2002-3

HOLY CROSS in NEW ENGLAND

and

MOTHER MARY of SAINT-BASILE m.s.c. — c.s.c.

† † † † † † † † †

PART ONE

1. The Catholic Scene
2. The Immigrant Church
3. French-Canadian Immigration in the United States
4. The Parochial Schools in New England

PART TWO

1. Mother Mary of Saint Basile, m.s.c. - c.s.c.
2. The Foundations of seventeen schools from 1883 to 1902

† † † † † † † † †

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

As I have gleaned all the information to realize this paper in the book written by Sister Louise Parent, c.s.c.: "MOSAÏC TO THE GLORY OF GOD", I feel I cannot do better than to start the reading of it by offering the Preface.

> "In the summer of 1881, Mother Mary of St. Raphael (Helena Waters) then the Provincial Superior of the Canadian province of the Marianite Sisters of Holy Cross, accepted the invitation of Reverend Hyacinthe Martial, pastor of St. Joseph Church in North Grosvenordale, Connecticut, to open a bilingual, mixed school in the parish. Several reasons made the acceptance of the commitment a momentous decision.
>
> The Marianites of Holy Cross had come to Canada in 1847 at the request of Bishop Ignace Bourget, Bishop of Montreal, Que. The four pioneers from LeMans, France, had settled in St. Laurent, a small village on the outskirts of Montreal. In the thirty-four years of their presence in the diocese, besides recruiting and forming members to swell their ranks, they had founded six academies for young girtls, where both elementary and secondary education were imparted. These academies were private schools. Following a Eurepean pattern, the sisters opened boarding schools, but young girls living in the vicinity were admitted as "half-boarders" or day students. The first and most well-known of these academies was that attached to the first convent erected in the village of St. Laurent, l'Academie Notre Dame des Anges. The schools, in predominantly French Catholic rural settings, were independent though under the general supervision of the local ordinary. They furnished the chief source of income for the young community.
>
> Undertaking the direction of a parish school in the United States was quite another apostolate. New England offered a very different religious and social setting. Moreover, the format of education was to be significantly other than that prevailing in the province of Quebec. Teaching boys was so new a concept for the community that this condition, laid down by Fr. Martial in his request for sisters to staff his school, presented a major obstacle against acceptance of the "mission". Neither in France, nor in French Quebec at that time, were so-called "mixed schools" taught by women religious. Twice Mother Mary St. Raphael submitted the request to accept this mixed school to the General Council at LeMans, France, and twice she received a negative answer. The General Council indicated that it would not assume such a responsibility; if the Mother Provincial thought that she could not do otherwise, then *hers* was to be the responsibility.

Mother Mary St. Raphael, a Canadian of Scotch ancestry, and a convert to Catholicism, decided to take the responsibility. She notified Fr. Martial that he could count on six sisters within the next few weeks. What seemed a very simple decision (to present day readers) was at that time a fairly daring one. In accepting to take on the direction of the school in North Grosvenordale, Mother Mary St. Raphael opened up an important new apostolate to the Canadian branch of the Marianites of Holy Cross (now known as Sisters of Holy Cross), an apostolate incidently which furnished to the community alone between 1881 and 1976 some 700 religious vocations.

It seems appropriate, before starting to tell of the work of the Sisters of Holy Cross in the New England province of the Sacred Heart, to present in a triptych, the frame work of the conditions under which they were beginning their apostolate. Such a presentation will serve to explain in some measure, the type of work they were to engage in, the methods and means they used to to so, and the changing character of their apostolates."

Sister Adrienne Milette, csc

PART ONE

1. The Catholic Scene

Religion had always been an important element of American culture in New England. Founded and settled by English fleeing religious persecution, the New England colonies of Massachusetts and Connecticut were virtually commonwealths.

Catholicism, of course, was not part of this religious society. Indeed, the antagonism toward "papistry" and all it stood for in the country they left behind, the Puritans carried with them to America. It was their intent that popish idolatry would not marr the purity of their Biblical cult. Material symbols as aids to pray were so distasteful to them, vanished them from their house of prayer, even the Cross, emblem of Christianity. Puritan conscience tolerated nothing that it considered unscriptural.[1]

Until the Revolution war, New Englanders had little difficulty in maintaining the rigorous purity of their belifefs. They had disputed the entrance of other Protestant sects unto the stronghold of faith they had set up in the area, but no "popish abomination" desecrated the land.

Much further south, however, Catholics found shelter on the hospitable American shores. Land purchased from the British Crown by George Calvert, the first Lord Baltimore, became known as Maryland, and the Catholics found asylum.

Even in the Catholic settlement, they remained a minority. They were gradually outnumbered by Protestants who attempted to stem their growth and influence by controlling the education of the children. Catholics were strictly forbidden to open schools of their own. This situation prevailed during the colonial period and lasted down to the Revolution.[2]

Protestant hostility to Catholics broke down, in a degree, as a result of aid given by Catholic France, Poland, and to some extent Spain to the cause of American Independance. The presence of French and Polish soldiers who had joined the English colonists for their freedom and political independance swelled the Catholic population on American shores.With the army, were Catholic priests who had come to minister to the needs of their countrymen engaged in combat on foreign soil.

The success of the American Revolution presented a practical problem to the Caholics in the United States, now cut off from the spiritual jurisdiction of English Bishops. Hence, in 1770, shortly after the inauguration of the first president of the United States, the first Catholic See of United States was created. The Reverend John Carroll, cousin of the reknowed Charles Carroll of Carrollton, Maryland, and a signer of the Declaration of Independance, was consecrated in Lulworth Castle, England as Bishof of Baltimore, Maryland. It was in Baltimore that the Catholic element was concentrated. The See of Baltimore comprised the entire area east of the Mississippi to the Atlantic coast, and extended from the boundaries of Canada to what is now known as Florida. Its vast extent speaks of the scarcity of Catholics in the United States at the time.

The Constitutions of the United States, drawn up in 1787 had only one reference to religion. No religious test shall be required as a qualification in any public or public trust in the United States. This clause was defined in more sweeping terms in the First Amendment proposed and adopted by Congress in 1789-90 namely: "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof."[3] Opposition to the amendment had come largely from New England, the stronghold of Protestant hostility to the Pope and his Bishop.[4]

The way was now opened for the growth and development of the church in the new country. There was, however, an immediate need for some permanent source for religious training for native

clergy. This need was filled by the Sulpitians, whose role in the spiritual educational development of the Catolic Church in North America is significant.

Within the decade of their arrival in Montreal, the Sulpitians founded the College of Montreal and the Grand Seminary for the formation of the Clergy. Who can tell how many French Canadian priests of New England received part or all of their training at the "Grand Seminaire"? The advent of the Sulpitians to the United States corresponded with the consecration of the first Bishop of Baltimore, in **1790**. When Bishop Carroll went to England for his episcopal ordination, he negotiated with the Sulpitians to open a Seminary in Baltimore. Upon the Bishop's invitation, the Sulpitians opened St. Mary's Seminary in Baltimore in 1791. This institution was to become the nursery of Catholic priesthood in the United States.[5]

The Sulpitians were thus instrumental in aiding the newly consecrated Bishop to solve the perplexing problems providing priests for the vast area of this jurisdiction. Meanwhile the French Revolution and its aftermath had caused the self-exile of many cultured and high-minded clergymen from France. Many came to America and augmented the number of priests in the young country. After the arrival in Baltimore in 1792, one such priest was sent by Bishop Carroll to Boston, Abbe Francis A. de Martignon, was a young Parisian priest scholarly and tactful, who with the Reverend John Thayer, a native American, and a recent convert, labored in the extensive ungrateful field of Puritan New England. It was Father de Martignon who sollicited the aid of another exile from France, then teaching in England, to come to his help in the pastorship in Boston.[6] The man so invited was destined to become the first Bishop of Boston, the loved and revered Jean Lefebvre de Cheverus.

The Catholic Church grew rapidly all over the country. In 1808, Bishop Carroll, then 70 years of age and beginning to feel unequal to the long voyages by stage-coach and by sailing vessels which

his episcopal functions required of him, decided to divide the country into dioceses and create four suffragent bishops.[7]

On April 8, 1808, Pope Pius VII, by Papal Decree, subdivided the See of Baltimore into five dioceses. In addition to the See of Baltimore were added:

1. The See of Philadelphia, PA, with Reverend Michael Egan, Franciscan, as Bishop;
2. The See of Bardston, KY, with Reverend Benedict Flaget, a Sulpitian, as Bishop;
3. The See of New York with Reverend Luke Concamen, a Dominican, as Bishop.
4. The See of Boston, MA, with Reverend Jean Lefebvre de Cheverus, a modest man who lived very simply; he was the right man for the task. His aversion to luxury in any form made him the ideal interpreter of the Catholic Church to the Puritans. A bishop, who chopped his own wood, was at least a good democrat and might bring a message worth heeding. Plainess, frugality, industry so characteristic of Bishop Cheverus: those were the very secrets of Puritan success.[8] The Bishop stood in good terms with all parties, with the Sulpitians, the Jesuits, in Baltimore, authorities in Quebec and with the court of Rome.

2. The Immigrant Church

While the number of converts among the American natives increased steadily under the zealous administration of the early bishops, the spectacular growth in the United States in the 19th century, came from the massive immigration of foreign Catholics on American shores in the early decades of the century. They came as political, economic and/or religious exiles.

The first massive waves of immigrants came from Ireland. Their story is too well known to need expansion. In the 1830's and the 1840's, they poured into Boston which received a majority of

them, and with them the Irish clergy who followed the movement of their people to the new world. [9] Soon the preponderance of an Irish clergy replaced that of the French priests, who, after the Concordat of 1803 were no longer leaving their country to escape persecution or found it safe to return thereto.

The influx Catholic immigrants in the New England area now led to the division of the Boston diocese itself into three new Sees: Hartford, in 1844, which comprised the states of Connecticut and Rhode Island; the See of Burlington, in 1853, which covered all of Vermont; the See of Portland, Maine, in 1855, to which New Hampshire belonged.

In 1872, the See of Providence, RI, was split from the Hartford diocese, and in 1884, the See of Manchester, NH, was separated from that of Portland, ME, with Denis Bradley as its first Bishop. There were now in the United States, dozens of religious orders, thousands of priests, hundreds of educational institutions, a local and vigilant press and a growing Catholic literature.[10]

The greatest source of Catholicism in New England was the immense influx from Ireland, and in the later decades, from French Canada.[11]For close to a half century, the church was a church of immigrants, a church of foreigners, a church of the poor.

A great event was the appointment of the first papal delegate to the United States in the person of Archbishop Francis Satelli. The most important factor was the rapid expansion of parochial schools into every town and city. The decrees of the Third Plenary Council of Baltimore, in 1884, had placed very definite obligations upon pastors and their congregations to build and sustain a school in their parish. Such schools were seen as a threat to the American public school system, considered the bulwark of American democracy.

The "parish" became the most important institution for the immigrant, and the parish priest the most significant leader in the community. Father Freely considers that decision made in the mid 19th century to form nationality parishes to respond to different customs and needs of the different immigrants, may well have been the most single important decicion made by American Catholicism. [12]

When the Sisters of Holy Cross began their apostolic work in the United States, it was largely to answer this dual function in the Church of that area. In assuming the direction of parochial schools, they assisted the French-Canadian parish priests in their mandate to protect and preserve the faith of their immigrant flock by keeping alive among them their language, traditions and culture. At the same time, they helped to promote the integration of the French-Canadians into American scene.

3. French-Canadian Immigration in the United States

The growth and expansion in the United States within the last century was without a parallel in the history of the Church in the world.[13]

This phenomenal development of the Church can be attributed to the immigration policy of the United States which until the 1920's, maintained an "open door" to all immigrants. It was a policy dictated partly by humanitarian reasons. Peoples seeking freedom, whether religious or political, could usually find asylum on American shores.

In the post Civil War period, when the industrial Revolution seized the imagnination and the technological ingenuity of the American people, textile factories appeared, especially in the New England area, where the large river systems furnished the water power running machinery, and the humid climate favored the spinning of cotton woolen thread.

The demand for laborers in New England which was already filling the mill towns and railroad camps with Irish immigrants, began to attract young French-Canadians across the border.[14]

There had always been a certain amount of immigration from Canada. Proximity and a liberal policy made passage from one country to the other inevitable.

French-Canadian farmers hired out on the farms of Vermont, Maine and New York states where the attractions of the rising cities had depleted the rural households of young people. Woodchoppers were drawn to the forests of Maine and New Hampshire.[15] By 1849, Canadian legislatures estimated that some 20,00 immigrants, largely from the Province of Quebec, had emigrated to the Untied States within a span of five years.[16]

In spite of the difficulties encountered by the French-Canadian immigrants, as they established in an alien land, the conditions in the United States were considerably better than those they had experienced in their own country.[17]

Quebec farmers ignorant of the value of the crop rotation, impoverished the soil and sought to acquire more acreage.[18] But the land in eastern townships was held by speculators who asked exorbitant prices outside the reach of the farmers. Morever, what few produce farmers were able to raise, they had difficulty to carry over the few passable roads in existence to the still fewer markets available.[19]

The result of an inquiry revealed that the priests of the area attributed this exodus to the fact that higher wages were offered in the United States; the decline of lumbering operations along the tributaries of the St. Laurent; to the difficulty in securing wood lands in the vicinity of their old villages; to the unwillingness of the sons of proprietors to step down into the class of laborers.[20]

During the Civil War period, in the 1860's, French Canadian immigration perspectively increased, but the massive inrush of Canada, occurred immediately after the close of the war. An unprecedented demand for labor sent agents of New England factories to woo the Canadians from their exhausted farmlands. Often burdened with debts, they were lured by the fabulous American wages and the hope of salvaging their farms within a short period of time.[21]

Once arrived, they usually faced dismal conditions. They were nearly all of them poor, without leaders, without organization, without churches of their own. In the early 1860's there was a tendancy to quick assimilation, to dropping their French names, to abandonning the language, the costums, the faith of their fathers.[22]

The current began to flow in the summer of 1863. Catholic clergy were greatly disturbed over the loss of their parishioners, but moreso by the realization that these people were surrounded by influences that encouraged them to lose the faith into which they were born. When the families began to arrive, and they discovered that work could be found in the mills for every member, man, woman and children, (no laws then barred child labor) the desire to return to Canada began to fade. Children were the roots that stuck deep into the social and economic soil of the American community and planted the transient worker as a permanent immigrant. The French-Canadian employees and their families pooled their savings to buy a lot and build a cottage.[23]

In 1869, there were 100,000 French-Canadians in the New England States. The need for a French-speaking clergy was evident. Bishop de Goesbriand had been named to the See of Burlington, VT, in 1853, as its first bishop, and saw the dire need for a Canadian clergy. He had already appealed to the Bishops and the clergy of Quebec. Now he went personnaly for aid. Following this appeal to

come to the assistance of their brethren in New England, eight French-speaking arrived to work in Massachusetts. Henceforth, the number of French priests and churches increased fairly well.[24]

People, in general, were poor, the families large. These early priests saw their work well mapped out. The first thing to be done was to build a church, which would become the focal of the parish, then a school, a convent, the parish hall. It has been said that the four pillars of the Franco-American nationality are: the Church, the school, the social organizations.[25] The same could be said of all national parishes.

The French-Canadians were the largest and oldest group of the "newer immigrant races in the post Civil war period". They also have in many respects, maintened an honorable preeminence. They had, for example, nearly twice as many parishes in the archidiocese of Boston as any other foreign group and far more charitable and educational institutions.[26]

4. The Parochial Schools in New England

The present diocesan system of parochial schools emerged. It was stemmed from the First Plenary Council of Baltimore held in 1852. Concerned about the loss of faith of many immigrant children, who for lack of Catholic instruction, had to attend the public shools, the Bishops decreed:

That schools be established in connexion with the churches of their dioceses... and to provide from the revenues of the church... for the support of competent teachers.[27]

In the New England States, this decree could only in difficulty be honored. The Catholic immigrant was poor, struggling for survival and facing hostile elements. Parochial schools were denounced hopelessly inferior to the public schools, as a breeding place of bigotry, and intolerance, and as a menace to the unity and solidarity of the American people.

When the Third Plenary Council of Baltimore met in 1884, almost one fourth of the decrees were related to Catholic Education. Regarding Catholic Schools, the Council had laid down precise commands:

1. Every Church MUST have its parochial school.
2. Catholic parents were commanded to send their children to parish school unless they were clearly able to provide otherwise for the Christian education of their children.
3. It decreed the appointment of a diocesan board of examinors, a School Commission, to visit and inspect each parish school.

The purpose was to put each parish school on the level with the public school.[28]

As Catholic Bishops proceeded to implement these decrees, a new wave of anti-catholic bigotry broke out in 1886-1887 in a vigorous campaign against Catholic Schools promoted and sponsored by the American Parent Association movement.

The Haverill parish school had been ordered to close. The pastor refused to do so. The case was brought from court to court till the Supreme Court declared that the Bill was a violation of the First Amendment of the Constitution. Appeals to the State Supreme Court were in vain.

The Bill and its defeat were dractically significant. The battle to preserve their existence and to establish the legality of parochial schools was definitely won.

Coming as it did in 1889, when mandate had been imposed on all pastors to establish schools in every parish, this court decision made task easier for them The bilingual schools that developed were a response to the immigration experience. These allowed the immigrants to preserve not only their religious faith, but also their ethnic identities.

PART TWO

1. Mother Mary of Saint Basile, m.s.c. - c.s.c.
(Julie Bertrand)

The greatest figure after the Founders
to give lustre to the Institute.
Biography

Who was this woman who entered Holy Cross at 15 years old, and, at the age of 39, was named by the Bishop of Montreal, Edouard Fabre, superior general of the Congregation of the Sisters of Holy Cross and the Seven Dolors, after the decree had been signed by Rome for the autonomy?

Julie Bertrand was born in Sainte-Scholastique, Quebec, in 1844, the daughter of Olivier Bertrand who belonged to an old landed family established in the area. The archives show him as a contractor woodworker and a farmer. Her mother, Julia Welsch was of Irish descent. The fact that we do not know anything about her family make us believe she was perhaps an orphan who came to Canada during the potato famine in Ireland in 1830-1840. What we do know is that she inherited a strong faith, a rich temparament, and that, in the sense that it was understood in that time in her milieu, she was a superior woman.

Julie was the fourth of the Bertrand family's children and an only daughter. Her childhood was happy and surrounded by affection. She was profoundly marked by the three loves that her parents had taught: "love of piety, love of work and love of duty", as she herself put it in the vocabulary of her day; three loves that she kept throughout her life as the precious heritage of the human line from which she came and from the education she received from her early Marianite teachers.

When she was seven, her parents registered her in the boarding school that the Marianites had just opened the year before in Sainte-Scholastique. She remained there until she was fourteen, going through the whole cycle of studies then offered to the girls of the area. At thirteen, already an adult

in many ways, she manifested a desire to enter Holy Cross. However, her pastor, Father Pinguet, thought that it would be better for her to wait another year. Julie agreed and spent the year at the boarding school.

In the summer of 1859, her father accompanied her to Saint-Laurent where she was greeted by Mother Mary of the Seven Dolors, superior and mistress of the novices. At her taking of the habit, she received the name of Sister Mary of Saint-Basile, a name very dear to Holy Cross. She was fifteen. During the three years of her noviciate, she shared the life of the boarders at the academy as supervisor, in charge of needlework and on occasion, as a substitute teacher. The students, it is said, respected her as if she were a professed sister. Then, after her religious profession, considered her as a full fledged nun.

In December 1863, she pronounced her vows and was ready for a mission afar. The community then had mostly boarding schools: Sister Mary Basile was sent to each one and then called back to Saint-Laurent: teacher of the first class, also responsible for the needlework and the supervision of the students' recreation.

She was the one who prepared the first French-speaking graduates for graduation at the boarding school, according to the demands of the program that was authorized by the "Conseil de l'Instruction Publique du Québec". She put her whole soul and talents at the service of this mission as well as all the exuberance of youth. (Mother Mary of the Seven Dolors was tempted to remove her from this obedience that had gone to her head.)

Beginning in 1872 and during the next ten years, Sister Mary of Saint-Basile became acquiainted with a very different rythm of life and work, from the stable and well regulated one of the boarding school. During this period, she changed obedience and residences seven times. The reasons

for these changes ranged from community emergencies to the desire of the superiors to distance her from any post or place of influence. Sister Mary of Saint-Basile soon showed herself to be a woman who could overcome and regulate difficult situations — in spite of her youth — then twenty-eight.

In 1873, she became directress of Saint-Ignace Academy, a sewing school for young apprentices in sewing, in Montreal. The house, opened the previous year, developed rapidly and this neccessitated choices that were unexpected. Sister stayed there only one year. The time had come for the work to take a decisive turn - the transfer to larger quarters that could adequately house the students and the community; to change the status of the institution from a day school to a boarding school.The workrooms of the beginnings gave place to regular classrooms, where each teacher, at a free time, taught needlework.

As the school year finished, all the initiatives had come to a successful conclusion and with the new direction of Saint-Ignace boarding school completed, Sister Mary of Saint-Basile returned to Saint-Laurent, not as a classrom teacher, but a disciplinairian. She had to renew the atmosphere of life and work among the students and make it healthy. It was said that because of circumstances, proper to the institutions, it left much to be desired. After a few months, the atmosphere had changed. The boarding school of Saint-Laurent had made the hoped for turn around. Once this reform, as it was called in the Annals, had been achieved, that is at the time of obediences, in 1874, she was appointed to Varennes, assistant to the superior and teacher of French. Then it was at Saint-Liguori for another year.

In 1876, whe was named founding superior to the boarding school of Sainte-Rose, this important mission that was opened in a difficult situation. On the one hand, with the Mother House in Le Mans and the delays that resulted, and on the other hand because of divisions in the parish of

Sainte-Rose itself (some parishioners wanted the Sisters of Sainte-Anne; the pastor wanted the Sisters of the Congregation of Notre-Dame, so the bishop solved the matter by sending the Marianites). Bishop Fabre, deeply implicated in this mission foundation, had himself suggested Sister Mary of Saint-Basile as founding superior. "In Sister Mary of Saint-Basile, you have the person qualified to overcome obstacles." She instantly took things in hand, giving all she had.

The founding of the boarding school in Sainte-Rose was the work of the mature years, both as religious and organizer. She took up the tasks of superior, stewardship, teacher of the first class, sacristan at the parish church, and, like all the other sisters, had a share of the domestic chores. Success was not long in coming. Mother Mary of the Seven Dolors soon wrote to Bishop Fabre to thank him for having chosen the Marianites for the mission of Sainte-Rose.

It was from Sainte-Rose that Sister Mary of Saint-Basile left in 1879 for the General Chapter in le Mans. The sisters had elected her, by a majority vote, as a delegate. Now her life entered into a new phase where her personal story became intertwained with that of the Canadian community of the Marianites. She was one who presented to the General Chapter the request of the province to obtain modifications to some of the points of the Constitutions that were in the process of experimentation. This step made her less and less a "person a grata" with the authorities of the Congregation. This became very apparent after 1881.

When the Chapter was finished, she came back to Sainte-Rose, August 22, 1879. She was welcomed with great honor as much by the religious authorities as by the sisters and students. She remained into that function until the obediences in 1881. However, in Le Mans, she was already considered to be "unsafe". After 1881 and the forwarding to Rome of the files relative to autonomy — a file of which Sister Mary of Saint-Basile was a signer — she was systymatically distant from any

important position (as were most of the sisters who had signed it). Between 1881 and 1883, she was superior and teacher of French at Saint-Liguori (where there were so few students that four teachers were sufficent). She spent the last four months of 1882 at Pointe-Saint-Charles, at Saint-Jean-l'Évangéliste school that the community had just opened. By the express wish of the superior general, she was simply a teacher of French, excluded from all responsibility in the house. It was to this house and to this task, that seemed like a banishment, that Bishop Fabre would journey in January of 1883, to seek her out to direct the Congregation, after the Pontifical Brief had decreed autonomy.

2. The Foundations of seventeen schools from 1883 to 1902

> Between the years 1881 and 1900 the Sisters of Holy Cross accepted the direction of fifteen parish schools in Connecticut, Massachusetts, New Hampshire and Vermont, and refused as many more requests. Where French-Canadians had settled in the mill towns of New England, parishes mushroomed. When a church was built, there soon was to be found the parish school. Often the school was still a concept in the pastor's mind when the General Council of the community was approached for sisters to assume its direction.
>
> 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 on the one part, poorly lighted, poorly aired, poorly equipped classrooms; on the other, crowded quarters for the sisters who already were lodged in very restricted areas and, in either case, over-crowded classrooms. It is quite correct to say that the first years of the sisters' apostolate in the New England parishes were marked by penury, by hard work, and by teaching conditions no one would accept today. No fault could be laid on the pastors who called the sisters to their assistance. These early priests themselves lived in poverty, depriving themselves of any small comfort. They offered the sisters the best they had. They did all in their power and in their means to make life comfortable for them, and certainly performed miracles to assure the children of their flock an education comparable to that offered in the public schools of the time. Most important, the children received religious instruction, and the study of the French language was kept alive in them and in their homes. Neither of these benefits the children could have obtained elsewhere.
>
> A brief sketch of the first foundations in the last two decades of the 19th century tells a very similar tale, each one a reflection of the stamina the early pioneer women possessed.

The history of the autonomy is a very sad one, but Sister Graziella Lalande, c.s.c., describes it as: "une blessure où s'insèrent les ailes" — a wound where wings lie within — cited from the Magnificat, souvenir-book of the centennial of the arrival in Canada in 1847.

First Foundation in New Hampshire

Saint Louis de Gonzague parish in Nashua. In 1881, Father Millette, on assuming charge of the second Catholic Church in Nashua, met Mother Mary of Saint Raphaël, provincial superior. He exposed his problem of providing appropriate Christian education in conformity with the bilingual culture of his parishioners.[29]

He had also ambitious plans: he would have liked that the Sisters assume, from 7 A.M. to 6 P.M. the care of the young children whose parents were at work, and also night classes for working girls. Those requests were not accepted on account of the lack of Sisters.

The pastor stated that he was planning for a great school, with a garden; it would be the best around and that it would be ready for January 1st, 1884. The Sisters were nevertheless requested to come for September 1883. They could teach in temporary classes.

Everything was fine and in August, Mother Mary of Saint Raphaël arrived with three sisters. They occupied a lodging near the Church until the convent school was ready, and taught in the basement of the Church.[30]

When Saint Louis school opened, in September, the registration was over 300 (here one can understand why the public schools were really not in love with parochial). The tuition was 50 cents for the first two children of the same family, of 25 cents for the third, and gratis for the others.

Waiting anxiously for January to arrive, the Sisters taught, from September to December, in incredible conditions: dark classrooms in the Church basement, poorly lighted and ventilated, with

no divisions between the different class groups. Yet, in December, the pastor and his assistant decided to examine the children to realize what had been accomplished so far, and in such conditions. They were satisfied with the progress.

Months went by: they brought the great joy of moving in the new school. By April 1884, the Superintendant of the Public Schools of Nashua visited the parochial school, doubtless at the invitation of their pastor. The purpose was to examine the adequacy of the teaching and the curriculum. Satisfied with what he saw, the school was allowed to grant students under 16 years, the diploma needed to obtain work in the factories. This indeed was the first step to Higher education.

Here is another success to write about the hasardous exploits of this very young school... At the end of the first year, the pupils gave a public concert in the city hall to which friends, parents and the curious came in large number. The teachers had worked five weeks with the children, outside of class time, to prepare it. There was "public speaking" both in French and in English, choral singing, and piano selections by the music students. The pastor was particularly delighted and proud of his school especially when, even the Protestants in the audience congratulated him on the success of the evening! Such public concerts did much to destroy the lurking suspicions of inferiority attributed to the parochial schools. While credit went to the pastors, the success of these concerts resulted from the hours of labor that went into them on the part of the teachers. Their creativity was amazing. Their patience with the students, both skilled and unskilled, spoke of the impartial wish to develop what talent was found in every child.

The school flourished: a High School was added and sixteen Sisters were teaching in Saint Louis de Gonzague. The parish has been a fertile source for Holy Cross: 58 young women entered and many occupied posts of authority.

Sacred Heart, New Bedford, Massachusetts, 1886

> *"Go up to Canada and coax some holy community of Sisters to come back with you to New Bedford to take charge of the children."* So wrote Bishop Henderson, then Bischop of Providence, Rhode Island, to Reverend John Alfred Provost in 1886. *"Assure the good Sisters that I will give them a warm welcome and take good care of them in all ways."*[31]
>
> Fr. Provost, thus encouraged by his Bishop found his way to St. Laurent in the spring of 1886, where he was successful in obtaining the promise of four sisters to open his school in the Fall.
>
> At that time some 600 French-Canadian families were to be found grouped in the vicinity of the local textile mills in new Bedford. Although there were four Catholic churches in the city, the French-Canadians had no parish of their own. The Sacred Heart parish was founded to satisfy the needs and aspirations of this ethnic group and Fr. John Alfred Provost was appointed its first pastor.
>
> The children of the parish frequented the public schools of the city where religious teaching, of course, was not given. With the erection of the parish the parishioners rallied around their pastor in his decision to open a "convent-school" where religious and secular teaching would be had under the direction of religious sisters. Work began on the school immediately, with the assurance that it would be ready for September of the same year, 1886. By July, Fr. Provost was asking for six sisters to preside over the six classes being made ready. Although lodging for the sisters was not complete, the pastor assured the authorities that the sisters sould be well cared for.
>
> Thus, August 21, 1886, six sisters, with Sœur. M. St. Eugene (Octavie Bérubé) as superior, arrived in New Bedford. They received a warm and enthusiastic welcome by the pastor, a few civic leaders, and the parents anxious to greet them. Fr. Provost had prepared four rooms in the rectory to lodge the sisters until such time as the convent be ready to receive them. It wasn't long. Within ten days the sisters took possession of the convent, a three-story brick structure, 50'x60' and hurried to organize for the opening of classes, deferred for thir convenience, until September 6.

Three hundred and seventy eight students were enrolled the first day but the numbers increased daily, reaching in the Spring a maximum of 600. Delighted with the work of the first year, the pastor expressed his satisfaction and appreciation. "I cannot repeat enough the success that was theirs" he wrote to Sister Marie de Saint Basile, and the good they have wrought with the children,

of whom a great number ran the streets.[32] As was the case in the many areas where the Sisters opened a parochial school, visitors were frequent and varied, especially the first few months. Naturally, the Bishop of the diocese (New Bedford was at the time formed part of the diocese of Providence, Rhode Island) came to greet "the good Sisters who had accepted to direct this new parochial school". Although the school was not under his jurisdiction, the City Superintendant of Schools also came to visit the classes.

The pastors, as a matter of courtesy, and also with a smattering of pride, were particularly anxious display their schools and the accomplishment of the religious teachers. They made it a point to invite not only the superintendant, but members of the school boards. The order and the discipline which the religious maintened favored academic progress. Moreover, the variety of subjects taught, and the activities engaged in won the interest of the students. Sacred Heart School was a boarding school and a day school. Interestingly, the first boarder became the first postulant for Holy Cross from the Sacred Heart School, Miss Marie Clémentine Précourt who became Sister Mary St. Isabelle.

Saint François Xavier, Nahusa, New Hampshire, 1886

Reverend Henri Lessard was sent by Bishop Bradley in 1885 to Nashua. He was to organize the new parish of Saint François Xavier recently estblished as the result of the division of St. Louis de Gonzague parish. The Frenche population in Nashua had increased so rapidly that such a division was deemed advisable.

Arriving in June 1885, Father Lessard began work on a temporary chapel, on land donated by the Jacdson Mill Company.[33] The chapel was dedicated in January 1886. Then the pastor's thoughs turned to parochial school and to religious sisters to staff it. He addressed his request to Saint-Laurent, Québec, for Sisters of Holy Cross. Request was granted and, August 20, 1886, a founding

group of three sisters arrived. On the 28, they entered the house they were to live, a modest temporary dwelling.

Even though classes were to be held in the basement of the Church, registration of students numbered close to 150 on September 1. Seventy-five boys and seventy-two girls were grouped into three classes, poorly lighted, ventilated and certainly far from the ideal to carry on the high ask expected of the teaching sisters. About one sixth of the children read English and French with mediocrity; the others were in elementary stage. The Sisters began teaching in the convent-school. Fr. Lessard has planed, only in November 1886. Registration had mounted to 225.

For a number of years conditions were not much improved. The poverty of the parish presented what were still necessary improvements, both for the students' and for the teachers' welfare. The Sisters did what they could in a strong missionary spirit. They were still teaching there in 1972. Many vocations came from this excellent parish. One of them has become the superior general of the order: Mother Mary of Saint Barthélémy (Léda Duchesneau) 1938-1940.

Saint John the Baptist, Suncook, New Hampshire, 1888

The schools in the diocese of Manchester were now directed by the Sisters of Holy Cross serving French-Canadian parishes.

The pastor of Suncook, a quiet village, on the banks of the Merrimack River, discussed with his confreres the project he dreamed of to establish a parochial school in his parish of 3,000 Catholics some four-fifths of whom were French-Canadians, drawn to the area, by the cotton mills.

Father Millette suggested he might ask the Sisters of Holy Cross who were answering his needs successfully in Nashua. In June 1887, he wrote to Saint-Laurent, asking for nuns and stating that the school was being built and would be ready for January 1888: he would like three sisters.

It wasn't until February 25 that the Sisters arrived in Suncook. Intense cold had frozen the water pipes in the newly built school and the sisters received temporary shelter in the rectory until the damage could be repaired. The first days of March, they took possession of the convent, and on March fifth registration brought 192 boys and girls to their doors. In the evening of March 5, Bishop Bradley visited sisters to welcome them to his diocese. In his remarks, he wished them all kinds of prosperity. This wish, writes the annalist, was too soon fulfilled. The next day registration jumped to 230.[34] Obviously help was needed by the 22 of March, and help was sent.

Suncook's parochial school had to live the extravagance of the pastor who changed the class readers of Bibles French and English; and asked the Sisters to teach solfeggio and gregorian chant to youngsters who were hardly able to talk two languages, and had a mediocre background. Such arbitrary changes in school programs in the early foundations, though not frequent, point to one of the problems the sisters faced in the parochial school system.

Even after the establishment of diocesan school system, pastors were pretty much the masters in their schools. Their likes and dislikes created difficult situations at times, especially in the superior was in any way timid. The superior of a house 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 School, Rochester, New Hampshire, 1894

On August 28, 1894, four sisters arrived. The cordial reception they received from the pastor and the parishioners did much to alleviate the uncertainties that often attend a new beginning. Classes opened on September 4. Preparing the young children for the recption of the First Holy Communion was the first major task added to teaching the three grades into which the 150 registered students had been classified. Many of these aspiring communicants had gone beyond the so-called

"age of reason" but they were so lacking in knowledge of religion that they need special preparation. A group of thirty-five were made ready by October 26 when the parish of Holy Rosary witnessed its First Communion with all the pomp and ceremony the occasion called for.[35]

Sisters were usually pleased to be named for the mission of Rochester. The parishioners on Holy Rosary were always most cordial toward them and the school brought many consolations to the teachers. It wasn't however for the beauty or the comfort of the convent. In fact, the rooms were small, the ceilings too low. From a hygienic point of view, it was miserable place.

In 1901, the pastor notified the Superior General of his plans to make necessary modifications and to add a new wing to the existing convent-school. Mother Mary of Saint Basile, superior general, expressing satisfaction, wrote the pastor in part: *"We pray that your proposals go through. Your intentions,* she wrote tactfully, *are not to keep the actual rooms? They are so low that they cannot hold the volume of air necessary for the maintenance of health. We count also on large enough classrooms, well lighted and ventilated."*

Such observations so frequently found in the corresondence of the superior general told of the solicitous care of the Superiors for the health of their Sisters. But Mgr Martin, ecclesiastical superior of the Congrggation in Montreal, after a trip to the United States, visiting all the houses of the Community, wrote: *"The most gay, the most happy, I found in the most miserable house of Holy Rosary in Rochester!"*

Holy Angels School, Saint Albans, Vermont, 1899

The Sisters of Holy Cross, by 1899, were teaching in three dioceses in New England: Hartford, Connecticut; Manchester, New Hampshire; and Providence, Rhode Island. They were invited to enter the Burlington, Vermont diocese in 1899. Their need was the same as the one of other

Holy Cross houses, opened since 1883: the direction of a catholic school for the French Canadians. Saint Laurent acquiesced to the desire of the pastor of St. Albans, and the sisters arrived on August 23 and were warmly welcomed by the pastor and the parish reprensentatives.

They lost no time preparing the imposing red brick building. Father Daigneault had purchased for the convent-school, near the church. While the convent was imposing exteriorly, the rooms were small and the interior divisions of the house were scarcely adapted to classrooms. However, two hundred children registered the first day. Everything had to be done to convert the rooms into any semblance of a school.

The new undertaking drew considerable interest and, during the first months, the school received many visitors. Bishop de Goesbriand, came to welcome the sisters into his diocese and Mother Mary of Saint Basile also came to assure herself that her daughters were comfortably settled and happy in their new apostolate.

For two years classes were held in this first Holy Angels School, with registration mounting yearly. When Father Charles Provost succeeded Father Daigneault, in 1894, he began the construction of a convent-school. It was completed in 1899.[36]

It was a beautiful red-brick edifice three storeys high with a vast basement and a specially large attic. The rooms, including two round towerrooms on the front of the building and forming its facade were reserved for the convent. The attic served as a large dormitory for them. It was particularly inconvenient. They were always in the stairways with the dining room on one floor, the chapel on the next, the community room on still another and the dormitory in the attic cold in the winter, and siffling in the summer. With some reasion, nevertheless, the edifice for any years was the pride of the parish.[37]

Holy Angels parish is especially significant to the Community of Holy Cross. From it, as for many other parishes, came many religious vocations. The remarkable is that the entire family of seven girls, the family of Mr. and Mrs Amédée Thibault, all entered Holy Cross. We heard that when Mr. Thibault brought the youngest daugter to the postulate in Saint-Laurent, he said: *"Next time, I will bring my wife."*

Saint Joseph, Springfield, Massachusetts, 1898

In the summer of 1894, Father Louis Gagnier, pastor of Saint Joseph parish in Springield, Massachusetts, had written to the Superior general for sisters to staff his parish school. He outlined a grandiose plan. He had in mind for this first parish of the French Canadians, in Springfield, sisters to staff a bilingual elementary school, then as soon as feasible, a kindergarten for children of all nationalities. There bouls follow a dispensary, a home for the aged. Indeed his dream encompassed all the spiritual corporal works of mercy. The school was to serve the needs of his parish, a Frecch-Canadian population, but Father Gagnier's maganimous heart embraced all of God's children both young and old.[38]

Needless to say, that the project could not be accepted. Undaunted Father Gagnier returned with his same request in the spring of 1898. This time, he limited his needs to four teaching sisters and two for kindergarten.[39] The answer from St. Laurent held out some hope to the pastor that Sisters of Holy Cross could take over his school, though not a kindergarten.

The diocesan Sisters of Saint Joseph had been staffing his school. They daily from their Mother House across the city to teach the classes and returned there immediately after class hours. In spite of good will the sisters could no longer teach French in the school, for lack of French speaking subjects in their community. Father Gagnier had specified that French and English had to

be taught on equal footing[40] Accordingly in August 1898, six Sisters of Holy Cross arrived in the parish of Saint Joseph.

> While the house prepared for them was adequate, as a shelter, it was not adapted for a convent dwelling. Once the old Root home, Fr. Gagnier had purchased it in 1890 and converted it to the convent house. It was well over one hundred years old. The school, however, newly built, was considered one of the most beautiful in the diocese. It was a handsome brick school trimmed with stone, in the Renaissance style, equipped with a moden heating and electrical system. It had been planned by the architects Chickering and O'Connell. The cost, $33,000, was a considerable sum at the time. There were twelve classrooms well equipped, cupboards, a libray, a vestry, a sewing room for the ladies of the parish, two recreative areas, and a reception hall and stage. The hall had a seating capacity of several hundred persons. It was truly a magnificent school that spoke loudly of the pastor's designs for his parish.[41] The Holy Cross Sisters were the fifth community of religious women to teach in Springfield.[42]
>
> Among the first visitors to welcome the Sisters of Holy Cross were the Sisters of St. Joseph, their predecessors in the parish. Naturally they were given a tour of the new school. What a contrast to the quarters they had taught in for thirteen years in the basement of the church! But they were leaving with few regrets. The children had been hand to handle and very unruly. They wished their replacements all the luck in the world.[43]
>
> Classes opened September 6 with a registration of 311 pupils. Classifying them was a difficult task. Trying to determine the capacity of each child in the class was made all the more difficult by the unruliness of the boys. They had been well depicted by the Sisters of St. Joseph! After a month of real suffering, one supposes on the part of both the teachers and the pupils, order and discipline were taking over. Prayers were recited with great respect, language and manners were more polite, and attention in class more sustained. The pastor was overjoyed at the change, and the teachers must have sighed with relief as they gradually took the upper hand.

<u>Saint George, Manchester, New Hampshire, 1898</u>

> St. George's parish was an offshoot of St. Marie's. French immigration had increased so rapidly in the north end of the city that another parish for them was necessary to relieve the overcrowded conditions of St. Marie. Solemn dedication of the new church took place in 1893. Bishop Bradley appointed Reverend Urbain Lamy, its first pastor. It was, however, Father Lamy's successor, Reverend Isidore H. Davignon, an apostle of Catholic education, who brought the Sisters of Holy Cross from Suncook, where he had previously founded a bilingual school. The new pastor built, on land purchased on the corners of Pine and Orange Streets, St. George's

parochial school, an excellent building of brick with stone trimmings, and supplied it with all the latest improvements.As a school, it was the envy of many another school.[44]

As soon as construction began in the spring of 1898, Fr. Davignon approached the Mother House in St. Laurent, Que. to ask for sisters to staff his school. *"This school will very likely be one of the most important before long."* Fr. Davignon wrote.[45] In answer to his request, the General Council promised Fr. Davignon sisters for January, 1899. In August, however, because of a great deal of sickness among the sisters, the pastor was notified that the foundation would have to be delayed. The pastor's personal visit to St. Laurent met with little success. Frantically, he wrote to Canon Martin, the ecclesiastical superior of the Community in Montreal, and begged him to see what he could do to obtain at least two or three sisters to teach Catechism and so prepare the grould for the following September. *"I hold to this community,"* he wrote. *"I know it. I know the kind of teaching it gives. The Bishop of the diocese likes them very much and he would be happy to see them in the Episcopal City. A word from you will do no harm, I'm sure."*[46] A familiar tactic to obtain a much desired goal! It worked.

Although twelve classes were provided for in the school, the pastor did not expect that all would be filled the first months. When the school did open on April 3, 1899, four sisters were there to register the 290 pupils who came the first day. By the end of the week that number had risen to 320. Two secular teachers were added to handle this large number of students, grouped into six classes. The following September four new classes were opened.[47] Tthe September registration was up to 621. The sisters on the third floor of the school and their chapel and music room were on the second floor!

St. George's elementary school fulfilled the prediction of Fr. Davignon. It was one of the larger and more important of the French bilingual schools in Manchester for many years. It was also Fr. Davignon who obtained for the sisters, in 1908, the elegant white wooden convent on the corner of Beech and Pearl Streets. With its spacious shaded lawns, it was one of the loveliest convents the Sisters of Holy Cross knew in New England. It was the first convent that provided each sister with her own room, small it is true, but private and a real luxury, after sleeping in dormitories with "curtained walls" for so many years.

An interesting footnote revealing the care and consideration of this good pastor is found in a letter he addressed to the Reverend Mother, en 1908, in which he asks that the sisters stationed at St. George's that year, be not changed. *"Let them enjoy their new little rooms that they like so much. They have shown a great spirit of sacrifice and abnegation in their previous lodging."* The sisters of the convent wereabsolutely unaware of their pastor's letter to St. Laurent pleading in their favor.[48]

Saint Anthony, New Bedford, Massachusetts, 1896

The Sisters of Holy Cross accepted the direction of St. Anthony School three years before they actually came to live there, in Septembre of 1896. Reverend Hormisdas Deslauriers, named pastor of the newly erected parish, obtained two sisters to take over the school lay teachers conducted. These sisters, Sister M. St. Athanasius (McKinnon) and Sr. M. Augutine (Lizotte) traveled daily from the Sacred Heart convent where they resided. There was still need of lay teachers, of course, to take care of the large registration, but Fr. Deslauriers hoped to add a few more every year. From September 1896 to January 1899, the Sisters were boarding at the Sacred Convent, and traveling morning and night by tramways. They had to carry their noon lunch. Father Deslauriers, the pastor, rented (until the convent he was building was ready for occupancy) a house near the school. By May, even before the classes were over they moved to their new convent where they lived twenty-two years.

The superior of a convent was, as a rule, the directress of the school. The size of St. Anthony School was such that it had called for a school directress, other than the superior. It was a change maintained by Fr. Masse who 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 the time, care, and attention required by the demands of a heavy bilingual scolastic program. In a letter to the superior general, he asked that special care should be given to the choice of the person to take charge of the direction of the school.[49]

One such very competent directress who left her imprint on Saint Anthony's elementary school, Sister Mary of St. Olive. Sister served for over twenty-five years a solid reputation for order, discipline and excellence.

Our Lady of Sorrows, Adams, Massachusetts, 1899-1977

A third foundation undertaken in 1899 was that of Our Lady of Sorrows School in Adams, Massachusetts. In 1893, the Reverend L.O. Triganne, a French-Canadian priest, in the Springfield Diocese since 1886, was named pastor to succeed Reverend J.B. Charbonneau. At that time there were some 550 French Catholic families in Adams. As soon as he had cleared the parish from debt, Fr. Triganne began the construction of a parish school and convent.

He applied to St. Laurent, Que. for Sisters of Holy Cross to direct his school, which, he hoped, would be ready for September of 1898. At his repeated requests, Mother M. St. Basile had promised Fr. Triganne four sisters for that date, but she was hoping against hope that the school would not be ready on schedule. Illness and the penury of available sisters at the time made the commitment difficult to keep. She was indeed relieved to receive Fr. Triganne's letter announcing that the opening would

have to be delayed until September 1899. *"I did not know to what to attribute all the delays in the construction, but on the receipt of your last letter I had the explanation"* he wrote to her. *"The prayers of a whole community are better heard of God than those of a poor pastor in the United States."*[50]

On August 23, 1899, there arrived in Adams the six sisters destined to open his mission. They were: Sœur. M. St. Christina (Kernan) superior, Sœur. M. St. Athanasius (McKinnon), Sœur. M. St. Alban (Mailloux), Sœur. M. St. Octave (Charron), Sœur. M. St. Pierre d'Alcantara (Campeau) and Sœur. M. St. Adele (Gignac).

The convent prepared for them was a jewel. The sisters were somewhat shaken at the carpeted stairs, but the furniture though good and solid was not luxurious. Eventually, the carpets in the stairs disappeared.[51]They were delighted with the school, with its six large, spacious, well-lighted and well-ventilated classrooms. At registration, the pastor realized that the school was already too small.

Bishop Thomas Beaven of Springfield, blessed the school and convent in early September. The 380 pupils registered the first day were too numerous for four classes. The pastor had to hire lay teachers to supplement the four teaching sisters. Adams was always one of our attractive missions. The city itself is a manufacturing town situated in the Berkshire Hills overlooking the Housac River. The parish built at the foot of Mt. Greylock offers a nature lover one of the most scenic delights of the Berkshires.

The Sisters of Holy Cross spent many happy and fruitful years in the parish of Our Lady of Sorrwos. Their work was appreciated by parishioners and pastor. Thus, one of these pastors, Rev. J.T. Smith, wrote to Reverend Mother M. St. Rose, in 1954, *"I can never repay the debt of gratitude I owe to your community, your religious have been and are the greatest benefactors of this parish since the foundation."*[52]

Saint Anne's, Fall River, Massachusetts, 1883-1895

The first of the missions the Sisters of Holy Cross abandoned was that of St. Anne's in Fall River, Massachusetts. When the Rev. Thomas Briscoe became pastor of St. Anne's in 1878, he hired two sisters of Jesus-Marie, a French-Canadian community of sisters who taught at "The Flint" across town, in Fall River, to give religious instruction to the children of St. Anne's parish. These sisters were replaced the following year, by two of Mercy who sent two of their "Canadian" sisters to assume not only the Sunday school classes, but to open a regular parochial school in the basement of the church. Meanwhile, Fr. Briscoe's parish was growing rapidly with a continuing influx of French-Canadians. The pastor saw the need for a school

building and additional bilingual teachers, more than the Sisters of Mercy could promise him.[53] Fr. Briscoe, in early 1883, visited a seminary friend in Montreal, the Rev. J. Salmon, then curate of St. Gabriel's, Pointe St. Charles, where the sisters of Holy Cross staffed a school. It was Fr. Salmon who took Fr. Briscoe to St. Laurent, to meet M. M. St. Basile, the superior general. Face to face negotiations are always more satisfactory and especially more speedy than written ones. Fr. Briscoe won the promise of six sisters for the Fall of 1883 to take over the direction of the school he was currently building.[54]

The new convent was a comfortable three-story wooden building. Classes opened on September 3 with a registration of some 250 children grouped into four classes all on the first floor of the convent.

This foundation, begun in the same year as that of St. Louis de Gonzague in Nashua, held out a very promising outlook. Population increase led to opening more classes, so that by 1895 there were eleven sisters at St. Anne's. A series of circumstances, however, each one providential no doubt, led to the abrupt recall of our sisters from St. Ann's by the General Council in the summer of 1895.[55]

Fr. Briscoe who had invited the Sisters of Holy Cross in 1883, was transferred elsewhere in the diocese in 1897. The parish of St. Anne was then placed in charge of the Dominican Fathers. The number of students still increasing, additional classes were reopened in the church basement. The Dominican pastors built another school, this time a brick school on Hope Street. It was from this school, where they had taught successfully from 1891-1895 that the sisters were recalled.[56]

Why did Mother General recall the Sisters who were so very successful in Fall River? A letter from the pastor, Rev. C.B. Sauval, in the summer of 1895, to M. M. Basile, announced changes he thought necessary in the parish for the coming Fall. The reasons he advances for this directive (too intricate to be explicited here) specified his responsability to provide for the Dominican Sisters "founded" he wrote "for the diocese, and in particular this Parish". These modifications announced to Reverend Mother, in July 1895, were to be implemented the upcoming September. As for the future, he admitted, he could not answer.

When the letter came to Mother General, she immediately contacted Sr. Mary Christina (Kernan) the superior of St. Anne's in Fall River, who was at the Mother House, at the time, for the yearly retreat. Sr. M. St. Christina was a woman of high intellectual quality who doubtless read clearly the implications contained in the communication. Having been superior of St. Anne's since 1890 and the school directress, she was in a position to assess the local situation. She and Sr. M. St. Marguerite (McCormick) were sent to Fall River immediately. Unfortunately the archives nowhere indicate Sr. M. St. Christina's reflections to Rev. Mother. The

matter was submitted to the Bishop of Montreal, Bishop Fabre, to whom the direction of the Holy Cross Congregation of Sisters had been confided by the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda, when the community became autonomous in 1883.

With his characteristic authoritative decision, the Bishop advised withdrawal from the mission whose future continuance seemed so improbable under the circumstances.[57]

The General Council, therefore, decided to recall the sisters immediately and send them to Fitchburg, Massachusetts, where they had been asked to direct the parish school of the Immaculate Conception, but which they had refused for lack of subjects. But the most tragic of all this is the fact that the Sisters of Fall River heard the news from the pulpit on Sunday Mass which produced disturbance among the parishioners present. Somebody went too fast... others were too slow. There was hurt on both sides. But it was through lack of communication.

Fitchburg, Massachusetts, 1895-1902

... so the Sisters passed directly from Fall River to Fitchburg with their furniture and their class preparation! Over two hundred children registered for classes on the opening day of school in September. Both the pastor and the parishioners were happy to have their own parochial school. Fr. Gratton wrote his satisfaction to Mother M. St. Basile over the smooth functioning of the school, reporting that "all is well".[58]

Within seven years, the Rev. J.E. Marcoux had succeeded Fr. Gratton as pastor. In the Spring of 1902, the new pastor of Immaculate Conception parish visited Mother M. St. Basile at St. Laurent. There, Fr. Marcoux indicated in a most courteous, but indirect manner, that he wanted to confide his school to the "Faithful Companions of Jesus".[59] In fact, he had already submitted to the Archbishop of Montreal a communication from Bishop Beaven in which the Bishop of Springfield agreed that it would be desirable and advantageous to the parish that the Sisters of Holy Cross leave.[60]

The Archbishop sent the letter to Mother M. St. Basile. Naturally, Mother General inquired into the reasons that impelled the change, since the Sisters of Holy Cross had given satisfaction.

Fr. Marcoux explained the whole affair. The Faithful Companions of Jesus conducted a High School, in Fitchburg, and Fr. Marcoux sent a copy of the program of studies preparatory to entrance to his High School. No French was included in this program, although it was taught in High School, as an elective.

Had the Sisters of Holy Cross felt that accepting this program defeated one of the purposes proposed in accepting a school in this French-speaking parish? Nowhere is there any indication, however, of their having refused to adopt the program. But there was more to it. The Faithful Companions had just built, at their own expense, a magnificent construction destined to be their Mother House in America (they were in France and in England) which served to house a novitiate, a high school and a boarding school. This new school had the best of installations, and the teaching was excellent. To have these sisters teach in his parish, Fr. Marcoux explained, would save the cost of the upkeep of a convent, and would mean that the children of the parish would have the preparation needed for admittance to the high school.[61] There was certainly an implied critique of the education given by the Sisters of Holy Cross. Fr. Marcoux, however, granted that the community had a right to remain; and if it so decided, he would make the best of it.

It was no great incentive to continue their apostolate in the parish. Following the advice of Archbishop Brechesi, the sisters left in June. The Archbishop of Montreal wrote to Fr. Marcoux that the departure of the Sisters of Holy Cross from his parish was a lesson given to religious Canadian communities who had done so much to further the advancement of French-Canadian interests in the United States.[62]

The good pastor seemed to discount the basic training given in the elementary schools. Certainly in 1902, not many parishes planned for their own parochial high school. He seemed to say that the students were given too much French and so were not sufficiently prepared in English for admittance to high schools, whether Catholic or public.

His reasons for asking for a change of teaching communities had sound economic validity. It had less ethnic loyalty, as the Archbishop of Montreal wrote him.

In the seven years of its presence in Fitchburg, the community of Holy Cross had received six excellent subjects. Other young girls came to Holy Cross in succeeding years, as the memory of the good done by our Sisters remained alive in the minds and hearts of the parishioners of Immaculate Conception.

From Fitchburg, the sisters went directly to Somersworth, New Hampshire where their services were awaited.

Vergennes, Vermont, 1886-1906

When the Sisters of Holy Cross accepted Reverend Peter Campeau's invitation to come to the parish of the Sacred Heart in Vergennes, Vermont, to establish there a parochial school, they were accepting real missionary work.

The diocese of Burlington, Vermont, established in 1853, comprised the entire State of Vermont with only 52 priests, at the time of Bishop deGoesbriand's death in 1899. It was he who, in the face of influx of French-Canadians into the diocese, saw the necessity of establishing parishes for them, with priests of their own culture to meet their needs.

The French-Canadian farmers and wood-choppers who settled in certain centers of Vermont were less numerous than the textile workers who found their way to the more southern New England States. They lived in greater isolation and were more subject to the anglicizing influences about them than their compatriots who congregated in villages and towns.

Father Campeau indicated to Mother M. St. Basile that the beginnings would be rather difficult (rugged) but he was confident that before too long there would develop a beautiful mission. The parishioners appeared to him zealous enough and even desirous to start a school. He had Bishop deGoesbriand's blessing to do what he thought best. There was not much French, but he assured the sisters that there were many young ladies who would welcome French lessons in the evening.[63]

Father Campeau was therefore most happy to greet the four sisters who arrived on August 20, 1886 to open his school. The following day, they were greeted by Bishop deGoesbriand who came to welcome them to the diocese. He warned the sisters that their work would be arduous. *"The faith of these people is weak, very weak"*. For many years Vergennes had had no resident priest so that the faithful had Mass, and availability of the Sacraments, only every fifteen days. *"Hence it is that their ignorance of things religious is great: many have even lost their faith. You will very likely meet with difficulty with the students. But be confident"*, the Bishop told them, *"be good religious and all will go well"* Bishop deGoesbriand who had known the founder of our community, Basile Moreau, in France, spoke very highly of him to his spiritual daughters.[64]

The Bishop himself addressed the parishioners the following Sunday, and explained to them the necessity of sending their children to parochial school. He spoke to the gathering in French and in English, for French was no longer spoken too fluently in the area, and had even been totally forgotten by many.

The school prepared for the children was a new building and fairly comfortable. The convent itself had been a refuge where Indian chiefs had held their war councils during the Revolutionary War. The rooms were scarcely eight feet high.

For twenty years the Sisters of Holy Cross gave of their devotion and service to the people and to the church of Vergennes. The pastor, always sympathetic and understanding, foresaw the eventual closure of the school. Revenues were not keeping

up with the expenditures attending the upkeep of a school, and the registration was always uncertain. Bishop Michaud, *now* Bishop of Burlington, advised Fr. Campeau that since he had founded the school, he should wait for his successor to close it. Thus it fell to Rev. L.A. Vezina, who on taking the parish was told by Bishop Michaud that the parish could not afford a school, and that he, the Bishop, was notifying the sisters of the convent that the doors would close at the end of February, 1907.

In writing to the sisters the Bishop expressed his appreciation for the long years of service rendered to the diocese. *"We know that you have had your difficulties and have done your best"*. Then the bishop asked the sisters to convey his regrets at the closing of the school to their Mother General at St. Laurent.[65]

It is interesting to note that Fr. Vezina immediately communicated the message he had received from his bishop on February 11, to Chancellor Emile Roy of the arcdiocese of Montreal, rather than to Rev. Mother General. Fr. Vezina asked the chancellor to assure the archbishop that the Sisters of Holy Cross had done all in their power to maintain this wavering school, but that circumstances had been against them. *"I am new here."* Fr. Vezina wrote, *"but I know that Vergennes owes a debt of gratitude the diocese of Montreal for having lent us these teaching sisters"*.[66]

It was Chancellor Roy who communicated Fr. Vezina's letter to Rev. Mother M. St. Basile, at the time, visiting the missions of New Bedford. The ethnic question seems to be pointed out as having led to the closing Vergennes. Certainly, in the early missions undertaken by this community, the sisters were very conscious of the role they were expected to fulfill in keeping French alive in the areas they served. The manner at circumstances under which the closing of these missions was accormplished carries rather significant overtones by today's standards!"

Two other houses closed, Redford, New York (1884-1914) and Keesville, New York (1893-1913) both in the diocese of Ogdensburg, were part of the St. Joseph Province of Ontario, at the time of their closing.

1 Byrne, Very Rev. William, D.D. *History of the Catholic Church in the New England States,* Boston, 1899. I, Intro xiii.

2 Murray, J. O'Kane, *A Popular history of the Catholic Church in the United States,* New York, 1876, IV, p. 428.

3 Catholics, in 1790, headed by Carroll, thanked President Washington whose personal influence had helped bring about its adoption.

4 Leahy, Wm. A., *"Archdiocese of Boston"* in *History of the Catholic Church in the New England States,* Boston, 1899, I, p. 16.

5 Dilhet, Jean, *Etat de l'Eglise Catholique des Etats-Unis de l'Amérique Septentrionale.* Washington, D.C., 1922, Préface.

6 Leahy, *op. cit.* p. 23.

7 *Ibid.* p. 30.

8 *Ibidem.*

9 *Ibid.* p. 48.

10 *Ibidem.*

11 Byrne, *op. cit.* Intro. xiv.

12 *Ibid.* p. 42.

13 O'Donnell, Rev. James, *"The Diocese of Hartford"* in *The History of the Catholic Church in New England.* II. p. 8.

14 Hensen, M.L. & Brebner, John B., *The Mingling of the Canadian and American Peoples.* New Haven: Yale University Press, 1940, p. 125.

15 Benoit, Josaphat, *L'Ame Franco-Américaine,* Editions Albert Lévesque, 1935, p. 54.

16 Hansen, *op. cit.* p. 126.

17 Perreault, Robert, "One Piece in the Great American Mosaic". *Le Canado-Américain,* II, No. 2, p. 21.

18 Benoit, *op. cit.* p. 48.

19 Hansen, *op. cit.* p. 126; Benoit, *op.cit.* p. 48.

20 Hansen & Brebner, *op. cit.* p. 126.

21 *Ibid.* p. 127.

22 Lord, Sexton & Harrington, *History of the Archdiocese of Boston. Sheed & Ward, NY. 1944. III, p. 199.*

23 *Ibid.* p. 165-167.

24 Lord, et al. *op. cit.* p. 202.

25 Benoit, *op. cit.* p. 101.

26 Lord, et al. *op. cit.* p. 726.

27 Hansen & Brebner, *op. cit.* p. 212.

28 Benoit, *op. cit.* p. 62.

29 The American Protective Association (A.P.A.) was a secret anti-Catholic organization, active especially in the Middle West but which spread to the East during the 1890's. Like the earlier Know-Nothing Movement, the A.P.A. relied primarily on political activities to combat the alleged threat of Catholicism in America. *The New Catholic Encycloedia*, 1967, I, p. 442.

30 O'Donnell, Rev. James, "The Diocese of Hartford" in *The History of the Catholic Church in New England.* II, p. 8.

31 Hansen & Brebner, *op. cit.* p. 166.

32 Benoit, *op. cit.* p. 101.

33 *Ibidem.*

34 *Annals,* III, 234-236.

35 *Annals,* III, 344-345.

36 *Annals,* III,263-266.

37 *Souvenir Album,* Holy Angels School, St. Albans, Vermont, 1889-1949.

38 C.S.G., Rev. Louis Gagnier to M. M. St. Basile, July 9, 1894.

39 *Ibid.*, March 7, 1898.

40 *Ibid.*, March 16, 1898.

41 McCoy, J.J. "Diocese of Springfield" in *History of Catholic Church in New England,* II, 695-696.

42 *Ibid.*

43 *Annals,* IV, 152.

44 Redden, *op. cit.*, 95.

45 C.S.G., Rev. H. Davignon to M. M. St. Basile, May 20, 1898.

46 *Ibid.,* Rev. H. Davignon to Canon Martin, December 6, 1898.

47 Finan, *op. cit.,* I, 624.

48 C.S.G., Rev. H. Davignon to M. M. St. Gabriel, May 22, 1908.

49 C.S.G., Rev. Victor Masse to M. M. St. Bartholomew, March 31, 1940.

50 *Ibid.,* Rev. L.C. Triganne to M. M. St. Basile, November 1, 1898.

51 *Annals,* IV, 195.

52 C.G.C., Rev. J.T. Smith to M. M. St. Rose, December 15,1954.

53 Lachance (Pierre, E.) O.P. *History of Our Parochial Schools and Educational Activities* "Early Attempts to set up a French school" unpaginated.

54 *Annals,* III, 63-64.

55 *Ibid.,* 65.

56 *Ibid.*

57 *Annals,* III, 66.

58 C.G.C., Rev. E. Gratton to Rev. M. M. St. Basile, September 11, 1895.

59 *Archives,* St. Laurent, Que.

60 C.G.C., Bishop Beaves to Archbishop Bruchesi, April 22, 1902.

61 C.G.C., Rev. J.E. Marcoux to Rev. M. M. St. Basile, April 28, 1902.

62 C.G.C., Archbishop Paul Bruchesi to Rev. J.E. Marcoux, April 25, 1902.

63 C.G.C. Rev. P.A. Campeau to Rev. M. M. St. Basile, April 17, 1886.

64 *Annals,* III, 147.

65 C.G.C., Bishop J. Steven Michaud to Sisters of Vergennes, February 11, 1907.

66 C.G.C., Rev. L.A. Vezina to Chancellor Emile Roy, February 12, 1907.