

"CANADIAN HOLY CROSS AND ITS NEW ENGLAND OFFSHOOT"

(The Narrative for a Slide Presentation)

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## "CANADIAN HOLY CROSS AND ITS NEW ENGLAND OFFSHOOT:

### A PICTORIAL HISTORY"

Holy Cross was born of an apostolic inspiration and desire. Father Moreau, our founder, entered into God's plan with absolute confidence as he created a religious family. The important thing for him was flexibility and fidelity to the impulse coming from God. It is in this sense that he re-affirmed: "Be what you should be before God and I will be responsible for the future."

A segment of the future to which he referred will now become alive to you. To chart the evolution of the Sisters of Holy Cross in Sacred Heart Province more easily, I shall use the vitality curve developed in the book "Shaping the Coming Age of Religious Life". Our religious life cycle will be presented to you in four phases: namely, Foundation Period, Expansion Period, Stabilization Period, and Transition Period.

To live the venture of foundation within the movement of God was to live in God's time, without advancing it by acting according to human dictates and without losing heart if the waiting was long and the unknown cause to worry. It was to be vigilant and to respond at the first sign of God's will to send his sons and daughters to apostolic enterprises that, humanly speaking, were sheer folly, and to experience with them, in God, their joys, their sufferings, their difficulties, and sometimes, their death. Such was his dream.

I shall be brief for the first period as it entails our history in Canada prior to our arrival in New England and it situates us for the centennial celebration of our becoming a Congregation.

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The province continued to expand and to struggle during the administrations of Mother Marie of Saint Leocadie in 1863, Mother Marie of St. Bernard in 1865, and Mother Marie of the Immaculate Conception in 1866. In 1867 the constitutions were approved for ten years. This seemed re-assuring at the time and yet our annals reveal that many difficulties transpired.

Europe too was experiencing the devastating hours of the Franco-Prussian War. Le Mans did not escape from this, let alone the internal struggle taking place then.

In 1870 Mother Mary Alphonse Rodriguez took over the helm as Provincial Superior. Most of that decade she assumed a very strong leadership. In 1873 the death of Father Moreau was recorded as very memorable to all.

In 1879, Mother Mary of Saint Alphonse Rodriguez and Sister Marie of Saint Basile went to la Solitude at Le Mans for the General Chapter where they presented their work on the Constitutions which were unrealistic for the sisters in Canada. None of these met with approval from France: this was disconcerting. Mother Foundress presided a Provincial Chapter in the summer of 1880 and it was clear to her that suffering was ahead. It was her last voyage to St. Laurent.

Even though the province was going through very tearing moments, to live in God's time meant to move on. And God's plan was to branch out for the first time on New England soil. And how did this come to be?

The current French Canadian immigration to New England started to flow during the Civil War. An unprecedented demand for labor

sent agents of New England factories to woo the Canadians from their exhausted farm lands. Often burdened with debts, they were lured by the fabulous American wages and the hope of salvaging their farm within a short period of time.

Once arrived, they usually faced dismal conditions. They were nearly all of them poor, without leaders, without organizations, without churches of their own. But when whole families began to arrive, and they discovered that work could be found in the mills for everyone, this desire to return to Canada began to fade.

By 1869 there some 100,000 French-Canadians in the New England States. These people had to attend Mass in Irish parishes, and they did not understand the language.

The need for a French-speaking clergy was evident. Bishop DeGoesbriand of the See of Burlington, Vermont understood the situation of the French immigrants and so he went personally to the clergy of Quebec for aid.

The early priests who came then saw their work mapped out. The first thing to be done was to build a church which would become the focal point of the parish and then a school, a convent, and the parish hall.

That schools be established in connection with all the churches of their dioceses was an order which stemmed from the First Plenary Council of Baltimore. Bishops were concerned about the loss of faith of many immigrant children who had to attend the public schools. The Congregation of the Propaganda in a famous INSTRUCTION in 1875 warned Catholic parents of their serious obligation to send their children to Catholic schools. The Third Plenary Council of Balti-

more decreed the appointment of a diocesan board of examiners to visit and inspect each parish school in order to put them fully on a level with the public school.

True, these early schools were modest. For the most part the first classes were held in the church basement or in areas in the sisters' convent, converted temporarily, into classrooms. This meant poorly lighted, poorly aired, and poorly equipped classrooms. It is quite correct to say that the first years of the sisters' apostolate in the New England parishes were marked by hard work and by teaching conditions no one would accept today. At that time it was most important that children receive their religious instruction and that the study of the French language be kept alive in them in their homes.

Understanding the nature and functions of the parochial school system is crucial to the appreciation of the work of the Sisters of Holy Cross in our New England Province.

To shed better light let us concentrate in greater detail on our first foundation in New England. Basically the same cry will be expressed by pastors in the opening of new missions and sisters will face similar difficulties upon arrival.

In 1881, Father Hyacinth Maréchal, pastor of St. Joseph Parish in North Grosvenordale, Connecticut, went to Montreal to solicit teachers from Bishop Edward Fabre. The school was to be bilingual as was the parish, serving both French and Irish and mixed, i.e. teaching both boys and girls. This request meant not only undertaking an apostolate outside of Canada, it involved a new dimension of teaching. The mixed school of boys and girls was unknown

in France, and in Canada, at that time. When the Provincial Superior informed Father Martial that all his conditions were accepted by the General Council of Le Mans, save that of the mixed school, the pastor commented, "But, Mother, little boys have a soul as well as little girls. I cannot afford to maintain two schools. Try to obtain authorization." In the negative answer to her second appeal Mother Mary Saint Raphael was notified that she must assume the responsibility, if she accepted a "mixed school". She decided to take that responsibility.

On December 20, 1881, six sisters came to the United States. St. Joseph School opened in January 1882. Most of the students were day students: however the sisters received a few boarders.

In the spirit of the founder, Father Moreau, the sisters saw their task as precious auxiliaries of the pastor. They served in a diversity of ways: as they were to do anywhere they were sent in New England by preparing the children for their first reception of the sacraments, training the young boys for the service of the altar; organizing a girls' choir for church singing; doing sacristy work; keeping the church vestments clean and in repair and decorating the altars on feast days. Often the direction of the parish youth organizations was assigned to a sister. Visiting the sick and the elderly of the parish came within their purview as a mandate. Such services were performed after class hours, in addition to their house chores, and the fulfillment of their religious exercises.

The original purposes of the parochial schools, we recall, were to maintain the faith of the young population and to preserve their ethnic language and customs. The apostolate of the Sisters

was therefore directed to those purposes. The curriculum of the parochial schools, at least until the aftermath of World War I was often determined by the community at St. Laurent. In the parishes where the Sisters of Holy Cross exercised their mission, religion was taught in French. Where non-French speaking pupils were numerous enough, these were grouped in a special class for religious instruction given in English. Usually one half day was given to the teaching of English: the second half day was given to French. This practice of using one half the school day to teach French was common in the schools of the various dioceses where the sisters of Holy Cross taught. It explains the significant number of French-Canadian sisters in everyone of the parochial schools staffed by Holy Cross Sisters.

In 1913 a war measure was about to be promulgated by the National Government forbidding the teaching of any foreign language in schools. Thereby English became obligatory in all schools.

The pastor then requested that ALL the sisters sent to his school be able to teach English all day. To save the teaching of French however he suggested starting the school day an hour earlier, which hour would be devoted to French. He also suggested that the dismissal hour be delayed thus providing a second hour of French.

It is interesting to note that the pastors, in asking for teaching sisters stressed the necessity of having adequate personnel to teach English as well as French. Since the Sister Superior would be the mouthpiece of the sisters with the public, it was especially necessary that she be fluent in the use of English. The same was true for the musician, who was always a necessary component of the



staffing of every convent.

During the 99 years of service in North Grosvenordale, Connecticut the dedication to the children on both elementary and high school levels was outstanding and the interest in the spiritual welfare of the parish exceptional.

St. Joseph North Grosvenordale, Connecticut was the only New England school which was found when St. Laurent was a province. That I gave you a summary of its history is intentional as I plan to do so sparingly with our other foundations in Sacred Heart Province since most experiences were similar everywhere.

While North Grosvenordale was being born as a mission in New England, significant events transpired in the community of the Marianites. Because of the strained climate with France, Monsignor Fabre, the ecclesiastical superior, set up a diocesan order with the Marianite Sisters asking them to continue observing the constitutions and to study those points with which France had not been sympathetic. Therefore a chapter of affairs and a consultation took place. On January 10, 1883 Monsignor Fabre announced to the community by decree of Rome that St. Laurent would be autonomous. The Canadian province in Montreal became separated from the Mother House in France and a new governing Council was elected. The first Superior-Vicar of the Canadian branch became Mother Mary St. Basile (Julie Bertrand). Thus from a Mission in 1347, to a Province in 1860, the period of foundation ended with St. Laurent becoming a CONGREGATION in 1883. At that time also, the name Marianites of Holy Cross was changed to Sisters of Holy Cross and of the Seven Dolours. The Community numbered one hundred fifty sisters



ministering in twelve houses which included that of North Grosvendale, Connecticut.

A new era of our religious life time line would be inaugurated; namely, that of the Expansion Phase.

Exactly what transpired in all religious communities during their Expansion Period? The founding charism was institutionalized, membership increased rapidly and so did apostolic endeavors. The members had sets of understandings about themselves such as their call, their purpose, the life they wanted to live, their place in the Church and their relationship with other groups.

The gospel venture meant that the religious community had made some choices about the type of service that it wished to give the Church and the geographical location where this service was to be given.

The entire work of Mother Mary of St. Basile, first Superior General covers our early expansion years from 1833 to 1902. Who was this woman?

Our first Rev. Mother General from Canada was a product of our boarding school at St. Scholastique, Quebec. Before entering she met numerous times with Mother Foundress who accepted her as a postulant at age 15. How fortunate could one be to have received personal training from Mother Mary of Seven Dolors? Up until 1879 when she was elected as chapter delegate to Le Mans, she had been a successful teacher, a very tactful disciplinarian and superior. In 1883, she was chosen to become superior-vicar. She was truly a providential woman, accepting the unknown in deep faith.

She assumed the responsibility for every aspect of religious

life. Her goal was to conserve our spiritual and apostolic heritage.

Within eight months she had visited every house including that of North Grosvenordale, Connecticut. At the time she welcomed thirteen new postulants. Poverty was under great strain but she helped immensely with her intelligent economy. That she could bring light, encouragement and consolation to all through visitations and circular letters proved a necessary ingredient with the strain of separation. There was no doubt that the charism of Holy Cross was being kept fully alive. She responded to God's will in opening at least fifteen more missions in New England. The first of which was:

#### SAINT LOUIS DE GONZAGUE, NASHUA, NEW HAMPSHIRE

In early 1883, Father Millette had expected that the sisters would build a convent-school. Since the community could not, he decided to do it himself.

Initially he had ambitious plans. He would have liked the sisters to assume from 7 A.M. to 6 P.M. the care of children below school age whose parents worked. He also wanted classes for working girls and for the sisters to teach the boys beyond their first communion. Both these requests had to be refused for lack of personnel.

A most serious deterrent to learning, at the time, was the fact parents sent their children to work in the mills at an early age. Attendance was hard to regulate and especially difficult to motivate.

When the school opened in September 1883 tuition was 50¢ a

month for the first two children in a family, 25¢ a month for the third child and gratis for the other children in the same family. The Sisters worked under incredible conditions. There were no divisions to speak between each of the four class groups. Teaching time was equally divided between French and English.

By April 1884, the Superintendent of the Public Schools of Nashua visited the school and found it very adequate. Satisfied with what he saw, the school was allowed to grant students under 16 years, the diploma needed to obtain work in the factories.

The sisters were followed closely. Pastors visited frequently and questioned the pupils at any time. Examinations, oral and written were biannual and came from the Directress of Studies at the Mother House in St. Laurent.

St. Louis de Gonzague was one of the few parishes where the Sisters taught side by side with the Brothers. Maintaining two parochial schools of course, imposed an uncommon financial burden upon a parish, and most pastors sought to integrate the boys and girls in their parish schools.

In 1914 the Brothers of the Sacred Heart who staffed the boys' school called for an increase in salary. Because this was impossible the pastor asked our sisters to take over. Accepting the Brothers' school meant a surplus of seven teachers at one stroke and they were simply not available at the time. The Brothers stayed on for a few years but eventually their school closed and the elementary school integrated the boys of the parish with the girls.

### SACRED HEART, NEW BEDFORD, MASSACHUSETTS 1886

Although there were four Catholic churches in the city, the French-Canadians had no parish of their own. The Sacred Heart Parish was founded then to satisfy the needs and aspirations of this ethnic group.

Delighted with the work of the Sisters that first year, the pastor expressed his satisfaction and appreciation. "I cannot repeat enough the success that was theirs", he wrote to Rev. Mother Mary of St. Basile, "and the good they have wrought with the children, of whom a great number ran the streets."

### SAINT FRANCIS XAVIER, NASHUA, NEW HAMPSHIRE 1836-1973

When Mother General, Mother St. Julien visited in April 1914, she realized the difficulties under which the sisters labored in that mission. She asked the pastor for minimal improvements and a raise in salary. As a result the pastor thanked the Sisters for their services and asked the community to leave of its own accord. Rev. Mother refused to do so, without a dismissal in due form signed by the Bishop stating the causes for dismissal. The sisters remained there and an uneasy truce prevailed.

### SAINT JOHN THE BAPTIST, SUNCOOK, NEW HAMPSHIRE 1888-

After the establishment of a diocesan school system pastors were still pretty much the masters in their schools. Their likes and dislikes created difficult situations at times, especially if the superior was in any way timid. She had to use a great deal of diplomacy and patience to maintain the proper balance of harmony between the pastor and the teaching staff.

### HOLY ROSARY, ROCHESTER, NEW HAMPSHIRE 1893-

Sisters were usually pleased to be named to the mission of Rochester. It wasn't however for the beauty and the comfort of the convent. Rev. Mother Mary of Saint Basile was always concerned of the health of the Sisters there. The odors of the dye that was poured into the river from the nearby woolen mills, filled the classrooms and the convent. The work of the Sisters prospered beyond all expectations though nurtured in poverty, sacrifice, and holy joy.

### HOLY ANGELS, SAINT ALBANS, VERMONT 1889

These founders went there because French Canadians were attracted to Central Vermont Grand Trunk Railway which had its main offices in the city.

What is especially remarkable about Holy Angels is that an entire family of seven girls, the family of Mr. Amedee Thibault, all entered Holy Cross. Four have gone to the Lord.

### SAINT JOSEPH, SPRINGFIELD, MASSACHUSETTS 1898

From July 1922 to September 1923 life was disrupted because of a gas explosion and the widening of Water Street, now East Columbus Avenue, cost the school to lose half of its classes. By the end of 1924 a convent, a rectory, and a new school wing were ready. Not many schools could boast of a spacious reception hall and a roomy cafeteria. These later were to be used for the Sisters' annual retreat. The large reception hall was transformed into a large dormitory for the sisters who slept on "army cots" for the eight days. Retreats were penitential experiences as well as religious renewal periods!

# SAINT GEORGE, MANCHESTER, NEW HAMPSHIRE 1893-1972

St. George's elementary school was one of the larger and more important of the French bilingual schools in Manchester for many years.

It is perhaps Monsignor Devoy who remains most vivid in the minds and hearts of the sisters as a staunch promoter of education and benefactor. In 1914, he eliminated the monthly fee for each child in school and expected excellence, love, and concern for each child from his teachers.

# SAINT ANTHONY, NEW BEDFORD, MASSACHUSETTS 1896-

With a college preparatory high school in 1940, there were thirty-eight sisters. The Superior of a convent was generally the directress of the school. At that time Father Masse felt that the Superior of a house who had both the spiritual and temporal interests of thirty-eight sisters as her responsibility, could not give time, care, and attention required by the demands of a heavy bilingual scholastic program, and she appointed a second person.

# OUR LADY OF SORROW, ADAMS, MASSACHUSETTS 1899-1977

Adams was always one of our attractive missions. The city itself is a manufacturing town situated in the Berkshire Hills overlooking the Housac River, at the foot of Mt. Greylock.

## Boarding Schools

In several of the first houses founded, the sisters received a few boarders as an added revenue for the convent. Most were abolished within a few years as a result of the extra burden placed upon the teachers who taught their classes all day and had the care of the boarders after school and evening and because pastors com-



plained that they were an added cost to the parish.

Rev. Mother Mary of St. Basile saw the opening and closing of less successful foundations such as of St. Anne's in Fall River, MA, Immaculate Conception in Fitchburg, MA, and Vergennes, VT.

The Congregation of Holy Cross prospered well until 1902 when His Excellency Paul Bruchesi, Archbishop of Montreal was delegated by Rome to preside the General Chapter at St. Laurent. This Chapter was especially noteworthy. One of the significant acts was to partition the establishments of the new autonomous Canadian branch into three provinces. Our vitality curve in 1902 read more expansion as it now counted twenty-seven foundations.

The first three provinces formed were those of:

Our Lady of Sorrows, composed of the French speaking houses in the province of Quebec.

St. Joseph, composed of the English-speaking houses of Ontario and of Quebec with four in the United States.

Sacred Heart, which included all of the New England houses save those of Vermont. This province never gave pieces of territory to other provinces as it expanded. During the early part of the Expansion Period, Reverend Mother Mary St. Basile, directly administered the houses in New England from 1883 until 1902. But from 1902 until 1951, there ten provincial superiors who guided Sacred Heart Province and the contribution of each one is what we shall be looking at presently.

Sr. Mary of St. Cyprien (Eugenie d'Orsonnens) (1902-1903) was the first provincial superior named to the Sacred Heart Province. She was Canadian born of French Swiss ancestry. Gifted in-



tellectually and morally, she had early shown administrative ability as the Superior of the Academy Notre Dame des Anges at St. Laurent.

Her first goal was to maintain the initial spirit of the Congregation intact. Her reputation was that of a person of remarkable practicality, common sense, and understanding. These eminent "American" characteristics augured well for a quick grasp of the spirit of the new country in which she was called to labor.

Sister arrived at St. Louis de Gonzague, Nashua, New Hampshire the first headquarters of the provincialate in New England. After only four months in the province, she was forced to return to St. Laurent by reason of ill health. During her brief administration a new mission was opened, that of

#### ST. MARTIN, SOMERSWORTH, NEW HAMPSHIRE 1902-1975

The first pastor, Father Demers, in his will left the sum of fifty-dollars to every young lady of his parish who had entered the Congregation. At the time of his death, in 1927, that number had risen to 27. This emphasizes his appreciation of the work of the Sisters of Holy Cross in his parish and his esteem for the community.

#### Sr. Mary of St. Eugene (Octavie Berube) (1905-1908)

Sr. M. St. Eugene (Berube) was no stranger to the province. Even while she was filling the function of an assistant to the General Council (1885-1896) she was sent to found the mission of the Sacred Heart in New Bedford in 1886. She served this double function of assistant general and local superior in New Bedford for four years.

Sister was well acquainted with the Franco-American mentality, with the bilingual school system and with the conditions under which the Sisters taught in parishes. She was an able Provincial, impeccable in her language and bearing. Under her,

ST. ANTOINE, MANCHESTER, NEW HAMPSHIRE was founded.

Because of the bilingual educational demand of the parishioners, the Sisters of Holy Cross were introduced in 1904 to replace the Sisters of Mercy. Sisters from St. George convent traveled daily to St. Antoine parish where, with two lay teachers, they taught the classes there.

Father Doucet's first major project, was to buy a three-story wooden building on the corner of Hall and Silver Streets. The third story became the residence of the sisters, while the first and second stories were converted into classrooms. The pupils were so numerous that the basement of the church as well as this wooden building had to be used.

When in 1927, the present St. Antoine School was erected on the corner of Belmont and Somerville Streets, and classes were transferred there, the sisters took possession of the entire "old school" and converted it into a convent. The sisters still occupy the matchbox convent.

Sr. Mary of Saint Arsene (Helene Painchaud)(1908-1914)

Sister was acquainted with the life and missions of the province, as well as with their education status. The particular interest she manifested in the intellectual development of the sisters came as no surprise from a former directress of studies. Repeatedly she emphasized the importance of personal study and recom-

# SAINT JOSEPH, ATTLEBORO, MASSACHUSETTS 1913-1971

The pastor, then the Rev. Berube, who had known the Sisters of Holy Cross in St. Hyacinthe, New Bedford, appealed to Mother Mary of St. Gabriel at St. Laurent for Sisters. It was a relatively short notice and Rev. Mother could promise him nothing. Finally, after his repeated pleadings she wrote: "Reverend Father, we just do not have enough sisters to open a new mission. If you can find sisters for us, we will open your school". It was written in a jesting manner to an esteemed priest whom she knew very well.

Undeterred, Father Berube contacted some of his priest friends in New Bedford where the Sisters of Holy Cross were teaching and succeeded in obtaining from each one, the release of one of his sisters for one year, replacing her by a lay teacher. What could the Superior General do when Father Berube wrote that he had found sisters for his school?

# HOLY INFANT JESUS, NASHUA, NEW HAMPSHIRE 1914-

In the disastrous fire of 1930, over one hundred homes and buildings in the parish were destroyed, including the church, school, and convent. Undaunted, Rev. Janelle, pastor, built a new convent for the Sisters that year while they continued to teach in scattered areas. Sisters now live in a third convent readied for them. The parish, sorely tried by disasters, is today a thriving people of God, whose faith and generosity are visibly blessed.

Sr. M. St. Catherine de Sienne (Marie Exilia Fortier)  
(1914-1920)

With seventeen houses under her spiritual care, her main concern was to safeguard a strong religious spirit among all the sisters working under conditions, so different from those she knew in

Canada. Travel was not yet so common, nor even so easy, as it is now. She therefore, reached all the sisters in circular letters addressed to all the houses in the province. These communications reminded the sisters of the rules of the Congregation, and urged their faithful observance in an intense spirit of faith.

During her administration a new mission was opened.

SAINT THOMAS AQUINAS, SPRINGFIELD, MA 1919-1977

In her letter to Father Landry, advising him that his request was accepted, Rev. Mother St. Julien remarked facetiously:

Someone has said that when a Superior General accepts a foundation in Canada, she is working for the glory of God; but when she consents to an establishment in the United States she is working for the GREATER glory of God. We shall, therefore, Rev. Father, work for the GREATER glory of God in your parish, happy to devote our time and our efforts for the good of the pupils confided to our care.

The sisters had worked for the GREATER glory of God among the people of St. Thomas Aquinas for sixty-six years.

Sr. Mary St. Clothilde (Henriette Brunelle)  
(1920-1921)

Born in Ontario, of French-Canadian parents, Sr. M. St. Clothilde was initiated to the Franco-American mentality early in her religious life, as her knowledge of French and English made her especially useful in the missions of the New England States. Her straight-forwardness was well-known as was her spirit of justice and her sense of duty. It is also true to say that she endeavored to create a real family atmosphere in whatever mission she labored. Her stay was shortlived as at the extraordinary general chapter held at St. Laurent in 1921, she was named Superior General of the Congregation.

Sister Mary St. Beatrix of the Sacred Heart  
(Leopoldine Fortier) (1922-1923)

Sister was a remarkable woman, highly cultured, of extraordinary refinement and courtesy, and possessed a deep prayer life. When in 1923-24 a new infirmary was going up at St. Laurent, she requested a larger contribution from each house. To save expenses, that year, she asked the sisters to forego a summer retreat at the Mother House by making it alone in their respective houses.

At the time the French-Canadian troubles in the dioceses of Fall River and Manchester were raging. She warned the sisters of unflinching discretion, and enjoined on them not to take sides. Disloyalty to the Church or its representatives were abhorrent to her. The religious educator in her was always dominant for she saw teaching as a powerful and sacred ministry always.

It was during her administration that the provincialate was transferred to St. George's Manor on Island Pond Road in Manchester, N. H. This is how the province came to acquire the "Manor" as it is familiarly called.

In September 1924, she called on Monsignor Devoy. He promised to help and the following spring, the Corey farm was offered for sale. It consisted of a stately building and an expanse of 100 acres of land. Rev. Mother M. St. Clothilde who visited it was impressed and interested. Monsignor asked her if she thought the place suitable for a provincialate as well as a boarding school. Because Rev. Mother agreed, she was given the princely gift by Monsignor Devoy, and the only restrictions attached was that the Sisters of Holy Cross would always retain the property so that it would be dedicated to the interests of education and charity.

Monsignor Devoy even offered to take the proper measures to proceed to the legal incorporation of the Holy Cross community in the United States.

The Incorporation of Mount St. Joseph which resulted from the purchase, for the sum of one dollar, was to make legal upon payment the transfer of title to the Community. The community of Holy Cross was the first religious community of women in the State of New Hampshire to be incorporated.

The Manor did provide for a place of study for our sisters engaged in the teaching of youth. It offered a beautiful locale for the provincialate, a restful and healthful abode for senior members of the community and a provincial postulate and novitiate. Were he living today, Monsignor Devoy would certainly approve Holy Cross Kindergarten built on the land he donated.

Sister Mary of St. Anatolie (Rose Lagasse)  
(1928-1931)

Canadian born, Sister Mary St. Anatolie served one term at which time the province numbered 232 sisters and 19 houses.

To foster vocations was her favorite apostolate. In January 1929, she wrote to the sisters of each house encouraging them to talk to the students about the happiness, the grandeur of religious life, and of the priestly life. She saw in Alumnae associations a vehicle to keep in touch with former students, and the opportunity to keep alive in them any tendencies toward a religious vocation.

Sister Mary of St. Leonie (Marie Rosilda Brodeur)  
(1931-1937)

Gentleness and graciousness characterized this kind person. Like her predecessor, she was imbued with a strong apostolic spirit.



The thirties were a time when parochial school children were trained to sacrifice, and to give alms for the missions in Bengal. Every classroom had its mission box into which the pupils could directly drop his or her offering. Mother Mary St. Leonie encouraged this practice.

She opened the mission of St. Augustine, Manchester in 1936.

#### SAINT AUGUSTIN, MANCHESTER, NEW HAMPSHIRE 1936-

Acceptance of St. Augustine School meant supplying teaching personnel for twenty-three classes. It was the largest challenge the community ever faced in the New England States. Replacing one teaching community for another is a delicate task. This time TWO teaching communities were being replaced, the Jesus Marie Sisters and the Brothers of the Sacred Heart.

In his acknowledgment, Bishop Peterson wished the community well. "May God grant you", he wrote "the grace to maintain, at the highest level, the scholastic standards of this historic foundation, the Mother Church of our present numerous and worthy descendants of the sturdy and faithful Catholics of Old Quebec."

The sisters who went numbered twenty-four, nineteen named for St. Augustin School and five destined to travel to St. Therese School.

Sister Mary St. Fabien (Marie-Louise Roy dit Desjardins)  
(1937-1946)

Though not American born, Sister Mary of St. Fabien was a mild person with the tenacity that such people often display. She understood English perfectly, but she never spoke it.

Rumors of war, which might involve the United States and Canada, led Mother General, Mother Mary St. Maximilienne, to re-



quest, in the summer of 1940, that no Sisters in the United States go to the Mother House for their yearly retreat, not even the candidates for final vows. The French-Canadian sisters teaching in the New England missions were not naturalized. Their numbers were sufficiently large as to seriously inconvenience the school the community staffed if anything happened. Thus it was that twenty-seven of the total candidates made their final profession in Suncook, New Hampshire.

The passage of the U. S. Alien Registration Act in 1940, raised a number of problems, but the Provincial, Mother Mary St. Fabien, obtained from the Canadian government passport permits that greatly facilitated traveling to and from Canada.

Three new missions were found during her leadership.

SAINT THERESE, MANCHESTER, NEW HAMPSHIRE 1939-1974

SALMON FALLS, NEW HAMPSHIRE 1940-1967

TEACHER TRAINING INSTITUTE

Diocesan demands were becoming more stringent regarding the scholastic preparation and qualification of teachers in everyone of the five dioceses where the sisters taught. Over 350 sisters had to be qualified.

Sister Mary Saint Emmeline (Malenfant) then provincial prefect of studies along with Sister Mary Felicia (Frazer) took the initiative to bring about this important adventure, and in the summer of 1942 a Teacher Training Institute was started for the CSC'S. Thereafter extension courses were given, on week days from four to six in the afternoon and on Saturday mornings. The Institute functioned thus on Island Pond Road.

Sister Mary of Saint Jeanne (Marie Exilda Richard)  
(1946-1952)

was the tenth provincial superior. She held great interest in the affairs of the community. Behind a rather rigid exterior rendered more so by her strict observance of the rule, was found a warm affectionate person.

As provincial Sister Mary Saint Jeanne saw the origin of Field Day and the founding of two new houses; St Leo, Gonic, N. H. and Notre Dame College, Manchester, N. H.

SAINT LEO, GONIC, NEW HAMPSHIRE 1947-1971

FIELD DAY

The yearly September Field Days which draw alumnae, relatives, and friends in large numbers to the Manor on Island Pond Road, originated in the Fall of 1946. That year, the sisters of the Manor had invited the personnel of the convents in Manchester and the neighboring areas, to organize a miniature fair in order to raise supplementary funds for the upkeep of the newly completed Teacher Training Institute.

The success and enjoyment resulting from that Sunday in September gave rise to a series of yearly Field Days, each successive one taking on greater dimensions, and bringing in larger revenues. Field Days became a global project in the province and a real community effort.

NOTRE DAME COLLEGE, MANCHESTER, N. H. 1950-

It evolved from the Teacher Training Institute established in 1945. The Community decided to convert the three-year Institute to a four-year liberal arts college to serve its sisters and to offer at the same time to young women of the area, the advantages of

of a higher education. It was felt that initially young women would be drawn from the middle and lower economic bracket. They would be students who would very likely be financing their own education, and would need to prepare for an immediate earning career. The decision was wholly in conformity with the spirit of the Congregation whose mandate from the Founder was to make education available to the working classes.

The first president of Notre Dame College was Sister Mary Saint Claude (Graves). Setting up the academic program was the most important task of the administration that first year. Sister Mary Laure Kegresse, named by the General Council, dean and registrar, was given the task of guiding the College on its course in those adventurous first years.

The two original buildings of the Chandler estate and the St. Joseph Hall formed the nucleus of Notre Dame College's physical plant in 1951.

In the fall of 1957, Sister Mary Laure continued as acting president and Sister Louise Parent assumed the duties of the dean. Both academic and student affairs were under control.

Perhaps the highlight of Sister Mary Laure's administration was the construction of Holy Cross Hall, the center of academic activities today.

Sister Jeannette Vezeau became the new president in 1967, and still holds that position today. One of her first concerns on taking office was to meet with the members of the General Council of in Montreal, who composed the Board of Trustees at that time, and ask them to accept that the Lay Board, now advisory only, be asked

to assume the responsibilities of a full-fledged Board of Trustees.

Her first years saw many organizational changes in the administrative pattern.

With the purchase of Dr. Meeham's house for a dormitory on Chestnut Street (Moreau House) in the summer of 1975, every house on the block was owned by Notre Dame College. That same summer, ground-breaking for a student-center building took place on Carpenter Street.

In December 1970 the College received institutional membership and accreditation by the New England Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools for a period of ten years.

Although Notre Dame has no intention of becoming a co-ed college, the exchange program existing among the consortium colleges, since the late 1960's opened the doors of admission to men for specialized programs offered on campus.

In 1975 a Masters Program was initiated to answer a request by Superintendents of the surrounding areas. Recently the library welcomed a new addition to accomodate the present enrollment of 725. The College has now received word of accreditation for another ten years.

At the end of Sister Mary of Saint Jeanne's administration in 1952 our Sacred Heart Province finished more or less its period of expansion which lasted for at least three generations. It paved the way for a stabilization period felt not only in Holy Cross but in all religious congregations.

There was a loss of intensity of vision and commitment among the members now that communities had become so highly institution-

alized. Activism occurred and members became so absorbed in their work that they lost sight of its spiritual and apostolic underpinnings. Members became closed to changes and adaptation. They saw little need to elaborate the understanding of the founding vision or penetrate it more deeply. Fortunately this stabilization period lasted but for roughly one generation in time.

Mid-twentieth century was not without writing its pages of history in Sacred Heart Province. French continued to be cut from the daily curriculum in schools and this made it difficult for those sisters who came from Canada for the purpose of keeping French alive in the schools as well as in the homes.

Sister Mary of St. Emmeline (Elise Malenfant)

It was a prefect of studies that all of the sisters came to know her talent for organization and her local dedication to the cause of parochial education.

She believed that there would be more vocations in Holy Cross were the community to offer young girls their early religious training in the province itself, rather than having to go to Montreal. A postulate opened on Island Pond Road in February 1954. Sister Mary Irene of the Sacred Heart (Alida Houde) was named the first Mistress of Postulants. Permission was granted the next year to build an addition to St. George Manor. In August 1956, the novitiate was established canonically. Fifteen candidates presented themselves then. They pursued their canonical novitiate in Manchester, N. H. with Mother Mary Saint Philias of the Sacred Heart then named officially the first Mistress of Novices of the American province until 1971 when the novitiate was transferred to West Franklin, New Hampshire.

At the time when vocations declined, there were only two women ready for the canonical year. It was decided to allow the two novices to participate in an intercommunity novitiate program. Sister Doris Ouellette, the Mistress of Novices, accompanied them on this program. Until 1981 young aspirants were received in West Franklin. Now eleven candidates are housed in a common novitiate for all the provinces in a new structure at St. Laurent in Canada.

During Sister Mary of Saint Emmeline's administration, the monthly Moreau Day was initiated, and the following missions were opened: Groton, Connecticut, Westport, Massachusetts, and St. Joseph in Nashua, New Hampshire.

#### SACRED HEART, GROTON, CONNECTICUT 1956

Today this thriving school offers the complete eight years of elementary education. A U. S. submarine base and the Electric Boat Company are found there.

#### SAINT GEORGE, WESTPORT, MASSACHUSETTS 1956

Like Groton, Connecticut today it thrives with a full elementary program.

#### SAINT JOSEPH, NASHUA, NEW HAMPSHIRE 1957-

The modern convent houses mainly semi-retired sisters who are greatly involved in parish work. Grades 5 and 6 at St. Joseph School are part of a consolidation since 1977.

Sister Mary Raymonde (Germaine Carignan)  
(1953-1967)

Sister Mary Raymonde was known as a most congenial sister, a fine teacher, an understanding superior and as an able administrator.

Stabilization continued during her administration. For some



years, the Church authorities had been asking all religious communities, the establishment of a scholasticate. Acquiring property where a scholasticate might be established became a priority with Sister. Moreover, she became concerned about the senior sisters. The Manor, where many were retired, could only receive a limited number of them. Most of these sisters were American born, and saw retirement in Canada, away from relatives and friends, with great reluctance. In addition, a larger house for annual retreats seemed a necessity.

The community acquired the site of the former "Daniel Webster Home for children." Starting the scholasticate represented an act of courage and resoluteness. It meant obtaining approval from five bishops to request that the pastors hire one lay teacher in their respective schools from which a young teacher was withdrawn. Within a year, in August 1961, a group of 21 scholastics arrived to pursue their intellectual, professional, and spiritual formation under the direction of Sister Mary Blanche of the Rosary (Blanche Duval) a woman of great refinement, a scholar, and a deeply spiritual person.

#### HOLY CROSS KINDERGARTEN, MANCHESTER, NEW HAMPSHIRE

In 1959, Holy Cross Kindergarten was founded as a privately-owned non-denomination enterprise. In 1967, this building was built on the spacious campus whose physical plant, both indoors and outdoors, offers ideal conditions to promote growth and discovery.

After the General Chapter of 1957 which had given each province greater autonomy, the members of the Provincial Council had



been increased from three to five. The locale of the provincialate in Manchester, New Hampshire, was therefore restricted. The lack of space for personnel was compounded by the fact that the added equipment for conservation of archives and other documents was becoming more of a problem.

#### OUR LADY OF THE LAKE, PITTSFIELD, NEW HAMPSHIRE 1965-

For quite some time, Sister Mary Saint Raymonde sought a place where the Sisters could relax after the pressures of the school year, and recreate in body and mind and well-earned leisure. For the above reasons the property on Monastery Hill, Pittsfield, New Hampshire owned by the Franciscan Fathers was purchased. In October of 1965 members of both the Provincial Administration and the local administration moved to this new site. From the start, the sisters used the lake for swimming, boating, and picnicking.

The highlight of Sister Germaine's three terms, however, was undoubtedly the convening of the first provincial chapter for 1962.

The chapter was conducted with all the solemnity and discretion characteristic of the general chapters. An over-all assessment of the religious, apostolic, and financial status of the province, not only by the authorities, but by rank and file. It was certainly a breakthrough in representative government. It was also a return to the spirit of Father Moreau who believed in the involvement of large numbers in the government of the Association of Holy Cross. It was during this chapter that for the first time the sisters, through their delegates were consulted on the person they would like to see at the head of the province.

A second provincial chapter took place in December 1965, thus

preparing for the General Chapter to take place during the summers of 1966 and 1967. At the end of the first session important changes and modifications were to take place. Were these significant of an early Transition Period for the Sacred Heart Province? The following decisions were promulgated. A silver ring replaced the blue cincture received at the sister's perpetual profession. Sisters were to revert to their family name, if they wished, a measure deemed advisable for legal reasons. Certain modifications appeared in the religious habit of the sisters, too. Now the street suits began to appear causing a minor upheaval in the ranks. The use of color and removal of the veil, became optional only a few years later.

Eventually the seeming immutabilities of the stabilization period started to give and the province entered the breakdown period, the congregation suffered growth pangs as well as the whole Church. What happened in New England happened elsewhere too. This decline gave rise to stress and doubt in the individual members. Persons became dissatisfied with the current state of the community. A sense of crisis grew which showed evidence of transition. The community had lost its sense of identity and purpose. Service to the Church lacked direction. There was a net loss of membership. Any turnaround required the conversion of life of the individual members and of the institute, a turning from death, a turning toward life.

During the General Chapter of 1967, Sister Germaine Carignan was elected the Directress General of Finances for the Community in Canada and replaced in the province by Sister Jeannette Gingras

as provincial.

At that time the term Superior was changed to Provincial Animator, a term most appropriate, for Sister Jeannette's administration was characterized by intense spirituality and renewal, a community effort led by her.

The next decade underlined very clearly that Holy Cross was in a Transition Period. New Constitutions were offered each Sister. The Community made tangible efforts to read the "signs of the times" and to follow them, in spite of heart-wrenching effects such action sometimes may have entailed.

Having to abandon a parochial school, where they had taught for over fifty, sixty, and seventy years, was always a traumatic experience. The merging of some parochial schools, the grouping of some into regionals and the closing of others, was a period of retrenchment. Between 1967 and 1977, six parochial high schools and twelve of the elementary schools were closed. It is no wonder that a number of Canadian sisters decided to go back to their motherland after devoting themselves generously many years. The apostolic zeal of the sisters had thus to be channeled into other areas.

The Centers for Religious Education that developed in many parishes to reach Catholic children in non-parochial schools, were, in the late 1960's a fertile field for religious teachers. The facilities of the former parochial school were usually used for this purpose. In CCD, our sisters did splendid work for many years. Religious Education Coordinators taught, trained teachers, and fulfilled some aspects of pastoral work. Sisters became mem-

bers of a parish team, extraordinary ministers of the Eucharist in parishes as well as to inmates of the state hospital in Concord, New Hampshire. Each year a growing number of Sisters became involved in social projects. All such ministries represent a deviation from the traditional classroom pattern. Today, it is not unusual to see some sisters performing service for their aged or disabled parents.

Toward the end of Sister Jeannette's second term, the Community of Holy Cross commemorated the centennial of Father Moreau's death.

An innovative missionary effort was undertaken in the summer of 1973, when Sister Marguerite Gravel spent two months in southern Alaska. Sister was our first religious to travel to outlying areas and to live there. The next year the first mission was officially founded. Also in the summer of 1975 the Sisters of Holy Cross replaced the Sisters of Mercy who lacked personnel in Franklin, New Hampshire.

With the elective Chapter of 1977, Sister Jeannette's administration innovative in so many ways, came to an end. True to the trends seen in her administration, Sister was to pursue her apostolate of pastoral ministry in Brandon, Florida where ten sisters exercise varied apostolates today.

Sister's administration tasted a critical period like all other Congregations. Serious questions were being asked in provincial and general chapters. There was a great need for revitalization but not without painful search marked with shattering experience of doubt, uncertainty and pain. There was need to re-

ground persons and community in the biblical roots of religious life, in the charism and roots of the institute. And this was seriously considered lest extinction slowly ebb its way through.

Sister Juliette LeBlanc 1977-

Sister, our present Coordinator, is a person gifted with qualities of enlightened leadership, of solid judgment, and human sensitivity.

Sister Juliette placed the focus of her first year's effort on strengthening community living at local levels. The objective had a threefold dimension:

1. to help build local communities rooted in faith...
2. to assist local coordinators in their role as animator...
3. to prompt growth and healing of individuals enabling them to live more fully their consecrated lives...

The responsibility of every member of the community was also challenged to share with the Provincial Council the vision of the province as an aggregate of faith communities "striving to live fully Jesus Christ".

Sister Juliette's leadership in working towards this spiritual goal was strongly promoted and enhanced by the On-Going formation Commission chaired by Sister Lorraine Paille, assistant provincial coordinator. Corporate Reflection Days and General Assemblies serve as a healthy key to personal and corporate direction.

The year 1977 marked the 75th anniversary of the establishment of the Sacred Heart Province. Such a milestone in its history called for fitting recognition.

Contributing to the joy of the Province was the presence of all the members of the General Council from Montreal who came to signal the strong family ties of the province to the Community at large. Forty-six Canadian sisters, former laborers in the New England missions, responded to the invitation to renew bonds of friendship, and to share in the joy of former collaborators.

Londonderry, New Hampshire House was opened in 1978. It is especially dedicated to on-going formation. It is an implementation of one of the proposals of the General Plenary Council to provide sites conducive to meeting diverse personal needs for formation and renewal.

The Five Year School Study will certainly be a choice of focal events during this administration. This project initiated in 1973 is a serious study and evaluation of the teaching mission of Holy Cross in the Church of New England.

That the Sacred Congregation for Religious and Secular Institute approved new Constitutions on November 1st, 1981 proves another highlight of this administration.

Sister Juliette can look at another achievement with great pride. Late spring will find the completion of a much needed infirmary. It is increasingly difficult to send the elderly and the sick Sisters to Canada and the option is given them to end their earthly journey in New England at Saint George Manor in Manchester, New Hampshire or in Montreal.

The last half of this centennial of our congregation has found Sacred Heart Province outside New England laboring not only in the "home mission" of Florida and Alaska but also in the vice-provinces



of Asia, Haiti, plus the missions of Africa. Unlike the fathers and brothers of Holy Cross who supply missionary candidates on a provincial level, the sisters are consulted by the generalate. Plucked from several provinces are sisters who are sent in the name of the Congregation to answer a need. More often than none, the same sister usually goes back to her province upon return from foreign territory. Sacred Heart Province has contributed very generously to mission territory and presently eight sisters are serving in this capacity.

Since 1881 the Sisters of Holy Cross in the elementary schools they directed were not only instrumental in keeping alive the French language and culture among the French-Canadians, against increasingly strong odds, but more importantly they trained fervent and faithful children of the Church, as well as loyal American citizens.

This life, frugal and laborious in its early beginnings, was nonetheless a happy life. The Sisters developed to a remarkable degree the family spirit that Father Moreau hoped to see in his religious. Today they strive to be evangelical workers, competent, and faithful at the service of the Church of New England they cooperate with self-abnegation and generosity, with the Bishops and pastors in the several dioceses where they labor in furthering the Kingdom of God in the world.

That Sisters are taking serious measures to revitalize themselves personally as well as communally is evident. Is there a transforming response to the signs of the times? Is there a re-appropriation of the founding charism? Is there a profound renewal of the life of prayer, faith and centeredness in Christ? If so

Sacred Heart Province in experiencing a revitalization will have begun its re-foundation, its second foundation, a new vitality curve rich in faith and hope.