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The beginnings of Holy Cross ministry in higher education in New Brunswick

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1. Introduction

Two universities – St Joseph's University, and St Thomas University – were established in the nineteenth century to provide post-secondary education to Roman Catholics in the province of New Brunswick; and the Congregation of Holy Cross has been – and still is – involved in the ministry of both institutions. The focus of this presentation is the context in which the invitation, and the anticipations prompting it, came from the Bishop of Saint John to the Congregation to provide religious for the establishment of the first of these academies, St Joseph's University.

In response to the Bishop's request, the founder of the Congregation of Holy Cross, the Venerable Basile Moreau, assigned Fr Camille Lefebvre, the first Canadian-born Salvatorist of the Congregation, to be the superior of the Holy Cross community which would undertake the educational apostolate desired by the Bishop; and, in June of 1864, Fr Lefebvre arrived in Memramcook to begin his ministry. What was it that the Bishop wanted in requesting the services of a community of religious; and did he get what he wanted?

2. The Diocese of Saint John

Until 1829, the territory that is the civil province of New Brunswick was part of the ecclesiastical diocese of Quebec. The growing number of Catholics in the Maritime provinces (i.e., New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, and Prince Edward Island), especially of non-Francophone Catholics, and the difficulties for episcopal visitation posed by distance and terrain, prompted the Holy See to erect the Diocese of Charlottetown in 1829, under whose jurisdiction New Brunswick then fell. Finally, in 1842, New Brunswick was erected as a diocese in its own right, and assigned its own bishop, doubtless because of the influx of increasing numbers of Catholic immigrants into the province. That influx, however, may have only confirmed what the developments of an earlier period had already presaged and foreshadowed, i.e., the necessity of an independent diocese in New

Brunswick.¹

The decree establishing the diocese appointed the then Bishop of Charlottetown, Bernard MacDonald, as its first bishop, but also gave him the option of remaining in his see, should he so choose. Upon his exercising the latter option, Father William Dollard, vicar general of Charlottetown, an Irish-born priest who had served as missionary in New Brunswick, was consecrated Bishop of New Brunswick in Quebec City on June 11, 1843.²

On returning to the province, he took up residence in Fredericton, and his new church, dedicated to St Dunstan, became the diocese's first cathedral. During 1848-1849, Bishop Dollard moved the seat of the diocese to Saint John, the province's largest city, and home to a burgeoning Irish Catholic immigrant population.

His successor as bishop, Thomas Connolly, managed to provide the foundations of Catholic primary education by inviting three novices of the Sisters of Charity to come to Saint John from New York in 1854 as the nucleus of a new congregation, the Sisters of Charity of the Immaculate Conception (so named after the patroness of the diocese's cathedral). Efforts to provide Catholic education at the secondary level and beyond would come only with Bishop Dollard's second successor, John Sweeney.

3. The context of Bishop Sweeney's invitation to Holy Cross

Upon Bishop Connolly's elevation to the Archbishopric of Halifax in 1859, John Sweeney³ was consecrated third Bishop of Saint John in April of 1860. One month later, his diocese

¹ On this early pre-diocesan history, see John Jennings, Tending the Flock: Bishop Joseph-Octave Plessis and Roman Catholics in early 19th century New Brunswick, 1998: New Ireland Press.

² Official Historical Booklet: Diocese of Saint John, 1948: Holy Name Union, Diocese of Saint John, page 39.

³ Born in Clones, County Monaghan, Ireland, in 1821, Sweeney's family came to America in 1828. After studying theology at the Grand Seminary in Quebec City, he was ordained priest on September 1, 1844. He had been elected Vicar Capitular of the

(upon his accession, the whole of the civil province of New Brunswick), was divided, and the northern counties of the province now comprised the new diocese of Chatham, erected May 8, with James Rogers as its first bishop.

In Father Carney's life of Bishop Sweeny, we read that "From his own personal experience he realized the need of an institution where the boys and young men of the province, English and French alike, will have the opportunity of receiving an education to fit them for the higher walks of life".⁴ Even in the early years of his tenure, he attempted to engage the services of first one, and then another, religious congregation for the needs, especially educational, of his diocese -- with absolutely no success.

Two events in 1862-1863, in particular, seem to have provided the catalyst for the bishop to renew his search. The first was the failure of an educational institution in the parish of Memramcook -- after Saint John, the largest in the diocese. There, Father Francois-Xavier LaFrance⁵ had founded, in 1854, a "little seminary" for his Acadian parishioners. Named after the patron of the parish, St Thomas, this so-called seminary was, in reality, a parish school: its director was the pastor's brother, Charles, who was assisted by three instructors -- one of them the pastor's sister, and another, a Miss Mary O'Reagan, a native of Ireland. At the end of the first year of operation, there were 95 students, both male and female. It had been Father LaFrance's intention to have a separate school for the girls, but this was not financially possible. For the purposes of this school, he had personally purchased three hundred acres of land adjacent to the parish church, and, over the years, constructed several buildings for this fledgling educational foundation.

diocese of Saint John on the death of Bishop Dollard, and was appointed Vicar General of the diocese by Bishop Connolly in 1852. The diocese's longest serving ordinary, he died in 1901.

⁴ As cited in Official Historical Booklet: Diocese of Saint John (1948: St. John Diocese/Holy Name Union), page 43.

⁵ Ordained in Rustico, PEI in 1841, Father LaFrance was first vicar in Saint John, and subsequently pastor in Tracadie. In 1852, he was named pastor of St Thomas parish in Memramcook. Cf. Album Souvenir: College St Joseph 1864-1964, page 5.

Unfortunately, his untiring academic and educational efforts had to be curtailed;⁶ and, in 1862, his "petite seminaire" was forced to close. But his determination to secure an educational institution for his Acadians remained unabated. Accordingly, he informed Bishop Sweeny that he was prepared to give the lands and buildings he had accumulated to a religious community, and to surrender the parish living to support it,⁷ if such an institute could be persuaded to undertake the ministry he had been obliged to abandon.

This situation presented Bishop Sweeny with an opportunity that, for both personal and pastoral reasons, he would be anxious to grasp. Personally, he knew Father LaFrance well, for he had been a student with Father LaFrance in Charlottetown prior to priestly ordination.⁸ In addition to this personal connection, there was Sweeny's own pastoral ministry among the Acadians, first as the founding pastor of the parish in Chatham in 1845, and later as the pastor of the large parish in Barachois.⁹ Concerning the Acadians, here are the Bishop's own words to a Holy Cross priest: "these good simple people, who yet preserve, in a great measure, the manners and customs and, above all, the Faith of their ancestors, coming from Normandy, more than two hundred years ago".¹⁰

⁶ The nature of the reason for the closure remains unclear; one source suggests financial constraints (Cf. Clement Cormier, L'Universite de Moncton Historique, 1975: Centre d'etudes acadiennes, Universite de Moncton, page 6), while another hints at discord between Father LaFrance and his brother (cf. Canon Etienne Catta, Le Reverend Pere Camille Lefebvre et la renaissance acadienne, typescript: Centre d'etudes acadiennes, Universite de Moncton, page 687).

⁷ Cf. "Universite du College St-Joseph", #1882-1, Archives of the Diocese of Saint John.

⁸ Or so it is claimed by Fr Clement Cormier. Cf. "L'Universite de Moncton Historique", op.cit., page 7. If so, this would have been prior to Bishop Sweeny's studies at the Grand Seminary in Quebec (see. note 4 preceding). At any rate, Bishop Sweeny would certainly have known Father LaFrance in Saint John: see note 5 preceding.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰Letter of May 21, 1863 to Fr Charles Moreau (Archives of the Diocese of Saint John, 1887-2-b).

The second event to galvanize Sweeny's search, after the closure of the *Seminaire de St Thomas*, was the publication of several editorials in Saint John newspapers during the winter of 1862-1863 respecting the necessity of a reformatory in Saint John. Thus, for example, responding to an earlier comment in *The Globe*, the *New Brunswick Courier*, on January 10, 1863, had this to say:

Though a great deal has been said at different times in regard to the necessity of a Reformatory for the reclamation of youthful offenders, and though attempts have been made to secure legislative action for the establishment of an institution of the kind, the progress made, the practical advantages gained, amount to very little. The causes which have contributed to the ill success of the establishment of a Reformatory have been various, and not the least important of them is the prejudice which exists in the minds of certain members of the Legislature against contributing Provincial funds to any object or institution which has any connection with the City of Saint John.

The editorialist returns to the theme later in the year, when, on June 20, an American report is reviewed:

The last named report [of the Officers of the House of Refuge for Western Pennsylvania] contains [...] doubtless, very valuable information [for] our own rulers and philanthropists when they seriously contemplate the establishment of a similar and greatly needed Institution in this Province [...] We think it high time for our own community to exert itself for the establishment of a similar Reformatory institution in our vicinity.¹¹

This latter editorial appeared a fortnight before this comment by Bishop Sweeny: "The Protestant papers still are agitating about a Reformatory [sic]".¹² These two events, then, would seem to have provided the motivation, if not the necessity, for some decisive action: on the one hand, the public demand for a reform institution; on the other, the failure of an one attempted educational establishment, with the offer of lands, buildings and a living to support yet another. What did the Bishop want, and what did he do about it?

¹¹ The 1864 issues of the *New Brunswick Courier* are preserved on microfilm #F12224 in the Provincial Archives of New Brunswick, Fredericton.

¹² Letter of July 6, 1863 to Father Charles Moreau, #1887-5-d, Archives of the Diocese of Saint John.

4. "For the benefit of religion"

In the spring of 1863, Bishop Sweeny travelled to New York to try, yet again, to secure the services of a religious congregation for his diocese. In the preceding year, he had attempted, without success, to interest the Brothers of the Christian Schools. This time, he directed himself to a community of St Vincent de Paul, the Pretres de la Misericorde, who were established in St Vincent's Parish in the extreme north of the city.¹³ These priests, under their superior Father Lafont and with the permission of Archbishop Hayes of New York, had established an orphanage for young girls, and, to direct it, had invited in 1855 some Marianite Sisters of Holy Cross from New Orleans, where they had been established in 1848. Bishop Sweeny had learned that this Holy Cross community was being visited by a member of the congregation's general council (in fact, Father Charles Moreau, a nephew of the founder and superior general), and that he was staying with Father Lafont at St Vincent's.

Unfortunately, at the time of Bishop Sweeny's visit, Father Moreau was visiting other foundations of Holy Cross in North America, specifically the community at St Laurent in Montreal. On his return to Saint John, the bishop wrote to Father Charles, and, for the first time (but not the last) articulated the pastoral priorities he envisioned for the ministry of a religious congregation "for the benefit of religion in my diocese":

I am very desirous of having a "Reformatory" for young boys - an establishment much needed in this mixed community. Then, we require educational establishments of every kind, in different parts of the diocese. There are, at least 15,000 Acadian French Catholics in the diocese of St John, and more than this in the rest of the Province, and I need not say what an immense deal of good the zeal of your good religious could effect among this large population, not to speak of the English-speaking people.¹⁴

This ordering of the bishop's pastoral concerns we will see shortly repeated; here we might note that, while an academy for the Acadians is surely included, it does not occupy the pride

¹³ Cf. Canon Etienne Catta, op. cit., page 684.

¹⁴ Letter of May 21, 1863. #1887-2-b, Archives of the Diocese of Saint John.

of first place, and comes only after the need for a reformatory, and educational establishments of every kind.¹⁵

The Bishop closed this, his first communication with Holy Cross, with an invitation to Father Moreau to visit the diocese before his return to France. This Father Moreau did, at the beginning of June, 1863; and the Bishop was able to accomplish what he had proposed in his letter: "of bringing you through some of these purely Acadian French parishes". With the Bishop, Father Moreau visited Memramcook, saw for himself the parish, lands and buildings, and spoke with the pastor, Father LaFrance.

As a consequence of this visit, Bishop Sweeny wrote a second letter to Father Charles on June 15¹⁶, enumerating the specific ministries which he hoped a Holy Cross community could provide:

In the first place for the purposes of education, both superior and elementary. Secondly, I desire very much to establish a Reformatory for boys under the direction of your Order. The pressing reasons for this I have already explained to you. Thirdly, I desire as soon as circumstances will admit to establish an orphanage for boys. And fourthly, I am convinced there is in my diocese a very large and important field for the missionary labours of your good Fathers and particularly among the Acadian French population.¹⁷

One notices, in this second communication, how the relative priority assigned to educational establishments and a reformatory have been reversed from the earlier letter of May 21. And one notes that here, again, specific mention of the Acadians comes last. Circumstances shortly

¹⁵ Canon Catta (*op. cit.*, page 602) seems surprised that a reformatory heads the list, saying that its placing there is "assez inattendue". Perhaps he had not read the Bishop's later letter of July 6, and/or was ignorant of the public discussion in the press.

¹⁶ The typescript copy of this letter (#1887-4-c in the Archives of the Diocese of Saint John) bears the date of June 15. However, the copy of the handwritten original in the Archives des Peres de Ste-Croix in Montreal (#825) seems to read June 18.

¹⁷ Letter of June 15, 1863. #1887-4-c, Archives of the Diocese of Saint John.

to be related will dictate a radical re-ordering of priorities on the part of the bishop.

As well, in this second letter, the Bishop indicates how the community would be supported financially:

To encourage you in the undertaking, one of my priests [i.e., Father LaFrance] offers three hundred acres of land with several buildings thereon for educational purposes and I will put the parish in which the land is situated [i.e., St Thomas, Memramcook] under your charge to help the foundation and **to aid the Reformatory**.¹⁸

While Father Moreau's visit was short, it had a profound effect upon him, such that he was able to tell the Bishop that he would convey his request to the Superior General of Holy Cross in Le Mans, and that he would recommend the establishment of the foundation. In return, the Bishop was able to confirm, in a third letter dated July 6, what had been proposed in the second letter:

I am happy to be able to inform you that the Rev. Mr. LaFrance has given me a deed of all the property owned by him at Memramcook in **condition of your establishing a house of education for the benefit of the Acadian French and others**.¹⁹ There is no condition mentioned but this, so you will be free to undertake any good work that may be deemed practicable.

And, for yet a third time, the Bishop enumerates the ministries he wishes to be undertaken:

I hope now my dear Father Moreau that you have arranged everything with your excellent Father General and that I shall soon have a letter from you and the Father General informing that we shall have a colony early this autumn [i.e. 1863] for Memramcook, and three or four competent brothers for our free school in the City of St John. The Protestant papers still are agitating about a Reformatory [sic].²⁰

¹⁸ My emphasis.

¹⁹ The good bishop seemingly did not, or could not, foresee that this condition would frustrate, rather than promote, his plans for a reformatory -- contrary to the hopes expressed in his earlier, second communication of June 15/18. Clearly, the bishop's plans for the use of the property were not what the donor, Father LaFrance, intended, or indeed, would permit.

²⁰ The typescript copy of this correspondence may be found in the Archives of the Diocese of Saint John (#1887-5-d); a copy of the handwritten original is in the Archives des Peres de Ste-Croix in Montreal (#832).

One will note here that the bishop's pastoral concerns have not changed: educational institutions and a reformatory. One might, perhaps, be surprised by the lack of any explicit mention of the Acadians in this paragraph; but, of course, they are the subject of the preceding one.

Bishop Sweeny's hopes for a Holy Cross 'colony' by the fall of 1863 could not be realized, and it was probably unrealistic of him to expect that they could be. There was, first of all, the logistical problem of finding suitable candidates and transferring them from as far away as France. But there was also the bureaucratic necessity of obtaining permission from the Holy See, through the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith (Propaganda Fide), for the establishment of such a religious foundation. To this end, Bishop Sweeny, by letter of December 21, 1863, formally petitioned the Superior General of Holy Cross to found a house of the community in his diocese; and, for now a fourth time, he enumerates the ministries to be confided to the community:

Firstly, to undertake an educational establishment at Memramcook, principally for the Acadian French population; [the 'others' of July 16 have been omitted]

Secondly, to give missions from time to time, when the number of the Fathers will permit, in all the neighbouring parishes; [a new pastoral priority, but one of the ends of the Holy Cross congregation]

Thirdly, to establish, if possible, a reformatory for boys;

Fourthly, to have our free schools in the City of St John conducted by English-speaking brothers.²¹

The Superior General duly petitioned Propaganda Fide; and its approval of the enterprise was communicated by its Prefect, Cardinal Barnabo, by letter of May 3, 1864.²²

However, Father Moreau already had in mind to whom he would confide the direction of this new foundation. In 1857, Father Moreau had visited the religious at Saint-Laurent, and had met,

²¹ The French original may be found as #851 in the Archives des Peres de Ste-Croix; a transcription of the French text, and an English translation are found as 1887-8-g and 1883, respectively, in the Archives of the Diocese of Saint John.

²² A French translation (allegedly by Fr Moreau himself) of the Italian original may be found as #6 in the Archives of the Peres de Ste-Croix.

on that occasion, the first Canadian-born Salvatorist, Father Camille Lefebvre.²³

5. Camille Lefebvre²⁴

Born in Saint-Phillipe de Laprairie on 14 February 1832, Camille Lefebvre was the son of Louis Lefebvre and his third wife, Marie-Veronique Bouthillier (widow of Jean-Baptiste Moquin). Although his father was illiterate, Camille was taught to read by his mother, with the aid of her Missal. Given his mother's frail physical condition and his father's age, he was eventually placed with his godmother, his mother's sister Marie-Leonie Bouthillier, in Saint-Jacques-le-Mineur, not far from his birthplace. Here he received instruction, first with a Madame Loysel, and later with the pastor, Pere Laperle, with whom he studied rudimentary arithmetic, geometry, writing and grammar.

After the death of his father in 1846, he was enrolled in an academy newly inaugurated in his home town of Saint-Phillipe by the pastor, l'Abbe Proulx. Among the instructors was a German gentleman, George Singer, who instructed Camille in Latin, and whom Camille eventually followed to Saint-Cyprien, where he resided with the pastor, l'Abbe Morin, in the presbytery. This was the extent of the formal education that Camille had acquired prior to his entry into Holy Cross.

At the age of 20, Camille spent some (unspecified) time at a Jesuit college in Montreal, the College Sainte-Marie; but the sources are unclear whether he went there as a candidate, or was simply making a spiritual retreat. There is also some speculation (of doubtful veracity) that he may have considered a vocation with the Freres de la Doctrine Chretienne. In any case, upon reading an

²³ It was during this same visit that Fr Moreau received the vows of Elodie Paradis as Sister Marie de Ste-Leonie, later the founder (with Fr Lefebvre's cooperation), of les Petites Soeurs de la Sainte Famille (see Catta, *op.cit.*, page 892); she was beatified by Pope John Paul II on 11 September 1984.

²⁴ Cf. Etienne Catta, Le Reverend Pere Camille Lefebvre et la renaissance acadienne: Tome 2 (typescript: Centre d'etudes acadienne, Universite de Moncton); and Pascal Poirier, Le Pere Lefebvre et l'Acadie, deuxieme edition (1898: C.O. Beauchemins et fils).

advertisement in the press offering philosophical and theological education to two or three candidates willing to provide, in return, several hours of daily classroom instruction in the Holy Cross College at Saint-Laurent, Lefebvre decided to apply; and, in August 1852, entered the Holy Cross novitiate there. He professed vows on 1 November 1854, and was ordained priest on 29 July 1855.

Following ordination, Lefebvre served as curate in the parish of Saint-Eustache for five years, and then as curate in Sainte-Rose, for eight months. Subsequently, he was appointed as a catechist at College Saint-Laurent; and, not long after, became chaplain at a commercial college established by Holy Cross at Saint-Aime in the diocese of Saint-Hyacinthe. From here Lefebvre engaged in a preaching ministry, especially in Sorel, that confirmed a prior reputation for oratorical skills already observed in earlier appointments. Indeed, so impressed were the parishioners of Sorel that a deputation was sent to Montreal in 1864 (apparently with the consent of the Bishop and the incumbent pastor) to convince the provincial superior to appoint Lefebvre as pastor of Sorel. By chance, the delegation met Lefebvre on the street in Montreal. When told of their mission, Lefebvre replied that there was no need to see the provincial; that he had already received his new obedience: "I leave tomorrow for Memramcook in New Brunswick".

6. The first – but not the last – crisis

On September 9, 1863, Fr Basile Moreau had written to Father Camille Lefebvre at the community's house in St Laurent, Montreal, asking if he could count on his religious devotion for "un cure en Acadie vers le printemps [...] et qui serait le commencement d'une fondation tres importante". Father Lefebvre replied on October 5:

La divine Providence, au moyen de votre proposition, mon tres Reverend Pere, comble le plus cher de mes desirs, car depuis longtemps deja je cherchais l'occasion de voler au secours de cet peuple acadien, si cruellement eprouve, et comme nation et comme catholique, et cependant si admirablement attache a sa foi, a ses petits institutions ainsi qu'aux religieuses traditions de ses peres.²⁵

²⁵ The correspondence is reproduced in M. Chamard, A. Chiasson, C. Cormier, H. Leger, Le Pere Camille Lefebvre, c.s.c.

What is striking about this correspondence is that in neither the General's invitation, nor in Lefebvre's acceptance, is there any mention of the Bishop's desire for a reformatory, or for non-francophone schools. And it would not be much longer before the bishop himself began to suspect that pastoral priorities of his had been overlooked. For, on May 13, 1864, he himself arrived in Montreal to collect Father Lefebvre and take him to Memramcook -- and was much distressed to discover that the new superior knew not a word of English! To make matters worse, those who were to join him in the new foundation -- Father Robert²⁶ and Brother Elzear from France, Father Bazoge and Brother Alphonse Belair from Saint Laurent -- were themselves all Francophone. On his return to Saint John on June 3, and before his departure for Memramcook with Father Lefebvre, he wrote the Superior General a letter that again emphasized his hopes for a reformatory and the necessity of English-speaking religious:

Mais permettez-moi Tres Revd Pere de prendre la liberte de vous dire encore qu'il est de premiere importance pour le succes de votre ordre dans ce pays melange de differente nations de choisir pour Superieur de l'Etablissement un homme d'experience et de jugement, et connaissant la langue Anglais. Le pere Lefebvre est rempli de talent et de zele mais il ne connait point l'Anglais. Pourtant si le pretre qui sera avec lui et un des

(1988[?]: Fides), pages 50-51 (Archives des Peres de Ste-Croix, #845).

²⁶ Father Francois-Antoine Robert (1822-1888) provides the first link between Holy Cross and the future St Thomas University, now within the Diocese of Saint John, but then within the limits of the Diocese of Chatham in the form of its predecessor, St Michael's Academy. According to the minutes of College St-Joseph, Bishop Rogers, the first Bishop of Chatham, approached the Holy Cross community in Memramcook in 1866, seeking a missionary to meet specific needs. The council approved Father Robert's assignment, since he had been especially requested (Cf. Proces verbale du College St-Joseph du 12 Septembre 1864 au 30 Juin 1885 [Archives des Peres de Ste-Croix, Montreal], page 13). James Fraser, in his "By Force of Circumstance": A History of St Thomas University (1970: Miramichi Press, page 24), claims that Father Robert served as "president" of St Michael's from January until June, 1866. While Bishop Rogers' own testimony, cited by Fraser (pages 35-36), indicates that Robert remained in Chatham until his induction as pastor of Petit Rocher on June 21, 1866, one should also remember that Father Robert left Memramcook because he did not speak English well enough to assume the office of econome to which the Superior General had appointed him at Memramcook (Cf. Proces verbale du College St-Joseph, op.cit.).

freres parlent l'Anglais ce serait suffisant pour commencer a Memramcook; il y a une portion considerable de la paroisse composee d'Irlandais catholiques qui ne parlent qu'anglais, le frere qui prendra la charge de l'Ecole reformatoire devra parler Anglais assez bien.²⁷

Father Lefebvre also wrote the Superior General on June 5 from the "Palais episcopal" (where he had arrived two days earlier); he, too, insisted that "il est donc imperieusement necessaire qu'un pretre parlant l'anglais me soit adjoint sous le plus court delai".²⁸

In order to resolve this situation, another candidate, along with Father Bazoge, was sent by the provincial house in Montreal: a Father O'Brien, ordained priest by Bishop Sweeny in Saint John, and assigned responsibility for the Irish parishioners in Memramcook.²⁹ As well, Brother Daniel Ethier was transferred from New York.³⁰ These four priests and three lay brothers constituted the Holy Cross community that would try to turn Bishop Sweeny's dreams into realities.

7. Conclusion: what the Bishop wanted versus what the Bishop got

It is not my intention to pursue the history of the subsequent development of the Memramcook establishment, from its beginnings on October 10, 1864 as College St-Joseph to the institution it now is, the Universite de Moncton. My concern throughout has been to discover what the Bishop of Saint John was looking for in inviting Holy Cross to come to his diocese. Here, by way of conclusion, my attempt will be to summarize what, in fact, he achieved.

²⁷ Letter of June 5, 1864. #887, Archives des Peres de Ste-Croix, Montreal.

²⁸ Letter of 5 June, 1864; #886, Archives des Peres de Ste-Croix.

²⁹ Cf. Extrait d'une lettre adressee par le R.P. Lefebvre au T.R.P. Sorin" [dated March 19, 1870], (Archives of the Diocese of Saint John, #1861), page 4.

³⁰ According to Brother Alderic's Chroniques du College St Joseph de Memramcook, NB (1929 manuscript: Archives des Peres de Ste-Croix, Montreal, page 5), this brother was later ordained priest; he became available for Memramcook after the failure of a Holy Cross establishment in New York City.

While he succeeded in establishing an educational institution in Memramcook, it was the only academy that Holy Cross founded in his diocese. The bishop's hope for "educational establishments of every kind, in different parts of the diocese" was never realized, especially not in Saint John, where he had hoped to have some English Holy Cross brothers conducting "free schools"

His hopes that the priests would preach missions in parishes were certainly fulfilled. Indeed, Holy Cross priests, from the dawn of their arrival, were ministering in Memramcook -- and well beyond.

From 1864 the Catholics of Albert County were cared for by Father Lefebvre. Barachois came next under Holy Cross care from 1867 to 1892, then in turn Grand Digue (and so Shediac as a mission Church up to 1884), from 1873 to 1896; Cocagne from 1876 to 1885; Buctouche from 1867 to 1868.

In addition to these, Holy Cross priests ministered to the needs of 16 parishes in the Diocese of Chatham, and even as far afield as north-eastern Maine, where a Holy Cross priest was pastor of Van Buren (in Maine) in 1868.³¹

But his greatest disappointment, if any, must have been the failure to establish the reformatory that appears as a constant (and, initially, *the* dominant) theme in all the bishop's correspondence with Holy Cross. And for that failure, there are three explanations -- one financial, one legal, the third personal; together they dealt the reformatory project a mortal blow.

In the first place, as Father Lefebvre explains to the Superior General in his letter of October 10, 1864, the financial resources were simply not available for the reformatory project -- especially since Father Lefebvre arrived in Memramcook with the princely sum of eight Canadian dollars, to which the good Bishop, in his charity, added another twenty.³²

³¹ 1864-1939: Album Historique. Published June 13-15, 1939, Universite Saint Joseph (Legislative Library, Province of New Brunswick).

³² The source is Lefebvre's own Petite Chronique de l'etablissement du College St-Joseph de Memramcook, dated 29 May 1868. It is cited in several references, including M. Chamard et al., Le Pere Camille Lefebvre, c.s.c., op. cit., page 54; Clement Cormier, L'Universite de Moncton Historique, op. cit., page 7; and

The second explanation, the legal one, was the objection raised by the donor of the Memramcook property, Father LaFrance, to the use of the land and buildings for any purpose other than educational purposes.

His Lordship the Bishop accepted the property for the use intended, but proceeded in 1864 to apply it for the establishment of a reformatory and college. Rev. Father LaFrance prevented the carrying out of the reformatory idea by writing to Rome and by threatening his Lordship the Bishop with proceedings in equity before the courts, to compel the use of the property according to the intentions of the donator.³³

As threatening as such an objection was, the coup de grace for the project was delivered definitively by the refusal of the person assigned to the reformatory to assume his ministry. In a letter to the Superior General dated October 10, 1864, the very day the college opened its doors, Father Lefebvre, after noting the financial and legal obstacles to the reformatory, continues:

Le Pere O'Brien qui avait refuse d'acquiescer a vos ordres dans le cas ou la reformatoire aurait fonctionner cette automne sous le pretexte qu'il ne voulait pas s'abaisser aussi bas s'etait engage a faire la classe anglaise au college. Lorsqu'a la suite d'une conversation ou Monsieur LaFrance fit quelques reflexions sur certaines defautes qu'il avait remarque parmi les populations irlandais, ainsi que dans l'administration episcopal irlandais, le bon pere O'Brien qui est susceptible jusqu'a la folie se mouta tellement qu'il me declara qu'il ne travaillerait jamais parmi les francais et qu'au reste, il ne tenait pas a la congregation, qu'il etait pret a s'en separer. Il me refuse le droit de le commander objectant qu'il ne connait pas mon obedience et qu'il n'en a pas lui meme. [...] C'est un malheur pour ce pauvre pere quand etre arrive a la pretrise, le loup a secoue la peau de l'agneau!³⁴

One can only imagine the emotions which accompanied the events recounted. And, somehow, we

Etienne Catta, Le Reverend Pere Camille Lefebvre et la renaissance acadienne, op. cit., pages 704-705. This latter notes that the amount was twenty dollars, not the fifty suggested by Pascal Poirier in Le Pere Lefebvre et l'Acadie (second edition, 1898: C.O. Beauchemins et Fils), page 105; and that the amount was an advance not a gift.

³³ Cf. Correspondence 1863 to 1864, no. 21, Phileas Vanier Fonds (Archives des Peres des Ste-Croix, Montreal). A handwritten copy of the same is available in the Archives of the Diocese of Saint John, #1881.

³⁴ Letter of October 10, 1864; #914, Archives des Peres de Ste-Croix, Montreal.

are not surprised to learn from Father Lefebvre's 1870 letter to Father General Sorin that, after some months in Memramcook, Father O'Brien was called to Saint John to assist the Cathedral clergy there, whose numbers were very few, in their ministry.

Without a doubt, the greatest and longest-lasting of the bishop's achievements was the foundation of the college that is now the Universite de Moncton. And yet even this success is tinged with not a little irony. In 1936, with the erection of the archdiocese of Moncton as the metropolitan see for the province of New Brunswick, the then Universite St-Joseph passed out of the jurisdiction of the bishop of Saint John. And with the re-organization of the province's post-secondary educational system mandated by the Deutsch Royal Commission of 1961, the bilingual Universite St-Joseph became the unilingual French Universite de Moncton. Such developments were surely the realization of a dream: but the final reality seems to accord more with Father Francois-Xavier LaFrance's dream, than with Bishop John Sweeny's.

6. Epilogue

For more than thirty years, until his death on 28 January 1895, Fr Camille Lefebvre served as the Rector of the college that he and his collaborators had founded in 1864. One of the perduring puzzles is why he, of the Holy Cross religious then in Canada, had been appointed to this ministry. In addition to not knowing English, there is the fact that he had never received a formal classical education, and had never previously been appointed to a teaching ministry. Both Catta and Poirier hint that there may have been some reason why his Holy Cross superiors in Canada wanted him further away from Montreal: whether out of jealousy (his preaching was well-known and remarked upon), ambition (the comment that he would rise far in the hierarchy was not unknown), or fear (the situation of College Saint-Laurent was precarious, and the authorities there might have preferred less publicity regarding one of their religious). Perhaps the most cogent explanation is simply the inspiration of the Venerable founder, who obviously recognized in Lefebvre, ordained priest eight years earlier, greater potential for establishing and directing a new academic foundation than his confreres in Canada suspected.

And even though the diocesan reorganization previously mentioned entailed the loss of a university and the services of Holy Cross religious to the Diocese of Saint John, yet another re-drawing of ecclesiastical boundaries in 1958 would provide the diocese with jurisdiction over another post-secondary academy (St Thomas University in Chatham); and, with the closing of English programmes at St Joseph's in 1963 as mandated by the Deutsch Royal Commission, the diocese would once again acquire the services of Holy Cross academics. That story will, I hope, engage us on some future occasion.

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CHRONOLOGY

- 1799: Birth near Le Mans, France, of Basile Antoine-Marie Moreau, founder and first superior general of the Congregation of Holy Cross
- 1835: Moreau becomes superior of the Brothers of St Joseph, and organizes a group of "Auxiliary" priests
- 1837: Brothers of St Joseph and Auxiliary priests united into the "Association of Holy Cross"
- 1840-41: Moreau organizes the Marianites of Holy Cross
- 1841: Holy Cross missionaries in Indiana; foundation to become the University of Notre Dame
- 1842: Diocese of New Brunswick created from territory previously under jurisdiction of Diocese of Charlottetown
- 1843: William Dollard consecrated as first Bishop of New Brunswick; establishes see in Fredericton at St Dunstan's
- 1847: Holy Cross missionaries in Montreal establish College Saint-Laurent
- 1848: Marianite missionaries in New Orleans, USA
- 1848-49: Bishop Dollard moves the seat of the diocese to Saint John
- 1854: Fr Francois-Xavier LaFrance, pastor of St Thomas Parish, Memramcook, opens "seminary" on property next the Church
- 1855: Marianites establish orphanage in New York
- 1857: Definitive approbation of the Congregation of Holy Cross as a clerical institute of pontifical right
- 1860: In April, John Sweeney consecrated third Bishop of Saint John
- 1862: Fr LaFrance forced to close St Thomas Seminary due to difficulties
- 1863: In March, Bishop Sweeney visits New York and learns about the work of Holy Cross, and the general visit of Fr Charles Moreau, nephew and assistant of the founder.
- 1863: In June, Fr C. Moreau visits Saint John, and is taken to Memramcook by the bishop; on his return to France, Moreau recommends dispatching religious to the diocese, which the general council approves
- 1863: In September, Moreau invites Fr Camille Lefebvre of the Canadian Province of Holy Cross to undertake new foundation in Acadia; in October, Lefebvre accepts
- 1864: Bishop Sweeney brings Lefebvre to Memramcook in June; in October, first classes at College Saint-Joseph; 4 CSC priests, 3 CSC brothers, 62 students
- 1868: College Saint-Joseph incorporated, with power to confer degrees

- 1871: Fr Lefebvre becomes first Canadian-born Provincial Superior of Holy Cross in British North America (serves until 1880)
- 1876: In January, faculty and students occupy the newly completed structure in stone
- 1895: Death of Fr Camille Lefebvre
- 1898: St Joseph's College becomes the University of St Joseph's College
- 1928: University of St Joseph's College becomes St Joseph's University
- 1933: Fire destroys the main college building on October 10; class instruction continues in Moncton and Saint John
- 1934: Classes resume in a new college structure on October 20
- 1936: Archdiocese of Moncton created from territory formerly under jurisdiction of Saint John; Universite Saint-Joseph no longer under jurisdiction of latter; Saint John loses its Catholic college
- 1961: Deutsch Royal Commission on Higher Education in New Brunswick recommends (1) closure of English programme at Universite Saint-Joseph (2) transformation of Saint-Joseph into the Universite de Moncton (3) translation of St Thomas University to Fredericton
- 1963: Closure of English programme at Memramcook
- 1967: First non-CSC rector of Universite de Moncton appointed