

**A HISTORY OF THE BEGINNINGS OF HOLY CROSS
IN SOUTH INDIA, THE EARLY PHASE, 1954-1964**

1994-11

by

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Presented at the

1994 Conference on the

History of the Congregations of Holy Cross

June 3-5, 1994

L'Ermitage Sainte-Croix

Pierrefonds, Quebec

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A HISTORY OF THE BEGINNINGS OF HOLY CROSS IN SOUTH INDIA

The Early Phase, 1954-1964

Introduction

It was first suggested that I speak on the history of Holy Cross in India. Such a study would require considerable time for research and I cannot afford at this moment to take the time needed for such a study. I feel it would be of greater interest to take a far more limited topic. Therefore, I will examine the genesis and the first stage of the establishment of Holy Cross in South India.

As I began reading the background material Jacques Grisé kindly prepared and organized for me, I was fascinated by the importance of this small slice of Holy Cross history. In a period of ten years we see the establishment of the first complete formation program for Holy Cross outside of France and North America. This project, in a sense, shows the manner of evolution Holy Cross would experience in the thirty years following the establishment of this bold project first initiated in what is now called Bangladesh, namely, finding Indians to minister as Holy Cross religious in their own country.

The growth of this project would also bring to light some of the limitations of the system of mission territories being directly under the general administration and would eventually lead to the decision to entrust the mission of South India directly to the Canadian province of priests. On this point, I believe the history of Holy Cross in South India will help us understand better some of the inherent structural difficulties we meet.

In this short historical sketch I have centered my attention on the evolution of plans and structures and left in the background the many rich personalities involved. Many strong personalities were involved in this project and there were many elements of the history that would unveil the strengths and sometimes the ambiguities of the persons involved. I believe it is still too early to look at history from this perspective.

I. Genesis of the project: Pakistan 1954-58

A. The context: the situation in Bengal at the time

From the early days of the congregation the word **BENGAL** was almost synonymous with foreign mission. Typically the foreign mission seminary in Washington, D.C. was called the Bengali seminary, and in all our schools and colleges we were be called to collect money for

Bengal. Even today many religious think of our missions in Asia as the Bengal missions and expect every one who comes back from these missions to speak some Bengali. But what do we mean by Bengal?



Up to 1947 Bengal was a vast territory of India that covered two large provinces, East and West Bengal. The mission entrusted to Holy Cross comprised a large part of East Bengal, including several tribal territories where, in fact the Bengali language was not spoken. At some point in history some of our missions extended further east to territories that are now part of Burma.

"The Most Reverend Alfred LePailleur, C.S.C., Bishop of Chittagong, has submitted a proposal for the establishment of a new ecclesiastical unit in Assam. The Provincial of the priests' province of Canada has agreed to assume responsibility for the new territorial unit. The Provincial of the Brothers' Province of Canada has also agreed to assign Brothers to the new territorial unit and to support them financially.

" The chapter decrees that the missionaries working in the new ecclesiastical unit of Assam form a separate district of the Religious Vicariate of Chittagong."¹

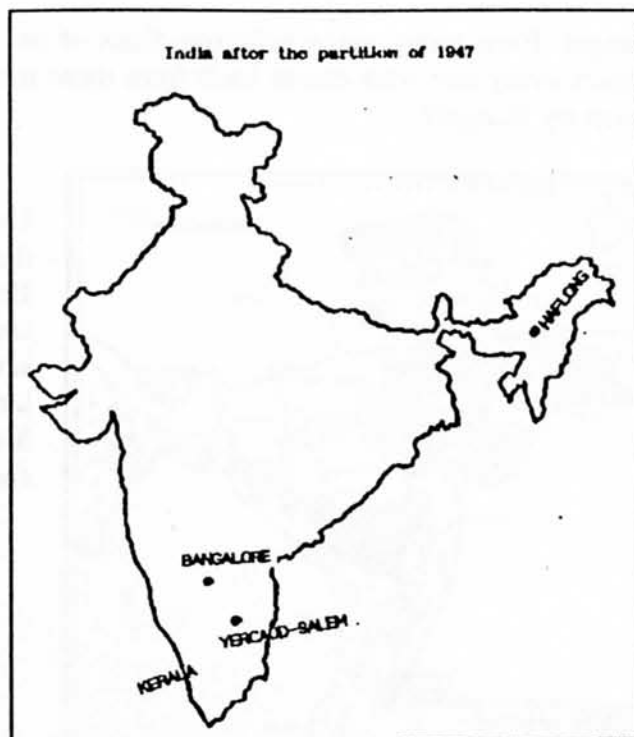
After the general chapter of 1950, we find three distinct units in the Bengal mission. The diocese of Dhaka entrusted to the American provinces, the diocese of Chittagong entrusted to the Canadian religious and now the district of Assam that would soon be known as the vicariate of Haflong, entrusted also to the Canadian missionaries. This district would assume responsibility for all the missions that remained in India after the partition of that country.

¹ Decrees of the general chapter of 1950, section F, Decrees 6-7.

B. Genesis of the plan to recruit men from South India

While the mission of East Pakistan was experiencing a regain of strength with the arrival of many new missionaries after the war, new ideas were proposed. The idea of establishing a solid program of formation in Bengal was more and more talked about. But the missionaries felt that it would be difficult to respond to the needs if we were to limit our recruitment to the area of East Pakistan. In fact, many missionaries came from the south to other parts of North India.

The idea of looking for vocations in the southern part of India began to emerge with the Canadian missionaries in East Pakistan. The hope in the first stage of the project was to find young men from South India who would come to East Pakistan, to be trained there and eventually to serve in the mission of the country. It was known that many dioceses of North India and religious congregations working in North India were recruiting in South India, especially in the state of Charily.



Already in 1949 we find a discussion among the religious in Chittagong on the importance of having local vocations. Fr. Philippe Payant prepared a reflection for the community on the need for developing "Indian" vocations for the Church and for Holy Cross. At the time the concern was clearly to foster vocations to religious life in the region, but there was also an awareness that vocations would be difficult to find in an area where there were so few Christians. The proposal to recruit in other parts of India was a logical outgrowth of this project.

In 1954, Father Lapierre, the superior in Chittagong announced that Father Lecavalier and Father Payant would go to recruit in South India. In fact, it was Father McClure who went first to the south with Father Payant. They identified a few young men to come and begin their formation in Pakistan. Four would come the following year. The following year Father Saint-Pierre went personally to South India to recruit, and he came back enthusiastic about the possibilities.

i We find a good summary of the early evolution of the project in a report about the visas of the Indian seminarians prepared by Father McClure in July 1958. By that time it had become clear that the possibility of obtaining visas for Indian's to work as missionaries in Bangladesh would be a major problem and this could call for a review of the entire plan. |

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Father McClure said, "The first two seminarians entered Pakistan in January 1955... In June 1955, two more seminarians entered Pakistan." He then added, "the only reason for which we have brought Indian seminarians into Pakistan was to keep them here as missionaries, once their training is over."²

This
The plan was confirmed by the general chapter of 1956 which said:

A program for the recruitment and training of candidates in southern India for the Vicariates of Priests and Brothers in Dacca, Chittagong, and Haflong, shall be undertaken in conformity with detailed plans to be submitted by the Religious Superiors for approval by the general council."³

This decree appeared at a time when work had already begun by the missionaries of Chittagong and discussions were now opening up on the possibility of moving the program to Haflong. To my knowledge, the Vicariate of Dacca never seriously joined this plan, possibly because the experience of Chittagong showed the difficulties of pursuing the plan for the Vicariate in Bangladesh.

From 1954 to 1958, each year one or two men from Chittagong would go to South India to pursue efforts in recruiting men for Chittagong. They went to Kerala and Goa. Effective recruiting for Holy Cross was, however, limited basically to Kerala, at least for the priests.

C. Early evolution of the project: should the project be transferred to India?

In 1956, four men from Kerala made their novitiate in Pakistan and were followed the next year by two more⁴. However, it became clear that they would not be allowed to stay and work as missionaries in Pakistan. This fact called for a review of the situation. In the same document Fr. McClure wrote: "My opinion is that we should very seriously consider whether we should keep these seminarians in Pakistan, or take the opportunity of the present time to make arrangement for their transfer to India." In his letter accompanying this report, Fr. Lecavalier wrote to the superior general: "Of course, Fr. McClure has suddenly become very pessimistic in this matter."

In fact, the problem of obtaining visas for Indians to come and work as missionaries in Pakistan proved to be a major obstacle and the project had to be reviewed completely.

² A copy of this report is found in the generalate archives in Rome.

³ Section E) "On Mission" No. 7

⁴ Three of these men completed their formation and two are still with us: Fr. Mathew Vadakedom who made his novitiate in 1956 and Father Mathew Kannatukhat who made his novitiate in 1957.

The year 1958 appears as a year of uncertainty regarding the project of recruitment and formation of men from India for Holy Cross. It was no longer clear whether these men were to be prepared for the mission of Pakistan or for the mission of Assam. In fact, the possibility of recruiting Holy Cross men from the south for the prefecture of Haflong (Assam) became part of the discussion. In a report prepared in February 1958 by Father Lecavalier, the topic was specifically the recruitment of men from South India for the prefecture of Haflong and Father Lecavalier said that this recruitment was immediately necessary and possible. Fr. Lecavalier suggested a possible way of achieving this goal by the establishment of a minor seminary in the south of India, "preferably outside Kerala". He added: "Bangalore seems to me the ideal place for this".⁵

Tensions between India and Pakistan over the issue of Kashmir created an increased difficulty for people who had permanent visas to go from one country to the other. In 1956, Fr. Lecavalier, now superior of the priests made a visit to the south with Brother Madore, superior of the brothers. In his report of 1956, he wrote: "When Brother Superior and I left Pakistan for India the dispute over Kashmir was taking new proportions and the news we were getting daily in South India was rather discouraging. We guessed that unless this dispute be settled somehow, it would be difficult to bring any new subject from India into Pakistan."⁶

Faced with this situation it became clear that men recruited from India would unlikely be permitted to work in Pakistan. The idea of recruiting young Indians to work in the developing mission of the North East of India became, however, an increasingly important part of the project. If these men were to work in the North East of India it might be better then to move the formation program in that region.

In 1958, Fr. McClure who had from the beginning a key role to play in the recruitment and formation of the Indian candidates, was moved from the prefecture of Chittagong in Pakistan to the prefecture of Haflong. Once he had moved to Haflong he insisted on moving the project to Haflong. Towards the end of 1958, this possibility was seriously considered. In his letter to the superior general of Feb. 2, 1959, Father Lecavalier wrote: "I have made a trip to Haflong and Silchar to talk over the matter of our Indian scholastics with Fr. Duclos and Fr. Marcotte. I told them that according to the difficulties we experience in renewing their visas, we apprehended it will not be possible to keep them in Pakistan later that next April when their visas expire."⁷ Fr. Lecavalier explained that the question was not discussed in the north. In fact, another plan was being worked out and was referred to in the same letter to Fr. O'Toole: "the news finally came that you had appointed him (Fr. McClure) to establish an apostolic school in South India."

⁵ Laurent Lecavalier, Recrutement dans l'Inde, 6-2-1958, Archives du généralat.

⁶ Report of Fr. Laurent Lecavalier, Nov 1, 1956, p.4

⁷ Letter of Fr. Laurent Lecavalier to Fr. O'Toole, from archives of the generalate.

Thus, the project of moving the formation program to the north eastern part of India was apparently never seriously discussed and the project that emerged in 1958-59 was that of starting a formation program in South India.

II. The foundation in South India: South India under the superior of the North

A. The first beginnings in Yercaud: 1959-1960

The place selected to begin the formation program was Yercaud, a small hill station in Tamil Nadu, near the rather large town of Salem. On April 15, 1959, Fr. Duclos wrote: "Our project of foundation of a minor seminary for the preliminary training of our Indian candidates is working out successfully. We have taken steps to obtain the official authorization from the local ordinary." By that time there were five South Indian scholastics who had completed their novitiate in Pakistan. They left definitively Pakistan on April 1, 1959, and moved to the south.

[For the first month the program occupied on a temporary basis a small house in Yercaud; then it moved for the remainder of that first year to the summer house of the diocesan seminary of Madras. Fr. McClure was the only Holy Cross staff member but he was assisted by three young religious who came from Pakistan. The scholastics and three new candidates studied philosophy, while twenty-eight young men were studying Latin. It was agreed that a permanent house needed to be found as soon as possible.] At this point, we see a single religious who is in charge of the formation program looking for a new house for the group and at the same time recruiting vocations from the South. The religious superior and all the other religious were living and working in the North East, about two thousand kilometers away.

The key problems of this first year were 1) to find someone else to work with Fr. McClure, 2) to prepare for the establishment of the novitiate, and 3) to find a permanent place for formation. Father Duclos as religious superior worked in close collaboration with Fr. McClure during that period. There was also a very close collaboration with the superior general since he was the one who took the final decision to move men from other sectors to work in South India. The superior general soon had to turn to the provincial of the Canadian province to find men and money to pursue the project. The situation soon became very difficult to handle. The superior general had the responsibility for the project but he had to depend on the province who could provide the means necessary for its support.

The problem of finding a suitable place for the seminary and the novitiate was solved rather rapidly. In October 1959, Father O'Toole made a visit to India and right at the beginning of the visit, Fr. McClure informed him that there was a community of sisters (the Catechist Sisters) who are ready to sell a property that would include a house that could be used for formation and a coffee estate that could be the first step in establishing a financial basis for the project. There was also on the other side of the road a good house for sale. Buying these two properties would provide the space needed to establish the formation program.

Father O'Toole immediately endorsed this plan and wrote to Fr. Vincelette in Rome asking him to consult the other members of the council and give him an immediate answer. The only minor detail was, of course, that the generalate had no money for this entire project. However, this was solved simply by asking the Canadian province to pay for the everything! On October 20, Father O'Toole wrote to Father Lalande who was at the time provincial in Canada: "The general administration is very eager to acquire one or both of these properties so that recruitment can go forward especially with a view to staffing the prefecture of Haflong... Unfortunately the funds of the general administration are extremely limited and, for that reason, we are counting on the generosity of the Canadian Province to finance the purchase of the property or properties just mentioned."⁸

The money was provided and the property was bought. On April 24, Father McClure wrote to Father Vincelette: "We have moved to our new house on Easter Monday. Much remain to be done but at least we are now in our own house."

For the major part of 1959, Father McClure remained the only perpetually professed Holy Cross religious appointed to the south. Towards the end of the year Brother Gilbert Boucher of the Canadian Brothers Province and Father Levite Thériault of the Acadian province joined him in Yercaud. It, however, appeared very quickly that these men had serious difficulties in working together. Less than four months after their arrival, Father McClure wrote a long letter to the superior general in which he explained that the two men were in fact very reluctant to come to the south. Brother Gilbert seemed reluctant to do the work he was asked to do and Father Thériault was unwilling to teach. He also informed the superior general that he would probably have seventeen men ready to begin the novitiate that year.⁹ In fact, Father Breen arrived in Yercaud on May 9, and the novitiate began on May 15 with a group of ten novices.¹⁰

By that time, the first group of young men finished their year of studies and several of them were ready to begin their novitiate later that year. The new property provided the space needed for the novitiate but a novice master was needed. The name of Father Harold Breen, a missionary in the north was suggested. On April 11, 1960, Father O'Toole confirmed this appointment: "Father Harold Breen has been designated as the Master of Novices and should be there in plenty of time for May 10"¹¹

⁸ Letter Of Rev. Christopher O'Toole to Father Lalande, October 20, 1959

⁹ In India, the academic year is usually completed in late March and the new year begins in June. The right time to start the novitiate would therefore be during the month of May, thus allowing the novices to move into the next academic year after their novitiate is completed.

¹⁰ It is interesting to note that three of these novices are still with us. These three men have worked in the missions of North East India since completing their formation.

¹¹ Letter of the superior general to Father Duclos, April 11, 1960

B. Plan for the establishment of the Brothers

So far the discussion about recruitment took place mainly among the priests. Although Brother Madore had visited the South in 1955 with Fr. Saint-Pierre, the recruitment project ~~of~~ for the brothers had not advanced any further. On April 21, 1959, Father Aimé Duclos, the religious superior of the community in Haflong, wrote to the superior general: "I believe that we are going in the right direction for the establishment of Holy Cross in India on a solid foundation. That may be true for the Fathers but what about the Brothers... Last January, Brother Godefroy mentioned to me that he has a plan for the recruitment of the teaching Brothers and his plan was this... he planned to open a small juniorate in Aijal and in order to fill it he would go to ChotaNagpur (A tribal area of the North of India)... The idea is good but his aim is too modest and unless he comes down in the south his efforts will not amount to much." So, Father Duclos suggested that Brother Godefroy go to the south for a visit and survey the possibility of recruiting brothers in that area.

Although one Brother (Gilbert Boucher) went to Yercaud to administer the coffee estate, the plan to begin the establishment of the brothers began only with the arrival of Brother Godefroy Danis and Donald Nadeau in January 1960. It was then that the plan for the development of the brothers took shape.

→ what happened next was planned by Brother Albert

In 1959, the bishop of Salem met with Father McClure and asked whether the congregation would be ready to take over Saint Theresa Technical School, a trade school run by the diocese. Father McClure immediately conveyed this request to the superior general who was then in Silchar, continuing his visit in India. Fr. O'Toole expressed his readiness to study this proposal but wanted Brother Godefroy first to go and see the situation himself before any decision could be taken. The idea of taking over the school permanently was abandoned, but it was agreed that the brothers would use this school for one year while studying more permanent plans for their implantation in South India. Thus, this school became the first, albeit a very temporary, center for the establishment of the brothers. Brother Godefroy assumed the responsibility of the Technical school but at the same time started looking for a more permanent place.

Immediately the brothers began efforts to recruit candidates. While the priests seemed to limit their efforts almost exclusively to Kerala, the brothers, from the very beginning, tried to diversify the ethnic origins of their vocations and recruited in Tamil Nadu, the state where they are located.

It soon became clear that the industrial school did not provide the necessary conditions for development of the recruitment and formation projects proposed and the brothers looked for another place. They found a piece of land in a suburb of Salem, in an area where the bishop was interested in seeing the congregation establish a Catholic English language school. This new site offered a possibility for ministry and a place more conducive to establishment of a basis for the preparation of young men to become brothers. The new place (Amapet) soon became the new center for the Brothers.

In early January 1961, the building of the school began. Brother Gilbert Boucher who was already in the south helped draw up the plans and Brother Louis Leduc came from Pakistan to take responsibility for the new construction. Brother Donald Nadeau who had come with Brother Godefroy went home to Canada for holidays and returned a few months later only to find that Brother Godefroy was seriously ill in Bangalore. Brother Godefroy had to leave India and return to Canada where he died in July 1963. *Ldn Nov. 61*

C. 1960-62 Expanding and completing the plans

During this period of foundation planning was done step by step. As soon as one question was settled, the next set of concerns needed to be examined. The question of the novitiate was settled in April 1960, and on May 12, Father Duclos wrote to the superior general about plans for the future. He said: "With the opening of the novitiate, we have a year ahead of us to plan for the future. After a year of experience in Yercaud, I believe we would do well to examine whether the minor seminary should be kept in Yercaud or brought down to the plain."¹²

This proved to be a major debate. From the beginning, Fr. McClure, had hoped to develop a major center in Yercaud where much of the formation would be done; others disagreed with this plan and wanted to keep some part of the formation in Yercaud and move the rest to other places. Father McClure felt that with the very small group of Holy Cross men available it would be better to concentrate all efforts in one place. He spoke with Father Duclos and Father Bujold, who accompanied him on the visit, and to others in the South and concluded: "(We) are unanimous in proposing that we make a comprehensive plan for the housing of both our minor seminary and our scholasticate, and that we start as soon as possible, on a program of construction splitted into four or five stages"¹³

In October 1960, when the decision to entrust the direct responsibility of the mission to the Canadian provinces was made, the needs in South India for men and money were growing. In spite of efforts to identify other men for working in South India, the mission relied only on Fr. McClure, Fr. Breen, Fr. Thériault, Brother Godefroy and Brother Gilbert Boucher, the latter having difficulty in adapting to this new situation and eventually leaving.

¹² Letter of May, 12, 1960

¹³ Letter to the superior general, September 25, 1960

III. South India under the responsibility of the Canadian provinces

Very early after the establishment of the foundation in the South. Fr. McClure noted the difficulty of having a superior living far away. He wrote to the superior general: "It would be much better for the South to have its head here, and directly under you. Distance with frequent postal troubles, simply adds to our already heavy burden...If you could arrange something that the south, with the four present units: seminary, novitiate, plantation and brothers' juniorate be directly under you, I feel it would be much easier to carry on."¹⁴ In fact, by that time it was clear that Fr. McClure did not agree with the superior and felt much freer if he were directly under the superior general who, so far as been shown, had unconditional support for his work.

The general administration saw the difficulty of having the houses in the south of India under the responsibility of the superior in the North. They did not, however, feel this project should remain under the general administration. The solution arrived at was announced in the new regulations promulgated by the superior general on October 13, 1960. The solution was basically to place the mission directly under the provincial superior of the priests in Canada. This solution left in practice a lot of autonomy to the brothers as well.

"1- The personnel director, Master of Novices, and their staff at Yercaud will depend directly upon the Provincial Superior of the Canadian province of priests...

"2- The personnel director and staff at the Industrial School in Salem will depend directly upon the Provincial Superior of the brothers province in Canada.

"3- The material administration of the houses and properties at Yercaud and Salem, respectively, will likewise depend directly upon the Provincial Superior mentioned in paragraphs one and two."

This decision was the first step to organize districts directly under the responsibility of the provinces. With the development of a formation program the general administration did not have the resources needed to support the project and had to turn to the provinces every time new expenses were involved. Such a situation was obviously not in the best interests of the mission and the superior general decided to ask the provinces to assume the full responsibility for the development of Holy Cross in the region. But this decision also meant a clear break between the formation program in the South and the mission in the North East. In fact, the only reason for the existence of the work in the South was to prepare missionaries for the Vicariate of Haflong.

¹⁴ Letter to the superior general, July 31, 1960

A. Further Development

Almost immediately after the decision to place the mission of South India under the responsibility of the Canadian provinces of priests and brothers, Father Lalande, provincial of the priests in Canada and Brother Dominique, provincial of the brothers, decided to visit South India. On October 31, Father Lalande wrote to the superior general asking permission for him and for Brother Dominique to make this visit.

Father Lalande arrived in Yercaud on December 21, 1960, accompanied of Fr. Lecavalier. They immediately began to study the various possibilities. It soon became obvious that they did not go along with the master plan of Fr. McClure to develop the project in Yercaud. In a first analysis of the situation, Father Lalande was open to the possibility of having the first part of the post-novitiate formation (philosophy) in Yercaud and the theology program move to Bangalore.¹⁵ The following month Father McClure wrote directly to the superior general expressing his satisfaction with the visit of the provincial but noted that while the provincial seemed hesitant about the best place for the philosophical formation, the community in India clearly wanted it to be in Yercaud: "After talking the matter over again with our confreres here and with outsiders, I must say I am now definitely in favor of keeping the philosophers here definitely"¹⁶ On the same day he wrote to Fr. Lalande expressing his preference to keep the philosophical formation in Yercaud.

For the brothers, it seemed clear they would share the same novitiate as the candidates for the priests. After that, they would eventually pursue their college studies in Bangalore. The Jesuits who had an important college in Bangalore (Saint-Joseph College) and were ready to receive them.

B. New personnel

After a long search for new personnel, Fr. Yvon Martin who completed his theology in Montréal finally arrived in South India. In 1961, Fr. Reginald McQuaid who completed his theology in Rome and went to Pakistan to study Bengali, was asked to move to South India. He arrived in June 1961, just in time to begin the new academic year. As the project for a scholasticate in Bangalore developed, it was decided to appoint Fr. Yvan Fournelle, who was at the time in the vicariate of Chittagong, to the South. Fr. Fournelle was sent to Bangalore to supervise the building of the scholasticate and take charge of the scholastics' formation in Bangalore. As the project evolved in a way that was not at all in the line foreseen by Father McClure, it became increasingly difficult to allow him continue to be part of the foundation in South India. On October 18 1962, Father Lalande, now superior general, wrote to Father Lecavalier to announce

¹⁵ Letter written by Fr. Lalande to the superior general, January 5, 1961, p.3

¹⁶ Letter of Fr. McClure to the superior general, February 16, 1961

that Father Payant would come to the South and replace of Father McClure in Yercaud. The initial plan was to ask Father McClure to go back to Pakistan. Father McClure found himself unable to respond to this new obedience and requested incardination in a diocese of South India.

The following year, in view of the opening of the scholasticate in Bangalore, it was decided to send Father Yvan Fournelle from Chittagong to South India.

The brothers were also building their basic group. Brother Donald Nadeau, who had first come with Brother Godefroy, returned from Canada to work in Salem; Brother Louis Leduc also came to Salem and played a key role in the building of the brothers' formation house and school in Salem. When the decision was taken by the brothers to open a house in Bangalore, Brother Julien Hetu was sent to take charge of this house. Unfortunately, Brother Godefroy suffered a massive heart attack and had to return to Canada where he died in 1963.

L J - Nov. 1961

C. The foundation of Bangalore

An important point of the visit of the provincials in December 1960 was to foresee the steps to be taken to pursue the development of the formation program. As we have already seen, a crucial question was the construction of a scholasticate. The brothers foresaw that their young religious would go to Bangalore and complete their college studies at the Jesuit college. For the candidates to the priesthood they would have to complete their philosophical studies and then move on to do their theological studies. For practical reasons, it was decided that the theological studies would be done in Bangalore at the Franciscan scholasticate.

For the next six months the discussion revolved around the possibility of buying a plot of land in Bangalore. To add to the difficulty of buying a piece of land, the community was faced with the difficulty of getting the permission of Bishop Thomas Potacamury. The bishop believed that there were already too many religious congregations in Bangalore and was hesitant to allow another congregation to come in. Finally during a visit in Montréal he signed the document allowing the purchase of a land not far from the Franciscan scholasticate. It was, however, impossible to proceed with this transaction. It was only in February 1962, that a new plot of land was found and finally bought¹⁷ (The irony of the situation was that the project of sending the scholastics to the Franciscans was later abandoned and the land that was purchased was never used.)

In his letter of August 7, 1961, Father Lalande spoke to Father O'Toole of the possibility of sending our scholastics to the major seminary in Bangalore. This question had been brought up before, but the main plan of sending our men to the Franciscan seminary still remained. This was the solution that stayed.

¹⁷ See letter of Fr. Lalande to Fr. O'Toole, February 23, 1962

In 1962, Father Laurent Lecavalier was delegated by Fr. Lalande, the superior provincial, to make the canonical visit to South India. This visit led to a major change in the formation policy. Fr. Lecavalier recommended that all the candidates do their baccalaureate studies prior to beginning their theological formation. The provincial accepted this suggestion and immediately abandoned Fr. McClure's proposal to keep the seminarians in Yercaud, where, he hoped, they could receive a decree from Saint-Joseph College (Memeramcook).

This meant that the Yercaud project would be cut back drastically as it would include two years of preparatory studies and one year of novitiate. Since Bangalore was to be the center for college studies, the Bangalore project would obviously become more important.

In 1962 the situation was clarified. It became clear that the idea of building a scholasticate near the Franciscans would not work; on the other hand, it became clearer that the major seminary of Bangalore (Saint Peter's Seminary) was ready to accept the group of Holy Cross men for both philosophy and theology. It was also agreed that college studies would be done in Bangalore. A small house belonging to the diocese was then placed at the disposition of the congregation for the college students. Later, the college students who completed their novitiate would stay with the other scholastics at Saint-Peters's seminary.

The Brothers found a house (Saint Andrew's House on Palmgrove Road) not far from the Jesuit college and made it their scholasticate.

With this foundation in Bangalore, all the elements of the formation program were now in place. Later there was to be a serious review of the program resulting in the decision of doing the college studies before the novitiate and abandoning the minor seminary program in Yercaud. To pursue this would lead us beyond the scope of this paper.

D. Collaboration

After the reorganization of 1961, when the foundation of South India was entrusted to the provinces, the priests and brothers developed their own autonomy but this was done in a spirit of close collaboration. In formation, for instance, the novitiate was always naturally considered as a joint novitiate for the priests and the brothers. The two provincials from Canada, Brother Dominique and Father Lalande worked closely together and they did their first visit to India together. In his letter to the superior general on May 4, 1962, Father Lalande noted that in studying questions related to South India he worked as often as possible in close relationship with Brother Dominique; "thus", he added "we can agree on all essential principles".¹⁸ When new

¹⁸ Letter of Fr. Lalande to the superior general, May 4, 1962.

land was purchased in Bangalore, Fr. Fournelle worked with Brother Louis Leduc and Brother Julien Hétu and the plan was eventually for brothers and priests to share the use of this land.¹⁹

IV. The question of structures

A. The decision to send the scholastics to Rome: a case study in structure and authority.

In 1961, two scholastics were ready to begin their theological studies and one novice who had already completed his philosophy would soon be ready to join them soon after. The provincial, who had met these men before, felt it would be best to send them to do a year of regency in Kolasib in Mizoram. The provincial carefully prepared the project and made sure that Kolasib would provide the type of formation suitable for them. Having verified that everything was ready, he sent the men through Father McClure their letters of obedience appointing them to regency. In a letter dated July 15, Father Lalande explained to the superior general all the steps taken in the study of this question and how the decision to send them to Kolasib was arrived at.

Fr. McClure, who obviously did not agree with this idea, did not give the men the letters of obedience but wrote directly to the superior general explaining why he believed the regency was not the right way to go and that since there was no possibility of doing theology in India these men should be sent to Rome.

Fr. O'Toole, who seemed to have almost absolute confidence in Fr. McClure, agreed with him and communicated his decision to Father Lalande with a brief telegram dated July 23, 1961: "PLEASE SEND YERCAUD SCHOLASTICS ROME NECESSARY APPLY IMMEDIATELY VISAS LETTER FOLLOW". Four days later, Fr. O'Toole strangely states in a letter to Father Lalande: "Allowing for a certain amount of pressure which Father McClure is inclined to use, I am wondering whether or not, at least for the present, it would not be wiser to have these young men come to Rome". In the third paragraph of the same letter he seems to have cleared his doubt and he wrote: "I really think that it would be easier to send these three young men to Rome."

This event looks rather amusing thirty years later; yet it illustrates the difficulty of establishing the type of structures that would allow a provincial to exercise efficient leadership in the mission. We find here also the provincial obliged to negotiate with the superior general to obtain the permission to move missionaries of his own province from the vicariate of Chittagong or Haflong to the mission of the south.

¹⁹ See letter of Fr. Lalande to the superior general, February 23, 1962

B. The question of structures at the general chapter of 1962

The report of Father McClure to the general chapter of 1962 provided a good analysis of the situation and an urgent request for a review of the structures. It is obvious by then that some are dissatisfied with the reorganization made when South India was placed under the province. Fr. McClure who prepared this report felt strongly that the mission of South India could not develop easily under the province in Canada.²⁰ He proposed that the entire mission of South India be placed under a superior who would be somewhat the equivalent of the superior of the vicariates. What he proposed became a reality with the organization of the district and the establishment of the district of South India.

He also felt that the building up of the mission of South India would require means beyond the capacity of the Canadian province and that in such cases the mission should be under the general administration and rely on human and financial resources from more than one province.

An interesting part of this report is the discussion of what we call now a mixed district. He saw the possibility of joining brothers and priests in South India into one administrative unit. He even suggested ways to organize the district in such a manner that brothers and priests would be clearly represented in the council.

The general chapter, however, did not go along with the proposal and the mission of South India would remain under the direct responsibility of the provinces. Two years later, in 1964, the Canadian province decided to constitute the sector of South India as a district, using the model already existing in Haiti and in Brazil. By that time, Father McClure had been asked to move out of South India and Father Yvan Fournelle was appointed as first religious superior.

Conclusion

This short period of ten years allowed the establishment of the foundation and wrote a whole new page in the history of Holy Cross. From the very first efforts to recruit men for the mission of Pakistan in 1954 to the establishment of the scholasticate of the brothers and of the priests in Bangalore in 1962-63, less than ten years had passed. The initial project of finding men from South India for Pakistan had been abandoned but gave birth to another project that was set in motion in 1958-59.

The realization of this project was by no means easy. At the beginning every thing was done by one man. By 1963 it had become clear that the man who began the project for the priests would have to move out because of his difficulty in working with others, and in moving along with the project as it had been reorganized. Other men from Canada, from the north of India and from

²⁰ Report to the general chapter of 1962, pp.9-10

Pakistan completed the group: Jean Desrochers, Hervé Morissette and Jean Paul Guidon among the younger men; Fernand Madore from Pakistan and Aimé Duclos from Haflong. In 1963, Father Breen, the novice master, was found dead in his bed, victim of a massive heart attack.

Many of the men recruited in the early years were not called to continue as members of Holy Cross and the optimism of the early years that saw Holy Cross soon taking up many new missions was replaced by a more realistic assessment of the situation. The growth of Holy Cross would be steady but would not move as fast as earlier imagined.

The difficulty in finding an adequate structure for this entirely new type of mission made the situation more difficult. The needs of this project were entirely different from those of the vicariates and soon it became clear that they could be best handled by the provinces.

The growth of this project required a financial support that called for much sacrifice on the part of the provinces. After the provincial chapter of 1961, Fr. Lalande explained to the superior general that the provinces had to abandon or postpone other projects to be able to provide the financial support needed for the mission of South India.

From the time the first Indian candidate joined Holy Cross in 1954 to the establishment of the province in India in 1984, exactly thirty years passed. In spite of early difficulties, the community in India and the priests' society in India have grown fairly steadily; the progress of the brothers has been more difficult. The difficulty was partly linked with the difficulty in explaining adequately the vocation of brothers in the clerically oriented church of South India,

Seen from a spiritual perspective, we can certainly see how God has been at work in the implementation of the project and how he made use of men who accepted answering the challenges that seemed really beyond their capacity in starting a truly Indian branch of Holy Cross.

Claude Grou, c.s.c.
May 24, 1994

India after the partition of 1947

