HOLY CROSS IN ALASKA:
THE LAST FRONTIER

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"Missionary by her state in life, 'The Sister of Holy Cross lives in a spirit of service'"
- Article 34 of the Constitutions of the Congregation of the Sisters of Holy Cross. (1981)

And so it was that the Sisters of Holy Cross from Manchester, New Hampshire, and true daughters of Father Basil Moreau, were called to serve for ten years in the bush areas of Southeast Alaska. Let us look first at where the Sisters were sent: The great land which is still so often called "The Last Frontier" of the Continental United States.

HISTORICAL FACTS ABOUT ALASKA

The Mastodonic Great Land of Alaska, which entered the Union as our 49th state in 1959, is of such immense proportions that citizens of the "lower 48" have difficulty grasping it. The state sweeps across four time zones, encompassing 586,412 square miles of territory, two-and-one-fifth times the area of Texas. Alaskans are always telling the joke of their rejoinder to proud Texans: "Stop boasting or we'll split in two and make you third."

Superimposed on a map of the contiguous United States, Alaska's territory engulfs most of the Midwest; its Panhandle extends to the Atlantic near Charleston, South Carolina, and the Aleutian chain reaches out into the Pacific between Los Angeles and San Francisco. Alaska is the northernmost state, the westernmost state, and also the easternmost state because the last of the Aleutians extend over the 180th meridian into the Eastern Hemisphere.

The diversity is just as incredible as the size of this lovely, lonely last frontier. Alaska has great plains, Arctic deserts, swamps, immense forests, the highest mountains of North America, more square miles of glaciers than the rest of the inhabited world, ice fields, broad valleys, fjords, twelve major river systems, active volcanoes, three million lakes, countless islands, and fifty percent more seacoast than all the continental United States (33,904 miles). The coast is washed by two oceans and three major seas. But the entire state has fewer people than Norfolk, Virginia. In 1980, the Census counted 456,000 Alaskans of whom some 50,000 were native peoples--Eskimos, Aleuts and Indians (mostly Tlingit and Haida from Southeast Alaska).

Water transportation is strictly seasonal, with a third of the coastline in solid ice for six months of each year. Few towns or cities are connected by highway because of the immense difficulties of building roads over great distances, often with quaky permafrost beneath and with mountain ranges and glaciers as great obstacles.

Those who insist on moving about Alaska are obliged to do so by airplane and in fact there is an aircraft for every 100 residents, ranging from frail float and bush planes to Boeing 747's, from converted World War II vintage Grumman Gooses to modern helicopters. Bankers, oil drillers, physicians, Eskimos on

native business, bishops and politicians spreading their respective words, all must depend on airplanes and not infrequently fly their own. Some of the world's most daring aviators are the Alaskan bush pilots. Bush pilots will land almost anywhere--on sand bars, glaciers, rivers, ice floes, beaches, lakes, pastures, graveyards, or ball fields. They face constant danger, realizing that each landing may be their last.

On the trail or in large cities, Alaskans are a friendly, outgoing lot, sharing their common glory and adversity. The people drawn to Alaska tend to be hardy individualists, lovers of the outdoors, those with an adventuresome streak in their blood and an itch to escape the constraints of the freeway society in the lower 48. There is no other state in America so essentially free of class distinctions, no state where a young person can rise so rapidly to the top in business or the professions. Indeed, a kind of weird unreality pervades many things Alaskan. Man and his doings nowhere seem so transient and unsubstantial, like a flash of Northern Lights in the Arctic sky--there now but likely to be goine in a moment.

What's more, the Alaskan climate seems deliberately programmed to keep man at bay. Everything about it is extreme. Fort Yukon, in the interior has reported temperatures as low as 75 degrees below zero, as high as 100 above. Soggy Ketchikan, in the southeastern panhandle is deluged with 180 inches of rain each year. While Anchorage asserts that it has warmer winters than northern New England, in Fairbanks brutal cold of 30 and sometimes more than 55 below drives inhabitants indoors for weeks on end. In contrast Southeast Alaska has unusually mild winters and cool summers due to the Japanese ocean currents that wash its shores. A familiar phrase is often repeated to tourists who visit the Southeast Rainforest: "If you wait a minute, the weather will change." And it usually does!

CATHOLIC CHURCH IN ALASKA

Christianity had been rooted in Alaskan soil as early as 1791 by the Russians. On May 3, 1879, Bishop Charles Seghers, second bishop of Vancouver, established the first Catholic parish of Alaska in Wrangell. At the time, there were 32 houses in the village and 508 inhabitants. Father Althoff was appointed pastor of the new parish named St. Rose of Lima. The first visible seed of Catholicism was planted in this great land.

Six days, later, on May 9, 1879, Bishop Seghers founded the parish of St. Gregory Nazianzen in Sitka as a mission of St. Rose of Lima. For several years, Father Althoff was 'Rome's solitary sentinel' the only Catholic priest in the entire territory of Alaska. He led an extremely lonely life in Southeastern Alaska. It was not until 1882 that Father Althoff arrived in Juneau and offered the first Mass on July 17 in a log cabin. In 1885 the Jesuits established a permanent Mission of the Holy Cross and in 1887, Our Lady of the Snows at Nulato.

Three Sisters of St. Ann from Victoria arrived in Juneau in September of 1886 to found a hospital: a one-and-a-half story structure with a five-bed ward. Sister Mary Zenon Fontaine devoted thirty-two years to the Alaska mission.

The same month the sisters opened the first Catholic school in Alaska using the unfinished church as a classroom. During the first four months there were only three Russian children, two girls and a boy. These were humble beginnings.

On November 28, 1886, Archbishop Seghers made his last and fatal trip to Southeast Alaska. He was shot to death by the crazed Fuller, a native guide who often accompanied the Archbishop. Father Barnum, S.J. wrote of the death of the "Apostle of Alaska": "The body was left bleeding on the river bank just as it had fallen so that the mighty artery of the land he loved so well received from the Archbishop's heart the crimson streamlet of his blood." The Archbishop's death opened the door for the heroic labors of the Jesuit priests and brothers in Alaska.

Later in 1894, Fr. Tosi, S.J. was appointed Prefect Apostolic of the Alaska Territory. With that decree the Catholic Church in Alaska was severed from the jurisdiction of the Bishop of Vancouver Island and placed under the supervision of the third Archbishop of Portland, Oregon. At the time a summation of the condition of the Catholic Church was given: ten priests, four churches with resident pastors, four without, six stations, one hospital and four Indian schools with an enrollment of 155 pupils. Most probably there were no more than a few thousand Catholics in the entire territory. Most of these were located in Juneau, Wrangell and Sitka in the Southeast and Holy Cross, Anvik and Nulato on the lower Yukon River.

In 1895 Father John Rene, S.J. made Juneau the administration center of the Catholic Church in Alaska. The new parish of St. Terese in Skaway was founded by Father Turnell, S.J. in September of 1898. In 1904, Ketchikan was established as a mission and in 1907 it received its first pastor.

On February 15, 1917, Bishop Joseph Crimont, S.J. was named Vicar Apostolic of Alaska. Under his guidance there was a steady if not a striking growth of the Catholic Church in Alaska. It was more than a turning of the tide; it ushered in a whole new era of stability and growth. After ordination in 1888, Joseph Crimont worked among the Crow Indians in Montana and a year later he was assigned to the Jesuit Alaskan missions at Holy Cross. After serving forty-eight years in Alaska, 'little Crim' as Fathers Barnum called him, died in Juneau on May 20, 1945 He lived so long that he buried most of his confrers who predicted that he would never survive because of his poor health and protested that the life was too difficult for him. At the time of his death, Bishop Crimont was the oldest member of the hierarchy of the U.S. During his administration, Bishop Crimont rejoiced in the building and dedication of the Shrine of St. Terese on Shrine Island, near Juneau. The Bishop personally knew the family of St. Terese of Lisieux; that is why he named the Little Flower (canonized in 1925) as the Patroness of Alaska.

In 1951 Fr. Dermot O'Flanagan, S.J. was named the first Bishop of Juneau. No longer was Alaska to be simply a vicariate apostolic with a Jesuit Bishop at its head, but it was to have its own diocese and diocesan bishop. Because of ill health Bishop O'Flanagan, S.J. resigned on June 19, 1968. He had given his priestly life to the Catholic Church in Alaska, first as the beloved "Father O" in Anchorage and later as the first Bishop of Juneau.

On February 4, 1970, the Most Rev. Francis T. Hurley was appointed Auxiliary Bishop of Juneau under the jurisdiction of Archbishop Joseph T. Ryan of Anchorage. It was not until July 20, 1971, that Bishop Hurley was named ordinary of the Diocese of Juneau. From this point on, Alaska included three Dioceses: Fairbanks, Juneau and the Archdiocese of Anchorage. Bishop Gleason, S.J. was the first Bishop of Fairbanks and, now retired there, he was succeeded by Bishop Robert Whelan, S.J. Bishop Francis Hurley succeeded Bishop Ryan as Archbishop of Anchorage in 1976, while Juneau received its third Bishop in 1979 with Bishop Michael Kenny a product of the St. Rosa, California Diocese.

During the first two decades of the twenthieth century one of the major problems of the Catholic Church in Alaska was the irregularity of priestly visitation, the incessant changing of pastors, and in many cases the absence of any priest. All were, of course, caused by the acute shortage of priests in Alaska. It continues to be throughout Alaska one of the principal factors in the loss of faith on the part of many Catholics. The traditional role and importance of the priest in the Catholic community up until recently had made the problem more pressing not only in Alaska but in every area that was called a frontier in American Catholicism.

To the credit of the missionary priests throughout Alaska, the pattern was always the same: where the people went, the Church went. No hardship, no sacrifice, no economics deterred the missionaries from being with the people, ministering to their spiritual and material needs as best they could. They stood almost without exception as "giants in the earth" and for this reason were revered and loved by the early Catholic people of the territory.

During these years no organization, no religious foundation, supported the Catholic Church in Alaska more than the Extension Society whose headquarters is in Chicago. No accountant on this side of eternity will ever be able to reckon the amount of financial and spiritual assistance the Extension Society provided throughout the years for the Alaskan missions. As early as 1952, Bishop O'Flanagan, first bishop of Juneau, wrote: "I am confident that there is no church, no mission, no priest,who has not experienced in one way or another, during the past forty-eight years, the kindness and generosity of the Catholic Extension Society."

THE HOLY CROSS MISSION IN SOUTHEAST ALASKA

Our focus is now directed to Southeast Alaska, Diocese of Juneau, for that is where Holy Cross began its missionary journey in Alaska.

Shortly after his arrival in 1970, Bishop Hurley surveyed the needs of his nearly 300 mile-long, scattered diocese whose parishes could only be reached by boat or airplane. Among his first undertakings was learning how to fly, thus becoming one of a half-dozen bishops throughout the world with a pilot's license. "I started to fly," he said, "so that I could personally visit all the towns frequently and establish a presence in the more remote villages, logging camps and canneries. My number one priority," he added, "was recruiting personnel to supplement the total of five priests in the diocese when

I came, and the one community of Sisters, the Sisters of St. Joseph of Peace in the school and hospital in Ketchikan."

Hurley learned his lessons well from the Second Vatican Council. He intuitively sensed that "presence" was the key word in the Church of the future. Thus, he set his energy to work in securing additional personnel in his unusual diocese of water and mountain ranges that encompassed 37,566 square miles. This admittedly was a relatively small area in comparison to the Archdiocese of Anchorage with 138,985 square miles and the Diocese of Fairbanks with 409,849 square miles. The Bishop solicited the aid of the Extension Society and the Knights of Columbus. From each group he secured grants enabling him to purchase two float planes. He manned the first; to pilot the second, he called upon his friend and classmate at St. Patrick's Seminary, Menlo Park, California, to volunteer his services. Father Churchill at the time was stationed in Hawaii. This was in the summer of 1971.

Father Churchill was stationed at Holy Name Church, Ketchikan, and flew to the villages and logging camps of Prince of Wales Island. The Bishop from his base in Juneau covered primarily the area north from Wrangell to Yakutat. Their goal was simple: establish a presence for the people but search out any who might be Catholic. It became evident to Bishop Hurley and Father Churchill that there were indeed significant numbers of Catholics and a good many people who were eager to welcome anyone who would speak of the Gospel of Christ. Presence and an occasional liturgy were not enough. Instruction in the faith was critical and much desired.

The bishop turned to the teaching sisters, whom Theodore Maynard in his HISTORY OF AMERICAN CATHOLICISM called "the crowning glory of the American Church." Mother Maureen Hennesy, Sister of Holy Family, of Mission San Jose, California offered the assistance of her community. During the same period Mother Bernadette Wiseman of the Presentation Sisters of Watervilet, New York took interest in a day-care center in Juneau. Three sisters came to open St. Ann's Day Care Center in the vacated St. Ann's school, where the Sisters of St. Ann's had staffed the only diocesan Catholic school for nearly eighty-two years. Sister Immaculate, a Presentation Sister from Ireland, turned her attention to the bush communities and began work in Hoonah, Yakutat, Pelican, Tenakee and other isolated communities.

Let us direct our attention to the Prince of Wales Island which was destined to be the prime area of ministry of the Sisters of Holy Cross. The Prince of Wales Island, third largest island of the United States after Kodiak and Hawaii, is in the southern part of the Diocese of Juneau, just forty miles west of Ketchikan. The island is 135 miles long and forty-five miles wide and covers about 2,200 square miles. The 990-mile coastline is nicked with countless bays, coves, inlets and points. Prince of Wales Island is predominantly covered by the Coastal Spruce-Hemlock Forest, commonly known as the Tongass National Forest, which is typical of much of southeastern Alaska. Mountains rising 2,000 to 3,000 feet cover most of the island. Because of the abundance of good timber, logging dates back over a hundred years. Of the thirty or more logging camps throughout Southeast Alaska, fourteen camps are on the Prince of Wales Island.

The island is called bush because it is covered with wilderness, comparable to the jungles of Africa. There are a few towns (Craig, Klawock, and Hydaburg), no paved roads, no telephone or television (that is not until 1975) and limited services: namely two grocery stores, two gas stations and one hotel. The logging camps are totally dependant on Ketchikan for food and every necessary commodity. Groceries, clothes or other necessities are ordered by mail, which is picked up once or twice a week by float plane. The following week, the ordered items arrive by plane or by the "Island Trader" an everage size boat that goes from camp to camp each week to bring bulk mail and the items that are too large or costly for the plane. The arrival of the mail plane and the "Trader" are the big events of the week.

Prince of Wales Island has long been the traditional home for the Tlingit and Haida Indians and more recently the home of miners, loggers, and commercial fishermen. Let us pause to examine the culture of the Tlingit Indians who still inhabit the Prince of Wales Island, especially in Klawock.

For many years, probably at least 8,000 years before Bishop Seghers arrived in Wrangell, the Tlingit Indians lived in a virtual paradise of snowcapped mountains, dense green forests and sheltered waters overpopulated with salmon and halibut. The forests were home for countless fur-bearing animals--the bear, wolf, fox, beaver, lynx and mink. Overhead the bald eagle, the ominous raven and scores of other birds claimed the sky of this area as their home.

A fact only recently acknowledged by historians and anthropologists, the Tlingit Indians had developed one of the highest and most advanced cultures of all the Indians in North America. They formed a highly cultivated democratic society. Although they recognized the leadership of a chief within each tribe, it was a matriarchal society. Everyone belonged to a totem family traced through the mother, the child being of the totem of its mother. Two of the same totem must not marry because they are considered related by blood.

The abundance of fish in the coastal waters and fur-bearing animals in their native forests afforded the Tlingits the leisure to develop art forms not found among other tribes. Surrounded by an abundance of timber they became master craftsmen in the use of that material. They constructed log houses that were spacious and artistically designed and which provided quarters for as many as a dozen families. They constructed boats that would hold as many as sixty warriors. Their most conspicuous art form was the totem pole, some of them standing as high as fifty feet. The totems were exquisitely carved with the figures and faces of real and mythical animals and served as a heraldic crest for the various families and tribes. Family wealth was measured by the size of their lodges, the height of their totems, and the number of their slaves who were captured from forays among Indian tribes in the states of Washington and Oregon.

A chief's wealth was demonstrated from time to time by the elaborate feasts he hosted, the valuable gifts he presented and sometimes the number of slaves that were sacrificed. These feasts were called potlatches and continue to the present day, although in a more modest manner. It was to these Indians and the white people, who journeyed from the lower 48 to the Prince of Wales seeking jobs, that the Sisters ministered.

On May 30, 1973, Sister Marguerite Gravel, CSC, from Manchester, New Hampshire, volunteered her services for the summer to Bishop Hurley of Juneau. She wrote of her experience in the "Inside Passage," the weekly diocesan newspaper:

> "The summer of '73 opened for me a new missionary adventure full of exciting experiences in logging camps, native towns and the cities of Ketchikan and Juneau. Teaching summer Bible school to the children in Craig and Klawock, working with the Presbyterian volunteers from the AnnaJackman boat, in Kake, and the quiet musical moments with the logging families in False Island; all opened my eyes to a new and different ministry. So much happened in so little time: days, weeks, months of surprise, wonder, precious blessings! It was like a dream - when suddenly in late August I awoke and found myself back in New England. Pleasant yet compelling memories lingered on, and deep down within a driving zeal brought forth the conviction that the Lord was calling me to minister in Alaska!"

The following summer of 1974, Sister Elaine Theoret, CSC, from Pittsfield, Massachusetts, joined Sister Marguerite to expand their work on Prince of Wales Island including Craig, Klawock, Thorne Bay and Coffman Cove. The two city parishes of St. Rose of Lima in Wrangell and St. Catherine in Petersburg were added to their ministry.

Sister Marguerite writes about their memorable beginning:

> On a beautiful Friday afternoon (Aug. 16, 1974) Sister Elaine and I descended from a Grummond Goose onto the float plane dock in Ketchikan. We were greeted warmly by Bishop Hurley and Father Jerry Frister, our bush pilot, who escorted us to Holy Name Rectory where at a pot luck dinner we met the entire parish personnel: Father Jim Miller, pastor of Holy Name, six Sisters of St. Joseph of Peace, from Bellevue, Washington, who staffed Holy Name School, as well as the Jesuit volunteer teachers and the five Sisters who worked and administered Ketchikan General Hospital, formerly owned by the same community.
>
> This royal welcome filled us with joy and thanksgiving to the Lord for bringing us to Alaska and entrusting us with a particular mission: to sow the seed of His Word. The seed was planted.
>
> The first few days were spent unpacking into our one-room apartment, in the basement of Holy Name School, which was to be our 'home-base' and the first Holy Cross convent on Alaskan soil. We were content to live simply and learn the new life of a pilgrim. Literally, it was exactly that!

Touring the bush missions on the Prince of Wales Island was for the Sisters the first order of business. The first float plane ride for Sister Elaine was exciting and scary: 'til this day, Sister Elaine prefers the solid ground. Nonetheless, she and Sister Marguerite followed

the circuit each month, spending three or four days in each station: Thorne Bay, Craig, Klawock, Coffman Cove and Naukati. The few Catholic families in each mission received the Sisters with open arms, shared their homes and food, and were always eager to learn and grow in their faith. The two early pioneers shared everything they had--their gifts, talents and their faith. It became evident that, because there was no resident priest, church building or Sisters' residence, the presence of the Sisters was the CHURCH!

Bush ministry was different and unique. The life-style was simple: living out of a suitcase; sleeping and eating with different families; teaching children; conducting adult classes; preparing for First Communion, Confirmation, Marriage and having time to be, to share, to live! The highlight of each visit was the Eucharist--a Communion Service conducted by the Sisters or a liturgy with Father Frister when he could fly out once a month. It was not uncommon to be stranded in a camp because of bad weather--one never hurries, tomorrow is another day. No one worries about arriving late--everyone understands and patterns their daily schedules on the weather.

Wearing raincoats and rain boots (called Ketchikan sneakers) are as common as night and day. One can always pick out tourists because they carry umbrellas. To brighten many soggy days, the Sisters had to look upon the rain as liquid sunshine! Living in a rain forest wasn't easy; but it had its fringe benefits especially during the fishing derby, when everyone (even the school closed) took to their boats and spent days catching the big one!

Returning to home base after ten or fifteen days on the island, was a welcome treat! Despite the dirty clothes, muddy boats and weary bones, there was still enough energy left to prepare, plan and pack for the next ten days in Wrangell and Petersburg. Sister Elaine often brightened those days with her home-made chocolate chip cookies!

Traveling to the city parishes was not quite so easy. Since the ferry system connected the major cities of Southeast Alaska and ferry fares were cheaper, Sisters Elaine and Marguerite spent several days each month traveling to and from Ketchikan. It took six hours to Wrangell and eight hours to Petersburg. Traveling the "Inside Passage" was a familiar "live-in", since the schedule was often unpredictable and often late. They frequently spent the night onboard snatching a few winks, crouched on the cold floor, between uncomfortable lounge chairs. Arriving at two or three a.m. in Wrangell, the Sisters were met by a parishioner and escorted to the Thunderbird Hotel where they resided for nearly a year. St. Rose of Lima Parish numbered forty to fifty families, who always received the Sisters warmly and appreciated their services. After four days of family visits and catechism classes, it was another mid-night ferry ride to Petersburg. The long boat rides were often colored with cribbage games, knitting and corcheting (which the Sisters both took up for the first time) and, of course, a great deal of chatting, meeting old and new friends, lots of laughter and sometimes crying!

One of the greatest joys for the Sisters was when the diocese purchased a small broken-down trailer in Coffman Cove, which was to be the first "en route" residence of the Sisters on the Prince of Wales Island. Endless days of cleaning, scrubbing, throwing out, seemed little to pay for a quiet place of their own. It became their "poustinia"--the restful highlight of each month tour of the bush.

Celebrating was of prime importance. Being in a small diocese made up of twelve priests and thirteen Sisters, getting together was necessary and even therapeutic, especially since the entire personnel was far from their family and community. Thanksgiving of 1974 stands out as a memorable occasion. Thirty or more priests, Sisters and lay volunteers joined Bishop Hurley at St. Teresa's Shrine, near Juneau, to celebrate Thanksgiving Day. Each person brought something to make the meal complete. It was a treat to share, joke and listen to experiences from Yakutat, Skagway, or some other remote area of the Diocese. The Bishop even shared his dishwashing ability which made everyone acknowledge that he was indeed the servant of servants. Father Pete Gorges charmed the group with his old-time songs and free-lance piano-playing. Despite the off-key voices, many chimed in or just sat by the huge stone fireplace and listened. It was a great family reunion that showed everyone that "home is where you make it!" and that Church is a family. It was unique, real and happy!

The greatest celebrations were spiritual ones. Each year Bishop Hurley would make a special visit to each mission to confirm one teen-ager here, or an adult there, baptizing a new born, or welcoming new families in a logging camp. It was always Spirit-filled! Everyone celebrated wherever they could--in the Presbyterian Church in Craig, the "Wreck-hall" in Coffman Cove, the interfaith Chapel in Thorne Bay, or the Berkeys' living room in Naukati--no matter how humble the dwelling, the joy and love within each person made it a living church! The Seder Supper in Coffman Cove, the Christmas play in Naukati and the Easter egg hunt at the Berkeys' all held precious memories and were so many signs of God presence!

Thanks to the Extension Society, the Diocese was able to acquire a three-quarter ton Ford pick-up and camper in January, 1975, which Sister Marguerite drove from Connecticut to Ketchikan. To avoid the winter storms, a southern route through Amarillo, Texas, was taken lasting eleven days. Thanks to the Catholic Directory which was her faithful companion, Sister was able to find lodging at different convents across the country. The trip proved to be a true test of faith in Divine Providence.

Receiving Sister Jeannette Gingras, Superior Provincial from Pittsfield, New Hampshire, and Sister Pauline Morneau, Assistant Provincial, was the highlight of the Spring of '85. They made the grand tour of the P.O.W. missions as well as the city parishes of Petersburg and Wrangell where the Sisters of Holy Cross ministered. The only unfortunate thing was that the sun refused to shine during their twelve-day visit. It rained and rained so much so that the guests couldn't be convinced that the sun ever made an appearance in Southeast Alaska.

Summers were extra special for Sister Marguerite and Sister Elaine because they brought a steady flow of Sisters of Holy Cross from New England who volunteered their services. The Sisters brought to the two missionaries a touch of home and that certain family spirit which was so often missed during the year.

The summer of 1975 welcomed Sister Jeanne Duchesneau and Pam Nolin, a young woman from Attleboro, Massachusetts, who later entered Holy Cross. 1976 brought Sisters Martha Ouellette, Jacqueline Brodeau and Carol Descoteaux and Pam Nolin, returned for a second summer. Each group brought a new spirit and a willingness to share their gifts and talents, teaching summer bible school to Catholic and non-Catholic children as well. St. Catherine's parish in Petersburg will always be remembered.

Rolling up their sleeping bags each morn and night in the unfinished parish hall, lending a hand to plaster the walls, selling cotton candy on the Fourth of July and touring the shrimp boat were added attractions and lots of fun as well. The transportation facilities were not the mark of efficiency--the rickety parish car, the state ferry and the diocesan float plane--all sweet souvenirs. Best of all were the fun-loving children and their families who willingly shared all they had, especially their deep faith and eagerness to learn and grow.

July 8, 1976, marked another mile-stone in the Catholic History of Alaska. Bishop Hurley who had spent only six short years in the Diocese of Juneau was named Archbishop of Anchorage, succeeding Archbishop Joseph Ryan. It was hard to hide the gifts of such a dynamic leader and greater responsibilities were to be expected. But it was a time of privation for the Diocese of Juneau, which lasted nearly three years.

During the summer of 1977, Sister Kilda Roy from Notre Dame College, in Manchester, New Hampshire, gave P.R.H. sessions in Craig and Klawock. The dozen or more participants were delighted with the course and wanted more. Sister Claire Thornton, Sister Claire Coll and Francoise Savoie volunteered their gifts and talents for the summer. Teaching children, sharing with adults, fishing, picnicking, filled their days and enriched their lives.

August, 1977, brought a special joy to Sister Marguerite and Sister Elaine when a third Sister of Holy Cross from New England was called to minister in Alaska. Sister Jeannette Lehoullier, from Pittsfield accepted a mission in Anchorage, Archbishop Hurley's Diocese. Sister was responsible for editing "Catholic Commentary," the Archdiocese's weekly page in the Anchorage Times.

Despite the 1000 miles that separated Anchorage from Southeast, Sister Jeannette, thanks to Bishop Hurley, flew to Wrangell to celebrate Holy Cross day, September 15, with Sister Marguerite and Sister Elaine. It was a red letter day and a special joy for our three Sisters to renew their commitment to Holy Cross at a liturgy offered by Father Frister, pastor of St. Rose of Lime parish in Wrangell. In late December, Sister Jeannette was re-assigned to Notre Dame College in Manchester. One last visit of the three Sisters on January 31, was never to be forgotten.

May 1978, marked another canonical visit by Sister Juliette Leblanc, provincial Superior, accompanied by Sister Gertrude Gagne, professor at Notre Dame College, Manchester. It was a treat to have them visit the missions on the Prince of Wales Island and St. Ann's Day Care Center, in Juneau, where Sister Elaine became director in August 1977. Such encounters brought abundant blessings and a shot in the arm to our two missionaries.

After a successful year directing St. Ann's Day Care, Sister Elaine returned to New England in June, 1978, where she accepted a ministry closer to home because of her sickly parents. Four years of service and joy-filled dedication will always be remembered in the hearts of many Alaskans. Sister Marguerite dearly missed her companion--founding Sister, so to speak. They had labored through thick and thin for the sake of the Kingdom!

Because of the prayerful support of her religious family back home, Sister Marguerite carried on a full-time bush ministry for the next two years. Until she began to teach Grade 5 at Holy Name School, filling-in for a Jesuit Volunteer who had to return to his home in Connecticut. It proved to be a fruitful experience which made Sister realize that she needed some stability, a recess from the constant bush travel of the past five and one-half years. It was indeed a welcome change. Getting back into the classroom which she loved so much made her come alive. In May, 1979, Sister Marguerite became Principal of Holy Name School, where she gave her all for two years. The Sisters of St. Joseph of Peace who had staffed Holy Name since its foundation were dedicated to the work of education. Their thirty-five years of faithful service were greatly appreciated.

Sister Marguerite invited Sister Eva Ledoux, a Sister-artist from St. George's Manor, in Manchester to come to Southeast Alaska for the summer of 1979. Come she did and stayed two years. She was captivated by the Alaskan scenery and determined to paint every beautiful site she saw. She painted to her heart's content, taught art classes at the Ketchikan Community College and gave private art lessons in Wrangell, Petersburg and Anchorage. Traveling was never a problem. Despite her eighty-one years, she took advantage of every opportunity. Being a senior citizen afforded her free passage on the Alaska ferry system and she traveled throughout the state. Hundreds of Alaskans are not likely to forget her zest for life and the exuberant joy that flowed from her artistic ability.

Sister Eva will be especially remembered for her painting of St. Rose of Lima Church, which she did on location in the rain. It was presented to the newly appointed Bishop of Juneau, Michael Kenny, on the 100 anniversary of the first Catholic church in Alaska.

In August, 1979, Sister Adele Chevrette, from Manchester joined Sister Marguerite and Sister Eva at Holy Name Convent in Ketchikan for the year. Sister taught Basic Skills at Holy Name School. The three Sisters of Holy Cross shared happy times together. However, it was short lived. Sister Adele, while visiting her niece in Seattle, had an unfortunate fall, broke her wrist and returned to Manchester for treatment and healing. Her services were greatly appreciated.

June 15, 1979, marked a memorable date in the history of the Diocese; Bishop Michael Kenny was installed as the third Bishop of Juneau. It had been three years since Bishop Hurley left for Anchorage. Those years were hard ones for the small diocese, yet well worth the wait. Bishop Kenny brought a youthful vitality, a keen insight and a great devotion to the Church and each individual in it. The Diocese of Juneau was greatly blessed!

Thanks to the generosity of their new bishop, all the priests and Sisters of the Diocese were given the gift of meeting Pope John Paul II during his short, four-hour visit to Anchorage, on February 18, 1981. It was a memorable event, indeed!

Sister Rachel Jette, from Manchester volunteered her summer of 1981. It was full of new and exciting experiences. For Sister Eva and Sister Marguerite it was an added joy to have another "piece of Holy Cross."

September, 1981, brought another turn of events. Sister Eva returned to teach art classes in Manchester and Sister Marguerite set out for three months of studies, given to her by the Diocese, at the Franciscan School of Theology in Berkeley, California. It was a fruitful prelude, after leaving Holy Name School, for returning to full-time bush ministry on the Prince of Wales Island. Once again Sister was the only Sister of Holy Cross for the coming year.

It was a delightful surprise when Sister Margaret Mary Seguin, from St. Albans, Vermont, accepted the position of Director of Ministry at Holy Name Parish in Ketchikan in June, 1982. Returning to home-base each month to share inter-community living was a great joy for Sister Marguerite. Six Sisters from four communities shared community life; two Sisters of Holy Cross, one Benedictine Sister, one Franciscan Sister, and two Dominicans. It proved to be a fruitful and challenging experience.

The summer of 1983 marked a halt to the presence of the Sister of Holy Cross in the Diocese of Juneau. But it appears to be only temporary. Sister Margaret Mary Seguin and Sister Marguerite returned to their Holy Cross province in New England to spend a year of renewal within the community. This year was needed also to evaluate and assess the past in view of the future. Sister Marguerite hopes to return to the Diocese of Juneau in August, 1984.

Sister's last full year on the Prince of Wales Island was indeed the best of times. It was a special blessing to see some visible fruits, a result of the years of dedication of countless Sisters of Holy Cross. It was evident that their presence made a difference. 1982-83 marked a significant growth in the Catholic Church on the Prince of Wales Island.

Father Mike Nash, associate pastor at Holy Name Church in Ketchikan, spent three days each week on the island bringing weekly Mass to Craig, Klawock and Thorne Bay, and every three weeks to outlying logging camps. As of August, 1983, Father Mike became a full-time pastor of the Prince of Wales Missions and resided in Thorne Bay. Jim and Kathy Barnes, a lay-missionary couple from Oregon, took residency in a rented trailer in Craig to serve the people of that area.

Two new stations were added to Prince of Wales Church in the Spring of 1983. In Long Island logging camp five Catholic families awaited the priest and Sister to bring them the sacraments and help them grow in their faith. Its neighbor, View Cove, welcomed Father Mike and Sister Marguerite despite the fact that only one Catholic family was there. Shin and Jerry Berkey and their two dauthers were touched deeply by the presence of the Lord on the kitchen table of their tiny trailer.

The Craig/Klawock Catholic community saw for the first time the commissioning of three of its members as Eucharistic ministers. The community of five families in 1973 has grown to twenty-five familes. Their faith has deepened and their vision of Church has broadened to the point that they are planning to purchase a property and build their own church. Parents are teaching and preparing their children for the sacraments.

These are a few of the visible fruits in the Lord's vineyard. The mustard seed was planted, took root and nurtured by countless pioneer missionaries, many zealous priests and especially by the Sisters of Holy Cross who dedicated their all to an emerging Church. They left an impression of "loving is serving" to a young and vibrant Church.

The spirit of Holy Cross after ten years of service is deeply rooted on the Prince of Wales Island. Their mission was carried out faithfully, as stated in Article 37 of the Constitutions of the Sisters of Holy Cross.

> The Sisters of Holy Cross grant preference to the young, the poor and the deprived. They answer appeals of foreign missions and needs of emerging Churches in keeping with the vocation of the Congregation, its spirit and its resources.
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> 1. The Congregation willingly directs the Sisters toward pioneer tasks or difficult service.