1898), pp. 320-321; François HAMONIAUX, O.M.I., "Les Oblats dans l'île de Jersey" *ibidem*, 53 (1919), pp. 205-206.

(1880);⁴³ in Alsace-Lorraine, the house of missionaries of St. Ulrich (1880); and, in Belgium, a novitiate at Bestin (1896). The Province, however, had to give up the houses of Cléry (1865),⁴⁴ of Rennes (1869), of Nancy (1882)⁴⁵ and of Tours (1886).⁴⁶ In 1895, it ceded the houses of St. Charles, St. Gerlach and St. Ulrich to the new Province of Germany.

Some personalities

Among the noteworthy designers and builders of the Provinces of France, it is only right to name Cardinal Guibert in the first place. He always remained an Oblate at heart and a wise counsellor. The Congregation especially owes to him its most glorious work in France, namely, Montmartre. Let us mention some other names too. There was Father Achille Rey: he was a man of great intelligence and activity, of an exceptional affability; twice he was provincial of the Province "du Nord", as well as the founder and organizer of important works at Tours and Montmartre. He is also the author of an important biography of Bishop de Mazenod. There was Father Jean-Baptiste Lémus, an influential person who was known in the Catholic world for his eloquence and his alert and fertile pen. He, too, was superior to the chaplains at Montmartre. There was Father Alfred Yenveux, a true man of God, both meek and austere, who for some twenty years

⁴³ After the 1880 decrees expelling religious, the novitiate of Nancy was transferred to Holland, to Neerbeek, and then, the following year, to Houthen where it received the name of St. Gerlach novitiate. In August 1895, a new novitiate was opened at Angers in France.

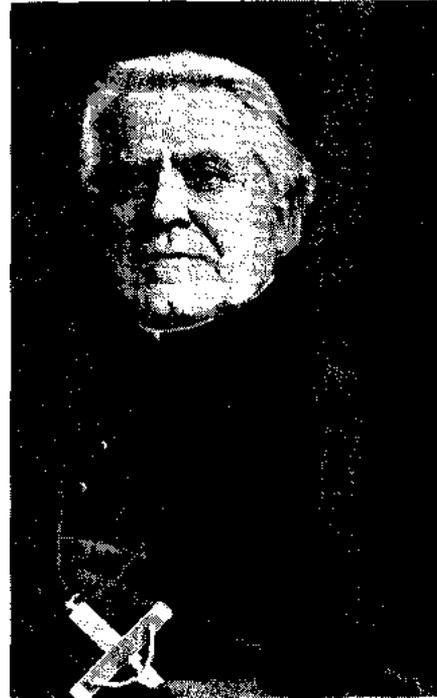
⁴⁴ In September 1865, after ten years of laborious apostolic work in the diocese and at the shrine of the Blessed Virgin, the Oblates regretfully left Notre-Dame de Cléry because they did not have the wherewithal to a suitable subsistence there. Cf. *Missions*, 4 (1865), pp. 551-553; 556-568.

⁴⁵ The expulsions of 1880 resulted in the closure of the novitiate and the public chapel, the doors of which were sealed.

⁴⁶ "Since we could no longer work in the Work of St. Martin . . . and since we were shut out from the chapel and the pilgrimage, and were thus pretty well reduced to impotence in our ministry, we had to give up this fine post." *Missions*, 24 (1886), p. 129.



Achille Rey (1828-1911)
First chaplain at Montmartre

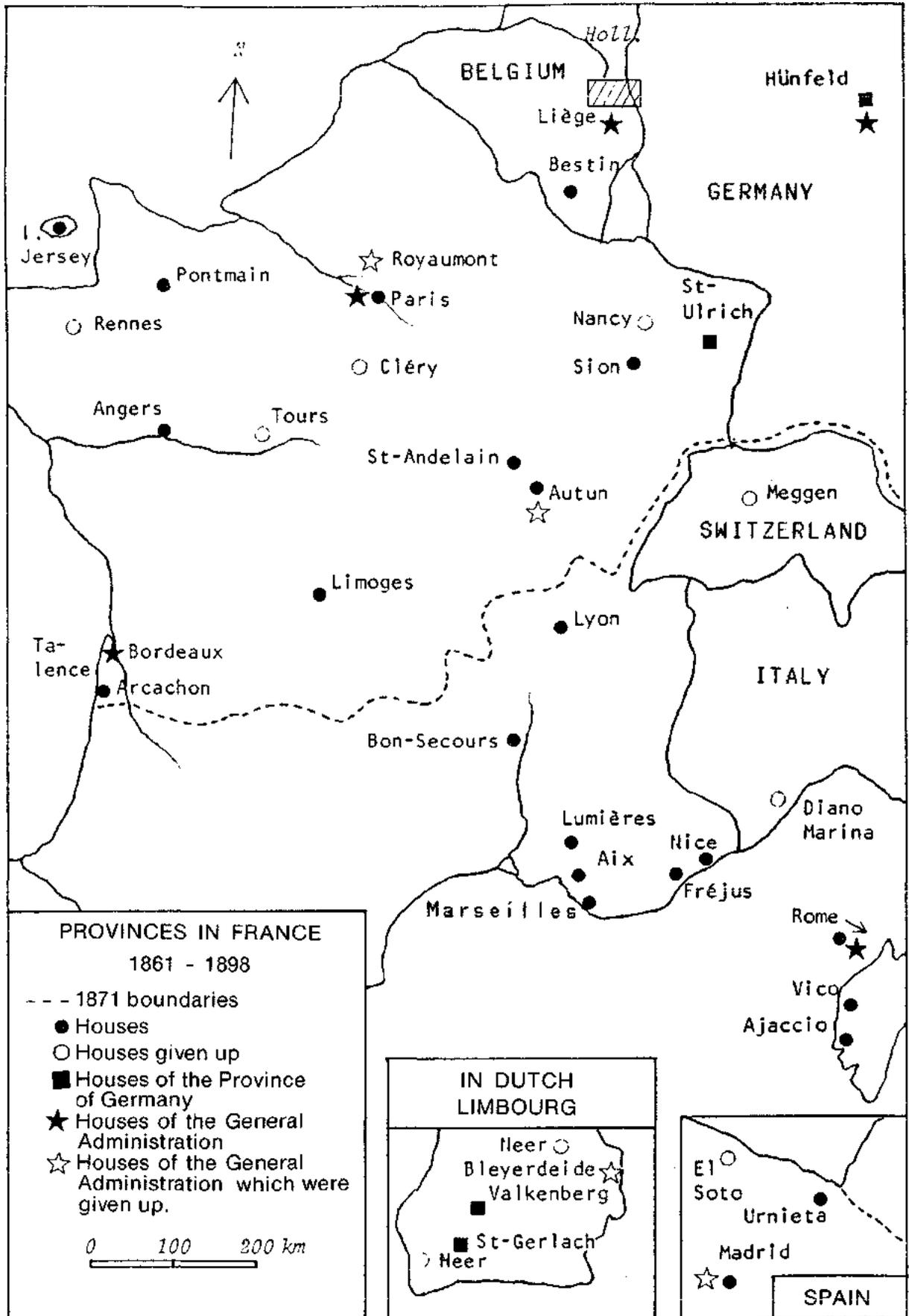


Jean-Baptiste Lémius (1851-1938)
A person with great influence

put his mark on the work of Sacred Heart at Montmartre through his dedication and by his writings. There was Father Léon Legrand, the founder and first superior of the juniorate of St. Charles, who opened wide its door to German aspirants. There was Father Auguste Lavillardière, a remarkable preacher, the founder of the house at Lyons and a future Superior General. There were Fathers Donat Michaux and Cyprien Delouche, both men who were very enterprising and active.

State of the two Provinces

Each of the two Provinces of France established in 1851 exercised its jurisdiction over the houses and works assigned to it by the General Administration. In his circular letter of August 1, 1871, Father Fabre, the Superior General, gave to each a geographical territory which was defined in these terms: "The Province "du Midi" includes: the dioceses of the ecclesiastical provinces of Aix, Avignon, Chambéry, Auch, Alby, Toulouse, Alger; and the dioceses of Lyon, Grenoble, Belley and Le Puy; and, in addition, those of Switzerland, Italy, Spain and Portugal. The Province "du Nord" includes:



the dioceses of the ecclesiastical provinces of Besançon, Bordeaux, Cambrai, Paris, Reims, Rennes, Rouen, Sens, Tours, Bourges, except the diocese of Le Puy; and the dioceses of Autun and Dijon; and, in addition, those of Belgium, Holland and Germany.”⁴⁷

The Province “du Midi” in 1898 had 143 Oblates, that is, 103 Fathers, 37 Brothers and 3 scholastics, divided among 14 houses;⁴⁸ the Province “du Nord” had 159 Oblates, that is, 96 Fathers and 63 Brothers who were divided among 13 houses.⁴⁹

III - *The Anglo-Irish Province*

New works

In a period of four years, from 1862 to 1865, the Oblates of the Anglo-Irish Province had established four important foundations in the big cities of England.

The first was opened at Rock Ferry in 1862, a suburb of Liverpool, where the Oblates cared for Catholics immersed into a very large Protestant population.

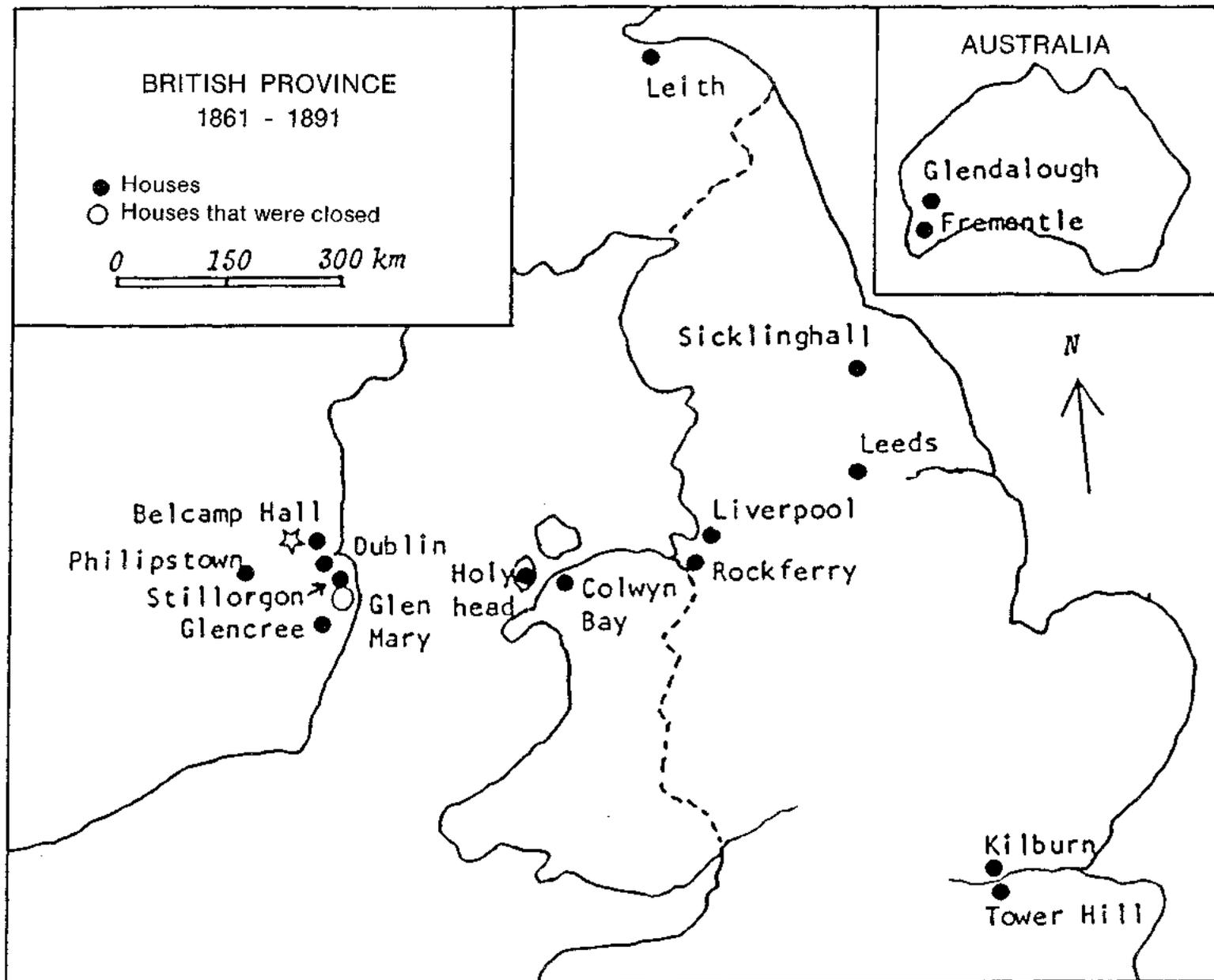
The second was at Tower Hill in 1864, in a poor section of London, where they brought Catholics together and preached missions. The poverty of this section had sorrowfully impressed the Founder during his first visit to England in 1850; hence he greatly desired to see his spiritual sons established there.⁵⁰ The Oblates of Tower Hill were also responsible for the German mission in London: the church of

⁴⁷ *Circulaires administratives*, vol. 1, p. 223.

⁴⁸ Aix, Le Calvaire, Notre-Dame de l'Osier, Ajaccio, Vico, Notre-Dame de Bon Secours, Notre-Dame de la Garde, Fréjus, Lyons, Madrid, Nice, Rome, Urnieta, Notre-Dame de Lumières.

⁴⁹ Angers, Pontmain, Bestin, Limoges, Talence, Autun, St-Andelain, Notre-Dame d'Arcachon, Jersey: St. Thomas, St-Mathieu and St-Martin, Montmartre, Notre-Dame de Sion.

⁵⁰ Cf. Théophile ORTOLAN, o.m.i., *op. cit.*, vol. 1, pp. 567-569.



this mission was located in a very poor quarter and referred to as "little Germany".⁵¹

The third establishment was Kilburn in 1865, located in a suburb to the northwest of London. This placed the Oblates in the midst of a heretical milieu in order to have the true faith flourish there. In a few years, the numbers of Catholics had risen to 600.⁵²

These three establishments in England became three prosperous parishes of the Anglo-Irish Province.

Other foundations also mark the Province's history. In Ireland, the Oblates in 1862 opened a retreat house in Dublin; and in 1870, a second school for young delinquents at Philips-town, today Daingean. In Wales, they accepted, for the benefit of English-speaking Catholics, the direction of the parishes of Holyhead in 1896 and of Colwin Bay in 1898.

Foundation in Australia

Finally, with the consent of the General Council, the Province established itself in the diocese of Perth in western Australia. The local bishop, Bishop Matthew Gibney, was earnestly requesting them to come and serve the seaport district of Fremantle, to direct an industrial school for young people, and to preach missions.⁵³

The provincial, Father Matthew Gaughren, himself presided at the installation of the Oblates in Australia. He arrived in 1894 at Fremantle with Fathers Roger Hennessy and Daniel O'Ryan, and took charge of a parish of some 4000 to 5000 parishioners and of the Catholic population in the surrounding area. An industrial school built at Glendalough, some 16 kilometers from Fremantle, by the Oblates

⁵¹ Cf. letter of Father Fick to the Superior General, May 14, 1873, in *Missions*, 12 (1874), pp. 92-103.

⁵² Cf. Théophile ORTOLAN, O.M.I., *op. cit.*, vol. 3, p. 348.

⁵³ Cf. Thomas HAUGH, O.M.I., "The Oblates in Australia". in *Études Oblates*, 3 (1944), pp. 74-82.

was opened in 1898. Father Daniel O’Ryan assumed its direction and was assisted by four Brothers who had come from the schools of Philipstown and Glencree in Ireland.⁵⁴

Apostolic activities

In the new places of ministry as well as in the former ones, the main work of the Oblates in Ireland remained preaching missions and retreats, whereas in England and in Scotland it was chiefly centered on parishes in a working-class milieu. A special apostolic initiative deserves to be explicitly mentioned, the English pilgrimage to Lourdes organized in 1883 by Father William King, assisted by his fellow Oblates. Placed under the patronage of Cardinal Henry Edward Manning and of several other prelates, this pilgrimage’s objective was to obtain, through Mary’s intercession, the return of England to the faith of its Fathers. To the three hundred pilgrims who came to Lourdes from every part of the British Kingdom, more than a million Catholics from different nationalities, who had given their adherence to this prayer initiative, were added. This first pilgrimage was thereafter repeated.⁵⁵

The Province in 1898

In 1898 the Anglo-Irish Province had 97 Oblates, that is, 48 Fathers, 8 scholastics and 41 Brothers, divided among 16 establishments; 10 of these latter were founded during the period we are now studying.⁵⁶ Two establishments were abandoned during this same period: Glen Mary in 1863, which

⁵⁴ Brothers George Nolan, Michael Lalor, Daniel Howard from Philipstown, and Brother Michael Boland from Glencree. Cf. Charles COX, O.M.I., *Vicariat d’Australie*, in *Missions*, 40 (1902), pp. 5-7.

⁵⁵ Cf. “Pèlerinage anglais à Notre-Dame de Lourdes 310 pèlerins, 21-24 mai”, in *Missions*, 21 (1883), pp. 274-276; Aimé MARTINET, O.M.I., “Coup d’oeil général”, in *Missions*, 22 (1884), p. 7. For the second pilgrimage in 1886, cf. “Pèlerinage britannique à Notre-Dame de Lourdes” in *Missions*, 24 (1886), pp. 393-396.

⁵⁶ Liverpool, Leeds, Sicklinghall, Inchicore (Dublin). Glencree, Leith, Rockferry, Stillorgan, Kilburn, Tower Hill, Philipstown, Belcamp Hall, Fremantle, Holyhead, Glendalough and Colwin Bay.



Léon Legrand (1854-1940)
"The Father of the Province of Germany"

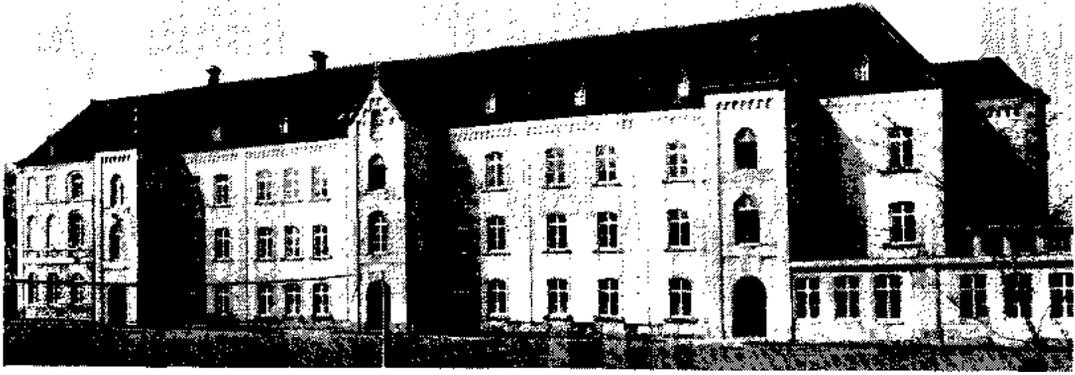
ceased being the novitiate, and the college of the Immaculate Conception at Dublin in 1868.

IV - Origins of the Province of Germany

Foundation

At the suggestion of Father Léon Legrand, the juniorate of the Province "du Nord" in Holland was in 1885 definitively established at Valkenburg under the name of juniorate of St. Charles: it was meant to be a regular recruiting source of young Germans. Soon the time came for the Congregation to spread into Germany itself. However, because of the laws proscribing religious congregations which were still in force in that country, it could only gain admittance there as a missionary Congregation in a territory placed under the protectorate of the Empire. To satisfy this requirement, the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda Fide entrusted to the Oblates' zeal the apostolic prefecture of lower Cimbebasia in south-west Africa, a part of present-day Namibia.

After long and delicate negotiations with an imperial Government which continued to remain suspicious of all religious institutes, Father Soullier, the Superior General, obtained the necessary civil authorization and, on May 5,



*St. Charles Juniorate, Collegium Carolinum, Valkenburg, Holland
The cradle of the Province of Germany*

1895, established the Province of Germany. The new Province's central house was to be located in the diocese of Fulda. In these first beginnings, the Province consisted of this future central house, the juniorate of St. Charles and the novitiate of St. Gerlach — both of these latter houses were in Holland — and the house of missionaries in Alsace-Lorraine. The house in the diocese of Fulda, which included a scholasticate, was opened at Huenfeld in 1897.⁵⁷

The young Province

The new Province, whose provincial was Father Simon Scharsch, was full of life and promise for the future. The work of parish missions was launched with energy and great success by Father Maximianus Kassieppe, who became one of the great missionary preachers of Germany. In 1898 the Province personnel already numbered 31 Fathers, 64 scholastics, 40 Brothers, 19 scholastic novices, 10 Brother novices and 178 juniorists.⁵⁸

⁵⁷ Cf. Circular letter no. 60, May 5, 1895 of Father Louis Soullier, O.M.I. Also cf. "Lettre du R.P. Scharsch, provincial, au R.P. Tatin", in *Missions*, 36 (1898), p. 340.

⁵⁸ Cf. *Missions*, 36 (1898), p. 340.

CHAPTER 10

In Eastern Canada and in the United States - 1861-1898

I. The Province of Canada: - Indian missions: to Labrador and Chimo - From Temiscaming to James Bay. - The St. Maurice and other missions - The ministry of the missionaries - Among the pioneers: Maniwaki, Temiscaming, Mattawa - Montreal, a centre for preaching - Saint-Sauveur in Quebec - Ottawa: parishes, the university - Hull: Notre-Dame de Grace - Lowell: centre for Franco-American works - Among the English-speaking people - Houses of formation - Fathers Antoine and Lefebvre - State of the Province in 1898. **II. The missions of Texas and the Province of the United States:** - Trials coming from the outside - Refusal of apostolic vicariates - An internal crisis - A province in the United States - Works of the new Province.

I - The Province of Canada

The Oblates of the Province of Canada were exercising their zeal in three major areas: Indian missions, the territories of the country being opened for settlement or in the process of "colonization", and the cities and villages in the south of Eastern Canada and the north-east of the United States.

The Indian missions,¹ already established in three vast areas of Eastern Canada, were making progress in their life and their extension.

¹ The word *Amerindian* is more and more being used to designate the *Indians* of America.

*The Indian missions:
to Labrador and to Chimo*

The missionaries who since 1844 were opening the region of the Saguenay and the North Shore of the St. Lawrence River, had established their residence in the midst of their flock, temporarily at Escoumins in 1851, and then definitively on the Indian reserve of the Betsiamites in 1862. Later, in 1889, they opened a second residence on another Indian reserve at Pointe-Bleue,² at Lake St. John. The house of Quebec remained a home base for the missionaries and Father Flavien Durocher, the superior of this house and a veteran of the Indian missions, continued to do the annual mission at Lake St. John until 1875.

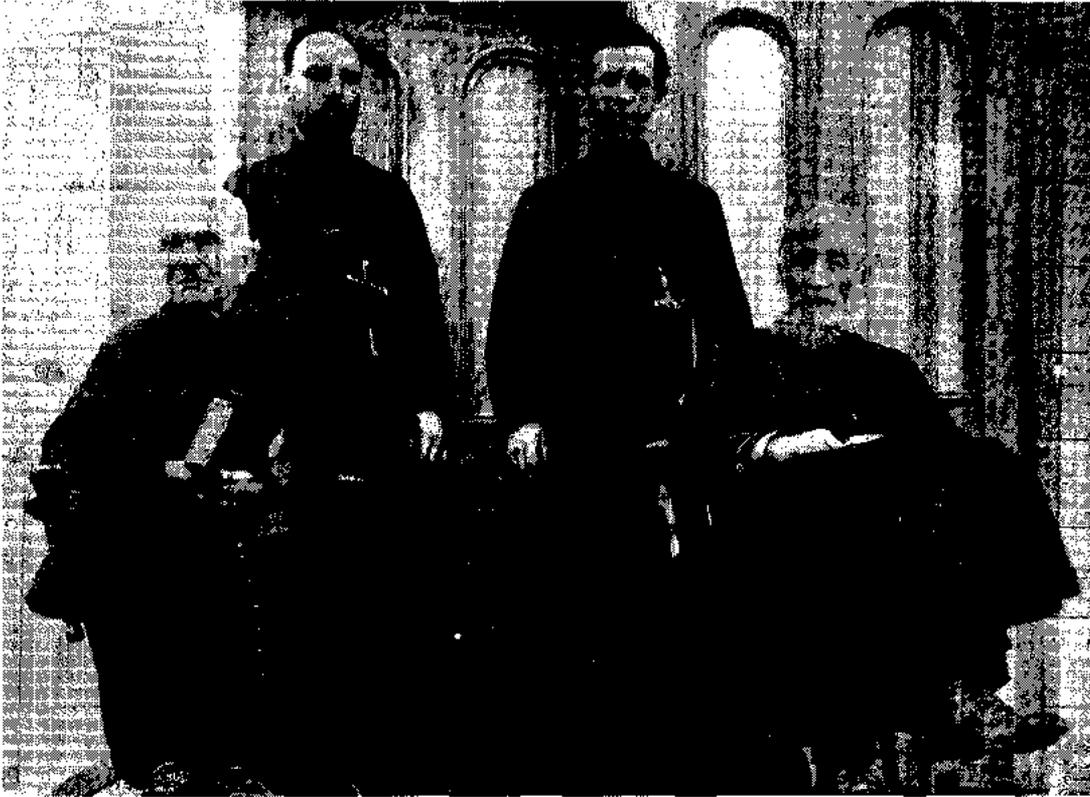
Besides the missions given regularly to the many stations that were located along the length of the North Shore of the St. Lawrence River and to the stations at Lake St. John (these latter from 1875 to 1889),³ the missionaries to the Betsiamites undertook the far distant missions to the interior of the country, to Eskimo Bay in Labrador. In this hinterland they reached the Naskapis Indians, a tribe of the Montagnais who wandered as far afield as Ungava Bay.

The courageous Father Babel made long dangerous expeditions and reached the territory of the Naskapis four times between 1866 and 1870.⁴ Father Arnaud, who had already

² The Provincial Council had even decided to establish the juniorate in the residence that was opened at Pointe-Bleue. Because negotiations were poorly conducted on the part of the Provincial in seeking the local Bishop's authorization, this project was postponed until later and then abandoned. Moreover, as the General Council did, we can have our doubts about the success of a juniorate which would have been located so far away from the main centres. Cf. Gaston CARRIÈRE, O.M.I., *Histoire documentaire de la Congrégation des Missionnaires Oblats de Marie Immaculée dans l'Est du Canada*, vol. 8, pp. 141-155.

³ However the secular priests had again accepted serving the Whites of the Saguenay in 1853, of the parish of Natashquan in 1864, and other stations where Whites lived. The Indians remained the responsibility of the Oblates.

⁴ Father Babel had the gifts of an explorer and left notes of his trips as well as precious maps of the territories he passed through. They mention, for



The Missionaries to the Betsiamites
 Seated (l. to rt.): Charles Arnaud, Louis Babel
 Standing (l. to rt.): Benjamin Boyer, Hormisdas Perrault

tried three times without success to reach them (in 1853, 1855 and 1858), succeeded to him from 1870 to 1875. A mission was established at North West River at Eskimo Bay. The Naskapis, who were well disposed, accepted the Gospel and became a fine Christian community. In 1871 this mission had its own chapel, dedicated to Our Lady of the Snows.

These far away missions of Eskimo Bay were usually reached by sea on the Hudson Bay supply ship, and were undertaken more than twenty times in all from 1853 to 1900.⁵ Fathers Zacharie Lacasse, Désiré Fafard and Georges Lemoine

example, the presence of mineral deposits which will begin to be exploited only some 75 years later. His trips were made in 1866, 1867, 1868 and 1870. Of his writings, the following has been published: *Journal des voyages de Louis Babel 1866-1868*, recherche et transcription, Huguette Tremblay, Les Presses de l'Université de Québec, Montreal, 1977, 161 pages.

⁵ Cf. Gaston CARRIÈRE, O.M.I., *op. cit.*, vol. 8, p. 321. In 1875-1876, Father Lacasse spent the winter in the interior of Labrador.

successively took up this task after Fathers Babel and Arnaud.

The missionaries' zeal pushed them even further to the Far North, to Fort Chimo at Ungava Bay, in full Eskimo country where many Naskapis would assemble. Father Arnaud was the first missionary to set foot there in 1872.⁶ That year, he taught catechism to 18 persons, Naskapis and Eskimos, 5 of whom were already baptized. In the succeeding years, the missionaries in charge of Eskimo Bay would go there, whenever possible.⁷ The project of establishing a residence at Fort Chimo, which was suggested by the missionaries and approved in 1892 by the Oblate authorities, could not be carried out because the financial means were lacking.⁸

From Temiscaming to James Bay

The second large area of Indians missions, the centre of which was Temiscaming, was located in the western part of the Province and extended to Abitibi, to the neighboring area in Ontario on to James Bay. The Oblates had been at work in this region since 1844 and had at first established their residence in 1863 at St-Claude on Lake Temiscaming, and thereafter, in 1889, at another spot on the lake which was later called Ville-Marie. In 1896, the missionaries to the Indians left Ville-Marie and established themselves on the Indian

⁶ Cf. "Le Journal de Voyage du père Charles Arnaud au Labrador (1872)", published by Father Gaston CARRIÈRE, O.M.I., in *Vie Oblate*, 34 (1975), pp. 45-110. The following has also been published: *Journal des voyages de Charles Arnaud 1872-1873*, recherche et transcription, Huguette TREMBLAY, Les Presses de l'Université du Québec, Montreal, 1977, 118 pages.

⁷ Access to Fort Chimo on Ungava Bay was possible only by means of the Hudson Bay Company's supply ship which at times could not go or arrive in time for the missionary to meet the Indians before they left for their hunting grounds.

⁸ The missions of Eskimo Bay and Fort Chimo were manned by only one missionary at a time and still the financial means were not at hand. At the end of the period we are studying, "the missionaries ceased coming to their flock, even for only a few days during the year. We do not know the exact reason for this." Gaston CARRIÈRE, O.M.I., *op. cit.*, vol. 8, p. 351.

reserve of Tête-du-Lac, north of Lake Temiscaming. This is today Notre-Dame-du-Nord. These missionaries made a yearly visit to some 10 missions,⁹ making a circuit of some 2700 kilometers.

The missions of James Bay, attached to Temiscaming, were far distant, however. One could not but admire the courage of the missionaries who went there every year, making some 1300 kilometers by canoe. Among these was Father Nédélec who, from 1867 to 1891, made this trip 21 times.¹⁰ A permanent presence of a priest in this locality was imperative both for the good of the faithful who were left to themselves for the greater part of the year and for the progress of evangelization.

Fathers François-Xavier Fafard and Joseph Guinard and Brother Grégoire Lapointe, founded in 1892 the first missionary residence in Albany, where a chapel had already been built in 1869. The year following, Father Fafard opened the mission of Fort Hope, 650 kilometers inland, and Father Guinard visited Attawapiscat, some 160 kilometers to the North of Albany, and Winisk, several more hundred kilometers to the north on Hudson Bay. The Christian communities of James Bay, which before had been visited but once a year, were now renewed in their fervour and made progress. The work of evangelization in this far distant and inhospitable land was taking on a new thrust.

The St. Maurice and other missions

The third large area of Indian missions, it too served by the Oblates from 1844 onwards, is that referred to as the

⁹ Longue-Pointe, Abitibi, Timogami, Matatchewan, Matagami, Grassy Lake, North River, Kipawa, Bay Lake, Golden Lake. Cf. Gaston CARRIÈRE, O.M.I., *op. cit.*, vol. 7, p. 231.

¹⁰ Cf. Gaston CARRIÈRE, O.M.I., *Dictionnaire biographique des Oblats de Marie Immaculée au Canada*, tome 3, p. 13. The annual visit of James Bay mission was started by Father Nicolas Laverlochère in 1847; he made it until 1851. Thereafter, it was done by one or two missionaries: André-Marie Garin (1852-1857), Jean-François-Régis Déléage (1855-1860), Jean-Marie Pian (1859-1866), and Jean-Marie Nédélec (1867-1892).

Missions of St. Maurice and extended in the north beyond the headwaters of the River that bears this name. Father Jean-Pierre Guéguen is the accomplished missionary of this region from 1867 to 1899. Leaving either from Maniwaki or from Temiscaming, he made an annual canoe trip of some 2750 kilometers over the rivers and lakes, countless times having to cope with rapids and portages. He generally visited seven main posts¹¹ and a number of intermediary secondary ones. In spite of the firm intent thereto, it was never possible to establish a residence for the missionary in this region.

It should be pointed out that the Indians of Maniwaki are still being served by the Oblates and that the mission of Sault-St-Louis — today Caughnawaga — near Montreal, cared for by Father Nicolas Burtin from 1855 onwards, was passed on to the secular clergy in 1892.¹²

The ministry of the missionaries

In all these missions, the missionaries learned the language of the Indians they were serving: montagnais, algonquin, iroquois or cree. They composed or re-edited prayer-books and hymnals and catechisms in the Indian tongues. In their apostolate, they attached great importance to the chapel, a place where people were to gather for prayer. Hence, wherever possible, they built a chapel. Brothers Grégoire Lapointe and Charles Tremblay are among the great chapel builders.

In the many posts they visited each year, the missionaries gave short missions: catechetical instructions and administration of the sacraments, gave advice to the Indians and, in the measure that this was possible, gave help to the poor and to the sick. All the missionaries became lovingly and devotedly

¹¹ Kipawa River, Grand Lac, Barrière River, Weymontaching, Kikendatch, Megisgane and Waswanipi. The mission of Lake Mistassini was done 5 times from 1862 to 1870, and then discontinued.

¹² Cf. "Refusal to accept the charge of apostolic prefectures or vicariates in the Canadian North-East", Documentary Note 23, p. 318.

attached to the Indians and these latter venerated and loved them in return.¹³

*Among the pioneers:
Maniwaki, Temiscaming, Mattawa*

The ministry in territories being settled, referred to as colonization areas, made up the second major category of the Province of Canada's activities. Three regions, the centres of which are Maniwaki, Temiscaming, and Mattawa, challenged their zeal.

In the first region, that of the Gatineau with Maniwaki as the centre, the missionaries had since 1849 been serving very many localities that were springing up. Some of these became parishes and were handed over to the secular clergy and others remain in the Oblates' care.¹⁴ In the 1873 General Chapter, the Provincial stated: "Through our Fathers of Notre-Dame du Desert (Maniwaki) the Gatineau River basin has been evangelized; it was they who attracted the Catholic population and who formed the parishes."¹⁵

The Brothers of Maniwaki made an important contribution to the work of colonization by running model farms, constructing a saw mill and milling grain, as well as by communicating their experience to the new farmers.¹⁶

In the second region, that of Temiscaming, a region quite remote from the farming parishes of the south, Brother

¹³ Cf. Gaston CARRIÈRE, O.M.I., "Méthodes et réalisations missionnaires des Oblats dans l'Est du Canada", in *Études Oblates*, 16 (1957), pp. 37-65; 22 (1963), pp. 53-80. A paragraph deals with missionaries who were ethnologists, explorers, geographers, naturalists, architects and linguists.

¹⁴ The following were handed over to the secular clergy: Gracefield in 1868, Bouchette in 1872, Montcerf in 1892. The Oblates retained Ste-Famille d'Aumond, Bois-Franc, St-Cajétan, Baskatong, etc.

¹⁵ *Missions*, 11 (1873), p. 332.

¹⁶ Brother Isaïe Lapointe was a specialist in poultry and spent his religious life at Maniwaki from 1879 to 1942. Brother Alphonse Laporte was especially noted for his talent as a beekeeper, and his advice was much sought after by the farmers of the region; the Brother was there from 1893 to 1930.

Joseph Moffet began in 1874 to experiment with the arable value of the soil. From 1883 onwards, Fathers Edward Gendreau and Charles Paradis became promoters of colonization. Father Gendreau was even the president and soul of a Society for the colonization of Temiscaming founded in 1884 and of a railroad company of Temiscaming.¹⁷ Brother Moffet, a man of experience and a genius at organization, on whom the survival of the colonists often depended, was surnamed "the Father of Temiscaming". Colonizing the region brought into existence a number of places served by the Oblates, several of which became parishes in the beginning of the 20th century.¹⁸

The third colonization region was near Temiscaming and located in Ontario, with Mattawa as its centre. It was first visited by the Fathers from Temiscaming, but it received its own residence of Missionaries at Mattawa in 1869. Besides looking after the parish that was being formed there, the Oblates visited the sparse population along the Ottawa and Mattawa Rivers and around Lake Nipissing. They ministered to colonists, Indians, men of lumber camps, workers and employees of the railroad. Some 31 stations were at one time or other served by the missionaries at Mattawa.¹⁹ The Oblates were constantly responsible for regularly ministering to 6 or 7 posts for the whites and as many for the Indians of the area. These stations will become parishes. Among the missionaries of Mattawa, the zealous Father Nédélec should be mentioned: he spent 23 years there, during the summers of which he would undertake his mission to James Bay.

In these three colonization areas, the missionaries were constantly travelling; they were ministering to people who were poor but well disposed; they were laying the foundations

¹⁷ Cf. Gaston CARRIÈRE, O.M.I., *Histoire documentaire de la Congrégation des Missionnaires Oblats de Marie Immaculée dans l'Est du Canada*, vol. 7, pp. 216-219.

¹⁸ St-Bruno-de-Guigues, Fabre, Laverlochère, St-Placide-de-Béarn, etc.

¹⁹ Cf. Gaston CARRIÈRE, *op. cit.*, vol. 8, p. 51.

for parishes and future dioceses, as well as sometimes promoting the work of colonization itself.²⁰

Furthermore, also in these areas that were being developed, the lumber camps continued to require the Oblates' zeal. This work, already begun in 1845, became more prosperous than ever in the decade of the 1870s.²¹ The houses of Hull, Maniwaki, Temiscaming and Mattawa sent from six to nine missionaries to this ministry for two or three months in winter. Hundreds of lumber camps along the Ottawa, Gatineau and Mattawa basins were the scene of a yearly mission. The missionaries to the Betsiamites, for their part, looked after the lumber camps on the North Shore. Father Louis Reboul was for 25 years the soul of this apostolic work.²²

Montreal, a centre for preaching

The third major area of the Province of Canada's activities, an area in which it had committed most men, consists of certain large centres, especially Montreal, Quebec, Ottawa, Hull, Lowell.

In Montreal, St-Pierre-Apôtre remains the Province's central establishment. The Provincial resided there; most of the preaching missionaries are based there and a church frequented by more than 8000 faithful was served from there.

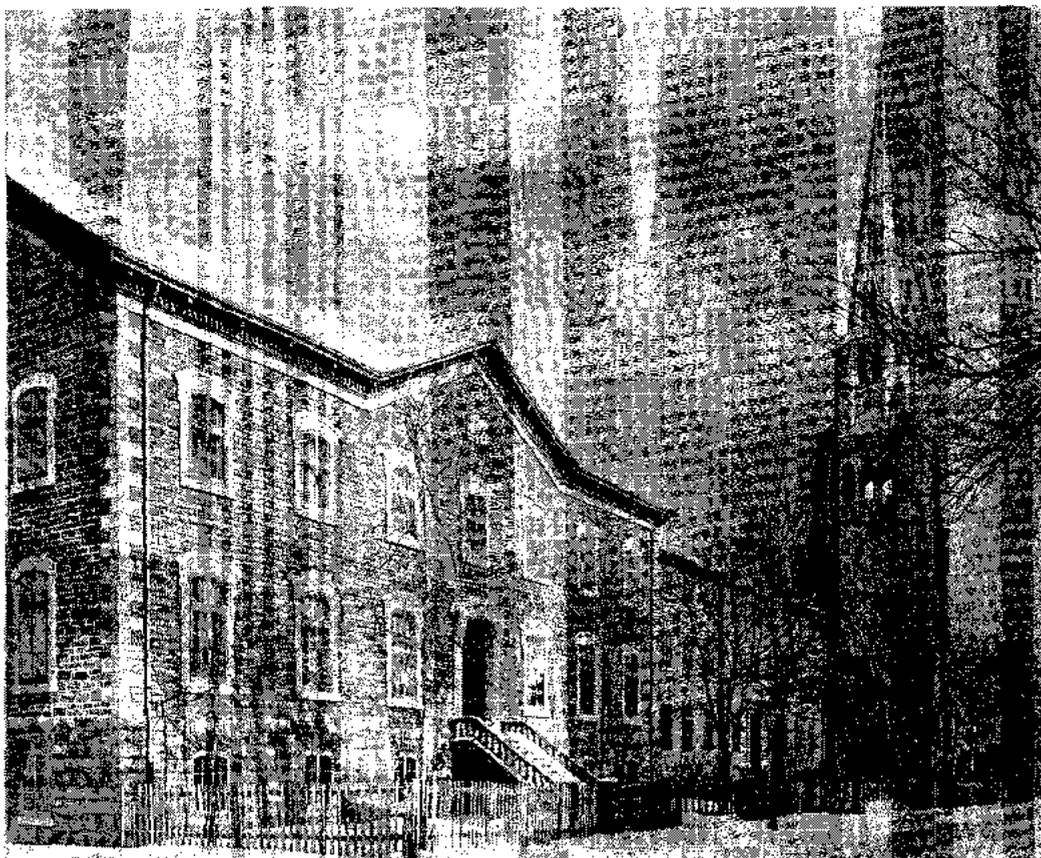
The missionaries of St-Pierre-Apôtre evangelized all the parishes of the diocese of Montreal²³ and a great number in

²⁰ Alexandre Cardinal Taschereau, the archbishop of Quebec, in 1880 called Father Zacharie Lacasse the apostle of colonization. On this occasion, the newspaper *Le Canada* in its issue of June 7th praised the Oblates for their work in favour of colonization and concluded: "In short, no other congregation in these latter times identified itself so much with the colonists' life, with their hard labour and misery; thereby the great cause of religion and of the fatherland has made equal progress." (quoted in *Missions*, 18 (1880), p. 326). In 1886, the Government of Quebec called upon Father Lacasse to preach in favour of agricultural schools.

²¹ Cf. *Missions*, 11 (1873), pp. 326-327.

²² Funeral eulogy for Father Reboul by Bishop Thomas Duhamel of Ottawa, in *Notices nécrologiques*, vol. 3, p. 380.

²³ Cf. *Missions*, 8 (1869), p. 184.

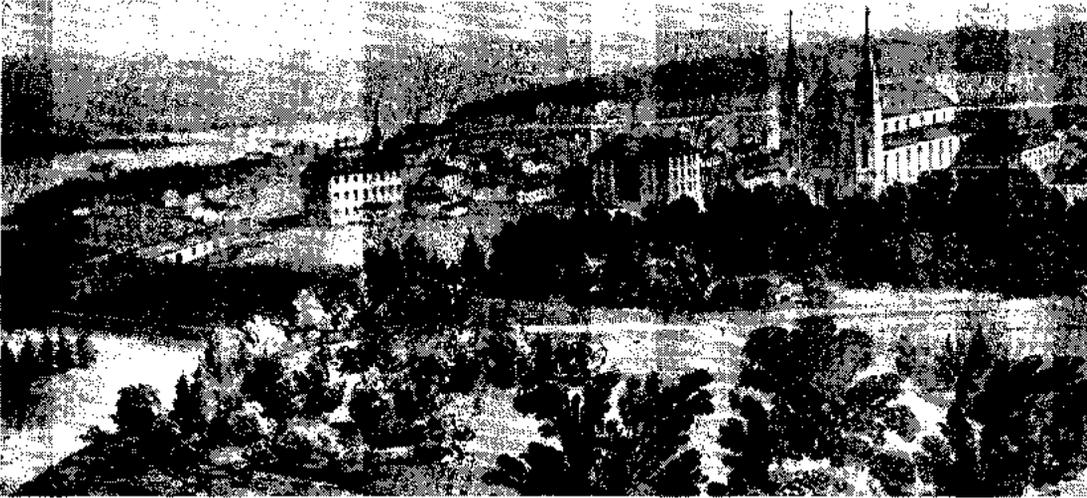


*Saint-Pierre-Apôtre, Montreal
School, parish house, church. Photo taken prior to 1900.*

other dioceses in Canada and even in the United States. They also preached in institutions, colleges, gave retreats to priests, to religious men and women. This bishop regularly, or almost so, requested them to preach on the occasion of pastoral visitations. "They became the preferred preachers, much sought after in the whole of Eastern Canada and in the French-speaking centres of the United States."²⁴ As Visitor, Father Soullier wrote in his 1876 Acts of Visitation that St-Pierre-Apôtre was "a power-source of zeal which reached out over the whole of Canada and often beyond."²⁵

²⁴ Gaston CARRIÈRE, O.M.I., *Cents cinquante ans d'action apostolique au rythme de l'Église*, p. 100.

²⁵ Louis SOULLIER, O.M.I., Acte de visite de la maison St-Pierre-Apôtre, Montréal, 26 octobre au 2 novembre 1876. Archives provinciales Montréal, *Actes o.m.i.*, vol. 3, p. 59. Bishop Bourget of Montreal in 1866 said to the Oblates of St-Pierre: "After God, it is to you, Fathers, that I owe the preservation of the faith in my diocese." *Missions*, 7 (1868), p. 22.



(Design by Whitehead, 1855. Courtesy National Archives.)

(From l. to rt.): Mother house of the Grey Nuns, College of Bytown, the Cathedral, the Bishop's Residence.

Saint Sauveur in Quebec

The house of Saint-Sauveur in Quebec had been serving a church since 1853, a church that became a parish in 1867. The Oblates there were busy with confraternities, associations, schools, charitable institutions, and other concerns. An auxiliary chapel was built in 1880 and named Notre-Dame de Lourdes. In 1898 the Provincial, speaking about this parish, declared that it was "in the opinion of all who had immediate experience of it, a model parish".²⁶ Father Flavien Durocher was the first to be in charge of it and was its pastor until his death in 1876. He and Father Ferdinand Grenier, who gave more than 40 years of his life to this parish and was loved and venerated by all, are the outstanding men of that time.

Ottawa: parishes, the University

In the city of Ottawa, the Oblates of the College served the parish of St. Joseph. They had to rebuild this parish church twice, in 1866 and again in 1893, because it had become too small for the growing population. In 1893, the

²⁶ *Missions*, 36 (1898), p. 301.



Joseph Tabaret (1828-1886)
Founder of the University of Ottawa

French-speaking Catholics are separated from this parish to form a new one, that of Sacré-Coeur which was entrusted to the Oblates of the Juniorat du Sacré-Coeur.

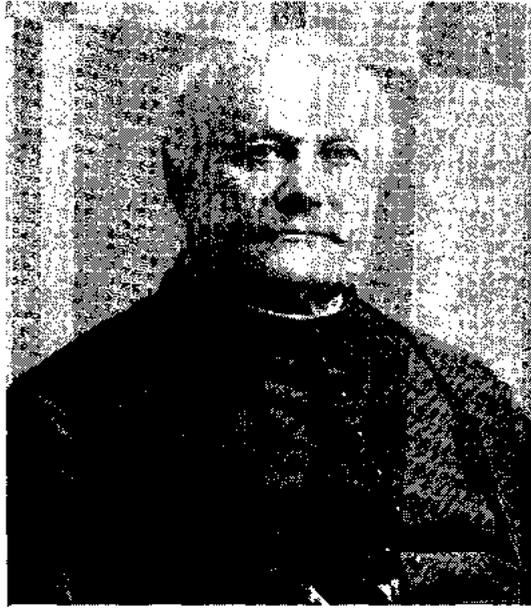
The College of Ottawa, founded in 1848 by Bishop Guigues as a bi-lingual institution, was in 1866 raised to the rank of a university by the Government of Canada. By decree of Leo XIII in 1889, it received the status of a Catholic university. This work, which began so humbly, grew bit by bit under the wise direction of Father Henri Tabaret who was directly responsible for it from 1853 to 1886, except for the three years when he was Provincial. The work included the diocesan major seminary from the time of its founding, the scholasticate until 1885 and the juniorate until 1889.²⁷

Hull: Notre-Dame de Grâce

Since it had been agreed that the Oblates would leave the Bishop's residence after Bishop Guigues departure,²⁸ the latter

²⁷ Besides being in charge of the parish of St. Joseph, the major seminary, the scholasticate until 1885, and the juniorate from 1876 to 1888, the Fathers of the University were the chaplains to the Grey Nuns of the city and all their boarding schools, to the Good Shepherd Sisters and their works for repentant women, of the Congregation of Notre Dame and their students, of the Congregations of men in the city, and of the prison.

²⁸ Bishop Joseph-Eugène-Bruno Guigues, the bishop of the diocese of Bytown which in 1860 became Ottawa, died on February 4, 1874. He had



André-Marie Garin (1822-1895)
Founder of the house in Lowell, United States

wanted to compensate them by definitively establishing them in Hull where they had been at work since the very beginnings of that locality. In 1870, he established a parish at Hull, named Notre-Dame de Grâces and entrusted it to the Oblates. The bishopric at Ottawa then became a simple residence for the two Oblates who served the cathedral; the other Oblates moved to the new house set up in Hull. Fathers Louis Reboul, Hyacinthe Charpeney and Eugène Cauvin, whose names have been remembered by several generations, were the pioneers in organizing the new parish which already in 1873 had some 10,000 faithful.

Lowell: centre for Franco-American works

In 1868, the Province of Canada accepted a foundation in Lowell. It was destined to have considerable influence on the 500,000 or so French Canadians who were spread over

been the superior of of the Oblates in America from 1844 to 1851, provincial of Canada from 1856 to 1864, and he remained an Oblate at heart and very devoted to his religious family. He had governed his diocese with energy and wisdom and had always worked in union with bishops of the land. "He was one of the great bishops of Canada of the last century." Gaston CARRIÈRE, O.M.I., *Histoire documentaire . . .*, vol. 11, p. 111.

the eastern United States and also on the Irish Catholic population. The missionaries assured services in the church of Saint Joseph for the French Canadians, in the church of the Immaculate Conception for the Irish; they founded Catholic parochial schools, and called upon the Grey Nuns of Ottawa for these works of education. They served outposts of French Canadians and preached missions in New England. In the 1880s, they were at work in some ten dioceses. Father André-Marie Garin, the founder of the house in Lowell and "the directing spirit of all this activity",²⁹ remained active at his post until his death in 1895. The gratitude of the people has built a monument in his memory at Lowell.

Among the English-speaking people

When they accepted the foundation in Lowell, the Oblates of Canada asked to serve a church for the Irish and also asked for authorization to preach missions in English in the diocese. These requests were granted. Since 1851, they were already serving the English-speaking parish of Holy Angels in Buffalo; in 1860, they had accepted the English-speaking parish of St. John the Baptist in Plattsburgh, which they kept until 1879; they also took charge of churches for French Canadian emigrés and for the Irish at St. Paul, Minnesota, from 1873 to 1877.³⁰ In each of these places, the missionaries saw to the establishment of French or English Catholic parochial schools, and did ministry in nearby posts.

From 1856 onwards, the house at Buffalo became an important centre for preachers. A group of eight missionaries preached nearly 110 missions, most of them in English, from 1856 to 1862.³¹ This work diminished for about two or three

²⁹ Gaston CARRIÈRE, O.M.I., vol. 10, p. 262. Upon the suggestion made by the Abbé Benoni Leclerc, the parish priest of Stanbridge, Quebec, Bishop John Joseph William of Boston asked the Oblates to serve the people of Canadian descent in the city of Lowell. *Ibidem*, pp. 206-207.

³⁰ Cf. *Missions*, 17 (1879), p. 364; Gaston CARRIÈRE, O.M.I., *op. cit.*, vol. 10, pp. 263 sq.

³¹ Cf. Henri WATELLE, O.M.I., "Rapport sur l'oeuvre des missions dans la première province des États-Unis", in *Missions*, 45 (1907), p. 441.

years and then vigorously resumed. From 1870 on, Lowell became a centre for all this activity.³² Father Joseph Mangin, who was involved in preaching from 1866 to 1878, wrote: "Missions, missions, in them lies salvation for the people in the United States. . . . The flood of immigration continues to cast thousands and thousands of Catholics on our shores (10,000 emigrants landed at New York every week). . . . These are the strayed sheep who are in danger of being lost."³³ Because of a lack of personnel, however, this effort to preach missions experienced a decline in 1873.

Houses of formation

The Province of Canada organized its Oblate formation institutions on a solid footing. The juniorate opened at the University of Ottawa in 1876, was established in its own house in 1895.³⁴ In 1866 the novitiate also found its permanent location at Lachine, near Montreal. The scholasticate, at first joined to the major seminary of Ottawa at the University of Ottawa, was in 1885 set up in its own house at Archeville — which today is part of Ottawa — and put under the immediate jurisdiction of the General Administration. Aspirants to the Oblate way of life came in good numbers: for the period from 1861 to 1898, there are 662 takings of the habit and 430 first oblations on record.³⁵

Fathers Antoine and Lefebvre

Among the Provincials of that time,³⁶ there are two who merit to be singled out. Father Joseph-Eugène Antoine who

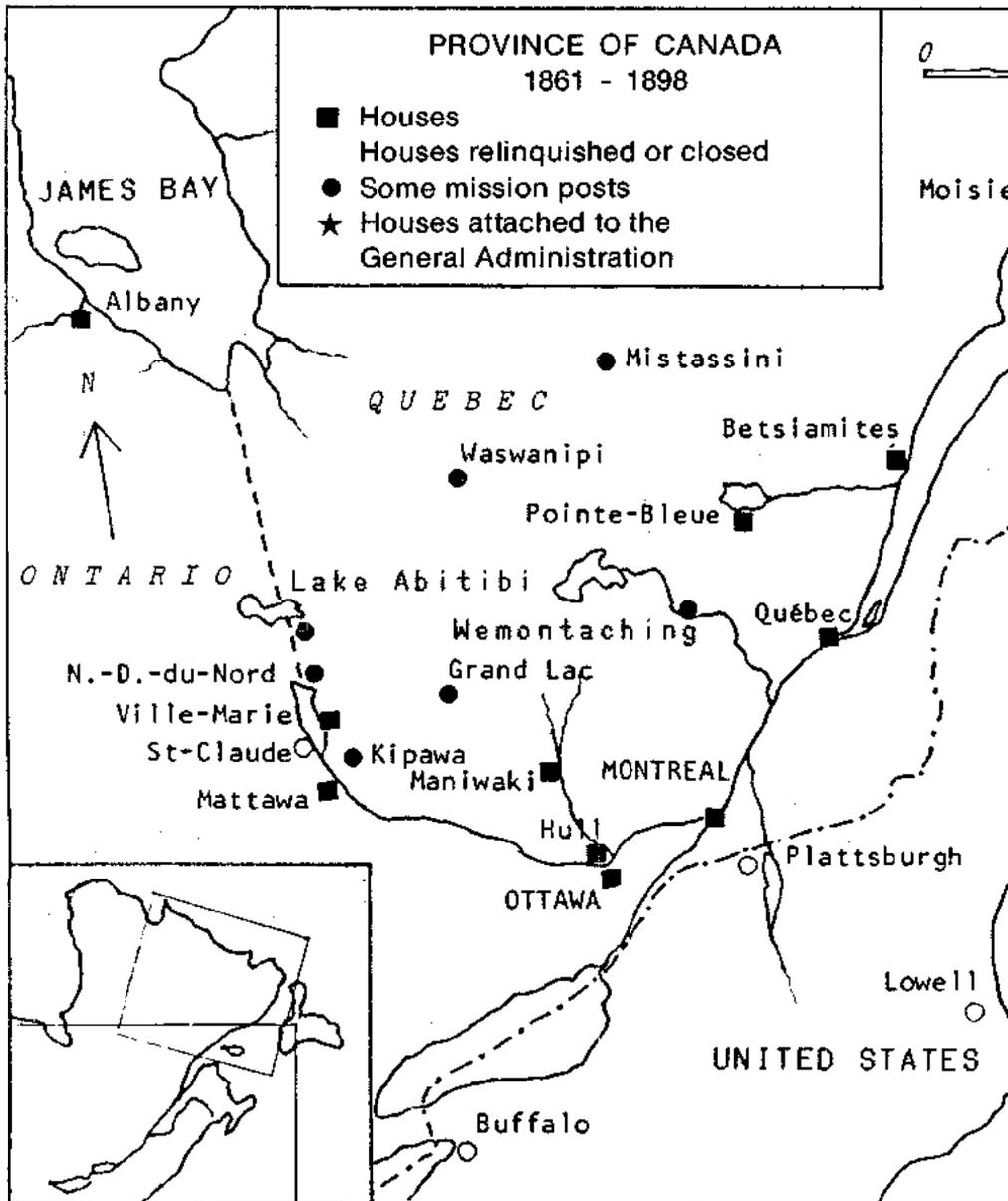
³² *Ibidem*, p. 444.

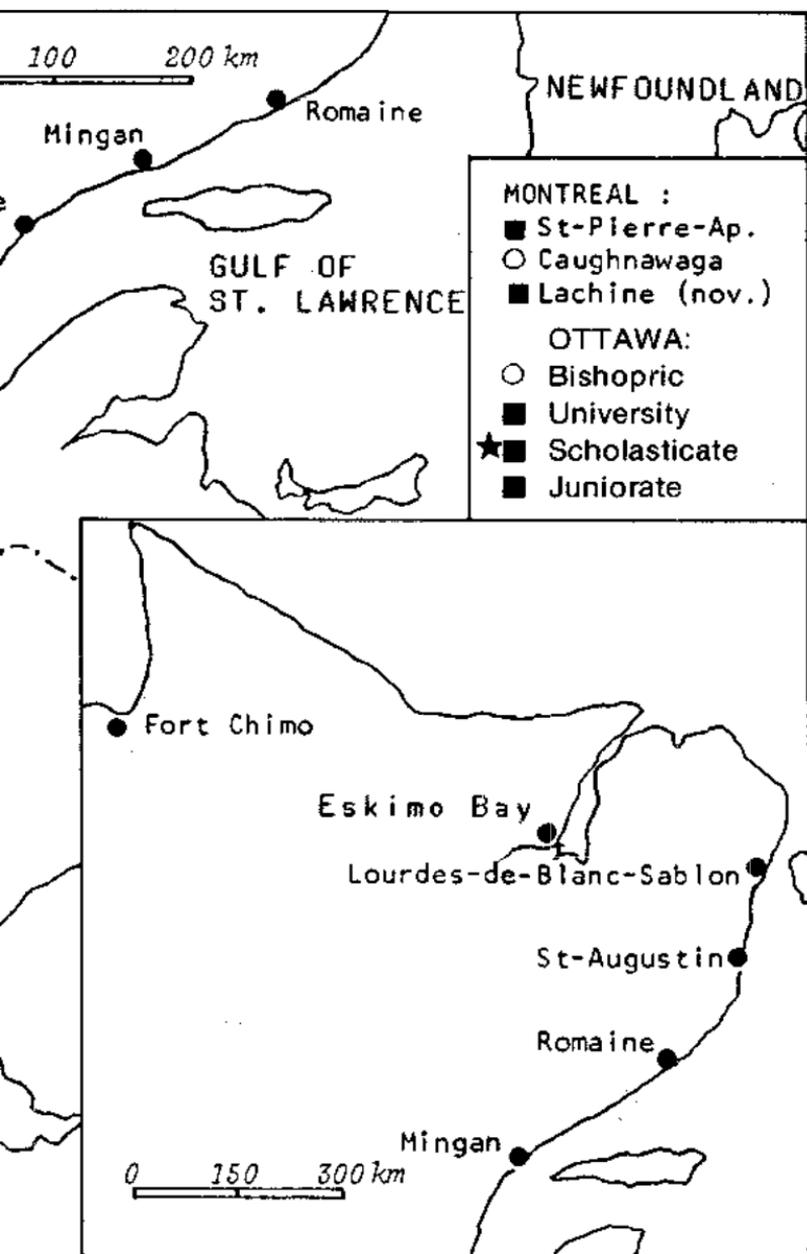
³³ Joseph MANGIN, O.M.I., to the Provincial of Canada, in *Missions*, 9 (1870), pp. 308-309.

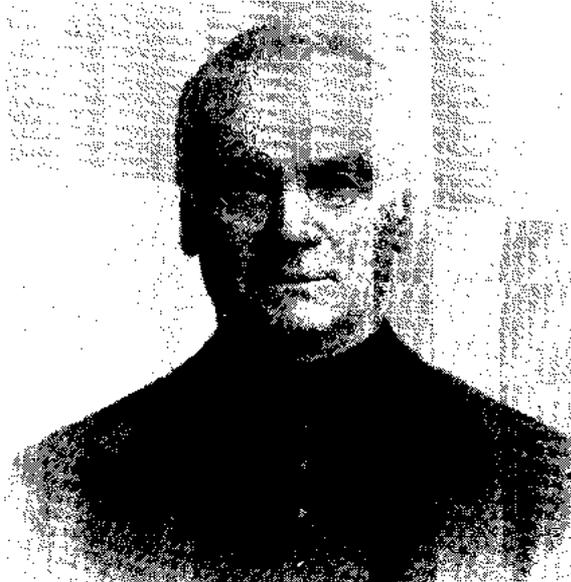
³⁴ An attempt to set up a juniorate at the novitiate in Lachine around 1870 preceded the opening of a proper juniorate at the University of Ottawa in 1876. In 1888, after considering moving the juniorate to Pointe-Bleue, the provincial authorities permanently established it in Ottawa, giving it the name of Juniorat du Sacré-Coeur.

³⁵ Cf. *Registre des prises d'habit et des Oblats du noviciat*, vol. 1, 1841-1884; vol. 2, 1881-1899. Archives provinciales O.M.I., Montreal.

³⁶ Bishop Eugène-Bruno Guigues, 1856-1864; Joseph Tabaret, 1864-1867; Florent Vandenberghe, 1867-1873; Joseph Antoine, 1873-1887; Célestin Au-







Joseph-Eugène Antoine (1826-1900)
Provincial of Canada 1873-1887

was in office for 14 years, from 1873 to 1887. He was a kind and understanding man, a wise administrator, and was accepted and loved by all. Father Louis Soullier, as Visitor in 1884, praised the quality of interior life which then existed in the communities of the Province: the religious spirit, fidelity to prayer, charity in relationships, respect for and confidence in superiors.³⁷ Father Joseph Lefebvre served in the capacity of Provincial from 1891 to 1897; he was the first Canadian Oblate to become Provincial. As Father Antoine, he was particularly esteemed and loved by everyone because of his goodness and wise, skillful government.³⁸

gier, 1887-1891; Joseph Lefebvre, 1891-1897; and Joseph-Marie Jodoin, 1897-1903.

³⁷ Cf. *Actes généraux de visites canoniques faites dans la province du Canada. Visites 1876 et 1884*, Paris, 1884, p. 26. Father Antoine was "universally esteemed and loved in Canada. Few European religious men have had the gift of identifying as he has with our Canadian fatherland; the clergy and the faithful, therefore, look upon him as one of our own." Bishop Adélar Languevin, in *Missions*, 54 (1920), p. 345.

³⁸ In particular, Father Lefebvre was able to calm certain people who were somewhat riled up on account of difficulties that arose during the term of his predecessor, Father Augier. The latter did not have "the happy touch to soothe Canadian aspirations". Gaston CARRIÈRE, O.M.I., *op. cit.*, vol. 11, p. 61.

State of the Province in 1898

At the time of the 1898 General Chapter, the Province's personnel consisted of 133 Oblates, that is, 87 Fathers, 42 Brothers, and 4 scholastics. These were divided among the professors at the University of Ottawa as well as among 8 houses and 4 residences.³⁹

II - The Missions of Texas and the Province of the United States

The mission of Texas, abandoned in 1851 and resumed the next year, consisted of the parish of Brownsville, and ministry in the numerous ranchos and the missions of Mexico. In 1861, Texas became a religious pro-vicariate with Father Augustin Gaudet as its superior.

Trials coming from the outside

However, from the year 1861 onwards, important events shook up the mission's life. A religious persecution that broke out in Mexico chased out the Oblates established in Victoria and, in 1866, those of Matamoros, who had tried to stay at their post in spite of the persecution.⁴⁰ In 1861 there also broke out the American War of Secession which ended in 1865, four years of horror and serious troubles for the missionaries. In 1862, Bishop Jean-Marie Odin, C.M., promoted to the archdiocese of New Orleans, left the diocese of Texas. His departure, as well as the death of Bishop de Mazenod which had occurred the year before, left the missionaries deprived of the support of the two prelates who had been at the origins of their work and had remained most favourable to them.

³⁹ Houses: St-Pierre of Montreal, University of Ottawa, St-Sauveur in Quebec, Maniwaki, Ville-Marie, Mattawa, Juniorat du Sacré-Coeur, and Hull; residences: Betsiamites, Novitiate at Lachine, Pointe-Bleue and Albany.

⁴⁰ Cf. Letter of Father Joseph-Marie Clos to the Superior General, June 28, 1866, in *Missions*, 6 (1867), pp. 158-175.

In spite of the insecurities and troubles stemming from the War of Secession, the Oblates continued their ministry at Brownsville and in the ranchos. In 1864 they opened a residence at Agualeguas, a little locality in Mexico where their presence was not noticed by the persecutors. There they took on the direction of a shrine dedicated to the Blessed Virgin and of a parish where they served about 6000 people.⁴¹ Right after the War of Secession in 1865, they opened a college at Brownsville and, two years later, a convent and a school for girls. In 1867, Bishop Claude Dubuis, successor to Bishop Odin at Galveston, enlarged the field of their apostolate in the ranchos by entrusting them with the mission of Roma and all its dependencies: San Ignacio and Rio Grande City.

The Superior General, Father Fabre, in his report to the 1867 General Chapter, highly praised the zeal, courage and success of the Oblates of Texas. "There are," he specified, "many sacrifices that have to be made there, many privations to endure, but a great amount of good to be done. What we are offered there are abandoned souls, souls deprived of everything. The Congregation could not and ought not back away from that. It will do all it can for the pro-vicariate and the Lord will bless its efforts."⁴²

Refusal of apostolic vicariates

In a synod held at New Orleans in 1872, the bishops proposed that the district of the Rio Grande be established as an apostolic vicariate; they asked the Oblates to take charge of it and suggested that Father Gaudet be the vicar apostolic.⁴³ The General Administration, however, refused to accept the responsibility for the new vicariate and thus also

⁴¹ The mission at Agualeguas was abandoned in 1884, for it was too isolated and ill situated to allow the missionaries to wield a sufficient influence. This was the last place where Oblates served in Mexico during the 19th century. Cf. Bernard DOYON, O.M.I., *The Cavalry of Christ on the Rio Grande 1849-1883*, pp. 116-117.

⁴² *Chapitres généraux 1861-1904*, Archives Deschâtelets, pp. 243-244.

⁴³ Cf. Bernard DOYON, O.M.I., *op. cit.*, p. 189.

was opposed to Father Gaudet being appointed to the post of vicar apostolic.

Bishop Dominic Nanucy was named to head the new apostolic vicariate to which the missions of Texas from now on belonged.⁴⁴ At this prelate's request, the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda Fide in 1880 again offered the Oblates an apostolic vicariate taking in the territory they were already serving plus some neighboring areas and proposed Father Pierre-Fournier Parisot as the vicar apostolic. Once more the General Administration refused for, as we shall see, it was then considering withdrawing the Oblates from Texas.

An internal crisis

The missionaries of Brownsville and of the ranchos, totally dedicated as they were to their exhausting ministry, were very attached to their flock and enjoyed the confidence of the people and the ecclesiastical authorities. They experienced the satisfaction of accomplishing a fruitful work among poor people who were deprived of spiritual assistance, something which was in complete conformity to their vocation. The trial of a long and painful "crisis" was in store for them. For some twenty years, from 1861 to 1882, they are plunged in a situation where their future was uncertain, wherein they feared that they would be withdrawn from the missions they held so dear, and wherein they felt that their work was not understood by the Oblate authorities.

A sequence of events gave rise to and maintained this painful situation. Impressed by the rather dark picture of the Texas missions that Father Gaudet presented in 1862, the new Superior General, Father Fabre, and his Council began to have serious doubts about the opportuneness of keeping this mission. At the same time, the pressing needs of personnel

⁴⁴ Bishop Nanucy, after staying in the house of the Oblates at Brownsville from February to March 1875, established his residence at Corpus Christi, Texas.

everywhere else in the missions was inducing them to reduce the Congregation's apostolic domains.

The next year, Father Gaudet went to Paris to plead the cause of these missions and returned to Texas without any new missionaries and without bringing any assurances about the mission's future. The missionaries experienced a painful sense of having failed. Assistant General Father Charles Jolivet came as Visitor to these missions in 1868, and did not bring any certitude about their future either. Father Florent Vandenberghe's appointment to the post of superior of the mission as a replacement to Father Gaudet did not improve the situation. The new superior was not an enthusiast for these missions . . . which his predecessor had not been either.

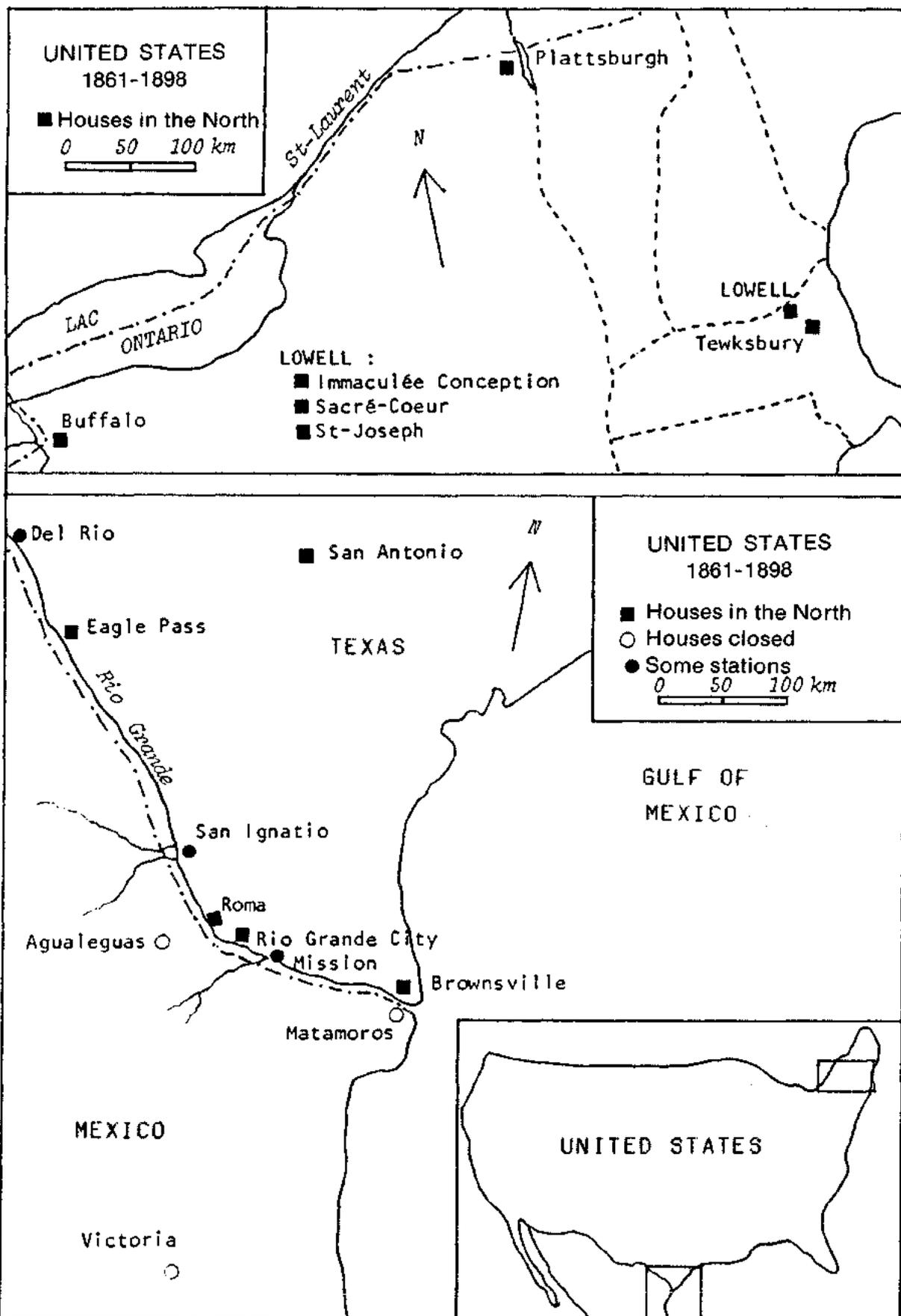
Assistant General Father Louis Soullier came as Visitor in 1876 and left the missionaries in a state of great anxiety. In accord with the instructions he had received to recall, if possible, the Oblates to France,⁴⁵ he began negotiating with the local Bishop and with the Provincial of the Jesuits in Mexico, who had taken refuge in Texas, to have our missions transferred to the Jesuits. These negotiations did not succeed, but the situation of incertitude persisted. Father Vandenberghe remarked to the capitulars of 1879 that the mission of Texas was in "an uncertain and abnormal situation" which was continuing and getting worse.⁴⁶

A Province in the United States

The solution to this long crisis came from Assistant General Aimé Martinet, who came as Visitor to the missions of Texas after the death of Father Vandenberghe who was carried off by yellow fever in 1882. Father Martinet understood the good that the Oblates were doing, the people's attachment to the missionaries and the latter's love for their faithful, and he foresaw the development possible for these missions if their scope was broadened.

⁴⁵ Cf. Bernard DOYON, O.M.I., *op. cit.*, p. 210.

⁴⁶ *Missions*, 18 (1880), p. 35.





James McGrath (1835-1898)
First Provincial of the United States

He proposed to the General Administration that an establishment being offered to the Oblates in San Antonio be accepted, that the Texas missions be attached to the flourishing houses situated in the north of the United States which were dependent upon Canada, and that thus an American Province be formed. This Province, with its own particular character and interests, would take on the responsibility for the mission of Texas which to this point had been directly dependent upon the General Administration.

Thus enlightened by Father Martinet's report, the authorities rallied to the solution he was proposing, and thus, on May 5, 1883, the Province of the United States was created. The missions of Texas finally had some assurance regarding their future. And so these missions came out of a sombre period, of a crisis which had not provoked any insubordination but a great deal of insecurity, malaise, and at times very vivid reactions on the part of some.⁴⁷

⁴⁷ Cf. *Circulaires administratives*, vol. 1, pp. 364-370. The Superior General, Father Fabre, wrote: "As a matter of fact, we did for some time doubt ourselves. We were asking ourselves, in view of the small number of our Gospel workers, of the difficulties of every kind they were experiencing in their ministry and which seemed to close the future to them, if it was really God's will that we be detained in this narrow prison for some time yet. God's will expressed itself with lightning clarity. After negotiating for six years with var-

At its beginnings, the Province of the United States included the houses of Buffalo, Plattsburgh and Lowell, which were located in the north, and the houses or residences of Brownsville, Rio Grande City, Roma and Agualeguas, which were located in Texas and in Mexico.

Works of the new Province

The young Province opened its novitiate at Tewksbury in November of the same year as its foundation, and its juniorate in 1889. The latter was first housed with the novitiate and then established in Buffalo. In the south, it took charge of the parish of St. Mary at San Antonio, and, a little later, of the church of St. Peter Claver for an apostolate among the blacks of San Antonio itself. Ten years later, the Province accepted the important parish of Eagle Pass on the Rio Grande, which became the centre of a number of missions. In the north, at Lowell, the Province opened in 1884 the new parish of the Sacred Heart and also the auxiliary chapel of St. John the Baptist to serve better the Franco-American population of the city.

The main work of the United States Province remained, in the southern part of the Province, the apostolate among Mexican Catholics dispersed and deprived in both the spiritual and temporal domains. The missionaries were visiting about 250 ranchos whereon the faithful totalled about 12,000.⁴⁸ In the northern part, the Province was mostly involved with parochial works.

The first Provincial of the United States Province was Father James McGrath. In 1898, the Province had 63 Oblates, that is 45 Fathers and 18 Brothers, divided among 7 houses and 4 residences.⁴⁹

ious religious societies, there was no one at hand to succeed us." *Ibidem*, p. 366.

⁴⁸ Cf. *Missions*, 23 (1885), pp. 158-159.

⁴⁹ Houses: Buffalo, Plattsburgh, Immaculate Conception of Lowell, St. Joseph at Lowell, Tewksbury, Brownsville and San Antonio; residences: Sacred Heart of Lowell, Roma, Eagle Pass and Rio Grande City. The Provincials: James McGrath (1883-1893), Joseph Guillard (1893-1898) and Joseph Lefebvre (1898-1904).

CHAPTER II

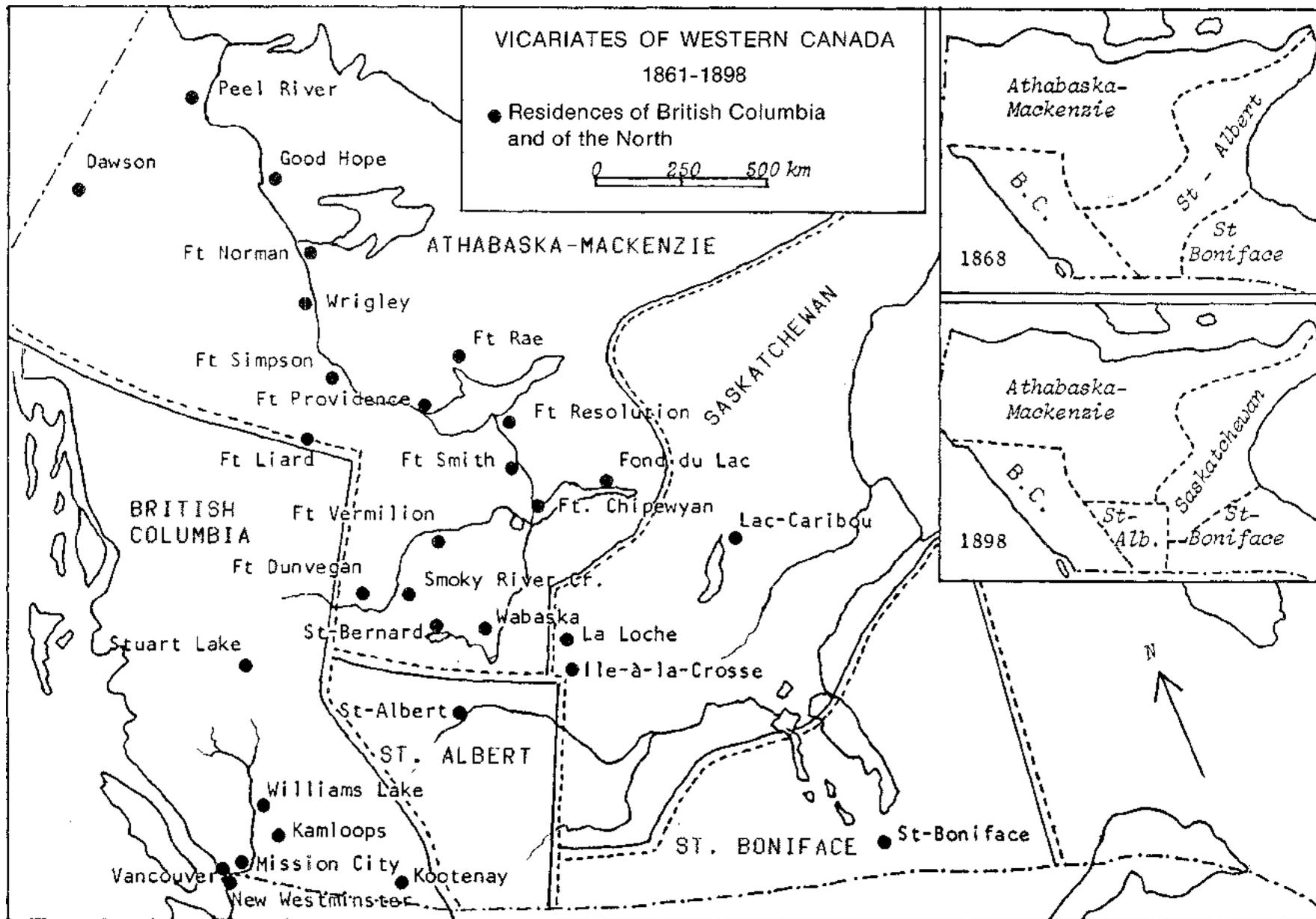
In the Canadian West and North 1861-1898

I. The Vicariate of St. Boniface: - Divisions of the Vicariate - The mission of St-Laurent - The mission of Fort Alexandre - The mission of Qu'Appelle - In the heart of the diocese - The personnel in 1898. **II. The Vicariate of Athabasca-Mackenzie:** - The apostolic vicariate - The Eskimo, Alaska, The Yukon - Still an era of pioneers - Brothers as navigators - The vicariate in 1898. **III. The Vicariates of St. Albert and of Saskatchewan:** - The vicariate of St. Albert - The influence of the mission of Île-à-la-Crosse - The influence of the mission of Ste-Anne - Among the Blackfeet - A profound change in the country - The Metis revolt - The missionaries' method - The vicariate of Saskatchewan - The vicariate of St. Albert in 1898. **III. The Vicariate of British Columbia:** - First missionary penetration - An apostolic vicariate - In the North, the South-east, the East - The "Durieu System" - The vicariate in 1898.

I - *The Vicariate of St. Boniface*

Divisions of the Vicariate

The Vicariate of Missions of St. Boniface, the territory of which was identical to the diocese of St. Boniface, was twice reduced in size when large areas of territory were detached from both the vicariate and the diocese at the same time. The first of these reductions took place in 1864 when the Vicariate of Athabasca-Mackenzie was formed in the Far North; the second one occurred in 1868 when the Vicariate of St. Albert was formed in the vast plains of the West. Nevertheless, even after these important reductions, the Vicariate of





St. Boniface, Manitoba. (From l. to rt.) The old college, the bishop's residence, the cathedral in the time of Archbishop Taché.

Missions of St. Boniface was still twice the size of France and on its territory had the largest Indian population of all the vicariates after that of British Columbia.¹

Abstracting from the territories detached from it in 1862 and 1868, on which we shall return later, the Vicariate of St. Boniface was evangelizing three distinct groups: the Saulteaux, Cree, Assiniboine and Sioux Indians, who were still hardly touched by the missionaries' efforts; the Whites who were more and more numerous in this part of the country; and the Metis, who were often interspersed among the Indians and the Whites.²

The mission of St-Laurent

Under Archbishop Taché's direction, a systematic effort was undertaken to resume evangelizing the Indians of the

¹ Archbishop Alexandre Taché, O.M.I., in *Chapitres généraux 1861-1904*, copy Archives Deschâtelets, p. 274.

² The Whites who had settled in Red River were gradually moving into areas that were best suited for development, especially after the land surveys and the entry of Manitoba into Confederation in 1870. Archbishop Taché favoured the coming of colonists who were Catholic French Canadian; to this end, he even obtained the collaboration of influential Father Lacombe. The English element rapidly dominated, however, and immigration from Europe quickly became an important factor.

eastern part of the vicariate.³ With regret this evangelization had been interrupted around 1850 in order to go to the people of the North and the West who were better disposed. This missionary activity to these Indians had three main centres.

The first centre was located at St-Laurent on the southern part of Lake Manitoba. In 1861, Father Laurent Simonet was put in charge of the Saulteaux Indians around Lakes Manitoba and Winnipegosis, a large number of whom were not yet Christian,⁴ and of the Metis of the area. Afterwards, two missionaries became, so to speak, identified with the mission of St-Laurent: Father Charles Camper who devoted himself to them for 30 years (from 1866 to 1897) and Brother Jeremias Mulvihill who did the same for 46 years (from 1867 to 1913).⁵ Among the other missionaries, Father Ambroise Comeau who arrived in 1893 ought to be mentioned. After he had listed the work of this Father in the Indian missions, Archbishop Langevin declared in 1898: "This part of the vicariate advanced with giant steps on the road to progress."⁶

The mission of St-Laurent became a parish and in 1887 served 8 out-stations with a population totalling some eleven or twelve thousand persons. Two missions were opened on its territory in 1892: Ste-Rose on Dauphin Lake for the Whites,

³ Cf. above, chapter 7, pp. 106.

⁴ Cf. Joseph-Étienne CHAMPAGNE, O.M.I., *Les missions catholiques dans l'Ouest canadien (1818-1875)*, p. 129.

⁵ During his first nine years, from 1867 to 1876, Brother Jeremias Mulvihill was engaged in doing a variety of tasks. He endowed St-Laurent with a beautiful church and a school. He himself taught French and English for many years. "Gifted with exceptional talents for administration and management, he put all his know-how at the service of the mission. Because the people had confidence in him, he fulfilled the role of mayor for 24 years. The Federal Government appointed him a Justice of the Peace. In 1902, in his capacity as mayor, he went to Ireland to recruit colonists." Gaston CARRIÈRE, O.M.I., *Dictionnaire biographique des Oblats de Marie Immaculée au Canada*, t. 2, p. 415.

⁶ *Missions*, 36 (1898), p. 283. Father Ambroise Comeau was responsible for all the Indians missions of Manitoba. "He resurrected the work of the missions to the savages around Lake Manitoba and he daily made new conquests over paganism and heresy." *Ibidem*, pp. 282-283.

and Camperville on Lake Winnipegosis for Indians and Whites.

The mission at Fort Alexander

A second centre for Indian missions was opened in 1867 at Fort Alexander, located at the mouth of the Winnipeg River. This place had already been visited from time to time by the missionaries.

This mission, dedicated to St. Alexander, was officially entrusted to the Congregation in 1867.⁷ Its territory consisted of "an immense area of land between Lake Winnipeg, the Nelson River and Hudson Bay".⁸ It was populated by several thousand Indians whom no missionary had ever visited and who were nonetheless asking for a priest.

The mission of St. Alexander led to the birth of the important mission of Portage-du-Rat — today Kenora — on Lake of the Woods in Ontario. The missionaries established themselves there in 1881. In 1897 an industrial school for the Indians was opened there; Father Charles Cahill was its first principal. In 1898, this mission served a population of 8900 persons, 2400 of whom were Catholic.⁹ A little later, the station of Fort Frances near the American boundary, which the Oblates had been visiting for nearly twenty years, received a resident missionary in 1893.

The mission of Qu'Appelle

The Oblates were requested to exercise their apostolate in a third important centre of the diocese of St. Boniface: Qu'Appelle, today Lebret. Archbishop Taché had himself chosen the location of this mission in 1865. It was first served by the Abbé Joseph Ritchot, the parish priest of St. Norbert. Father Jules Decorby, who came in 1868, was its first resident

⁷ Cf. Joseph-Étienne CHAMPAGNE, O.M.I., *op. cit.*, p. 155.

⁸ *Missions*, 36 (1898), p. 274.

⁹ Cf. *ibidem*, p. 275.

missionary. The Oblates assumed responsibility for the population of the place, the majority of whom were Metis, and that of the surrounding area, made up of Saulteaux, Sioux, Cree and Assiniboine Indians and Whites.¹⁰

As long as the buffalo hunt continued, one of them — Father Joseph Lestanc from 1870 to 1874 and Father Jules Decorby from 1874 to 1878 — accompanied the hunters on their long expeditions, often going as far as 80 leagues from Lebret, to follow the game which often wandered from place to place. These hunters, who were Metis and their families, often as many as 200, accompanied by a considerable number of Indians, were well disposed towards the missionary and the latter carried on a consoling ministry among them.¹¹

Thanks to Archbishop Taché's influence, the missionaries were put in charge of the industrial school for the Indians opened by the Canadian Government in 1884 near the mission of Lebret. Father Joseph Hugonnard was its director until his death in 1917. In 1898 the Vicar of Missions said that this school was "the pearl of our missions and our chief hope for the conversion of the Indians".¹²

The mission of Qu'Appelle soon became the centre for five out-stations: the Cree reserve of Montagne de Lime (File Hills), Notre-Dame de Lumières on the Sioux reserve, the mission of Notre-Dame de Bon Secours at Pasquari on which three important Saulteaux reserves depended, and finally, Dauphiné, a small colony of French-speaking Metis.¹³ The central mission of Qu'Appelle in 1898 had a population of 1248 Catholics who were Whites, 707 Catholics who were Indians, and 3250 Indians who were non-Catholics.¹⁴

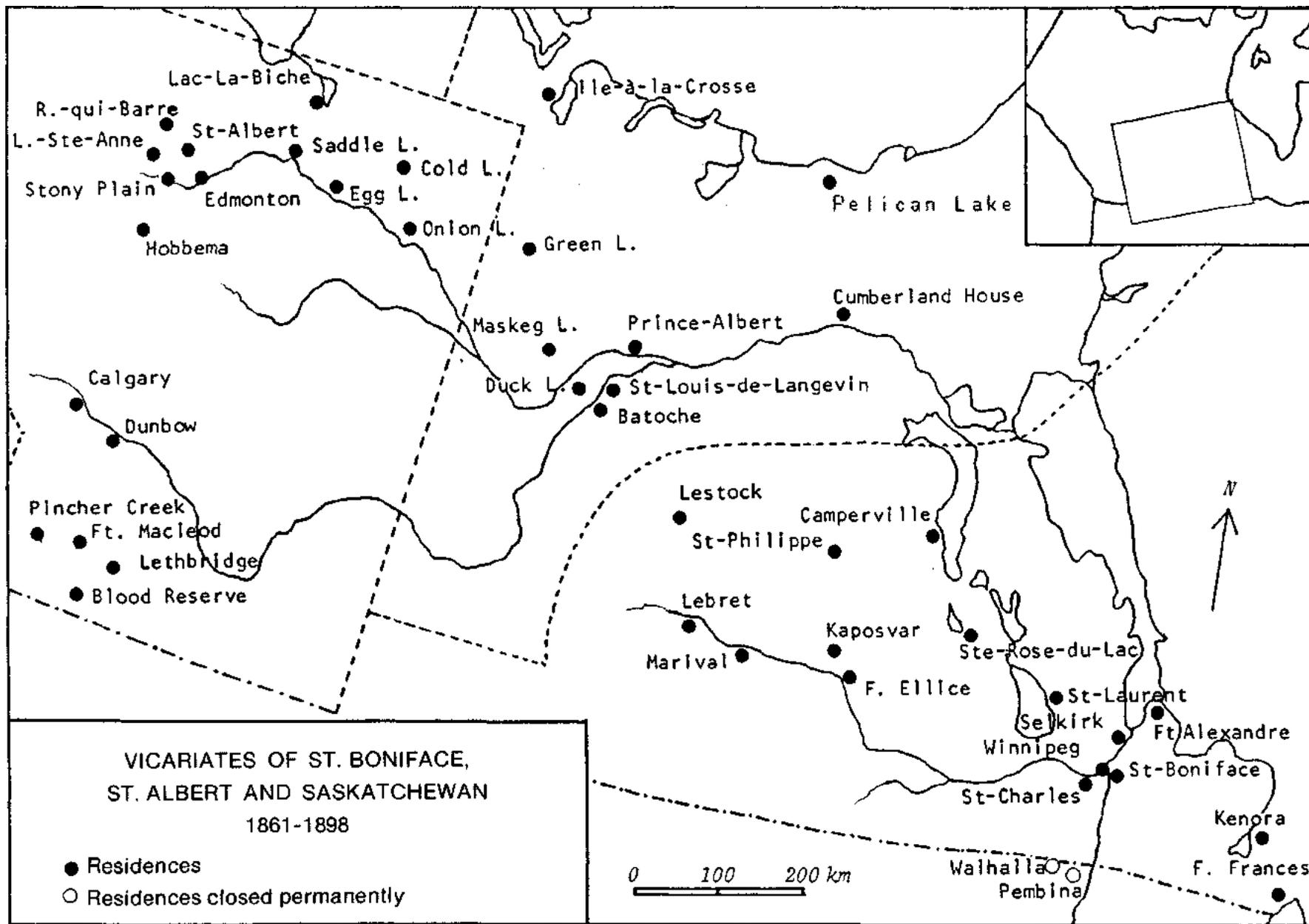
¹⁰ Cf. *ibidem*, 25 (1887), p. 154.

¹¹ Cf. Jean TISSOT, O.M.I., Rapport au chapitre général de 1873, in *Missions*, 11 (1873), p. 347.

¹² *Ibidem*, 31 (1893), p. 341. In 1893 the school had an enrolment of 194 children, under the direction of Fathers Joseph Hugonnard and Jean-Baptiste Dorais, assisted by 9 Grey Nuns from Montreal. *Ibidem*, p. 341.

¹³ *Ibidem*, 36 (1898), pp. 288-289.

¹⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 286.



Within the radius of Qu'Appelle, five missions with resident priests were opened: Montagne-de-Tondre (today Les-tock), Lac Croche (Marieval today), Fort Ellice, St. Philippe and, finally, the Hungarian mission of Kaposvar, served by Father Agapit Pagé. This Father had learned Hungarian and he extended his pastoral care to other Hungarian and German colonies.¹⁵

Archbishop Adélarde Langevin, vicar of missions and archbishop of St. Boniface, was able to write the following at the end of his report to the 1898 General Chapter: "Our non-believing savages, whose hardened attitudes had become a proverb in the whole North-West, now show themselves disposed to hear the word of truth."¹⁶

In the heart of the diocese

At the very centre of the diocese of St. Boniface, the Oblates ministered at the cathedral and were the chaplains of the prison, the hospital and religious institutions, directed an industrial school and, until 1877, were in charge of the classical college and the major seminary. These last two institutions were afterwards entrusted to the secular clergy and then, in 1885, to the Jesuit Fathers.

In 1875, Archbishop Taché assigned the parish of St. Mary in the rising city of Winnipeg to the Oblates. He also gave them the property thereof. Thereby he wanted to give them their own house in what was the centre of the diocese. The rectory was established as a regular religious house. Besides serving St. Mary's parish, where they built a magnificent church which was opened for worship in 1881, the Oblates were the chaplains of the hospital, the prison, the

¹⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 294. In virtue of the decision of Assistant General Father Louis Soullier, who visited the vicariate in 1876, the two residences of St. Joseph (Walhalla) and of Pembina, located in North Dakota and whose population belonged to the dioceses of St. Paul, Minnesota, and St. Boniface, were closed. Cf. *Missions*, 17 (1873), pp. 344-345.

¹⁶ *Ibidem*, 36 (1898), p. 295.



Missionaries on retreat in Manitoba, ca. 1899. (*Seated, l. to rt.*) Pierre Saint-Germain, Jean-Baptiste Baudin, Joseph Lestanc, Charles-Joseph Camper, Mgr Adélarde Langevin, Joachim Allard, Damase Dandurand, Joseph-Urgel Poitras; (*2nd row*) Ambroise Comeau, Albert Kulaway, Didace Guillet, ? Prisque Magnan, Jean-Baptiste Dorais, Augustin Duhaut, Joseph McCarthy, Joseph Hugonnard, Pierre Lecoq, Valès Philippe, Joseph Magnan; (*3rd row*) Agapit Pagé, Siméon Perreault, Léon Favreau, Adélarde Chaumont, Joseph Thibaudeau, Charles Cahill, Paul Bousquet, Cornélius O'Dwyer, Guillaume Kulaway, Adolphe Enk; (*4th row*) Brothers Jean-Marie Legac, Louis Boisramé, Apollinaire D'Amour, Théodore De Bijl, Adolphe Gauthier, Bonaventure Doyle, Jeremias Mulvihill, Eugène Gauthier, Godfroy Pilon, Donat Fafard.

provincial penitentiary, and of religious institutions, especially the convent and boarding school of the Sisters of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary.¹⁷

Finally, they served the parish of St. Charles which was about 3 leagues distant from St. Boniface. The novitiate, which until then had been set up at St. Boniface, was in 1897 transferred to the rectory of this parish: this rectory was owned by the Oblates.

On November 22, 1871, the diocese of St. Boniface was raised to the status of an archdiocese and a metropolitan see, having the diocese of St. Albert as its suffragan. This latter diocese was created on this same day, as well as the apostolic vicariates of Athabasca-Mackenzie and British Columbia. His entire ecclesiastical province was in Oblate care.

From the 16th of July to the 24th, 1889, a Council was held at St. Boniface under the presidency of Archbishop Taché. It had this unique trait that it was entirely composed of Oblate bishops: Archbishop Taché, and Bishops Vital Grandin of St. Albert, Henri Faraud, vicar apostolic of Athabasca-Mackenzie, Isidore Clut, auxiliary to the latter, Paul Durieu, coadjutor to Bishop Louis D'Herbomez of the apostolic vicariate of British Columbia. Father Célestin Augier, the Provincial of Canada, represented Bishop D'Herbomez.

The personnel in 1898

The personnel of the vicariate of missions of St. Boniface in 1898 consisted of one archbishop, 32 Fathers, 14 Brothers, divided among 17 houses or residences.¹⁸ They were serving 34 chapels and churches. Side by side with the Oblates, the secular clergy was steadily increasing: in 1898, the secular priests number 34. In the diocese there are also some Jesuits and Canons Regular of the Immaculate Conception.

¹⁷ *Ibidem*, 17 (1879), p. 430-431.

¹⁸ Vicars of Missions were: Archbishop Taché, appointed in 1851; Father Joseph Camper, appointed in 1887; Father Adélar Langevin, appointed in 1893.

II - *The Vicariate of Athabasca-Mackenzie*

The apostolic vicariate

The Oblate missionaries in the districts of Athabasca and Mackenzie were very isolated and far removed from St. Boniface. Since they were also quite aware of the importance of their missions, they did not delay in asking for a bishop who would stay with them, who could directly lead them, and whose prestige would be helpful to the Church in those regions.¹⁹ Father Henri Grollier, the heroic founder of several missions, was the first to urgently request this. The idea made its way and Archbishop Taché saw to making it a reality as soon as possible.²⁰

The new apostolic vicariate comprising the districts of Mackenzie and Athabasca was established on May 13, 1862 and entrusted to Bishop Henri Faraud. Two years later, on November 30, 1864, the apostolic vicariate was constituted a religious vicariate distinct from that of St. Boniface. Bishop Grandin, coadjutor to St. Boniface, administered the apostolic and religious vicariate until its incumbent was installed, an event that took place only in the summer of 1865.²¹

The Mackenzie missionaries, who were already present among all the Indians tribes of the vicariate, intensified their activity with the gradual reinforcements of personnel. The

¹⁹ Archbishop Alexandre TACHÉ, O.M.I., *Vingt années de missions dans le Nord-Ouest de l'Amérique*, p. 142.

²⁰ Cf. Jules LE CHEVALIER, O.M.I., "Démembrement du vicariat de la Rivière-Rouge", in *Études Oblates*, 4 (1945), pp. 68-97.

²¹ Bishop Faraud, already afflicted with acute rheumatism when he was appointed vicar apostolic, was authorized by Pius IX to appoint an auxiliary bishop for himself, after having consulted his missionaries on the matter. A papal Bull in blank, dated August 3, 1864, was handed to him for this purpose. It was Father Isidore Clut who was chosen in 1866. Cf. Gaston CARRIÈRE, O.M.I., "Nomination du père Isidore Clut, O.M.I., Évêque d'Arindèle et auxiliaire de Mgr Henri Faraud, O.M.I., 3 août, 1864", in *Vie Oblate Life*, 35 (1976), pp. 51-78. Father Émile Grouard, named bishop on October 18, 1890, succeeded to Bishop Faraud, who had resigned the previous March 20th.



*Bishop Henri Faraud, O.M.I. (1823-1890)
Vicar apostolic of Athabaska-Mackenzie*

missions which had a resident missionary increased from 4 to 18, five of which were in the area of Lesser Slave Lake and Peace River.

The Eskimos, Alaska, the Yukon

Three undertakings by the Oblates of the vicariate deserve a special mention. The first is the attempt to evangelize the Eskimos of the Arctic Ocean. The missionaries of Good Hope — Father Grollier in 1860 and 1861, Father Jean Seguin in 1862 and 1867,²² Father Émile Petitot in 1865, 1868, 1869, 1870, and 1877 visited the Eskimos at Fort McPherson. Father Petitot even went into full Eskimo territory, not far from Liverpool Bay, to study the Eskimo country, language and way of life. Later, in 1889, Father Camille Lefebvre was assigned to the evangelization of the Eskimos. He was based at Fort McPherson itself, and concerned himself with this task until 1898.²³ All of these evangelization efforts, though zealously and courageously repeated, were unfortunately without any tangible success.²⁴

²² Cf. *Missions*, 9 (1870), pp. 45-51.

²³ Cf. *ibidem*, 36 (1898), p. 187.

²⁴ Cf. Joseph-Étienne CHAMPAGNE, O.M.I., *op. cit.*, p. 121; André SEUMOIS, O.M.I., "Étapes historiques de la mission esquimaude" in *Prêtres et missions*, Québec, 29 (1954), pp. 294-295.

The second undertaking was in Alaska. Father Seguin in 1862-1863 and Father Petitot in 1870 had already gone to Fort Yukon in Alaska in view of establishing a mission there, but their initiative was not successful. Bishop Clut and the Abbé Auguste Lecorre, still a novice,²⁵ again made the trip to Fort Yukon in 1872; in the spring of 1873 they pushed on via the Yukon River to the Bering Sea where they founded the mission of St. Michael. The Abbé stayed there while Bishop Clut returned to the Mackenzie. There were some baptisms. However, after learning that the territory of Alaska was attached to the diocese of Victoria on Vancouver Island, Bishop Faraut recalled the Abbé Lecorre in 1874. The Oblates were thus the first Catholic missionaries to bring the Good News to Alaska.²⁶

Finally, the third undertaking was the founding of a mission in the Yukon Territory, occasioned by the influx of Whites seeking gold on the Klondike River. The Jesuit Father Charles Judge had preceded them and opened a mission at Dawson City in 1897-1898. Father Edmond Gendreau of the Province of Canada, in the capacity of Bishop Grouard's vicar general, Fathers Camille Lefebvre and Alphonse Desmarais from the Mackenzie, the Abbé Osias Corbeil, a secular priest from St. Boniface, and Brother August Dumas from the Province of Canada, took charge of the mission that had already been started and served other mining centres and the Indians of the area. They were the pioneer missionaries in a territory which was later to become an apostolic vicariate.²⁷

Still an era of pioneers

In the overall picture of the apostolic vicariate of Athabasca-Mackenzie, the era of the pioneers, the builders,

²⁵ The Abbé August Lecorre had to interrupt his novitiate for this trip to Alaska; he began it again on September 8, 1875, and made his perpetual vows the following year.

²⁶ Cf. Gilles MOUSSEAU, O.M.I., "L'affaire d'Alaska", in *Études Oblates*, 5 (1946), pp. 161-188. Also cf. "Journal de voyage de Mgr Clut au territoire d'Alaska en 1872", in *Missions*, 12 (1874), pp. 241-294; 357-375.

²⁷ Cf. *Missions*, 37 (1899), pp. 118-121; 219-248; 334-338.

the great labour and fatigue, the life of isolation and insecurity was not a thing of the past. Bishop Grouard, the successor to Bishop Faraud, in 1898 described the life of the missionaries in the following terms:

“All kinds of labour is the necessary lot of the Fathers as it is of the Brothers. Instructing our savages and to this end studying languages, writing books which we have to print and bind, hearing confessions, visiting in winter as well as in summer the sick who are at times a considerable distance away, teaching school wherever that is possible: such is, like everywhere else, the lot of the missionaries in the North. Moreover, they have to take on loads of other work to procure their meagre subsistence and to protect themselves from the cold. Consequently, they assist the Brothers in fishing, construction, clearing land, gardening where the soil can be cultivated with some chance of success. This means that the concern for material existence, the struggle to live take up a great portion of our activities. It should be noted that it is not solely a matter of acquiring a certain well-being or of living more or less comfortably — that would not be worth mentioning — but it is really a question of avoiding death from hunger and cold. No one is therefore exempt from work if he wants to survive in our missions.”²⁸

Brothers as navigators

Besides accomplishing the material labour needed to maintain the missions and the life of the mission personnel, the Brothers also functioned as sea captains, navigators, steamboat mechanics, boats they themselves built to transport provisions to the missions. In fact, to avoid the exorbitant transport costs for this provisioning via the Hudson Bay Company, Bishop Grouard had decided to equip his vicariate with two boats. One, named the *St. Joseph*, in 1893 began sailing Athabasca River and Lake from Fort McMurray to the head of the rapids; the other, baptized the *St. Alphonse*,

²⁸ *Ibidem*, 36 (1898), pp. 180-181.



The Oblate Bishops of the Canadian West in 1902.

(Seated: from l. to rt.): Vital Grandin, Adélarde Langevin, Émile Grouard;
(Standing: from l. to rt.): Emile Legal, Albert Pascal, Isidore Clut,
Augustin Dontenwill, Gabriel Breynat.

in 1895 began navigating the Athabasca and Mackenzie Rivers, from Fort Smith to Pell's River, a distance of some 1300 miles.

Among others, Brothers Hermas Charbonneau and James O'Connell were boat captains; Brother Wilhelm Beckschaeffer gave them precious assistance as an engineer, a mechanic and pilot. The money saved by these boats made it possible "to found and maintain new works of the highest importance", as Bishop Grouard testifies.²⁹

The vicariate in 1898

In 1898 there are 62 Oblates in the vicariate: 2 Bishops, 30 Fathers and 30 Brothers³⁰ are spread over 18 missions.

²⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 182. Cf. Pierre DUCHAUSSOIS, O.M.I., *Apôtres inconnus*, Paris, Ed. Spes, 1924, pp. 67-71; *Missions*, 31 (1893), pp. 381-384; 36 (1898), pp. 181-182.

³⁰ Cf. *Missions*, 36 (1898), pp. 179-180.

Bishop Grouard pointed out, however, that in regard to the active ministry, "age, infirmities and illness forces us to deduct quite a bit from this figure". As a matter of fact, the former robust constitution of several was now undermined by the poor standard of living and the severity of the climate.³¹ He also stresses the priceless presence of the Brothers in the vicariate. Their collaboration in the missions themselves and in the trips of the missionaries made possible the ministry of the priests who, without the Brothers, would be tied down by temporal concerns.

Side by side with the Oblates, the Grey Nuns of Montreal were the heroic co-workers in the apostolate, especially in their schools, orphanages, visits of charity to homes at Fort Providence and Fort Chipweyan.³² The Sisters of Providence of Montreal were devoting themselves in similar works in the mission of St. Bernard on Lesser Slave Lake.

III - *The Vicariates of St. Albert and of Saskatchewan*

The vicariate of St. Albert

In 1868, four years after the vicariate of Athabasca-Mackenzie was established, another religious vicariate, that of St. Albert, was detached from St. Boniface. This new vicariate, whose territory became a diocese with the same name in 1871, covered an immense area which spanned Western Canada diagonally from southwest to northeast, that is to say, from the Rocky Mountains to Hudson Bay. Entrusted to Bishop Grandin, the vicariate had 14 Oblates, that is to say, 1

³¹ *Ibidem*, p. 180. Brother Alexis Reynard, "the indispensable key worker on the missions of the Mackenzie vicariate" since 1853, was killed and eaten by his Iroquois guide around June 20, 1875. Gaston CARRIÈRE, o.m.i., *Dictionnaire biographique des Oblats de Marie Immaculée au Canada*, t. 3, p. 122.

³² Cf. Pierre DUCHAUSSOIS, O.M.I., *Femmes héroïques, les Soeurs Grises dans l'Extrême-Nord*, p. 270.

Bishop, 9 Fathers and 4 Brothers when it was established. These Oblates were divided among 7 residences.³³

Within the vicariate there were two regions climatically most distinct from each other. The northern portion, towards the direction of Hudson Bay, had a cold, even a very cold climate, and offered no possibilities of development or colonization. It was populated by Cree and Montagnais Indians and Eskimos.

The influence of the mission of Île-à-la-Crosse

The main mission for this northern part was Île-à-la-Crosse, opened in 1846. Dependent on it was the important mission of Portage La Loche some 200 kilometers to the northwest, as well as other outposts or missions, such as: Canoe Lake, Green Lake, Cold Lake. Among the apostles of these missions we can mention Fathers Joseph Rapet who dedicated 36 years of his life to them (1879-1915), Jules Teston who gave 40 (1883-1923) and Laurent Le Goff who gave 53 (1870-1923).³⁴

Five hundred kilometers to the northeast of Île-à-la-Crosse was located the second mission in the northern part of the vicariate, St-Pierre on Cariboo Lake. It was opened in 1847 and was a mission in an almost inaccessible area, very cold, with no possibility of cultivation, and nearly without sufficient wood for heating. Among others, Father Alphonse Gasté who served here for 40 years (1861-1901) and his companion Brother Célestin Guillet for 25 years (1869-1894) are the heroic missionaries here. This mission served 800 widely scattered Montagnais who were quite attached to their missionaries. Father Gasté even went as far as the Eskimos of Doobant Lake, 1000 kilometers further to the north, and succeeded to

³³ St. Albert, Lac-Ste-Anne, St. Joachim, St-Paul-des-Cris, Lac-la-Biche, Île-à-la-Crosse, and Cariboo Lake.

³⁴ Cf. Gaston CARRIÈRE, O.M.I., *op. cit.*, under *Rapet, Joseph; Teston, Jules; Le Goff, Laurent.*

attract some who came to the mission for several years.³⁵ Lack of men and financial resources led the vicariate's administration to propose abandoning this very remote post, the maintenance of which was so costly. On the advice of the General Administration, however, it was maintained. In 1898, the Vicar of Missions could declare that the Montagnais who came to it were "among our best Christians".³⁶

Finally, still in the north region of the vicariate, there was the entire vast territory east of Île-à-la-Crosse to Hudson Bay, populated with Cree Indians, which had not as yet been visited by any Catholic missionaries. Two missions with resident priests were opened in it, one at Cumberland House in 1877, and the other at Pelican Lake the next year. Two names are linked to these missions: that of Father Ovide Charlebois, called "the Hermit of Cumberland", who devoted 16 years of his life to this location, and Father Étienne Bonald, the founder of and missionary at Pelican Lake for 22 years. These two great apostles not only built fine Christian communities in their missions which were in a region that was completely pagan, but also laid down the foundation for other Christian communities at Le Pas, Norway House, Pukatawagan, and pushed their expeditions as far as Nelson House near Hudson Bay.³⁷

The influence of the mission of Lac-Ste-Anne

The second part of the vicariate of St. Albert, the southern part, included approximately the basin of the North and South Saskatchewan Rivers and the prairies of the West. This territory in general has a temperate climate and is quite favorable to cultivation.

³⁵ Cf. Gasté to Bishop Grandin, July 15, 1869, in *Missions*, 9 (1870), pp. 333-344.

³⁶ *Ibidem*, 36 (1898), p. 171.

³⁷ *Ibidem*, 31 (1893), pp. 420-422; 36 (1898), pp. 172-173.



Missionaries in Alberta, ca. 1900. (Seated l. to r.): Henri Grandin, Albert Lacombe, Bishop Émile Legal, Hippolyte Leduc. *(Standing):* Christophe Tissier, Joseph Lestanc, Alexandre Blanchet, Laurent LeGoff, Louis Ladet.

The oldest mission of this part, Lac-Ste-Anne, opened in 1842, already spread its influence to several other localities.³⁸ During the course of the period we are concerned with here, new missions with resident priests were founded, the main ones being: St. Albert, St-Paul-des-Cris,³⁹ St-Laurent de Grandin, Battleford, Prince Albert, Edmonton, Batoche, Duck Lake, Bear Hill (Hobbema today), St-Paul-des Métis.⁴⁰ In

³⁸ The mission of Lac-la-Biche, definitively founded in 1853, belonged to the diocese of St. Albert, but "for weighty reasons and to facilitate the administration of the vicariate of Mackenzie, Bishop Grandin in 1869 provisionally ceded it to Bishop Faraud, the vicar apostolic of Athabasca-Mackenzie." *Ibidem*, 14 (1876), p. 431. Cf. also *ibidem*, 11 (1873), p. 358.

³⁹ Saint-Paul-des-Cris was founded in 1866 by Father Lacombe to accustom the Indians to cultivation and to shield them from the famine which threatened them as a consequence of the disappearance of the buffalo from the prairies. The mission had to be abandoned in 1873 because the Cree showed little interest for grain farming.

⁴⁰ Other missions that were founded were: Fort Pitt, Muskeg Lake, Onion Lake, Delmas, Cold Lake, Frog Lake.

these missions, the Oblates served the prairie Crees who had scarcely been touched by the Gospel before 1861; they also served Métis and Whites.

Among the missionaries who devoted a long period of their ministry to them, we can mention Fathers Alexis André (28 years: 1865-1893), Vital Fourmond (23 years: 1869-1892), Hippolyte Leduc (51 years: 1867-1918), Julien Moulin (42 years: 1878-1920), Henri Grandin (48 years: 1875-1923), Valentin Végréville (38 years: 1865-1903).

Among the Blackfeet

In southern Alberta, other missionaries undertook the evangelization of the Blackfeet nation.⁴¹ Their first visits to these Indians go back to 1863 and the first mission opened in this territory, Our Lady of Peace (Calgary), to 1873. The missionaries' efforts among them was for a long time without result. The character and superstitious religion of these Indians, their religious and social organization, their warlike attitudes and moral degradation were all so many obstacles to evangelization.⁴²

Father Albert Lacombe, the famous missionary to the Métis and the prairie Crees, played a preponderant role in their evangelization. He won the confidence of the nation's great chief Crowfoot, and from the Canadian Government he obtained an industrial school for them. The latter was opened at Dunbow in 1884 and he himself was its first director. Fathers Constantine Scollen, missionary from 1873-1882, Leon Doucet, from 1875 to 1939, and Émile Legal, from 1881 to 1897, were outstanding missionaries among these Indians.

⁴¹ The Blackfeet nation consists of three tribes: The Blackfeet properly so-called, the Piegans, and the Blood People. This nation was for long time at war with the prairie Crees. In the Calgary district, Blackfeet numbered some 6000.

⁴² Cf. *Missions*, 23 (1885), p. 22.

The missionaries of southern Alberta also served the Assiniboine Indians and the Whites who, after 1880, were rapidly coming into the area.

A profound change in the country

To understand well the missionaries' activities in the valley of the Saskatchewan and in the prairies, we must be acquainted with the profound change that was at work in this country, especially from the 1880s onwards.

Pushed back by the colonists, the Métis of Manitoba emigrated in large numbers towards the West, from 1870 onwards.⁴³ The countless herds of Buffalo which each summer came to graze on the central plains suddenly vanished, never to appear again.⁴⁴ This deprived the Indians and the Métis of their principal wealth and source of provisions. The railroad from 1883 onwards brought many colonists and Whites of different nationalities who were asking for priests and churches. The Indians, dispossessed of their lands were regrouped on many reserves and, by treaty with the Government, obtained certain rights as a compensation.⁴⁵ Father Leduc in 1879 said: "All these are important events for us, and the vicariate is forcibly called to change in every aspect within a few years from now."⁴⁶

The Métis revolt

In the upheaval that was disrupting their way of life, the Métis and Indians suffered especially from great poverty and were more and more indignant at the Government and also

⁴³ Cf. *ibidem*, 26 (1888), p. 143.

⁴⁴ Cf. Jules LE CHEVALLIER, O.M.I., *Batoche. Les missionnaires du Nord-Ouest pendant les troubles de 1885*, Montréal, L'Oeuvre de la Presse Dominicaine, 1941, p. 11.

⁴⁵ Bishop Grandin, Fathers Hippolyte Leduc, Albert Lacombe and others made countless efforts, be it in the capital of the North-West Territories, be it in Ottawa, to defend the rights of the Indians and of the Métis. Cf. *Missions*, 31 (1893), pp. 355-358.

⁴⁶ *Ibidem*, 17 (1879), p. 435.

the Whites because of the difficulties they were experiencing in having their rights respected. This is the origin of the Métis uprising in 1885, an uprising supported by the Indians and led by Louis Riel, during the course of which Fathers Léon Fafard and Félix Marchand were killed, victims of their devotedness. Other missionaries were ill-treated, seven churches or missions completely destroyed or seriously damaged.⁴⁷

Father Lacombe had succeeded to keep the Blackfoot tribes peaceful. Bishop Grandin and Father Joseph Lestanc calmed the Métis and Indians of the St. Albert district from the very outset of the troubles, and Father Constantine Scollen appeased the Crees of Bear's Hill (Hobbema) who had already raised the flag of revolt. Other missionaries were not so successful in their efforts to maintain peace. Because they did not want to espouse the views of Louis Riel, Fathers Vital Fourmond, Julien Moulin, Valentin Végréville and Zacharie Touze were confined to the rectory at Batoche under a state of arrest. Father Mélasype Paquette escaped the fate of Fathers Fafard and Marchand by fleeing in time. Fathers Louis Cochin and Laurent Le Goff, who did not want to abandon their Indians in these difficult circumstances, had to roam after them, from one encampment to another, virtual prisoners of the rebel Indians' chiefs.

These missionaries, however, opposed as they were to a revolt that was bound to fail, did not hesitate in the moment of defeat to become the advocates of the vanquished with the General in chief. Bishops Taché and Grandin used all their influence to obtain an amnesty for the political prisoners.⁴⁸ The pardon given to a good number of them, the conversion

⁴⁷ Cf. Hippolyte Leduc to the director of "The Mail", January 8, 1885, in *Missions*, 23 (1885), pp. 433-436; Jules LE CHEVALLIER, O.M.I., "La belle histoire des missionnaires Oblats de l'Ouest", in *La Patrie*, March 12, 1932, p. 12.

⁴⁸ Cf. Gaston CARRIÈRE, O.M.I., *Cent cinquante ans d'actions apostolique au rythme de l'Église*, p. 110.

of two Indians chiefs, and the Christian death of those condemned to death, including Louis Riel, was a reward for their effort.

The missionaries' method

Before the country was developed, the missionaries in both the Canadian North and West usually established their missions in the close vicinity of the Hudson Bay trading posts where the nomadic Indians would gather several times a year. They would then give the exercises of a mission, which ordinarily included the teaching of the faith in the form of catechism, and the administration of the sacraments. During the rest of the time in the year, they concerned themselves with the people who lived near the mission, visited Indian camps, and responded to the appeal of the sick, even if they had to make long trips to do so.

In their ministry, they used the Indians' language, catechism by questions and answers, catechetical tableaux illustrating the mysteries of religion: salvation history, dogma, moral, the sacraments. The one published by Father Lacombe was especially used. Holy pictures, hymns and prayer books in the Indian languages were also attractive and useful means used to instruct them in the faith.

The missionaries attached great importance to schools. They saw them as indispensable not only for formation to the Christian life, but also for imparting the necessary general instruction. In important centres, they opened boarding schools; in this religious women gave them their priceless and essential collaboration.

The Oblates were always close to their flock and devoted to their interests, giving them advice and helping them according to the available means. The Oblates supported the industrial schools opened by the Government as suitable means to assist the Indian who was inevitably linked to the life of the Whites. Those the Oblates directed were also most useful for the Christian formation of the Indians. Often the Oblates were peacemakers between Indian tribes and conciliation

agents to acquire the best result for the Indians in regard to the irresistible advance of the Whites into their country.

Among the more noteworthy interventions, we can mention the following: "In January 1861, Father Lacombe put a halt to the fighting between the Cree and the Blackfeet; Father Jean-Marie Caer did the same in 1863; Father André worked as an agent of the American Government to bring peace between the Sioux and the United States in 1863-1865, and was then shamefully betrayed by the military authorities. Archbishop Taché in 1870 returned from the Vatican Council at the Government's request to restore peace; in 1885 he again worked towards this end, and he was also betrayed by the promises the authorities made and then did not keep. Father Lacombe in 1883 prevented bloodshed when the railroad was being built and, in 1885, succeeded in keeping the Indians on the side of the authorities."⁴⁹

The Vicariate of Saskatchewan

The religious vicariate of St. Albert, as also the diocese of St. Albert, were in 1890 relieved of their North and East portion by the creation of the religious and apostolic vicariate of Saskatchewan under the direction of Bishop Pascal. In 1898, the new vicariate of Saskatchewan had 29 Oblates, that is, 1 Bishop, 18 Fathers and 10 Brothers divided among 13 residences with a church, which also served a dozen secondary posts.⁵⁰

The Vicariate of St. Albert in 1898

For its part, the vicariate of St. Albert at the same date had 2 Bishops, 28 Fathers and 27 Brothers residing in 22 parishes or missions and serving an additional 24 outposts. Four parishes of the diocese were entrusted to the secular clergy.⁵¹

⁴⁹ Gaston CARRIÈRE, O.M.I., *La réponse des Oblats de l'Ouest canadien à la perception de la "mission" chez Mgr de Mazenod*, manuscript, p. 15.

⁵⁰ Cf. *Missions*, 36 (1898), pp. 160-161, 176.

⁵¹ Cf. *Missions*, 36 (1898), pp. 199, 202. Bishop Grandin worked without much success in promoting priestly vocations among the Indians and Métis.

IV - *The Vicariate of British Columbia*

The Oblates were missionaries in Oregon since 1847. In 1858 they transferred the centre of their activities to the diocese of Bishop Modeste Demers which comprised Vancouver Island and continental British Columbia. In Oregon the Oblates retained only the mission of Tulalip.

First missionary penetration

On Vancouver Island, the Oblates were serving the Whites of Esquimalt and Victoria as well as the Indians in the area. Fathers Julien Baudre and James McGuckin and Brothers Patrick Allen and Edward MacStay on January 7, 1864, began a college at Victoria, named after St. Louis. Fathers Pandosy, Fouquet and Brother Blanchet in 1863 opened a mission on the island's north near Fort Rupert. It was later transferred to the island of Habledown and took the name of St. Michael. A church was built there and a school was also opened. The Indians, however, deeply marked by barbarity, showed themselves hostile to the Gospel. In 1864, Fathers Fouquet and Jean-Marie Le Jacq, after a dangerous journey, reached the islands of the Queen Charlotte archipelago.

Evangelization was still at its first beginnings in continental British Columbia in 1861. Two missions had been founded, one in 1859 at Okanagan Lake, and the other the year following at New Westminster. Further, a few apostolic expeditions had been made into the area of Fort Hope and Fort Yale on the lower Fraser River.

The year 1861 saw exceptional activity. Two chapels were built at New Westminster, one for the Indians and another for the Whites; and another chapel was built for the Indians

The first Métis priest, Edward Cunningham, was ordained in 1890, and the second, Patrick Baudry, in 1901. Cf. Ronald ZIMMER, O.M.I., "Early Oblate Attempts for Indian and Metis Priests in Canada", in *Études Oblates*, 32 (1973), pp. 176-291.

at Fort Hope. Father Fouquet opened an important mission, St. Mary — presently, Mission City — where Father Florimond Gendre was in 1862 the first superior and organizer. In the following year, the latter opened an industrial school here, of which he was the first principal while looking after the mission at the same time. From July to October 1861, Father Grandidier made a long expedition to bring religious assistance to the Whites and Indians living in the regions of the famous gold mines of Mount Cariboo. The number of Indians visited and instructed by the missionaries in 1861 was estimated as 12,000.⁵²

An apostolic vicariate

On December 20, 1863, an important event occurred in the development of these missions: the Holy See raised continental British Columbia — including the Queen Charlotte archipelago — to an apostolic vicariate and entrusted it to the Oblates. The latter thus became more free in the organization of their apostolic work.⁵³ Father Louis D'Herbomez, vicar of missions, was appointed vicar apostolic. He established his residence at New Westminster and chose the church of St. Charles as the vicariate church.

In 1865, he founded in the city a college which he placed under the patronage of St. Louis; the next year he transferred this college to the Oblates who were working in that of Victoria. Later, in 1893, Bishop Durieu began a minor seminary which existed until 1909. The missionaries of New Westminster carried on a very active ministry, not only among the white population which was rapidly increasing, but also among the many Indians who were concentrated in that area.

⁵² Cf. Adrien-Gabriel MORICE, O.M.I., *Histoire de l'Église catholique dans l'Ouest canadien*, vol. 4, 225.

⁵³ Cf. *Chapitres généraux 1861-1904*, copy Archives Deschâtelets, Ottawa, pp. 242-243.

Under the direction of Bishop D'Herbomez and that of his successor, Bishop Durieu, the Oblates, who were already established in the region of New Westminster and the lower Fraser River, penetrated into the other great areas of the vicariate.

In the North, the South-east, the East

Two missions were founded in the north. In 1867, Father James McGuckin established the mission of St. Joseph on Williams Lake to serve the Whites and the Indians of the area around the Cariboo mines. And, 490 kilometers further north, Father Jean-Marie Lejacq in 1873 opened the mission of Our Lady of Good Hope on Stuart Lake to serve the two to three thousand Indians scattered over this vast territory.

In the farthest south-east of the vicariate, Father Fouquet and Brother John Burns in 1874 founded the residence of St. Eugene (Cranbrook) for the Kootenay Indians of the upper Columbia; and in the region east of the Fraser, the mission of Kamloops in 1878 became a residence of missionaries. Furthermore, the Oblates were given the parish of Vancouver, a city that was the terminus of the railway since 1885 and was undergoing a rapid development.

The apostolic vicariate in this period of founding and rapid growth needed to regroup all its available missionary forces. Hence, in 1866, Bishop D'Herbomez recalled the Oblates from the residence of Esquimalt and from the college in Victoria; and in 1874 those of the ungrateful and sterile mission of St. Michael at Fort Rupert;⁵⁴ and also, in 1878, the last missionaries who still remained at Tulalip in Oregon.

The "Durieu System"

The missionary activities in British Columbia had certain characteristics that were distinctive. There were: the gatherings

⁵⁴ Cf. *Registre du conseil général*, March 9 and June 22, 1866; *Missions*, 17 (1879), p. 410.

of Indians in the central missions⁵⁵ to prepare and celebrate certain feasts with great manifestations; the missionaries' concern to form Indian men and women to various trades and agriculture, resulting in the establishment of trade schools.⁵⁶ A social and religious organization of Indians, established by Bishop Durieu, called the "Durieu System", was based on the Indians' culture and customs aimed at grouping the converts together in villages where they were governed by chiefs who were responsible, under the Bishop's and the missionary's authority, to enforce respect for the laws of God, the Church and the State and to provide local Indian government. An appointed person took care of the Eucharist and of leading the people in prayer during the absence of the priest. This "system" also included the practice of public penances for public faults,⁵⁷ a delicate matter which was less and less in vogue after 1893.

What was the result of the missionary work in British Columbia? Bishop Durieu described the matter like this in 1886: "The six tribes we have been evangelizing for a quarter of a century, have made great strides in civilization. Ceding to the gentle influence of religion, they have abandoned their nomadic life and have regrouped around the church and today make up villages that rival those of European emigrants. . . . Infidelity is extinct among these six tribes, drunkenness is unknown among them today. . . . There remain several tribes of savages who are still immersed in the darkness of idolatry."⁵⁸

⁵⁵ For descriptions of these gatherings, cf. Adrien-Gabriel MORICE, O.M.I., *op. cit.*, vol. 4, pp. 304 sq.; *Missions*, 31 (1893), pp. 129-161; 34 (1896), pp. 23-47.

⁵⁶ There were trade schools at the missions of St. Mary, Williams Lake, Kootenay (today, Cranbrook) and New Westminster.

⁵⁷ The 1893 General Chapter recognized the great advantages inherent in such a practice, as well as its serious disadvantages; it felt that it was more and more risky to have recourse to it. On the "Durieu System", cf. Adrien-Gabriel MORICE, O.M.I., *op. cit.*, vol. 4, pp. 266-277; Émile BUNOZ, O.M.I., "Bishop Durieu's System" in *Études Oblates*, 1 (1942), pp. 193-209; *Missions*, 43 (1905), p. 275.

⁵⁸ *Missions*, 24 (1886), pp. 121-122.



Bishop Paul Durieu, O.M.I. (1830-1899)
Bishop of New Westminster

The vicariate in 1898

In 1898 the Congregation had assumed pastoral responsibility for some 80,000 persons, 24,000 of whom were Indians, 6000 Chinese, and 50,000 Europeans. These are approximate estimates. Of these 80,000 persons, 24,000 were Catholic, 50,000 were Protestant and the remaining 6000 were pagans.⁵⁹

⁵⁹ Cf. *ibidem*, 36 (1898), p. 249.

In 1898, the vicariate had 2 Bishops, 25 Fathers, 2 scholastics and 24 Brothers spread over four houses and two residences.⁶⁰ The post of vicar of missions was fulfilled by Bishop Durieu, the vicar apostolic until 1898; it then passed on to his coadjutor, Bishop Augustin Dontenwill.⁶¹

⁶⁰ Cf. *ibidem*, pp. 245-246. The houses were: St. Charles at New Westminster, St. Mary, St. Joseph at Williams Lake, St. Louis at Kamloops; the residences: St. Eugene at Kootenay, Our Lady of Good Hope at Stuart Lake. *Ibidem*, p. 248. The Okanagan mission, which was the first mission in the diocese, was closed in 1896 because Bishop Durieu had been duped by a land exploiter who managed to get control of the mission property. Cf. Adrien-Gabriel MORICE, O.M.I., *op. cit.*, vol. 4, p. 336.

⁶¹ In 1898, the Oblates had as collaborators in the apostolate in the entire Canadian West: 52 secular priests, 5 Jesuits, a few Canons Regular of the Immaculate Conception, 167 Grey Nuns of Montreal, 45 Faithful Companions of Jesus, 31 Sisters of Providence, 28 Sisters of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary, 19 religious women of the Institute of our Lady of Refuge, 17 Sisters of St. Anne, 17 Sisters of the Assumption of Nicolet, 9 Grey Nuns of Nicolet; 17 Cistercians (reformed) of Notre-Dame de la Trappe at St. Norbert, and 4 Brothers of Marie. Cf. *Canada ecclésiastique*, Beauchemin, Montréal, 1898.

CHAPTER 12

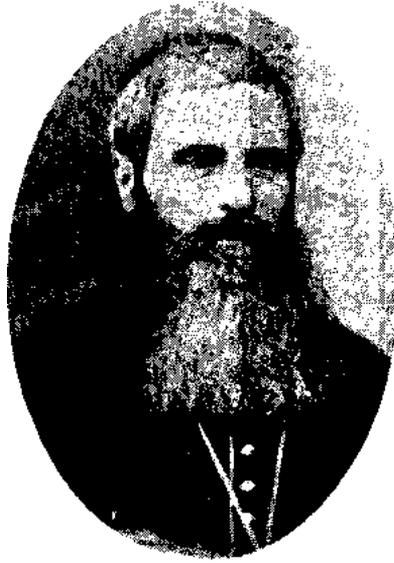
In Ceylon and in South Africa. *The General Situation - 1861-1898*

I. The Vicariates of Ceylon: - The vicariate of Jaffna: its condition - The missionaries' constant labour - Favoured works: the school, the clergy, the press - The vicariate in 1898 - The vicariate of Colombo entrusted to the Oblates - Works of education: St. Joseph's College, seminaries, at Maggona, the press - The vicariate in 1898 - Among the Buddhists. **II. The Vicariates of South Africa:** - South Africa in transformation - A new bishop, divisions of the vicariate of Natal - Ministry, policies of Bishop Jolivet, new missions - The vicariate of Natal in 1898 - The vicariate of Basutoland: foundation at Roma - The first conversions - The vicariate in 1898 - The vicariate of the Orange Free State: beginnings, on the farms, in mining centres, schools - Bechuanaland - The vicariate in 1898 - The vicariate of Transvaal: penetrating a Huguenot country - a mission among the natives - The vicariate in 1898 - The vicariate of Cimbebasia: foundation. **III. The General situation in 1898:** - Personnel - Internal life - Apostolic life - In the provinces and vicariates.

I - *The Vicariates of Ceylon*

The Vicariate of Jaffna: its condition

The religious vicariate of Jaffna, until 1883 referred to as the vicariate of Ceylon, comprised the northern part of the island of Ceylon, today known as Sri Lanka. This vicariate served a population who were mostly Tamils, grouped together in areas that were separated and rather distant from each other. According to the data given by Bishop Christopher Bonjean in 1873, an agglomeration of some 20,000



Bishop Christopher Bonjean, O.M.I. (1823-1892)
Bishop of Jaffna, then of Colombo

were in the extreme north, another of the same number in the extreme south, some 6000 were on the east coast, and another 10,000 were in the west, in the districts of Mannar and Mantotte. Except in the peninsula of Jaffna in the north, everywhere else the Catholic population was living along the seashore. In the interior of this territory, in the jungle, there were only two small groups of Christians: 608 at Vanny, and about one hundred in the ancient capital of Anuradhapura.¹

In 1893 far-reaching modifications were made to the boundaries of the apostolic vicariate of Jaffna: the agglomeration in the south, important because of its number and temporal resources, was transferred to the neighboring diocese of Colombo; and the agglomerate in the east to the new diocese of Trincomalie. Thus Jaffna lost more than half of its Catholics, their numbers shrinking from 91,000 to 40,000, and 15 of its missionaries were henceforth attached to the diocese of Colombo.²

¹ Cf. *Missions*, 11 (1873), p. 377.

² Cf. *ibidem*, 36 (1898), pp. 379, 380.

The missionaries' constant labour

The life of the missionaries at Jaffna, where communications were difficult, painful and costly, was about the same from one locality to another, from one year to another. Bishop Bonjean remarked in a report: "What I do not find it possible to do is to describe the constant devotedness of all these Fathers, their unceasing labour, the long days spent in the confessional, the daily preaching and catechism instructions, the uninterrupted visits of churches, the trips which are so long and difficult for ordinary excursions or visits to the sick, this always the same life of deprivation, physical and moral suffering supported with joy: this constant motion due to concern and work which hardly leaves an apostle in Ceylon the time to breathe, but which fills to overflowing each of his days with an abundant harvest of merit."³

The missionaries' devotedness reached even heroic moments: during the cholera epidemics which would periodically rage throughout the region;⁴ the expeditions through the thickest jungle to reach non-Christians;⁵ during the long and painful struggle against the Goanese and Jacobite schismatics, who were especially active in the Mannar and Mantotte districts. These schismatics refused to acknowledge the authority of the vicar apostolic, took over churches and missions,

³ *Ibidem*, 11 (1873), pp. 399-400.

⁴ The first great cholera epidemic struck the island from 1850 to 1855. The disease returned especially during the years 1862-1867, 1875-1878 and 1891-1892. Bishop Bonjean mentioned Fathers Léon Mauroit, Michael Murphy, Charles Lytton, Charles Massiet and Nicolas Sandrasagra as being "among those of our men who distinguished themselves the most in this ministry and supreme devotedness" in the epidemic of 1875-1878. Cf. *Missions*, 18 (1880), p. 21.

⁵ Towards 1870, Father August Rouffiac evangelized the Veddas who lived in the thickest forests. Father André Melizan was in 1871-1874 the missionary in the jungle of Vianny, in the bush country of Calpentyn and in the marshes of Puttalam. Father Boniface Gourdon, "one of those who made converts in the bush country", a solid man, had as his favourite mission that to the Buddhists of the region of Haldanduwana where he stayed from 1882-1892. Cf. Pierre DUCHAUSSOIS, O.M.I., *Sous les feux du Ceylan*, Paris, 1929, p. 179.

spawned lawsuits and harrassed a number of Christians. Their agitation stopped only after the 1890s.⁶ During the years 1862-1865, furthermore, with Father Christopher Bonjean at their head, the missionaries sustained a fierce attack on the rights of the Church which were being violated by the marriage laws decreed by the Government. While they did not achieve full success, they did obtain important concessions.⁷

Favoured works: the schools, the clergy, the press

Certain works were favoured by the missionaries of the vicariate. The first of these was schools and education. A suitable network of Catholic primary schools was obtained after a great struggle with the Government which was made up of Protestants. In fact, Father Bonjean took the leadership in a campaign against the school policies of the Government. "He demanded equality for educational establishments for all religions without distinction, Buddhist, Hindu, Moslem, as well as Christian, with the parents having a free choice in a full freedom of conscience. . . . He achieved his objective in 1869."⁸

An English school for boys had been opened in Jaffna a number of years before; in 1880 it became St. Patrick's College.⁹ Another one for girls was opened by the Sisters of the Holy Family of Bordeaux as soon as they arrived in Ceylon in 1862.¹⁰ Others were opened later.

⁶ Cf. "The Goanese and Jacobite 'Schism' in Ceylon", Documentary Note 24, p. 319.

⁷ One of the most important brochures published by Father Bonjean is entitled: *Marriage Legislation in Ceylon*, Trichinopoly, 1864, 166 pages.

⁸ Pierre LEFRIANT, O.M.I., *La Perle au Front de l'Inde, Sri Lanka (Ceylan), l'île resplendissante*, manuscript, Rome, General Archives, p. 186.

⁹ Cf. *Missions*, 28 (1890), pp. 8-11.

¹⁰ The Sisters of the Holy Family of Bordeaux arrived in Ceylon at the end of 1862. In January 1863 they at first accepted to direct at Jaffna a boarding school to which a day-school was also attached. Thereafter they also concerned themselves with orphanages, industrial and parochial schools, and hospitals in the vicariate.



Professors at St. Patrick's College, Jaffna

Formation of the local clergy was a deep concern of Bishop Étienne Semeria and of his successor, Bishop Bonjean. In 1869 the latter laid the foundations of a seminary which he dedicated to St. Martin in 1874. Father Nicolas Sandrasagra, the first priest formed in this institution, was ordained on December 23, 1876. In 1898, nine Ceylonese had already been raised to the priesthood and 30 others were preparing themselves for it in the seminary.¹¹

To bringing about a native clergy must be added the formation of two religious institutes: the Brothers of St. Joseph, founded by Bishop Semeria in 1864 and attached to the St. Joseph orphanage for boys, near Jaffna; and the Sisters of St. Peter, an institute formed in 1865 under the direction of the Sisters of the Holy Family of Bordeaux. In 1898 the Brothers of St. Joseph numbered 22 in all, and the Sisters of St. Peter 36. These latter were divided into two branches,

¹¹ Cf. Albert PERBAL, O.M.I., "Le clergé indigène à Jaffna-Colombo", in *Missions*, 61 (1927). p. 145.

one for the Tamils at Jaffna and the other for the Singhalese at Kurunegala.

Finally, in his concern for printed works, Bishop Bonjean installed a printing press at the St. Vincent orphanage. This press began operations in 1871. It definitely became the most important press in the city of Jaffna. It published, in English and in Tamil, books, different publications, and even a newspaper, *The Jaffna Catholic Guardian*, which was founded in 1876, came out in English and in Tamil, and became a weekly in 1878.¹²

It is with pride that Bishop Bonjean could say to the capitulars of 1879: "Our mission is one of the finest of India."¹³ Bishop André Melizan, surnamed "the shepherd bishop", carried on the work of his predecessor, Bishop Bonjean, when the latter was transferred to the see of Colombo in 1883.

The vicariate in 1898

In 1898, the religious vicariate of Jaffna had 37 Oblates,¹⁴ and was at work in 19 residential missions.¹⁵ It had set up its novitiate and scholasticate in the seminary of St. Martin.

At Jaffna Bishop Bonjean had accomplished, as he also did in Colombo, a remarkable work for the formation and guidance of his missionaries, especially through his circular letters and his directories of 1875-1878, and by his little book *De dotibus boni missionarii*, by his treatise *De infidelibus et haereticis evangelizandis*, which came out in 1876. In 1903, Bishop Henri Joulain brought these texts up to date and

¹² It owed its existence to the initiative of Father Michael Murphy, who was strongly encouraged and supported by Bishop Bonjean. Cf. *Notices nécrologiques*, vol. 7, p. 185.

¹³ *Missions*, 18 (1880), p. 34.

¹⁴ *Ibidem*, 36 (1898), pp. 380, 381, 383. The vicars of missions were: Bishop Étienne Semeria who was appointed in 1851; Bishop Christopher Bonjean, appointed in 1868; Bishop André Melizan, appointed in 1883; and Bishop Henri Joulain, appointed in 1893.

¹⁵ Cf. *Missions*, 36 (1898), p. 384.

summarized them into one work in *Directorium theologicum pastoralement complectens ad usum missionariorum* (360 pages).

The vicariate of Colombo entrusted to the Oblates

In 1883, the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda Fide entrusted to the Oblates the southern part of the island of Ceylon, the apostolic vicariate of Colombo.¹⁶ Bishop Bonjean was transferred from Jaffna to Colombo, and he became the vicar of missions of the Oblates in their new field of the apostolate. In taking possession of his see, he had brought 11 Oblates with him. To the Oblates we must add the 14 secular priests who were already working in the vicariate.¹⁷

The new vicar apostolic had first of all to cope with financial problems and to overcome the opposition, at times clandestine and at times quite open, of the secular priests of the vicariate.¹⁸ He was a powerful polemicist, both in word and in writing, in Colombo as in Jaffna, and he defended the cause of the Christian education of children, the sanctity of marriage and he worked tirelessly to put an end to the schism of Goa.¹⁹

The population of the vicariate of Colombo was for a very great part Singhalese. In 1898 there were 18,826 Cath-

¹⁶ The Oblates who had been sent to the diocese of Colombo in 1851 had been withdrawn in 1866. In 1886, the diocese of Colombo became an archdiocese, its suffragans being the apostolic vicariates of the island, namely Jaffna and Kandy, which were at the same time raised to the status of dioceses. In 1893, the southern part of the archdiocese was raised to a diocese, named the diocese of Galle; on the other hand, the archdiocese at that same time acquired the province of the north-west on the island, of which Kurunegala was the capital, territory that was detached from the diocese of Jaffna.

¹⁷ Cf. *Missions*, 31 (1893), p. 479.

¹⁸ Cf. *ibidem*, p. 479; Robrecht BOUDENS, O.M.I., "Catholic Missionaries in a British Colony Success and Failures in Ceylon 1796-1893", in *Nouvelle Revue de Science Missionnaire*, 1979, p. 140.

¹⁹ Leo XIII had called Bishop Bonjean to Rome in view of preparing the concordat of 1886. On September 3, 1889, Bishop Bonjean wrote a remarkable letter concerning the schism of Goa. This letter is reproduced *in extenso* in *Missions*, 28 (1890), pp. 41-72.

olics, served in 47 central posts and 205 secondary ones.²⁰ In these many stations, the Oblates preached, catechized, administered the sacraments, visited the sick, ran schools; they were constantly engaged in these many tasks.

***Works of education: St. Joseph's College,
seminaries, at Maggona, the press***

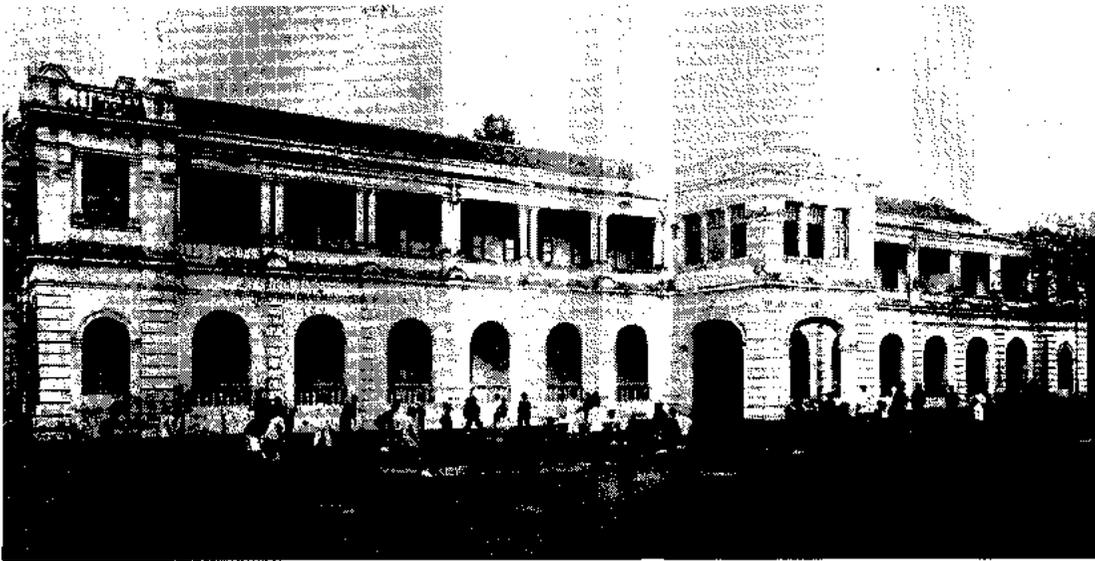
As in Jaffna, at Colombo, too, works of teaching and education were favoured. Father Charles Collin told the capitulars in 1893 that the Catholic schools were "everywhere the first priority across the vicariate, both in terms of the number of children attending them and of the quality of the teaching given to them."²¹ The Oblates concentrated an important part of their forces, a community of ten Fathers, in the college of St. Joseph opened in Colombo in 1896 for higher education, an institution which would soon be forming a Christian elite. In 1898 Bishop Melizan referred to this institution as a "work of the highest importance which has had to be preferred over all the others".²²

As soon as he arrived in Colombo, Bishop Bonjean opened a seminary which he dedicated to St. Charles. In 1890, it was permanently installed in a vast house at Borella. Some years later, in 1895, he added a minor seminary dedicated to St. Louis, founded two years previously to prepare future secular priests and Oblates. By 1898, these young institutions had furnished four priests, three of whom were Oblate. Father Louis Coquil, who was in charge of both

²⁰ Cf. *ibidem*, 36 (1898), pp. 368-369.

²¹ Cf. *ibidem*, 31 (1893), p. 454. The number of schools had risen from 155 to 307, and the number of pupils from 11,324 to 24,577, during the period from 1887 to 1893.

²² *Ibidem*, 36 (1898), p. 377. The pioneers of this work were: Fathers Charles Collin, the first rector and organizer of the college, Thomas Guglielmi, the builder and administrator of the college buildings, Charles Henry Lytton, director of the preparatory college dedicated to St. Charles, and an admirable educator. In 1898, St. Joseph's College had 268 students, and that of St. Charles, linked to it as a preparatory institution, had 257.



St. Joseph's College, Colombo

seminaries for a long time, was renowned as a remarkable formator of the local clergy.

An orphanage, an industrial school and a reform school, grouped together while remaining distinct from each other, made up at Maggona the important establishment of St. Vincent. The religious institute of the Brothers of St. Joseph was founded there in 1890 to look after the orphanage and the teaching tasks. The organizer here was Father Charles Conrad who for a long time was the directing heart and soul of this ensemble of works of St. Vincent at Maggona.²³

Finally, a number of other Oblates, not only Bishop Bonjean, were apostles of the press. Among these were Father Constant Chouvanel who published a number of works in Sinhalese, and Father John Pahamunay, the editor in chief of *The Ceylon Catholic Messenger*.²⁴

²³ Brother Louis-Émile Lepinay skillfully and successfully organized and directed the reform school which admitted also non-Catholic young people. Together with his fellow Oblates, Brothers Martin Crouzeix and Jean Thoravail, he dedicated his entire life to this work. Cf. *Missions*, 75 (1948), pp. 520-533.

²⁴ Cf. *ibidem*, 59 (1925), pp. 174-178.



Charles Conrad (1858-1924)

The heart and soul of the works at Maggona, Ceylon.

The vicariate in 1898

In 1898, the religious vicariate of Colombo had 70 Oblates, that is, 67 Fathers and 3 Brothers,²⁵ divided among 3 houses, 3 residences and 3 districts.²⁶ The novitiate and the scholasticate were established in the major seminary at Borella.

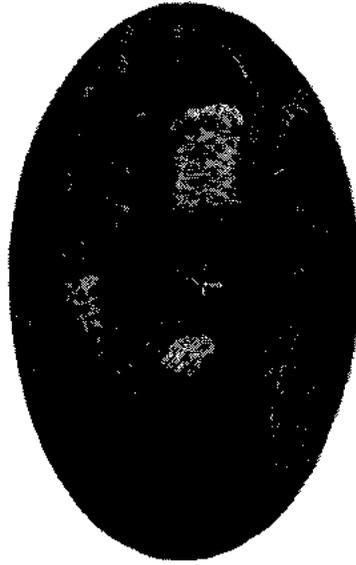
Among the Buddhists

In the vicariates of Jaffna and Colombo, some Oblates undertook to directly evangelize the Buddhists. Bishop de Mazenod greatly longed for this, for he had sent his Oblates to the island of Ceylon first and foremost for the conversion of non-Christians.²⁷

²⁵ The vicars of missions were: Bishop Christopher Bonjean, appointed in 1883; Charles Collin, pro-vicar, appointed in 1892; Bishop André Melizan, appointed in 1893; and Isidore Belle, appointed in 1897. There were 5 secular priests in the diocese.

²⁶ The houses were: Sacred Heart at Borella, St. Joseph's College and Kotahena, all three at Colombo; the districts were: Wennapuwa, Negombo and Maggona; the residences were: Pettah, Kurunegala and Puttalam.

²⁷ Cf. Letters to Father Semeria, February 21, 1849, September 19, 1851, in *OBLATE WRITINGS*, vol. 4, pp. 32, 82; letters to the Oblates on the island of Ceylon, June 2, 1851 and January 31, 1857, *ibidem*, pp. 66-67, 135-136.



Constant Chouvanel (1825-1923)
An outstanding apostle in Ceylon

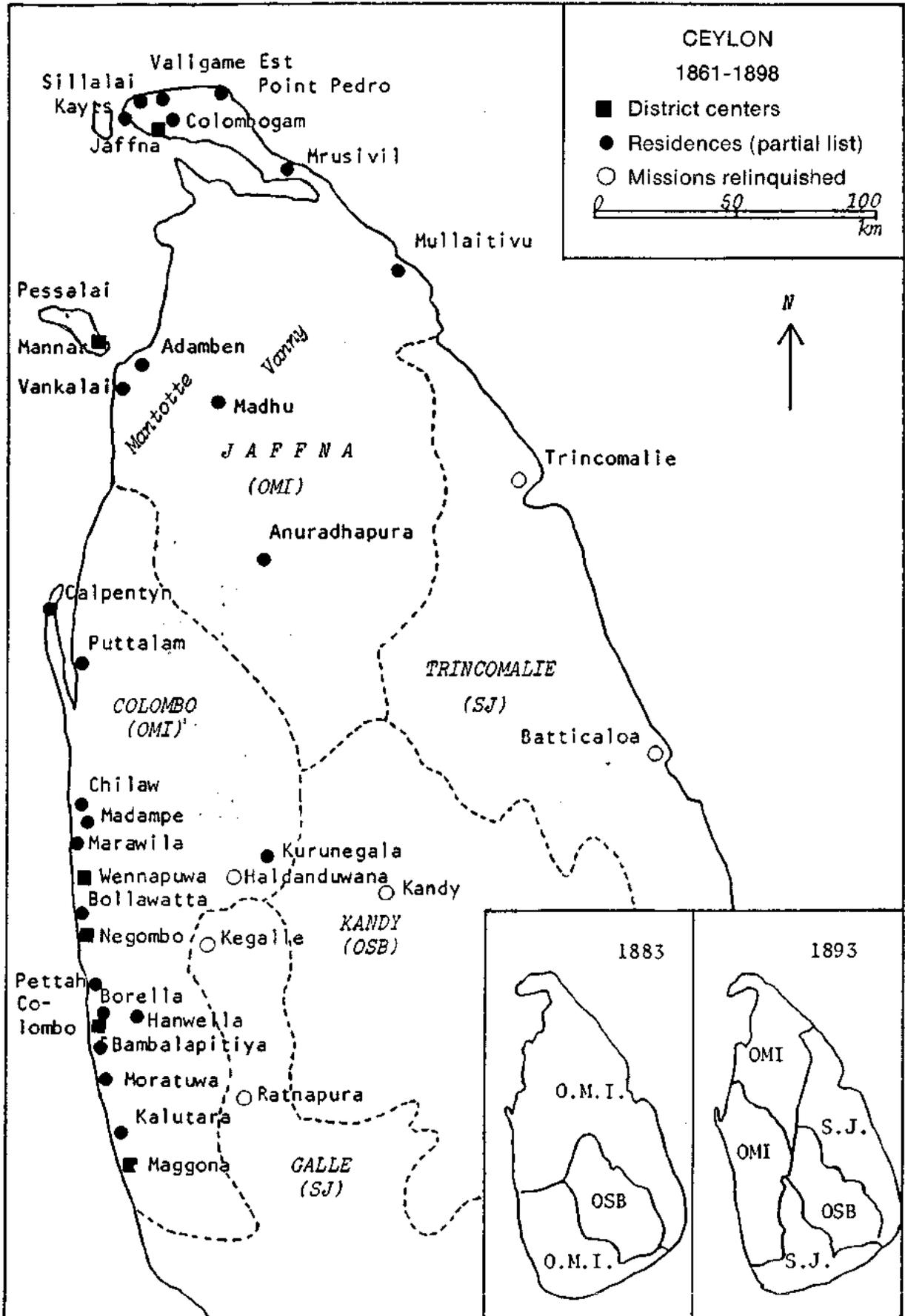
The Oblate who was most successful in this apostolate was Father Constant Chouvanel. He had been assigned to serve the villages of the district of Wennapuwa in 1875, and he baptized in less than one year 44 adults and 21 children. The following year he was working at Talampitiya which was not far from Kurunegala. At the end of 1876, he was assigned solely to ministry among the Buddhists of the district of Chilaw and received special faculties for this purpose.²⁸

Referring to the 20 converts of the little Christian community of Talampitiya, Bishop Bonjean wrote that he liked to consider them "as the first of this nation".²⁹ Father Boniface Gourdon also displayed a very generous zeal among the Buddhists in the mission of Haldanduwana and during the years 1880-1887 obtained the conversion of a certain number of them.³⁰

²⁸ Cf. Robrecht BOUDENS, O.M.I., *The Evangelization Work of the Oblates during the 19th Century*, 1882, manuscript, pp. 6-7.

²⁹ *Missions*, 18 (1880), p. 25.

³⁰ Cf. *Notices nécrologiques*, vol. 7, pp. 333-335; Pierre DUCHAUSSOIS, O.M.I., *Sous les feux de Ceylan*, p. 180.



However, in spite of the success achieved by these missionaries and by others here and there, experience showed — as Father Chouvanel himself attested — conversions from Buddhism would result rather in an indirect way, through the influence of fervent Christian communities.³¹ Conversion to Christianity required very great sacrifices from the Buddhists. “The convert from Buddhism becomes an exile from all that he was, from his own social milieu with all the consequences that that entails; he is blacklisted, can no longer find any work, has difficulties with his own family, etc.”³² On the other hand, at the end of the decade of the 1870s, Buddhism was experiencing a resurgence and began to develop its schools and to form leaders who would later dominate in politics and education.³³

II - *The Vicariates of South Africa*

South Africa in transformation

The missions of the vicariate of Natal in South Africa changed greatly during the period from 1861 to 1898. The discovery of diamond mines in the Orange Free State in 1866 and gold mines in Transvaal in 1884 brought to South Africa a great influx of Whites of all kinds and transformed the agricultural society of the country into an industrial one. Mining centres are built, railroads begin to cross the land in 1875, civil, economic, social and political institutions arose and developed, and prosperity set in for the rest of the 19th century.

³¹ Cf. *Missions*, 31 (1893), p. 468; also cf. *Rapport sur l'essai d'évangélisation des Bouddhistes Kandiens* of October 6, 1879. Rome, Oblate General Archives, Chouvanel dossier.

³² Report of Bishop Antoine Coudert, 1888. Rome, Oblate General Archives.

³³ Cf. Robrecht BOUDENS, O.M.I., “Catholic Missionaries in a British Colony Success and Failures in Ceylon 1796-1893” in *Nouvelle Revue de Science Missionnaire*, 1979, pp. 150-152.

Hence, the major problem confronting the missionaries and their ecclesiastical and religious superiors was how to respond to the requests for ministry, churches, schools and other institutions for the Whites of the cities and villages, and at the same time attempt to progress in evangelizing the Blacks for which purpose they had originally been sent. The lack of material resources and especially of missionaries, already keenly felt before, was now more acute in this period of great change.

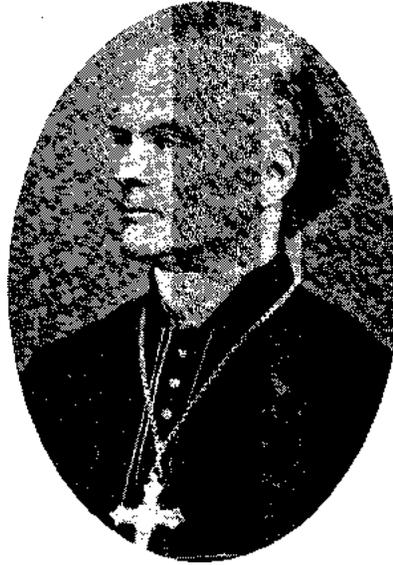
*A new bishop,
divisions of the vicariate of Natal*

The General Administration wanted to entrust the direction of the vicariate of Natal to a young bishop, one who was familiar with the English language that was spoken by the large majority of the Whites, and who could frequently visit his immense vicariate. Thus, Charles Jolivet was appointed apostolic vicar in 1874.³⁴ The new prelate succeeded to Bishop François Allard, the heroic pastor of the beginnings, who in 1872 had been invited by the Superior General to withdraw³⁵ and who had just handed in his resignation.

On account of the rapid developments in the country, the vicariate of Natal, upon the request of Bishop Jolivet and the General Administration, was in 1886 divided by the creation of an apostolic vicariate in the Orange Free State and of a prefecture apostolic in Transvaal. After these divisions, the vicariate of Natal still included the colony of Natal itself, Zululand, Swaziland and Transkei or Kaffiry. Later, in 1892, the vicariate of the Orange Free State was enlarged by the addition of the immense territory of Bechuanaland; and in 1894, Basutoland, whose missions were prospering and which

³⁴ Cf. Address of Father Fabre, Superior General, to the capitulars of 1873, in *Chapitres généraux 1861-1904*, copy Archives Deschâtelets, p. 422. Also cf. J.B. BRAIN, *Catholic Beginnings in Natal and Beyond*, p. 139.

³⁵ Letter of Father Joseph Fabre to Bishop François Allard, June 4, 1872.



Bishop Charles Jolivet, O.M.I. (1826-1903)
Vicar apostolic of Natal

until then belonged to the vicariate of the Orange Free State, was raised to an apostolic prefecture.³⁶

***Ministry, policies of Bishop Jolivet
new missions***

Because of the lack of success of the missions attempted in 1855, 1858 and 1861 among the Zulu of Natal, Bishop Allard had directed the activity of his missionaries towards Basutoland. Nevertheless, for 55 years (1856-1911)³⁷ Father Julien Barret at Pietermaritzburg and for 33 years (1852-1885)³⁸ Father Jean Sabon at Durban continued to serve, each in his own city, the Catholics who were immersed there in a strong Protestant majority. These two Oblates, often and for a long time all alone, shared the task of visiting Catholics scattered over the colony of Natal.³⁹

³⁶ Vicar apostolic of the Orange Free State was Bishop Anthony Gaughren; prefect apostolic of Transvaal was Father Odilon Monginoux, who in 1891 was replaced by Father Aloysius Schoch; prefect apostolic of Basutoland was Father Odilon Monginoux in 1894-1895, Father Alexandre Baudry with the title of apostolic administrator from 1895 to 1897, and Father Jules Cénez, appointed apostolic prefect in 1897.

³⁷ Cf. *Missions*, 39 (1901), pp. 68-73; 41 (1903), pp. 50-62.

³⁸ Cf. *Notices nécrologiques*, vol. 6, pp. 87-104.

³⁹ Cf. *Missions*, 11 (1873), pp. 430-434.

Having received the authorization from the Holy See, Bishop Allard tried to bring assistance to some 120 Catholics of Delagoa Bay in Mozambique: no priest had been there since 1834. Father Victor Bompont was chosen for this mission. He spent the year 1864-1865 at Lorenzo Marquez, but he had to abandon this post, for the authority of this territory demanded that, in the exercise of his ministry, he renounce the jurisdiction of Bishop Allard and place himself under that of the Archbishop of Goa.⁴⁰

As soon as he arrived in Natal, Bishop Jolivet visited his vicariate, a visit which took six months. He was 48 years old, an active and energetic man to whom social relationships came easily. The new prelate took careful cognizance of the state of his vicariate, of its personnel and works. Already then he selected land sites on which churches and schools would be built. The basic orientations he had chosen were: to serve as adequately as possible the White Catholics dispersed over his vast vicariate and who were everywhere a small minority; to open schools and obtain the collaboration of religious women to operate them; to occupy positions before the Protestants did; and to promote missions among the natives.⁴¹

In the part of his vicariate which remained in his jurisdiction after 1886, five new mission centres were opened for the Whites and the Natives of the colony of Natal: Bluff,⁴² Oakford, Estcourt, Ladysmith and New Castle. In the Transkei, a

⁴⁰ Cf. Letter of Bishop Allard to the Superior General, November 20, 1865, in *Missions*, 6 (1867), pp. 94-107; *ibidem*, 5 (1866), pp. 40-41; 44-48; *Annales de la Propagation de la Foi*, Lyon, 39 (1867), pp. 464-465.

⁴¹ Cf. Bishop Jolivet's report to the General Chapter of 1879, in *Missions*, 18 (1880), pp. 42-48. St. Michael, the first mission to the Zulu, had been abandoned in 1863 for the second time; it was opened again in 1882 by Father Baudry, left in the care of a layman in 1887, and then taken over in 1890 by the Marianhill Fathers.

⁴² Saturnio do Valle, a lay apostle who had been baptized when a child, was established at Bluff and brought to Father Sabon at Durban the first converts to the faith. This was the beginning of the mission at Bluff which in 1880 was dedicated to St. Francis Xavier. Cf. Howard ST. GEORGE, O.M.I., "A lay Apostle of the Nineteenth Century Saturnio do Valle, Pioneer of Zulu Catholicism", in *Etudes Oblates*, 25 (1966), pp. 135-152.

territory bordering on the colony of Natal to the south, with a population of 750,000 Natives and 10,000 Whites, 3 missions were opened: Kokstad, Umtata and Cala. Finally, in Zululand, another territory belonging to his vicariate and having a population of 500,000 natives, Father Anselme Rousset in 1895 opened a mission at Emoyeni, where he will be a very active apostle for many years and also visited other places of the region.⁴³

Outstanding missionaries devoted a more or less large part of their lives as apostles in Natal. Besides those mentioned above, we can also mention the names of Fathers François Lebihan, Marcellin Deltour, Alexandre Baudry, Odilon Monginoux and Louis Mathieu.

The vicariate of Natal in 1898

Because of its institutions and progress, the Church was from henceforth recognized in Natal and wielded a definite influence there. The vicariate, which had some 800 Catholics in 1874, had 12,000 in 1898. It was served by 22 Oblates, 4 of whom were Brothers, and by 6 congregations of religious women who looked after schools, orphanages and hospitals; and, since 1882, by an impressive group of Trappists: 24 Fathers, 250 Brothers and as many tertiary Sisters.⁴⁴

The vicariate of Basutoland: foundation at Roma

Armed with the authorization of King Moshoeshoe, Bishop Allard, Father Joseph Gérard and Brother François

⁴³ Cf. John BRADY, O.M.I., *Trekking for Souls*, pp. 208-210.

⁴⁴ A group of Trappists, under the direction of Abbot Francis Pfanner, were received by Bishop Jolivet in Natal in 1882. They acquired large tracts of land and formed a village called Marianhill. They became missionaries within their own lands, ran an orphanage and taught several trades. Their missionary work was most fruitful. Cf. Franz HAGEL, O.M.I., "Marianhill's Founder and the Oblates", in *Études Oblates*, 6 (1947), pp. 210-212. They were serving 18 missionary stations in 1898.



Joseph Gérard (1831-1914)
Missionary in Natal and Basutoland. Venerable since 1976.

Bernard established themselves in Basutoland⁴⁵ on October 11, 1862.

This tiny country, encircled by the colonies and republics of South Africa, was populated by a native nation which was formed by the merging of several clans in 1831 under the influence of the powerful chief Moshoeshoe. When the Oblates arrived, the country did not as yet have its definitive boundaries and was still struggling with the Boers who were threatening to invade it. In 1868 it became a territory under a British protectorate status. At the request of King Moshoeshoe, the Missionaries of the Gospel Society of Paris were already in the country since 1833. They had been invited to instruct the people, had founded the first schools, had created a written form for the language and in 1861 had brought in the first printing press.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ Cf. *Missions*, 1 (1862), pp. 385-387.

⁴⁶ Cf. Jean-Louis RICHARD, O.M.I., *L'expérience de la conversion chez les Basutos*, Rome, Gregorian University, 1977, p. 27.

The Catholic mission was established in the Tlouthe valley under the name of the Village of the Mother of Jesus, later (1877) changed to that of Roma. It was officially opened on November 1, 1863, on the occasion of the solemn opening of the first church at which King Moshoeshoe himself was present, together with his subaltern chiefs and a large crowd of Basotho.⁴⁷

The missionary activity began with instruction at the church, visits to the surrounding villages, the opening of a school, the translation of the catechism into Sesotho. The Sisters of the Holy Family of Bordeaux arrived in 1865 and took charge of the schools and other works of charity. A first station was opened in 1866 at Korokoro and a second in 1868 at St. Michael. However, a war of extermination declared between the Basotho and the Boers from 1865 to 1868 endangered the new mission from its very outset and caused the missionaries a good deal of trouble.⁴⁸

The first conversions

The mission recorded its first catechumens on December 25, 1864, and its first baptism on October 8th of the following year.⁴⁹ Severe conditions were laid down for admission to the catechumenate. In 1873, the mission had recorded 300 baptisms and 25 Christian marriages.⁵⁰ "The piety of this new faithful people is extremely edifying," Bishop Allard noted.⁵¹ He added: "No doubt, there are in the Kaffir nature certain obstacles that are really major and opposed to the action of grace; but there are also marvellous elements wherein grace can take root and which await only the Gospel preaching to

⁴⁷ Cf. *Missions*, 3 (1864), pp. 39-42.

⁴⁸ Cf. *ibidem*, 8 (1967), pp. 80, 86, 189; Bernhard ALBERS, O.M.I., *Father Joseph Gérard, O.M.I., Apostle of the Basotho*, in *Vie Oblate Life*, 41 (1982), pp. 236-243.

⁴⁹ Bishop Allard to Father Fabre, November 5, 1865, in *Missions*, 6 (1867), p. 80.

⁵⁰ Cf. *ibidem*, 11 (1873), p. 437.

⁵¹ *Ibidem*, 11 (1873), p. 437.

be transformed into Christian virtues.”⁵² The second mission was founded in 1876, 100 kilometers to the north of Roma, by Father Joseph Gérard; it was placed under the patronage of St. Monica.

Basutoland had recorded 834 conversions when in 1887 it was consecrated to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. After this consecration, Bishop Anthony Gaughren, the vicar of missions, declared: “We witnessed a real change in the country. In one year alone the Fathers had to record as many conversions as had been achieved during the first 25 years of their difficult apostolate. Since then, this movement has continued and even today — he was writing in 1893 — the average number of conversions each year is about 350.”⁵³ In several villages the chiefs were appealing for missionaries.

The vicariate in 1898

Basutoland was detached from the vicariate of the Orange Free State and erected as an apostolic prefecture in 1894. In 1898, its six missions⁵⁴ and the stations served by them counted a total of 5233 Christians and 333 catechumens.⁵⁵ The mission already had the image of being a unique success among the Blacks of southern Africa. There was every reason to look upon its future with hope. Twenty Oblates were at work in this mission, that is, 11 Fathers and 9 Brothers, assisted by 32 Sisters of the Holy Family of Bordeaux, 8 of whom were natives.⁵⁶

⁵² *Ibidem*, p. 438.

⁵³ *Ibidem*, 31 (1898), p. 499.

⁵⁴ Roma and its four missions: St. Michael, Nazareth, Thaba Bosiu, Loretto; St. Monica and its station, St. Margaret Mary; Korokoro and its station, Massabiella; Mountolivet; Gethsemany; Sion.

⁵⁵ Cf. *Missions*, 36 (1898), p. 411.

⁵⁶ Cf. *ibidem*, p. 411.

*The vicariate of the Orange Free State:
beginnings, on the farms, in mining centres, schools*

The Dutch republic of the Orange Free State, located to the west of Basutoland and populated by Boers, Whites and a large number of Natives, had as yet only one mission, namely, at Bloemfontein, where a Premonstratensian Father Jacque Hoenderwangers looked after the Whites of that locality and its environs. Father Victor Bompard succeeded to his ministry in 1869.⁵⁷

In this vicariate where everything needed to be done, the missionaries were devoting themselves to two different apostolates. The first was an itinerant apostolate among the Catholics dispersed in the towns and on the farms of the Boers. Father Bompard and other missionaries after him continued this apostolate with Bloemfontein as their centre. Two other central missions were opened for this kind of apostolate, one at Jagersfontein in 1881 and the other at Harrismith in 1893.

The second apostolate was among the Catholics among the European immigrants who were flowing into the diamond regions in western Griqualand. Father Bompard from Bloemfontein visited them for the first time and said Mass for them for the first time on October 2, 1870.⁵⁸ The following year, Father Anatole Hidien, who had been assigned to the apostolate among the miners, established his residence at Bultfontein. This most active and universally loved apostle, however, died a few months after his arrival.⁵⁹ He was succeeded by Father François LeBihan who transferred his missionary residence to New Rush — Kimberley today — which was not far away. Fathers Andrew Walsh and Hilaire Lenoir and others

⁵⁷ Father Jacques Hoenderwangers returned to his monastery at Grimbergen in Belgium.

⁵⁸ Cf. John BRADY, O.M.I., *op. cit.*, p. 121.

⁵⁹ Cf. Aimé MARTINET, O.M.I., Biographical sketch of Father Anatole Hidien in *Notices nécrologiques*, vol. 2, pp. 344-347. This sketch contains a description of the state of the vicariate of Natal and its problems at the time of Father Hidien's death.

were to succeed him. A second residence was opened at Beaconsfield from which other mining centers were served.

In the missions and the parishes that were being formed in the vicariate, the missionaries opened Catholic schools and obtained the collaboration of religious women to operate them. In 1892 they even founded at Clogolan a college called St. Leo's College; it was located on a large farm, not too far from the boundary of Basutoland. It passed into other hands in 1895.⁶⁰

Bechuanaland

Two missions were opened in a new territory, Bechuanaland — today Botswana — which was added to the vicariate of the Orange Free State in 1892.⁶¹ One was Taungs, founded in 1895 to serve the Blacks by Father Frédéric Porte who worked there until his death in 1926; the other was Mafeking founded in 1896 to serve Catholic Whites by Father Hilaire Lenoir who was replaced shortly afterwards by Father George Ogle.

The vicariate in 1898

The twelve Fathers and two Brothers of the vicariate were working in eight missions spread over three districts.⁶² They are assisted by 60 religious women of different congregations and by 3 Brothers of the Christian Schools. Their ministry was addressed to some 4000 Catholics who were dispersed and adrift in a population of 140,000 heretics and a million Blacks who were not yet Christian.⁶³

⁶⁰ Cf. General Council, July 16, 1895.

⁶¹ In 1893, Father Frédéric Porte made a three month long trip and explored the immense country of Bechuanaland — an area of 710,000 square kilometers — and composed a detailed report. Cf. "Rapport du père Porte à Mgr Gaughren, vicaire apostolique de l'État Libre d'Orange", in *Missions*, 32 (1894), pp. 182-228.

⁶² District of Bloemfontein: Bloemfontein, St. Leo's College (Coclolan), Harrismith; District of western Griqualand: Kimberley, Beaconsfield; District of Bechuanaland: Mafeking and Taungs. *Missions*, 36 (1898), pp. 401-405.

⁶³ *Ibidem*, p. 406.

*The vicariate of Transvaal:
penetrating a Huguenot country*

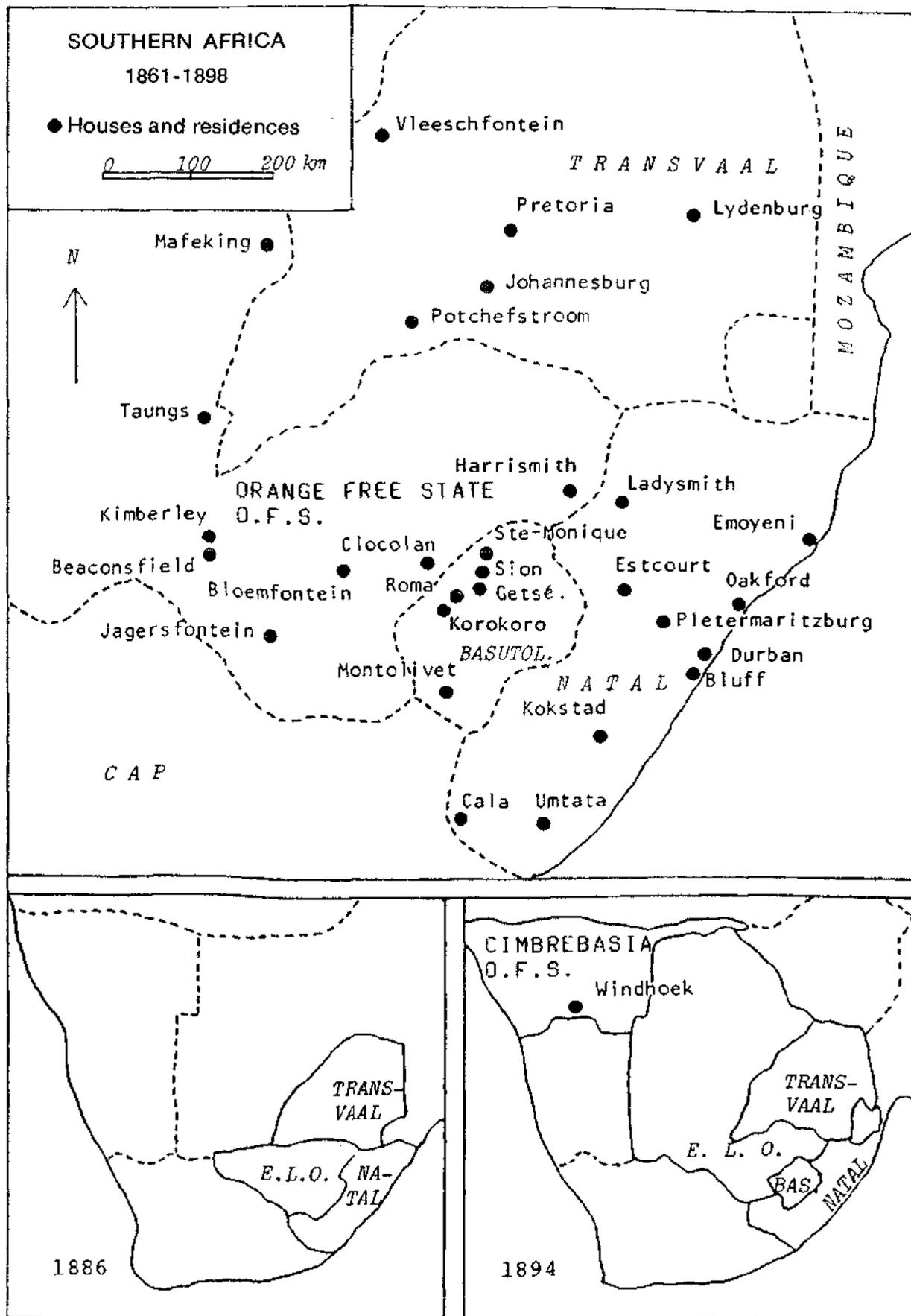
The Dutch republic of Transvaal, almost as large as France and situated to the north of the Orange Free State, was populated with Natives, Boers and Europeans. The first missionaries to penetrate this territory, which was a fortress of Huguenot Boers, closed to Catholic priests by very strict laws, were the missionaries from Bloemfontein: the Premonstratensian Father Hoenderwangers and then, in 1869, Father François LeBihan. Both visited the Catholics in the capital city, Potchefstroom itself. They created quite a stir in the city⁶⁴ and their daring resulted in an appearance before a justice of the peace.

Some years later, in 1874, Father Andrew Walsh came from Natal and went to Pilgrims Rest and to Lydenburg. In this latter place he even acquired some land on which to build a church. The first definitive mission was opened at Pretoria in 1877 by Bishop Jolivet and entrusted to Father Walsh. In 1886, when the apostolic prefecture was established, it was still the one and only mission in the country.

The annexation of Transvaal into the British possessions in 1877, the influx of Europeans attracted by the discovery of gold in 1884, gradually reduced the Huguenots' ferocious opposition to the entry of Catholic priests into the country. In 1886 the Oblates opened a second mission for miners at Barbeton, and a third the following year in Johannesburg, as well as some out-stations in other mining centers.

Over and above serving Catholic miners, just like in the Orange Free State, some Oblates were serving Catholics dispersed across the large Boer farms. The residence at Lydenburg was opened in 1892, that of Potchefstroom in 1889; both of these served as missionary bases.

⁶⁴ *Ibidem*, 28 (1890), pp. 173-174.



A mission among the natives

A first mission among the natives was accepted in 1894: it was the mission of Vleeschfontein which was inherited from the Jesuit Fathers.⁶⁵ Father Eugène Noel was in charge of it until 1914. In the mission's temporal needs, he was assisted by Brother Joseph Kribs who devoted himself in this mission until 1934. The mission formed an isolated village of natives, 250 in number in 1899, nearly all of them Catholic. The missionary opened a school there.⁶⁶

The vicariate in 1898

The religious vicariate of Transvaal⁶⁷ in the beginning of 1899 had 12 Fathers and a Brother, with 2 houses and 3 residences.⁶⁸ It was assisted by the Sisters of the Holy Family of Bordeaux, of Loretto, and the Dominican Sisters, who were looking after the schools and hospitals.

The vicariate of Cimbebasia: foundation

The apostolic prefecture of Lower Cimbebasia in South-west Africa — today Namibia — was entrusted to the Oblates in 1892 to facilitate their establishment in Germany. This mission territory consisted of some 350,000 square kilometers and was almost exclusively populated by natives of different tribes who had been driven out of richer areas where they had formerly been living.

⁶⁵ *Ibidem*, 37 (1899), p. 399; 56 (1922), p. 800.

⁶⁶ Cf. *ibidem*, pp. 339-343; 56 (1922), pp. 800-803.

⁶⁷ Monsignor Odilon Monginoux from 1886 to 1891, and Monsignor Aloysius Schoch from 1891 to 1898 held the posts of prefect apostolic of Transvaal and of vicar of missions. At the time when the prefecture was established, there was only one mission in the entire territory, that of Pretoria with two Fathers: John Mary de Lacy and Leopold Trabaud; there were also some Sisters of Loretto.

⁶⁸ Houses: Johannesburg, Pretoria; residences: Potchefstroom, Lydenburg and Vleeschfontein. The Sisters of Loretto were at work at Pretoria and Lydenburg, the Dominican Sisters at Potchefstroom, and the Sisters of the Holy Family at Johannesburg.

The first missionaries, Fathers Bernard Herrmann, Joseph Filliung and Brother Gerhard Havenith, arrived in December 1896 and established their residence at Windhoek. Monsignor Aloysius Schoch, the prefect apostolic of Transvaal, who was ending a six months' exploration of Lower Cimbebasia, welcomed them and provided them with most valuable information about their mission territory.⁶⁹

For the time being, the missionaries had to limit their apostolate to some 200 soldiers and Catholic settlers of Windhoek and environs,⁷⁰ since the civil authorities forbade them to minister to the natives; the latter was reserved to Protestant missionaries.

III - *The General Situation in 1898*

Personnel

During the period from 1861 to 1898, the Congregation's personnel nearly quadrupled, rising from 414 to 1527 Oblates. The number of Fathers rose from 273 to 831, of scholastics from 53 to 287, and of Brothers from 88 to 409.

While it was increasing in number, the personnel was also becoming more universal in terms of its origin. The Oblates living at the beginning of 1899 came from 185 dioceses and from 20 different countries. Certain dioceses were quite generous in contributing to Oblate recruitment: Montreal gave 106; Metz, 80; Quimper, 56; Strasbourg, 55; Vannes, 53; Laval, 50.⁷¹ Even though France remained the principal source of vocations, other countries furnished 689 of the 1527 Oblates, in other words, 45.1% of the total. The main ones of the latter are Canada, which gave 240; Germany, with 149; and Ireland with 138.

⁶⁹ Cf. *Missions*, 36 (1898), p. 418.

⁷⁰ *Ibidem*, pp. 421, 423.

⁷¹ Cf. *État général du personnel de la Congrégation des Missionnaires Oblats de Marie Immaculée*, no. 5, avril 1899. Cf. "Tables on the Personnel of the Congregation in 1898-1899", Documentary Note 15, p. 320.

This personnel of the beginning of 1899 is young, its average age being 37.9 years. If the scholastics are not counted, more than half of the remaining Oblates, that is 454 Fathers and 229 Brothers are below 40 years of age. The General Administration is directly responsible for the formation of scholastics and their assignment, once they are priests, to the Provinces and Mission Vicariates.

Internal life

During the course of the years from 1861 to 1898, the community and religious life had certainly known weaknesses here and there; in the over all, however, it was spared from any serious crisis. Father Fabre could tell the capitulars of 1879: "To give you our assessment, we can tell you that, in our view, the Congregation's moral situation both within and without, seems good, consoling and satisfying."⁷² The general report on the Congregation presented at the 1898 Chapter is laudatory. "Among us exist admirable devotedness and virtues which I am not afraid to describe as heroic, which permeate everything within and without with a real perfume of holiness. . . . This is the case in the foreign missions and in the provinces, among the elder members and the most recent newcomers in the family, and this is the case among our good lay Brothers."⁷³

The seven General Chapters held from 1861 to 1898 inclusively, besides touching upon the Congregation's works, also concerned themselves with very many questions that relate to the Institute's internal life. No issue of major importance did arise. Among the more noteworthy agenda items we can mention: the Chapter of 1867 proceeded to a revision of the Constitutions and Rules; those of 1873, 1879, 1887 and 1893 gave quite an impulse to study; nearly all insisted that the first work of the Congregation to be promoted is the preaching of missions according to the Rules and the Oblate spirit.

⁷² *Missions*, 17 (1879), p. 319.

⁷³ *Circulaires administratives*, vol. 2, cir. no. 70, March 19, 1899, p. 23.

The apostolic life

The Oblates' apostolic activity can be summed up as follows: preaching missions, ministry in shrines, in parishes, among Catholics who are dispersed and without religious assistance, missions among the natives, works of education related to evangelization. Let us note, however, that the work of major seminaries did not grow since the Founder's death. In the Provinces at the end of the century, the Congregation is in charge only of the major seminaries of Ajaccio and Fréjus in France and of Ottawa in Canada. All three go back to the Founder's lifetime.

The fields of the apostolate grew larger in Europe. The Oblates are at work across the whole of France and have opened their first establishments in Italy, Holland, Spain and Belgium; they have also set up a province in Germany.

Outside Europe, the Congregation has strengthened and extended its activity in territories which it had already partially touched. Thus it took on responsibility for a diocese, four apostolic vicariates and two apostolic prefectures in these territories.⁷⁴ Moreover, the Congregation had accepted three new territories: the apostolic vicariate of Colombo in Ceylon, the apostolic prefecture of Lower Cimbebasia in Southwest Africa, and a mission in Australia.⁷⁵

⁷⁴ In Canada: the diocese of St. Albert, the apostolic vicariates of Athabasca-Mackenzie, British Columbia and Saskatchewan; in South Africa, the vicariate of the Orange Free State and the apostolic prefectures of Transvaal and Basutoland.

⁷⁵ The General Administration had to refuse several mission territories and works offered to it by the Holy See or by bishops. Among these were: the missions of Namaqualand in Africa, in 1865; responsibility for two apostolic prefectures and two apostolic vicariates in the north of Quebec in Canada, in 1867, 1878, and 1882; the missions of Alaska, in 1868, 1873, and 1881; a mission in the Laquedives and Maldives Islands in the Indian Ocean in 1887; a reform school at Port Hope on Trinity Island in the Antilles, in 1888; the minor and major seminary of Quito, Ecuador, in 1889; the founding of a college in Argentina, in 1889.

The Congregation had the task of looking after a total of eleven local Churches that were in the process of development; for each of them she was fully responsible and, in the case of most of them, she provided almost by herself the priestly personnel: St. Boniface, St. Albert, Athabasca-Mackenzie, British Columbia, Saskatchewan, Natal, Basutoland, the Orange Free State, Transvaal, Jaffna, Colombo and Lower Cimbnesia which had just been entrusted to her. The pastors of these Churches and the Oblates sent their requests, difficulties and hopes to the capitulars and to the General Administration from whom they expected assistance, especially in regard to personnel.

In the provinces and vicariates

A bird's eye view over the whole Congregation as it is in 1898 reveals the following particular items: The "du Nord" Province of France had advanced greatly in recruiting and was directing shrines of great influence; the British province, whose English-speaking members were much needed in the foreign missions, all of them located in the British possessions and in the United States, remained very active but had lost its earlier recruiting pace; the Province of Germany flourished from its very outset; the Province of Canada, where recruitment was weak, even none in the preceding period, was furnishing a considerable number of Oblates; the vicariates of the Canadian West and North as well as those of Ceylon were succeeding by means of heroic labour to consolidate and develop their local Churches; the vicariates of South Africa, due to lack of means and personnel and on account of the rapid and sudden changes in terms of population, are slowed down and find it difficult to respond to the immediate needs of Catholics; and they have just partially begun to approach the great masses of natives on their territory.

Such is the Congregation's situation at the end of the 19th century. Blessed Eugene de Mazenod's foundation exists, full of vitality, in its internal life as in its missionary fields in Christian countries and in non-Christian regions. The Congregation has successfully responded to the challenge addressed

to her in 1861: to continue and develop the apostolic elan the Founder had given to her.

Documentary Notes

1 - *The Main Biographies of Bishop de Mazenod*

Jacques JEANCARD, Bishop, *Mélanges historiques sur la Congrégation des Oblats de Marie Immaculée. À l'occasion de la vie et de la mort du père Suzanne*, Tours, 1872, 400 p. The author was a witness of the Congregation's first beginnings. He composed his work in 1866-1872, basing it on his own recollections and he especially underscores the person of the Founder whom he knew so very well. There are a few errors of names, dates and other data which do not affect the substance of this history. This publication was meant solely for the Oblates.

Robert COOKE, O.M.I., *Sketches of the Life of Mgr de Mazenod . . .*, London, 1879-1882, 2 vol., xxv-400 and xii-419 pp. The author, basing himself mainly on *Mélanges historiques . . .* of Bishop Jeancard and documents made available by the General Administration, wrote a biography meant to appeal to the general public and in the style that was in vogue at that time. The hero's weaknesses are either softened or omitted.

Toussaint RAMBERT, O.M.I., *Vie de Mgr Charles-Joseph-Eugène de Mazenod . . .*, Tours, 1883, 2 vol., 800 and 720 pp. Father Rambert, with a great concern for historical accuracy, quotes copiously from documents. The synthesis of the texts brought forward is insufficient to give us a real biography. Nevertheless, the General Administration decided to publish for the Congregation's benefit this important valuable documentary work.

Antoine-Charles RICARD, Bishop, *Monseigneur de Mazenod, évêque de Marseilles, fondateur de la Congrégation des Missionnaires Oblats de Marie Immaculée*, Paris, 1892, xvi-474 pp. The author offers the general public a biography based upon the volumes of

Father Rambert and the manuscript of the work being prepared by Father Rey, which is mentioned below.

Achille REY, O.M.I., *Histoire de Mgr Charles-Joseph-Eugène de Mazenod, évêque de Marseilles, fondateur de la Congrégation des Missionnaires Oblats de Marie Immaculée*, Rome, 1928, 2 vol., 758 and 912 pp. The author conscientiously studied all the available Oblate archives material and completed his documentation from other sources. He verified everything he could. He undertook this work in 1886. It is more complete and accurate than that of his predecessors, but it is unfinished. Regarding its value as a history, cf. F.-X. CIANCIULLI, O.M.I., *Valeur historique de la biographie Rey*, in *Études Oblates*, 19 (1960), pp. 249-254.

Jean LEFLON, *Eugène de Mazenod, évêque de Marseilles, fondateur des Missionnaires Oblats de Marie Immaculée*, Paris, Librairie Plon, 1957-1965, 3 vol., 492, 667 and 861 pp. (An English translation by Francis D. Flanigan, O.M.I.: *Eugene de Mazenod, Bishop of Marseilles, Founder of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate 1782-1861*, New York, Fordham University Press, 1961-1970, 4 vol., xxv-511, 702, xii-528 and 387 pp.). This author is a professional historian. He places the Founder in the religious, social and political history of his time. Besides his training and knowledge of history, both quite superior to those of his predecessors, he had the added advantage of having access to numerous documents about Eugene de Mazenod which were discovered in the bygone decades and of being assisted by a group of Oblate research personnel. This is a complete and definitive biography.

Marius NOGARET, O.M.I., *Monseigneur de Mazenod 1782-1861, évêque de Marseille, fondateur des Missionnaires Oblats de Marie Immaculée*, Lyon, Éditions Pole et Tropiques, 1960, 48 pp. ill. A brief, precise, well-presented life of Bishop de Mazenod, elaborated by a close collaborator of Jean Leflon in the latter's work on the Founder.

Aimé ROCHE, O.M.I., *Eugène de Mazenod*, Lyon, a text of 59 pages, followed by a magnificent album, 1960. This biography was published again in 1975 under the title *Le bienheureux Eugène de Mazenod*, Editions du Chalet, Lyon, 141 pp. ill., but without the album which was part of the first edition. In a brisk and lively style, the author situates the Founder in the context of Provence. (An English translation by Alfred Hubenig, O.M.I., *The Blessed Eugene de*

Mazenod, Bishop of Marseilles, Founder of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate, Lyons, Editions du Chalet, 1975, 171 pp. ill.).¹

2 - The Program of Eugene's Life in Venice

In Venice, under the guidance of Don Bartolo Zinelli, Eugene followed a flexible yet precise program of life which he clearly remembered and esteemed. In his *Mémoires*, he describes his regular program in the following terms:

"I went to confession every Saturday and received communion every Sunday. Reading good books and prayer were the only exceptions I allowed to the busy schedule of my studies. I attended and served Mass every day and I also recited daily the Little Office of the Blessed Virgin Mary. From my reading of pious materials I had acquired a certain attraction for mortification and, although I was still a child, I undertook to fast on all Fridays and three days a week during Lent; my parents did not notice it. I often put sticks of wood under my bed-sheets, and on Saturdays, to make sure that I awoke early enough to spend more time in church, I slept without further ado on the floor on a single cover. My health did not suffer from this at all and I followed this routine all the time I lived in Venice."²

3 - The De Mazenod Family's Financial Situation

According to the calculations made by Father Nogaret, the debts of Eugene's father, Charles-Antoine, and of his grandfather, Charles-Alexandre, before the Revolution, amounted to 283,000 pounds, and went beyond the value of the family goods which were then estimated as being worth 200,000 pounds. The dowry which Marie-Rose brought when she married Charles-Antoine amounted to 120,000 pounds mortgaged on the goods of Charles-Antoine and was to be repaid in the case of legal separation.

After the Revolution, Madame de Mazenod succeeded to recover her dowry by having the De Mazenod properties, seized by the State after the death of Charles-Alexandre, awarded to her by

¹ Cf. Robrecht BOUDENS, O.M.I., "Les premiers biographes de Mgr de Mazenod"; in *Études Oblates*, 17 (1958), pp. 3-37.

² "Souvenirs de famille", in *Missions*, 5 (1866), p. 128.

the courts. Making use of the procedure followed by many wives of emigrants, she requested and obtained, on April 25, 1802, a dissolution of her marriage in regard to its civil effects, in order to protect her goods against the claims of the De Mazenods' creditors and to be able to administer them herself.

Consequently, President de Mazenod, who was to inherit from his father, possessed no more property any more, but only his debts. He thus found himself in a very inferior and humiliating position in regard to his wife.³

4 - *The Joannis' Opposition to the De Mazenods*

The peaceful existence of the Charles-Antoine de Mazenod and Marie-Rose Joannis pair was troubled by the jealousy of the President's mother-in-law who "began to fear that her daughter may come to love her husband more than her; this provoked on the part of the irritated husband a revenge whose consequences were to be disastrous."

With great frankness and objectivity, the President confidentially outlined the situation of his household to his best friend, de Perrier, in a long letter of August 12, 1803. He stressed this jealousy of his mother-in-law and admitted that he "at one time annoyed her by indulging in some flirtation", although he always remained "both equally tender and attentive" towards his wife; and that, when he had given up this straying, his mother-in-law, instead of helping him to regain the heart of his wife, acted in the very opposite sense. It was at this point that the Revolution broke out.

He also explained to him how afterwards his wife, if left to herself, was obliging and attentive, "perfect", in short; but she was quite a different person when influenced by her mother and by a cousin, Roze Joannis. The latter had attached himself to his "dearest lady cousin" and was quite hostile to the President. Under the influence of this cousin, who was most experienced in business matters, his wife had "handled" all his affairs, without consulting him and without giving him the least bit of information of what she was doing.

³ Cf. Joseph PIELORZ, O.M.I., *Vie spirituelle de Mgr de Mazenod 1782-1812*, pp. 19-24.

The break-up of the De Mazenod home was never total, but very close to being so. Their son was the unifying link and he worked to draw their hearts closer together, even if he could not succeed in restoring the home. When the President returned from exile in 1817 and settled down in Marseilles, his wife visited him often and showed him much friendship and even some tender affection.⁴

5 – *Eugene's Moral Self-portrait*

When he was in the seminary of St-Sulpice in Paris, in order to make himself better known to Monsieur Duclaux, his spiritual director, Eugene, on his own decision and in all objectivity, depicted an elaborate moral portrait of himself. Here are parts of it which Jean Leflon retained in his biography of Eugene de Mazenod.⁵

“I am of a quick, impetuous nature. When I desire things, I desire them very intensely and the least delay makes me suffer. . . . I become impatient at obstacles which prevent my desires from being fulfilled and no hardship seems too great in overcoming the most difficult of these obstacles. Headstrong in my wishes and feelings, the mere appearance of a contradiction makes me bristle. If the contradiction persists and I am not fully convinced that I am being opposed for my own good, I flare up and then my soul seems to develop a new resilience so far unknown to me; that is, I acquire a sudden and strange glibness in expressing ideas which come to me in a rush, while, ordinarily, I have to search for them and find difficulty in expressing them. I have the same ease in expressing my ideas when I feel strongly about a thing and wish to make others share my feeling. By a strange contrast, if instead of opposing me, people give in to my wishes, I am lost for words. . . .

I have always had a pronounced candor which causes me to brush away every kind of compliment when it shows the least sign of being insincere. Out in the world, people accommodated themselves to my ways. . . .

Since experience has shown me that I am seldom mistaken in my judgments, I have to guard carefully against pronouncing them unnecessarily. . . .

⁴ *Ibidem*, pp. 19-24.

⁵ Jean LEFLON, *op. cit.*, vol. 1, pp. 294-296.

In spite of all that I have just said about myself, it is almost unbelievable how sensitive my heart is, but it really is, even to extremes. . . . I idolize my family. I would suffer anything for certain members of my family, and this is no exaggeration because I would willingly and unhesitatingly sacrifice my life for my father, my mother, my grandmother, my sister and my father's two brothers. As a general rule, I feel an intense love for all those who love me, provided their love matches mine. When it does, my heart feels gratitude to the utmost degree. This feeling has always been so exquisite that I have never mistaken it. I have always desired a friend, but never have I met one, at least of the kind I would like to have. It is true that I am difficult to please, for just as I am disposed to give much, so, too, I demand much. . . .

Nevertheless, there is nothing of a carnal nature in all these desires, for they spring from the noblest part of my heart. One of the strongest proofs of this is that my heart has always disdained any intimate friendship with women, since this kind of friendship springs more from the senses than from the heart. Nor does social standing influence the love I bear for those who sincerely love me. I am unbelievably affectionate toward the servants who are sincerely devoted to me. I find it painful to be separated from them, and leaving them was heartbreaking. I am deeply interested in their happiness and do everything I can to secure it for them. And I do it not out of magnanimity or nobility of soul; only with those towards whom I feel indifferent do I act in this manner. Rather it is done out of affection, tenderness, yes, even love. . . ."⁶

6 - *The Church during the French Revolution, 1789-1799*

The Estates General met in May 1789, became the Constituent National Assembly on July 9th, and on July 14th occurred the capture of the Bastille.

The Constituent Assembly decreed: on November 2, 1789, the nationalization of the clergy's goods; on February 13, 1790, the suppression of religious vows and the monastic Orders; and on the following July 17th, the Civil Constitution of the Clergy which

⁶ The complete text of this moral portrait of Eugene is reproduced, together with explanatory notes, in Herménégilde CHARBONNEAU, O.M.I., *Mon nom est Eugène de Mazenod*, p. 18-25.

separated the Church in France from Rome, changed the boundary of the dioceses and rendered ecclesiastical appointments dependent upon the State. A law obliged all priests to take an oath accepting this constitution. Some submitted to this, and these are "those who have taken the oath" or "the swearers"; others refused to do so, and these are "those who have not taken the oath" or "the recalcitrant" who were liable to deportation, to imprisonment. Thus a profound division resulted within the clergy.

During the period of the Terror from 1793 to 1794, even the constitutional worship was abolished and the priests who had taken the oath were no longer being recognized. Efforts were made to have priests resign or to get them to marry; if they did not do either, they were interned or guillotined. A certain number of priests did marry; about 1900 were killed and 30,000 exiled or deported.

7 – *The Church under Bonaparte, 1799-1815*

In November 1799, General Bonaparte overthrew the Directorate and established the Consulate. As First Consul, he did not delay in concentrating all power in his own hands. He reorganized France completely, and by the concordat of 1801 restored the Church's right to exist in the land. "Once he became Emperor in 1804, he applied no more restraint to his ambitions, supported no more obstacles and gave way to the dangerous excesses of his dreams of grandeur which were to lead to his downfall."⁷

His distressing conflicts with the Pope and the Holy See, his measures and threats to subdue the Church and make her serve his ambitions, had dashed the hopes that had been placed in him. At his downfall, the Church in France was in a precarious situation indeed. "Ecclesiastical vocations were rare, seminary teaching was very mediocre, there were few ordinations, priests were inadequate in number and in knowledge, there were about 15,000 parishes without a pastor, society was indifferent on the level of the masses and unbelieving in its upper classes: such is the deficit account that the loser at Waterloo had left behind him."⁸

⁷ H.-X. ARGUILLIÈRE, *Histoire de l'Église*, Paris, Édition de l'École, 1941, p. 519.

⁸ A. BOULANGER, *Histoire générale de l'Église*, Paris-Lyon, vol. 9, pp. 30-31.

8 - *The Choice of Bishop de Demandolx for Ordination to the Priesthood*

As a director at the seminary of St-Sulpice, it was difficult for Eugene to avoid receiving the priesthood from the hands of Cardinal Maury, who had been appointed archbishop of Paris by Bonaparte but was without the required canonical institution. He was extremely adverse to being ordained priest by an intruder bishop. Bishop Jean-François de Demandolx, a friend of the De Mazenod family, had known Eugene, at least to the extent that he had frequently met him during the National Council of June-July 1811. On November 25, 1811, he kindly invited Eugene to come and receive the priesthood from his hands. This invitation had been "obviously arranged" between them.

Eugene was to write later: "Frankly, I was in no way inclined to be ordained a priest by that Eminence, and, since I had already become a director of the Seminary of Paris during the exile of our good Sulpicians, I had to resort to a little sleight of hand in order to carry out my plan."⁹

Eugene de Mazenod took the soutane on November 4, 1808, received the tonsure on December 17, 1808, the minor orders on May 27, 1809, the sub-diaconate on December 23, 1809, the diaconate on June 16, 1810, and the priesthood on December 21, 1811.

9 - *The Correspondence of Eugene de Mazenod with Charles de Forbin-Janson*

In our study we often quote the correspondence of Eugene de Mazenod with Forbin-Janson, especially that of the years 1814-1817. This correspondence consists of 17 letters of the Founder, most of them quite extensive. One of them is from 1806, the others are from the period of 1813 to 1817. The original text of these letters was discovered in 1953 in the archives of the Holy Childhood in Paris by Father Paul-Émile Duval, O.M.I. These letters throw a new light on a number of elements concerning the first beginnings of our Congregation. Their tone of familiarity and complete openness helps us to understand vividly the concrete situation in which the Founder

⁹ Bishop de Mazenod to Bishop Clausel de Montais, October 28, 1852, quoted in Jean LEFLON, *op. cit.*, vol. 1, p. 479.

lived. Five other letters of Bishop de Mazenod to Bishop Forbin-Janson, written between September 11, 1835 and August 22, 1839, have also been discovered recently.¹⁰

Forbin-Janson (1785-1844) was three years younger than the Founder and made his major seminary at St-Sulpice in Paris as a confrere to the Founder; he was ordained in 1811, in the same year as the latter. In Paris he took an active part in reorganizing the Society of the Missionaries of France. He invited Eugene to join him in this Society, but Eugene refused, for his objective was the evangelization of Provence. In 1816-1817 the idea of a merger of the two Societies was discussed a number of times; however, the Missionaries of Provence refused such a merger and besides, the two Societies became too different from each other for such an amalgamation to be possible.

10 - *The House of Aix*

From Madame Victoire Gontier Father de Mazenod purchased the former monastery of the Carmelites at Aix. The construction of this building goes back to the 17th century. This Lady had been operating a boarding school for girls there. The purchase contract bears the date of December 30, 1815 and gives the price paid as 16,000 francs. The last instalment of payment on this sum was made on December 31, 1822. The item purchased was that part of the former monastery which had been acquired by Madame Gontier. One wing of this monastery will never belong to the Oblates. Furthermore, the Lady vendor reserved for herself, for the next seven years, the use of a portion of the locale sold in order to continue the work of her boarding school. As soon as May 13, 1816, however, she renounced the usage of these premises that she had reserved for herself.

The church attached to the monastery had been confiscated by the Revolution and not disposed of since, and so it was still national property. At Eugene de Mazenod's suggestion, Monsieur Giguou, the vicar general, asked that it be transferred to the diocese of Aix so that it could be given to the missionaries' usage. On November 20, 1816, a royal edict mistakenly transferred it to the

¹⁰ Cf. Leo DESCHÂTELETS, O.M.I., "Cinq lettres du Fondateur retrouvées à New York", in *Études Oblates*, 32 (1973), pp. 49-64.

Missionaries of France. After lengthy negotiations, a new edict of May 22, 1822, gave the church to the archdiocese of Aix and the latter immediately transferred it to the Missionaries of Provence.¹¹

In his *Mémoires*, the Founder described the material conditions in which in the very first days the Society's missionaries lived in the Carmel of Aix: "As for lodgings, it was not easy for us; thus two missionaries slept in that room which became the library, and I slept in the small corridor which serves as a passage to arrive there; and, as we were not well provided with furniture in those beginnings, we placed a lamp on the sill of the communicating door which thus served the three of us to undress and go to bed. The refectory, provisional so to speak, remained poorly furnished for a long time; we put a plank on two barrels which served as a stand to this improvised table. The fireplace, where our kettle boiled, smoked to such an extent that it darkened the day in this fox-hole where we ate, with sufficient appetite, the poor portion that was everybody's share."¹²

11 - *The Founder's Intent regarding the Religious Life*

In his *Mémoires* the Founder clearly states that from the very first beginnings he saw the necessity of giving his Society a statute of the religious life with vows.

"I have mentioned that my intention, when I dedicated myself to the ministry of the missions in order to work especially at the instruction and the conversion of the most abandoned souls, had been to imitate the example of the Apostles in their life of devotedness and abnegation. I had become quite convinced that, in order to obtain the same results from our preaching, we had to walk in their footsteps and, as far as lies in our power, to practise the same virtues. I therefore considered it indispensable to embrace the evangelical counsels, to which they had been so faithful, lest our words become what I have only too often recognized in others' words, that is to say, a noisy gong and clanging cymbals. My constant thought

¹¹ Cf. Joseph PIELORZ, O.M.I., "Nouvelles recherches sur la fondation de notre Congrégation", in *Missions*, 83 (sept.-déc. 1956), pp. 232-233.

¹² *Mémoires*, quoted in Toussaint RAMBERT, O.M.I., *Vie de Mgr Charles-Joseph-Eugène de Mazenod . . .*, vol. 1, p. 176. Also cf. De Mazenod to Father Mille, January 24, 1831, in *Missions*, 84 (1957), pp. 130-131.

was always that our little family should by religious vows consecrate itself to God and to the Church's service. The difficulty was to have my first companions relish this doctrine, which is somewhat severe for beginners, and that especially in an age when one had lost the mark of this tradition, for we were coming out of a revolution which had dispersed, I could say almost destroyed, all the religious Orders."¹³

12 - *The Virgin of the Miracle*

The reference is to the statue of Mary Immaculate that was set up in the choir of the church of the Mission and blessed by Father de Mazenod on August 15, 1822. For the Founder, this was a day of fervour and grace. That same evening he shared his experience with Father Tempier.

"Would that I could share with you all that I experienced in the way of consolation on this beautiful day devoted to Mary our Queen! I had not felt for a long time as much joy in speaking of her grandeur and in encouraging our Christians to put all their confidence in her, as during my instruction to the Sodality this morning. I can safely hope I was understood and I can well believe that all the faithful who came to our church this evening shared the fervour with which I was inspired at the sight of the statue of the Holy Virgin and greater still by the graces which she obtained from her divine Son, I dare say, while we were invoking her with so much affection, because she is our Mother.

"I believe I owe her also a special experience that I felt today. I will not go so far to say more than ever, but certainly more than usual. I cannot describe it too well because it comprised several things but all related, however, to a single object, our dear Society. It seemed to me that what I saw, what I could put my finger on, was that within her lies hidden the germ of very great virtues, and that she can achieve infinite good; I found her worthy, everything pleased me about her, I cherished her rules, her statutes; her ministry seemed sublime to me, as it is indeed. I found in her bosom sure means of salvation, even infallible, such is how they looked to me."¹⁴

¹³ *Mémoires*, in Toussaint RAMBERT, O.M.I., *op. cit.*, vol. 1, p. 187.

¹⁴ Quoted in Achille REY, O.M.I., *Histoire de Mgr Charles-Joseph-Eugène de Mazenod . . .*, vol. 1, p. 280. Cf. OBLATE WRITINGS, vol. VI, pp. 92-93.

An oral tradition, rather late, it is true, states that the statue of the Immaculate Virgin was as though alive and gave the Founder a sign of her approval. Father Morabito writes: "The oral tradition, reported by Father Bonnard and Father Lamblin, says that the Immaculate Virgin did, on that same evening of August 15, 1822, give to Father de Mazenod, who was in prayer before her, some tangible signs of her approval of the new Society he had founded, by leaning forward towards her servant. 'Father Bonnard lived with the early Fathers, especially with Father Courtès,' Father Lamblin says. And he adds: 'I myself have lived with all our earliest Fathers; I have questioned them and they all affirmed this fact.'" ¹⁵

The biographers of the Founder, Rambert and Rey, without explicitly mentioning that the statue had been alive, both express themselves as follows when they comment on Eugene de Mazenod adopting the name of Oblate of Mary Immaculate for his Society: "Thus his presentiments became reality, and so did — why should we not say it — the vision of August 15, 1822, when our venerated Founder, while setting up in the choir of the church of the Mission the statue of the Virgin Mary, had seen our Immaculate Mother look tenderly at him and adopt him and his sons as the children of her heart!"¹⁶

Whatever the reality of this possibly miraculous phenomenon may be, this statue of the Immaculate Virgin has always been very much venerated by the Oblates and remains one of the most precious souvenirs we have of the Founder and of the origins of the Congregation. In the beginning of this century when religious were expelled from France, this statue was transported to the international scholasticate in Rome. It presently overlooks the Blessed Sacrament altar in the main chapel of the General House in Rome.

13 - *Excerpt from De Mazenod's December 22, 1825 Letter to Tempier*

The exhortation at the end of this long and fine letter of the Founder which narrates events from December 20th to 24th, 1825, is as follows:

¹⁵ Cf. Joseph MORABITO, O.M.I., "L'Immaculée dans la spiritualité du Fondateur", in *Études Oblates*, 14 (1955), pp. 31-32.

¹⁶ Toussaint RAMBERT, O.M.I., *op. cit.*, vol. I, p. 430. Achille REY, O.M.I., *op. cit.*, vol. I, p. 362.

“Let all of you redouble your fervour and exactitude for the observance of the Rules. You know that today they have taken on a more imperative character. Try to respond to the expectations of the supreme Head of the Church, this is the means to draw down upon us and upon our holy ministry new blessings.

“Let us renew ourselves especially in devotion to the most holy Virgin and render ourselves worthy to be Oblates of the Immaculate Mary. But this is a passport to heaven! How have we not thought of it sooner? Avow that it will be as glorious as it will be consoling for us to be consecrated to her in a special manner and to bear her name. The Oblates of Mary! This name satisfies the heart and the ear. I must admit to you that I was quite surprised when it was decided to take the name I had thought should be left aside, at being so impervious, at feeling so little pleasure, I would almost say a kind of repugnance, at bearing the name of a saint who is my particular protector, for whom I have so much devotion. And now I see the reason; we were remiss in regard to our Mother, our Queen, she who protects us and who must obtain for us all graces whereof her divine Son has made her the dispenser. So let us rejoice to bear her name and her livery.”¹⁷

14 – *Eugene de Mazenod as a Bishop, the Victim of Fierce Persecution, 1832-1835*

Without the civil authorities knowing it, on October 1, 1832, Eugene de Mazenod was appointed Bishop of Icosia *in partibus infidelium*, and was ordained bishop in Rome on the following 14th. He had had to accept this promotion for the good of the Church at Marseilles and of his Congregation. The civil authorities wanted to suppress the episcopal see of Marseilles as soon as the incumbent Bishop Fortuné de Mazenod, who was already advanced in years, would die.

This promotion to the episcopate cost Eugene the trials of a persecution directed against him by the civil authorities. The French Government protested his appointment, and even went so far as to forbid him the exercise of his ecclesiastical functions and to deprive him of his rights of French citizenship. The authorities of the city of

¹⁷ The complete text of this letter is in OBLATE WRITINGS, vol. VI, pp. 216-224.

Marseilles and of the Department of Bouches-du-Rhône constantly intervened in Paris to accuse him unjustly of being opposed to the Government.

This was a very painful period in the Founder's life, a situation in which he did not always feel himself supported by the Holy See. The latter had its diplomatic worries which escaped the perception of the Bishop of Icosia. Bishop de Mazenod lived in retirement from July to October 1835, first at Notre-Dame de l'Osier and then at Notre-Dame du Laus.

Thanks to the change of attitude towards the Church by the Monarchy of Louis-Philippe and the skillful intervention of Father Guibert in Paris, the situation of the Bishop of Icosia was regularized with the Government at the end of the year 1835. On October 2, 1837, Bishop Eugene de Mazenod was appointed residential bishop of Marseilles, succeeding thus to his uncle who was retiring. After he had become bishop of Marseilles, Eugene de Mazenod continued to carry out, as before, his duties as Superior General.

15 - The Missions during the Period of the Restoration

Missions, especially in the rural areas, were a current feature in France from the 17th century onwards. They were interrupted by the Revolution of 1789 and discreetly resumed at the beginning of the Empire. They were strictly forbidden by Napoleon in 1809, but began anew after his downfall in 1814. Several societies of missionaries were then established.

The ministry of the missions that was restored methodically and on a large scale after 1815 aimed at being a response to the need of the time, that is to say, to reconquer for the Church a society that the Revolution had detached from her. In the mentality of that time, the mission marked for the people the triumphant return of God who had been chased out by the revolution's impiety. The solemn planting of the cross at the end of these missions was the symbol of this renewed conquest. The rhetoric of the preachers and the manifestations held during the course of the missions were in harmony with each other, especially in urban milieux.

Since, however, they were, at least at the outset, again a reality thanks to the return of "the most Christian King" and his patronage, and because the object was to re-establish a Catholic France, these missions did not always avoid confusing the religious restoration with

the restoration of the monarchy, or, to use the expression in vogue at the time, the restoration “of the throne and the altar”.

The missions preached by Father de Mazenod’s missionaries, especially those from 1815 to 1823, enter into this context. The Founder, however, with his keen sense of adaptation, his concern to explicitly proclaim Jesus Christ and Him alone, and by limiting his activity almost exclusively to the rural areas, did avoid the royalist and triumphalist excesses indulged in by the preachers of his day. Leflon writes apropos of this last point: “Although he abhorred the Revolution with his whole being, believed in the divine right of kings, loathed the liberal charter and shared the opinions of the ultras, Father de Mazenod was, on the whole, rather conservative in displaying his monarchism, if we can judge from existing documents.”¹⁸

16 – *The Religious Situation in mid-19th Century England*

At the time when the Oblates were establishing themselves in England, the relations between Catholics and Anglicans were clearly improving. Bishop de Mazenod took a great interest in this fact and hoped for the conversion of England and, as a consequence therefrom, for a similar movement in the whole British Empire. On December 21, 1845, he published a pastoral directive which ordered public prayers in the diocese of Marseilles for the return of England to Catholic unity. In this document we can see all the attention he paid to this cause and how much value he attached to the return of England to the Roman Church.¹⁹

As a matter of fact, there were two movements which decisively contributed to a reconciliation between the two Churches; one was marked by the influence of Newman, the other by that of Wiseman.

Newman, who belonged to the Oxford Movement, launched a return to the Christian sources in order to usher in a restoration of the Anglican Church; in the process, he came by stages and quite unexpectedly to the Roman Church to which he gave his complete adherence in 1845. Other conversions of intellectuals belonging to the Oxford movement followed. Besides these conversions, this movement brought about a better understanding of Catholicism among the Protestants.

¹⁸ Jean LEFLON, *op. cit.*, vol. 2, p. 102.

¹⁹ Cf. OBLATE WRITINGS, vol. III, pp. 161-174.

Wiseman, the rector of the English College in Rome, undertook, without there being any prior contact or agreement, an initiative among Catholics which was like a parallel to that of the Oxford Movement. In 1836 he started giving in London a series of conferences on the principal doctrines of the Catholic Church which were meant as much for the Protestants as they were for the Catholics. He was not engaging in "any irritating polemic", but giving "a loyal, simple presentation buttressed by proofs which took into account the mentality of his compatriots."²⁰ This initiative provoked a great deal of interest. In 1850 Wiseman became the first archbishop of Westminster and was created Cardinal.

These two movements, that of Newman and Wiseman, though their points of departure were absolutely different, were thus instrumental to the success of the same cause.²¹

Instead of four ecclesiastical districts directed by vicars apostolic, England will have eight on July 30, 1840; the districts of London, of Lancastershire, of Yorkshire, of Wales, of the Centre, the North, the East and the West. The hierarchy was juridically restored in 1850. At this date, England had some 700,000 Catholics, especially Irish people who since 1846 had been immigrating en masse to the industrial centres.²²

17 - *Canada in 1841*

In 1841 Canada included nearly all the territory of the St. Lawrence River and Great Lakes basin, that is, the southern portion of the present-day provinces of Quebec and Ontario, which were then referred to as Lower Canada and Upper Canada. The Oblate "Province of Canada" established in 1851 will always be limited to this territory, though with some modifications, especially by extending itself towards the north. Until 1883, this Province included the foundations made by the Oblates in the United States.

In ecclesiastical terms, Lower and Upper Canada were in 1841 divided into four dioceses: Quebec (1658), Kingston (1826), Montreal

²⁰ Cf. Jean LEFLON, *La crise révolutionnaire 1789-1846*, Histoire de l'Église . . . sous la direction de A. Fliche and V. Martin, t. 20, Paris, 1951, pp. 487-488.

²¹ *Ibidem*, p. 488.

²² Cf. *Bilan du monde*, Paris-Tournai, Casterman, 1958, t. 2, p. 657.

(1836), Toronto (1841). The territories of the present-day Canadian North-West, were since 1820 a district dependent upon the diocese of Quebec and governed by Bishop Norbert Provencher. In 1844, this district became an apostolic vicariate bearing the name of *Hudson and James Bay*, and Bishop Provencher became its vicar apostolic. In 1847, the vicariate was raised to the rank of a diocese, first named *of the North-West*, a designation changed in 1851 to the diocese of *St. Boniface*.

18 - *The Indian Missions in Canada*

Since the very first beginnings of New France, the Recollects in 1615, then the Jesuits in 1625, undertook to proclaim the Good News to the Indians of the colony. When the French regime came to an end in 1760, the Indian nations of lower and upper Canada had nearly all been in contact with the Word of God, even though they had not been regularly evangelized.

The British conquest of New France in 1760 struck a severe blow against the Indian missions by forbidding all recruitment to the Jesuits and by dispossessing them of all their goods. Although the secular clergy was impoverished and limited in its recruiting after the conquest, it did manage to take on a number of these missions, especially in the first half of the 19th century. Some even went as far as the Canadian West and into British Columbia.

The Jesuits, who had returned to Canada in 1842, again took on a part of their former missions. In 1844, the Oblates inherited the Indian missions of the North Shore of the St. Lawrence, of the Saguenay, the St. Maurice, Temiscaming, Abitibi, and the Canadian West. Secular priests and Sulpicians had immediately preceded them and now initiated them into their new apostolate.

19 - *The Needs of the Church in America in the 19th Century*

In the 19th century, the Church in the United States had to face a rapid growth of its membership and a large expansion of its territory. The number of Catholics rose from 30,000 in 1790 to 318,000 in 1830, and then to 4,500,000 in 1870. At the same time, the Church had to spread out because the boundaries of the United States were expanding considerably through the annexation of new territories: Louisiana (1803), Florida (1819), Texas (1845), Oregon (1846), California, New Mexico and Arizona (1848), Alaska (1867). To the

masses of immigrants who had come from Ireland, as well as those who came from other European countries, were added, with the annexation of the new territories, a new population of Indians and especially Mexicans and people who were Spanish-speaking.

These great increases caused a multiplication of dioceses. The first diocese, Baltimore, was founded in 1779; it became an archdiocese in 1808. Five other archdioceses are established in 1852. The total number of suffragan bishops at that time was 35.

The writings and concerns of those directing the Church in America are filled with references to the influx of immigrants, the new peoples, the dioceses to be organized in the new territories, Catholic education to be assured by means of schools, clergy formation, the mission to the Indians.

Their activity remained modest, it is true, but the Oblates nevertheless did involve themselves in meeting these great needs of the Church in the United States during the last century; this they did by their ministry to French Canadian immigrants in the States of the North, by their commitment to people speaking Spanish in Texas, by the mission to the Indians in Oregon, and also, though temporarily, by the direction of major seminaries and educational institutions.²³

20 - *An Outline of the Religious History of the Island of Ceylon (Sri Lanka)*

When the Oblates arrived in Ceylon in 1847, the population comprised Singhalese, whose traditional religion was Buddhism, and Tamils, whose religion was Hinduism. Each of these two groups, which made up nearly the whole population on the island, had its own language, history, culture, all of it very ancient. Beside these two groups there were, as a tiny minority of natives, the Veddas, a tribe of hunters, illiterate and buried in the jungle; and a group of Moslems belonging to the religion of Islam. Towards the end of the 19th century, a few thousand Indians came to the island to work on the tea-farms and on the rubber plantations.

The history of the Church in Ceylon bears the marks of the favorable or unfavourable dispositions of the political powers that

²³ Cf. Daniel-Rops, *L'Église des Révolutions*, Bayard, 1960, pp. 715-730; Clarence MENARD, O.M.I., *Oblate Evangelization in the United States Early Phase (1842-1883)*, manuscript, pp. 2-3.

have dominated the island. The first implantation of the Catholic Church took place during the Portuguese occupation from 1505 to 1656. Mass conversions took place among the groups that were living along the coast, and Church institutions were flourishing.

Under the occupation of the Calvinist Dutch from 1656 to 1792, the Catholic structures were destroyed and all the Catholic priests were expelled. In 1686, however, the Oratorian Father Joseph Vaz, arrived on the island clandestinely and stayed there, secretly carrying on a heroic missionary endeavour.

When the British occupied the island of Ceylon from 1792 to 1948, the island experienced religious tolerance, even though the Catholics still had to struggle to have their rights respected. European missionaries now made their appearance: the Benedictine Sylvestrines in 1846, the Oblates of Mary Immaculate in 1847, the Jesuits in 1893, the Sisters of the Holy Family of Bordeaux in 1862. The formation of a native clergy began in the decade of 1860 to 1870. When the Oblates arrived in Ceylon, the Catholics there numbered 113,210.²⁴

The island of Ceylon was at first under the jurisdiction of the archbishop of Goa in India. By the papal Brief *Ex munere pastorali* of 1834 — reissued in 1836 — the island became an apostolic vicariate directly under the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda Fide, and it became completely independent of the see of Goa with Gregory XVI's Brief *Multa praeclara* of 1838. In 1849, a second apostolic vicariate, that of Jaffna, was established; a third, that of Kandy, followed in 1886. The hierarchy was established in 1886, and the see of Colombo became an archdiocese with the other vicariates becoming dioceses. The dioceses of Galle and Trincomalee are established in 1893.²⁵

21 – *The Orientations of the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda Fide*

The Sacred Congregation of Propaganda Fide — since Vatican Council II also known as the Sacred Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples — was founded by Gregory XV in 1662 and is

²⁴ *Chronological Table of Events Connected with the Progress of Catholicity in Ceylon from St. Francis Xavier Downwards*, Jaffna, 1873, p. 2.

²⁵ Cf. Jos. Claude LAWRENCE, O.M.I., *Work and Working of the Archdiocese of Colombo in Ceylon (1947-1970)*, pp. 18-22.

responsible for directing the Catholic missions in all parts of the world. At the present time it is made up of Cardinals and representatives from the missionary world: bishops, superiors of institutes, directors of the Pontifical Mission Works.

Historically, it was established at a time when the royal Patronage (Padroado) was creating serious difficulties to the missionary apostolate. In fact, under this system, which gave to the Kings of Spain and Portugal important privileges as an incentive to spread the Catholic faith in the new countries, a too close relationship eventually resulted between the colonial policies and missionary activities. The system was more and more becoming a political instrument in the hands of the colonizing powers.

Hence, one of the first objectives of the new Roman Congregation was to establish a clear and definitive separation between missionary activities and politics, between the Church and colonialism. Remnants of this old system still existed during the period when our missions began, especially in regard to the missions of Ceylon.

The Sacred Congregation of Propaganda Fide had from its very beginnings the aim of promoting the intellectual and spiritual formation of missionaries, and, in a special way, to promote the formation of a native clergy. In the days of Bishop de Mazenod and the first missionary developments within our Congregation, the Sacred Congregation especially insisted on the following: the formation of a native clergy which, as soon as possible, would be capable of assuming the direction of their Church; the establishment of the ordinary ecclesiastical hierarchy, that is, replacing apostolic vicariates with dioceses; the convocation of provincial, regional and national synods and councils to settle local missionary problems; the formation of catechists; encouraging the missionary cooperation of the laity in the Work of the Propagation of the Faith, which was founded in France and quickly spread to other countries; establishing schools; the apostolate of the press; and finally, contributing to scientific research into the different peoples' culture.²⁶

²⁶ Cf. Joseph METZLER, O.M.I., *La Sacrée Congrégation pour l'Évangélisation des peuples ou "Propaganda Fide", au temps de Mgr de Mazenod*, 1982, manuscript, 15 pages.

22. - *The Association of the Holy Family of Bordeaux*

The Association of the Holy Family of Bordeaux, founded in 1820 by Father Pierre-Bienvenu Noailles, was canonically established by the bishop of Bordeaux in 1831 and received a decree of praise from the Holy See in 1842. Its objectives are far reaching and its constitution multi-form. According to the will of its founder, it brings together ecclesiastics, laity (consecrated or not) and consecrated persons who live in community.

At the time when it was affiliated to the Congregation of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate, the Association, in its group of consecrated persons living in community, comprised seven branches which devoted themselves to different works and functions: the Sisters of St. Joseph for working women and orphans; the Ladies of the Immaculate Conception for the higher education of girls; the Sisters of the Immaculate Conception for the instruction of the ignorant and the care of the sick who are poor and living in rural areas; the Farming Sisters for the religious and moral instruction of country children, who are also trained to work in the fields; the Sisters of Hope for the sick who are at home; the Solitaries of the Holy Family who are dedicated to the contemplative life; and the Sisters of St. Martha for domestic work in ecclesiastical establishments and within the Holy Family communities.²⁷ The total of the members within all these branches in 1861 was 1400 persons, whereas the total membership of the whole Association was 20,000.²⁸

The act of affiliation of the Association of the Holy Family of Bordeaux to the Congregation of the Oblate Missionaries of Mary Immaculate gave the Superior General of the Oblates power of jurisdiction over the Association, so that in consequence to the Association's councils — which, together with the General Directress, he presided either in person or through a pro-director — he could issue, if the case warranted it, directives to the Association. In 1902-1903, the Association of the Holy Family, in its group made up of consecrated persons living in community, received the approbation to be a religious congregation of pontifical right. In the juridical order, an important change was made to the authority of the Superior General of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate in regard to the Association: "To

²⁷ Cf. *Vie du bon Père P. B. Noailles*, 1899, vol. 2, pp. 518-519.

²⁸ Cf. *Actes du 1er Congrès de l'Association de la Sainte-Famille de Bordeaux, Martillac, 2-13 août 1980*, pp. 11-12.

an authority which can be said to have been total was substituted a simple moral direction for the sake of maintaining unity, discipline and the traditional spirit within the Institute."²⁹

At the time of this papal approval, the seven branches had been reduced to three, each directed by a general directress, namely: the Institute of Hope, the Institute of the Immaculate Conception and the Institute of St. Joseph. The contemplatives were reduced to a single community living in the General House.

Thereafter, in 1958, the group of religious women of the Association suppressed its division into three branches or institutes based on the apostolic activities carried on by each, and organized itself into religious provinces. From 1969 to 1974, in a spirit of return to the sources of the Association, the three branches of the consecrated life gradually began to reform again.³⁰

In 1980, the Association defined itself in the following terms: "Founded in Bordeaux in 1820 by Father Pierre-Bienvenu Noailles, the Association of the Holy Family is today spread abroad over some twenty countries and gathers together into the same family apostolic religious women, contemplatives, consecrated secular women and married or celibate associates, and associates who belong to the youth as well as associate priests."³¹

23 - *Refusal to Accept the Charge of Apostolic Prefectures or Vicariates in the Canadian North-East*

Several times the Bishops of Quebec wanted to give the Oblates full responsibility for the northern parts of Eastern Canada; these territories would be apostolic prefectures or vicariates in the hands of the Oblates.

A first plan proposed the creation of an apostolic vicariate extending from James Bay to Newfoundland, thus including the entire North of Eastern Canada. This plan was put together in 1860 during a reunion of the Bishops of Quebec. In 1867 and in 1868, it

²⁹ 1902, *affiliation de la Sainte-Famille à la Congrégation des Oblats de Marie Immaculée*, manuscript, General Archives of the Association of the Holy Family, Rome.

³⁰ Cf. *Actes du 1er congrès de l'Association de la Sainte-Famille de Bordeaux . . .*, p. 12.

³¹ *Ibidem*, p. 5.

was discussed at great length by the General Administration and the Province of Canada, and finally rejected above all because the Congregation saw its realization too difficult and burdensome.

In 1870, the Bishops obtained from Rome the establishment of two apostolic prefectures in the North of Quebec; again they asked the Oblates to take charge of them. Due to the lack of missionaries and financial resources, the Congregation had the creation of these two prefectures postponed.

Finally, two other requests were also refused for the same reasons: the prefecture of the Gulf of St. Lawrence, created by Rome in 1882; and the apostolic vicariate of Pontiac in the northern part of the diocese of Ottawa, also created by Rome in 1882.

In any case, the Oblates continued to serve all the Indian missions in the territories which had been proposed to them as apostolic prefectures or vicariates.³²

24 - *The Goanese and Jacobite 'Schism' in Ceylon*

When the Holy See erected the island of Ceylon into an apostolic vicariate in 1834, the Holy See detached it from the jurisdiction of the archbishop of Goa in India. The latter held his jurisdiction over the island in virtue of a concordat that had been signed between the Holy See and Portugal. A certain number of priests and Christian communities on the island, however, persisted in remaining under the jurisdiction of the Archbishop of Goa. To deal with the difficulties created by this situation, the Holy See in a concordat concluded in 1857 granted an extraordinary jurisdiction to the archbishop of Goa which extended only to those places where such jurisdiction was still being exercised in 1857. Since considerable difficulties, encroachments, harrassments and abuses of power occurred thereafter, Leo XIII, by his Brief *Studio ac vigilantia* of August 26, 1884, suppressed these enclaves of Goan jurisdiction. The protests of the Goanese broke out again in full force. In 1886, the Pope established the hierarchy on the island, and thereby definitively suppressed all and any jurisdiction coming from outside it.

³² Cf. Gaston CARRIÈRE, O.M.I., *Histoire documentaire des Missionnaires Oblats de Marie Immaculée dans l'Est du Canada*, vol. 9, pp. 55-127.

Then the Jacobite schism made its appearance in Ceylon. This was the name of a heretical sect founded in the Orient in the 6th century. A certain Alvarez, claiming to be the emissary of the Jacobite bishop in southern India, a Bishop Mar Dyonisius, now attempted to establish a hierarchy for the natives of the island, so that every Portuguese or European bishop would be excluded. He tried to gain the discontented Goanese to his cause and was particularly active in the district of Mantotte in the diocese of Jaffna. Rejected even by the archbishop of Goa, he had to leave the island in 1880,³³ after having caused a good deal of trouble and disturbances.

Statistics on the Congregation's Personnel

a – General statistics from 1861 to 1898³⁴

	1861	1867	1873	1879	1887	1893	1898
Fathers	273	324	372	434	529	658	758
Scholastics	53	39	48	67	129	201	277
Brothers	88	89	100	214	261	352	392
Total	414	452	520	715	919	1211	1427

b – Personnel of the Congregation in April 1899³⁵

1. *General statistics*

Fathers	831	54.5%	average age: 42.1 yrs.
Scholastics	287	18.7%	average age: 23.2 yrs.
Brothers	409	26.8%	average age: 39.5 yrs.
Total	1527	100.0%	average age: 37.9 yrs.

³³ Cf. Charles MASSIET, O.M.I., "Le schism jacobite dans Mantotte (1887-1890)", in *Missions*, 29 (1891), pp. 59-98; 30 (1892), pp. 160-179.

³⁴ Statistics given in the reports of the Superiors General published in *Circulaires administratives*, vol 1, p. 284; vol. 2, pp. 21, 19 (circ. no. 70), 168; in *Missions*, 17 (1879), p. 326. The statistics of 1861 were established by Father Joseph PIELORZ, O.M.I., *Les chapitres généraux au temps du Fondateur*, vol. 2, p. 141.

³⁵ According to *État général de la Congrégation des Missionnaires Oblats de Marie Immaculée*, no. 5, avril 1899, Paris.

2. Age groups

Years	Fathers	Scholastics	Brothers	TOTAL
15-19	0	21	17	38
20-24	13	180	38	231
25-29	148	73	73	294
30-34	160	6	63	229
35-39	133	1	38	172
40-44	78	0	31	109
45-49	60	0	30	90
50-54	61	1	42	104
55-59	49	0	28	77
60-64	37	0	19	56
65-69	38	0	18	56
70-74	34	0	3	37
75-79	8	0	3	11
80-84	3	0	3	6
85-89	2	0	0	2
90-94	0	0	0	0
95-99	1	0	0	1
Total	825	282	406	1513

c - Country of origin of the Oblates in April 1899³⁶

Country	Fathers	Scholastics	Brothers	Total	%	Diocese
France	526	130	182	838	54.9	68
Canada	134	26	80	240	15.7	16
Germany	28	66	53	147	9.8	17
Ireland	70	14	54	138	9.0	24
England	18	7	6	31	2.0	11
Italy	13	9	3	25	1.6	13
Belgium	8	9	7	24	1.6	6
United States	11	5	3	19	1.2	7
Ceylon	13	4	-	17	1.2	2
Holland	2	5	6	13	0.8	3
Poland	1	4	4	9		3
Spain	3	1	2	6		6
Switzerland	2	1	2	5		2
Czechoslovakia	-	3	-	3		1
Austria	-	1	-	1		1
Cape Colony	-	-	1	1	2.2	1
Scotland	-	-	1	1		1
India	1	-	-	1		1
Luxembourg	-	-	1	1		1
Natal	-	-	1	1		1
Not identified	1	2	3	6		
Total	831	287	409	1527	100.0	185

³⁶ The Oblates born in the diocese of Metz and Strasbourg are all considered as being born in France, even though this territory was attached to Germany from 1870 to 1919.

- *Dioceses which furnished 20 Oblates and more:*

Montreal: 106; Metz: 80; Quimper: 56; Strasbourg: 55; Vannes: 53; Laval: 50; Nancy: 48; Grenoble: 45; Cologne: 37; Paderborn: 37; Viviers: 36; Quebec: 32; St-Hyacinthe: 28; Mende: 26; Dublin: 25; Nantes: 25; Avignon: 21; St-Dié: 20.

- *Countries of origin of the 479 Oblates in mission vicariates in 1899*

France: 221 Fathers, 100 Brothers; Canada: 45 Fathers, 18 Brothers; Ireland: 14 Fathers, 17 Brothers; Germany: 9 Fathers, 9 Brothers, 1 scholastic; Ceylon: 8 Fathers, 4 scholastics; England: 8 Fathers, 2 Brothers; Belgium: 7 Fathers, 1 Brother; Holland: 3 Brothers; Poland: 1 Father, 2 Brothers; Italy: 2 Fathers; United States: 1 Brother; India: 1 Father; Cape Colony: 1 Brother.

