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A History of the Redemptorists of French Canada

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In July and in October 2011, in the context of the celebrations surrounding the hundredth anniversary of the Ste-Anne-de-Beaupré Province, Paul Laverdure gave the following speech in French. He translated it into English and gave it to the members of the Institute for Redemptorist Historical Studies meeting in Liguori. The original speech was accompanied by power-point slides and music and has been edited and adapted for the Bulletin. The sports analogy in the speech seems most appropriate in this Olympic year!

Austrian Redemptorists arrived in North America in 1832. Beginning in 1833, these missionaries can be found working in and around Michilimakinac and Sault-Sainte-Marie, traveling on the Great Lakes which divide British North America from the United States of America. In these years, Catholic missions in the United States were really directed to the few Catholics in the United States. These were the French Canadians—the Metis families of the early coureurs-de-bois left behind at the fall of New France and the settlers incorporated into an ever-expanding United States gobbling up parts of a retreating British Empire.

The first Canadian vocation to the Redemptorists is François-Xavier Bricôt, who was originally from Pointe-aux-Trembles, a village on

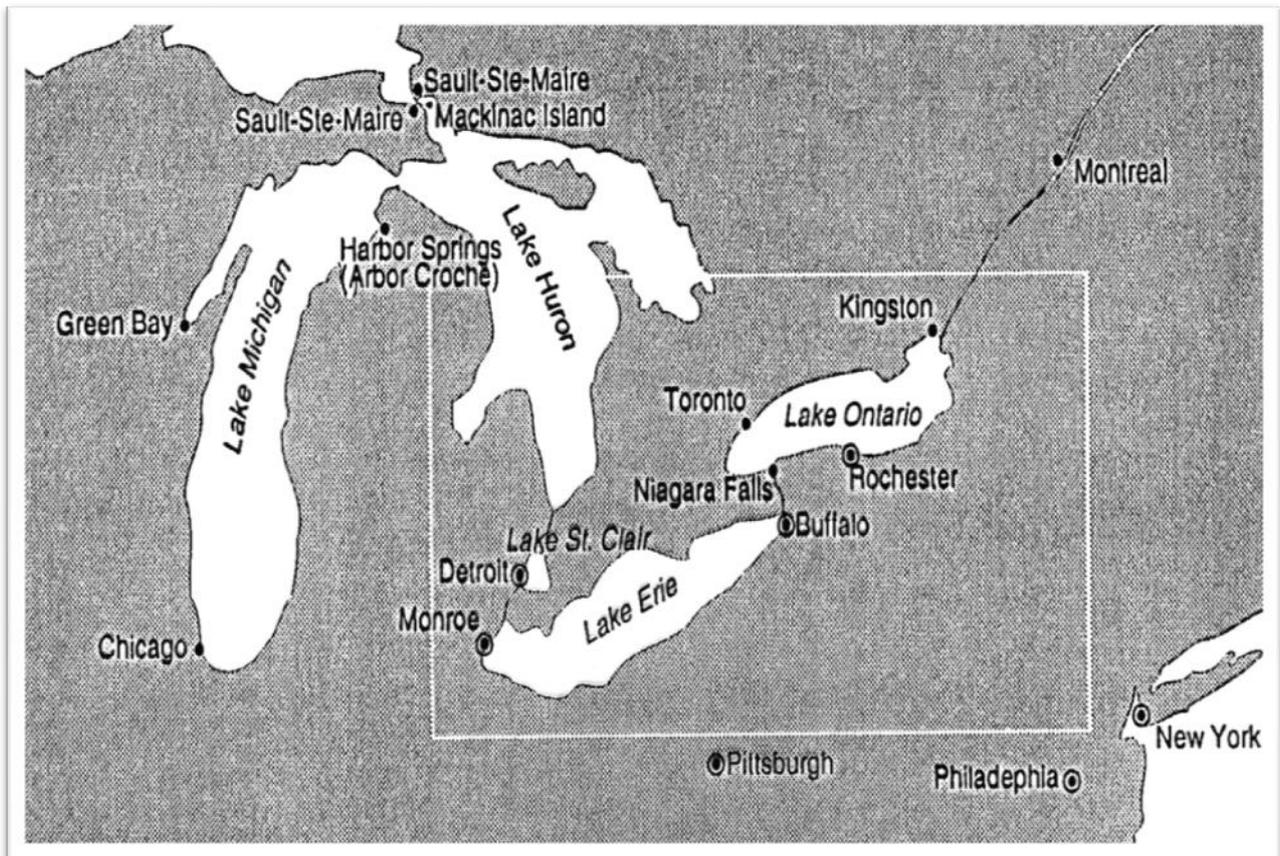
the island of Montreal. In 1852, he joined the Redemptorists established in Michigan where he was a teacher. Expansion into Canada itself, however, did not happen because of a perennial problem: the lack of available men.

Remember: to enter a Congregation, to become a Redemptorist in 1911 was an act of hope. The candidate hoped to save his soul and hoped by his self-sacrifice to save the souls of others – his friends', his family's, even of the community or town where he grew up, or wherever he would be sent to serve. Fundamentally, a Redemptorist wanted to become a saint.

The founder, Saint Alphonsus Liguori promised each and every Redemptorist that if he followed the Rule and persevered until death in the Congregation, he was guaranteed salva-

tion. He who obeyed his superiors – and a superior represented God and was more likely to know the Will of God for the individual – in preaching missions, in prayer, or in whatever work necessary to community life, that Redemptorist was assured of the salvation of his soul. And he was more assured of having worked for the salvation of others than, let us say, a lay person, or a diocesan priest. The work of the Congregation, according to Saint Alphonsus, is to spread the Good News to the most abandoned and to bring the world back to

and the Austrian, Father Clement Hofbauer, canonised in 1909 – are the models and the proofs that a holy Christian and Catholic life are not only possible but are assured in the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer. Redemptorists everywhere baptised babies with variations on the names of Alphonsus or Clement. The name of Gerard became very popular especially among expectant mothers who prayed for an easy birth, because Redemptorists encouraged them to direct their prayers to Gerard Majella.



First Missions by the Redemptorists in North America, 1833-1855

God with the moral theology which Saint Alphonsus himself had perfected. The life and work of a Redemptorist is anchored in hope.

Finally, religious life is a daily struggle for holiness. Religious see themselves as spiritual athletes. The Redemptorist team, the Redemptorist life, and Redemptorist spirituality are the training methods necessary to attain holiness.

The saints of the Congregation – Saint Alphonsus, of course, but also his companion, Brother Gerard Majella, canonised in 1904,

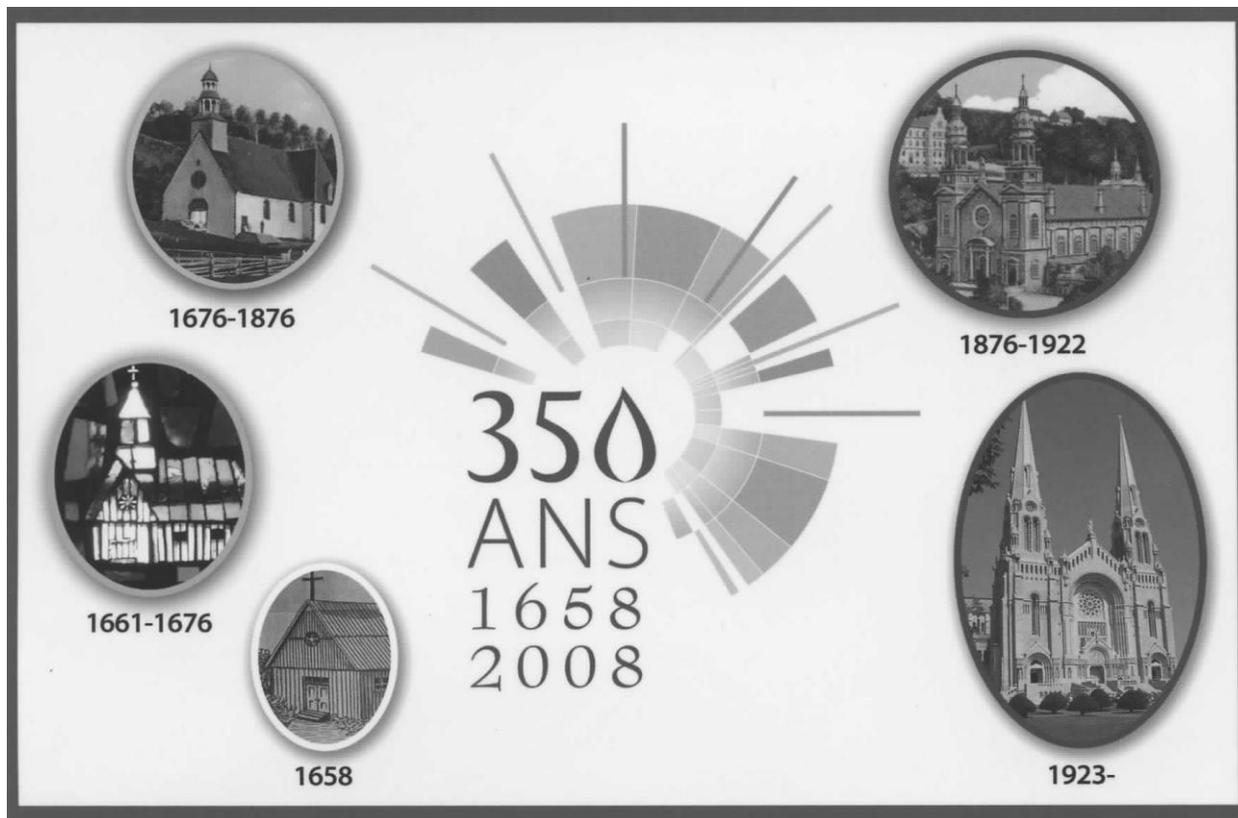
An athlete thrives on competition, and a spiritual athlete in rivalry with secular clergy, with religious clergy from other Congregations, or with his own teammates within the Redemptorist Congregation. In Canada, those who strove for greater holiness for themselves and others struggled mightily to gain yet another area to evangelize. This is important to remember! The Redemptorist struggle in Canada can be summarized in one sentence: do Redemptorists take the parish or the parish mission?

To begin: ever since their earliest years in America, Redemptorists had little contact with French Canada. American Redemptorists turned to German-language parishes which were expanding rapidly and were excellent sources of vocations.

Canadian bishops, however, repeatedly requested that the Redemptorists come and that they bring St. Alphonsus' moral theology and the popular parish mission Redemptorists. They were known to be 'lions in the pulpit and lambs in the confessional' as Théodule Rey-Mermet described them in *Moral Choices: The Moral Theology of Saint Alphonsus Liguori*. When Pope Pius IX granted a plenary indul-

brought Catholicism in Canada as in Europe to new heights just as the Redemptorists arrived.

Yet, English-language Catholics were a minority among Catholics in Canada. The American Redemptorists discovered that with Saint Patrick's alone the Redemptorists would not be known by the majority of Canada's Catholics – the French Canadians – and they lobbied their superiors to accept a foundation among French-speaking Catholics. A suitable place had already been offered, close to Quebec City, in a town called Sainte-Anne-de-Beaupré. The Americans took it over in 1878, but they were short of French-speaking personnel. One year later, in 1879, Rome asked



Ste-Anne-de-Beaupré celebrated its own anniversary of 350 years in 2008 and went through several churches due to fire or the increasing number of pilgrims.

gence to anyone going to confession in a Redemptorist church, the invitations to take over a parish in Canada multiplied. The American Redemptorists accepted the Irish parish of Saint Patrick's in Quebec City. They arrived in a Canada experiencing a religious revival. The influence of Saint Alphonsus' moral theology, the success of the popular missions, the founding of parish benevolent societies, fraternities, and sodalities in every church they visited

the Belgian Redemptorists to take charge of the place. In the care of the Belgians, Beaupré was beautified and saw a phenomenal growth in pilgrimages, so much so that Beaupré was declared a minor basilica in 1887. The continuous improvement of the art and architecture of the pilgrimage church in Beaupré and the growth in the number of pilgrims continue under the French Canadian Redemptorists.

The Belgian Redemptorists differed from the Americans in their interpretation of Redemptorist life. The Belgians, and the French Canadians who were educated by them, believed that Redemptorist identity came from the mission itself and not from the parish where missions took place. Parishes were diocesan responsibility. If a Redemptorist was stationed at a parish, it was so that he could use it as a stepping stone for preaching missions there or elsewhere. Beaupré was an exception, because it was a pilgrimage destination and a perpetual mission. When winter closes in, Redemptorists can be freed for other missions. The American Redemptorists disagreed; they believed that any parish can be a perpetual mission, a valuable source of religious vocations, and a place for Redemptorist community life.

And so the race began between the two Redemptorist groups. The Americans refused to leave Saint Patrick's in Quebec City to the Belgians and began to establish themselves in some of the largest parishes of Canada, in Toronto and in Saint John, New Brunswick.

Encouraged by the Belgians, the French-Canadian Redemptorists quickly established monasteries with small or no parishes attached. The so-called English houses were St. Ann's in the south-western part of Montreal, St. Augustine's in Brandon, Manitoba, and St. Gerard's in Yorkton, Saskatchewan. The so-called French houses were Sainte-Anne-de-Beaupré and St. Alphonse in the Youville or northern district of Montreal. Two houses of formation were officially bilingual: Notre-Dame-du-Bon-Conseil (or Our Lady of Good Counsel) in Ottawa and a dilapidated house in Hochelaga in the south-eastern part of Montreal. Except for Hochelaga, which did not have a parish, each parish foundation was small or in rural areas (even Youville was rural in 1911) and allowed the French-speaking Redemptorists the time to give missions further afield or to deepen their spiritual lives in study, prayer, and community activities. Beaupré had a minor seminary (also called the juvenate), Hochelaga, a former Carmelite monastery, housed the mission's administrative personnel and the novitiate to form future Redemptorists far from the distractions of parish

life and work. Once professed, the young Redemptorist was sent to Ottawa to study with the Oblates of Mary Immaculate – a Congregation inspired in part by the Redemptorists. Each monastery was organized for the work of the mission and housed at least one missionary if not an entire mission band whose revenues helped support the house.

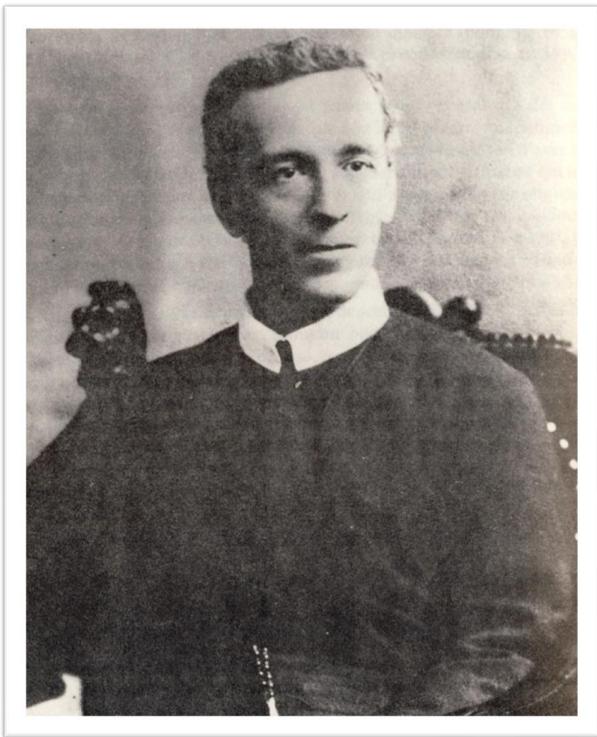
Summary

Sainte-Anne-de-Beaupré, 1878
St. Ann's, Montréal, 1884
Hochelaga, 1895
Saint-Alphonse juvenate, 1896
St. Augustine's,
Brandon, Manitoba, 1898
St. Gerard's,
Yorkton, Saskatchewan, 1904
Notre-Dame-du-Bon-Conseil,
Ottawa, 1905
Saint-Alphonse-d'Youville,
Montreal, 1910
Bilingual Province of Canada,
1911

The growth in vocations and in the number of French-Canadian Redemptorists was so impressive that, in 1893, they were organized into a religious vice-province under the Belgians. The Canadians believed that they no longer needed Belgian help and strove to be entirely independent in order to establish even more mission houses further afield in Canada, but the Belgians feared that the Vice-province would over-extend itself and endanger the Redemptorist mission. The Canadians then suspected the Belgians of holding back the Redemptorist mission in Canada. The Canadian mission field was and is immense and could no longer wait; waiting until there were enough men meant allowing the Americans to take the best places, attract the available vocations, and

to spread their type of Redemptorist organization and life in Canadian minds; they would take the parish missions throughout western Canada.

One hundred years ago, Father General Patrick Murray in Rome decreed that the Belgian Vice-province of Canada would become a province separate from the Belgians on July 26, 1911, Saint Ann's Feast Day. Father Alphonse Lemieux, the first Canadian Vice-Provincial, became the first Provincial of the nineteenth province of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer. He wrote to Father General Murray, "There is rejoicing everywhere."



Alphonse Lemieux, the first Canadian-born Vice-provincial and later the first Provincial

How many Canadian Redemptorists were there in this new Province? Not counting the students, thirty-four. And five were English-speaking – they were called the Irish, even the Scottish-Canadian, John McPhail, and the young George Daly, who was born in Canada of an English-speaking father and a French-Canadian mother. At the creation of the Province, most of the thirty-two Belgians chose to return to Belgium or to go to other Belgian missions. They left for the Antilles, the Congo, and the Ukrainian missions of western Canada,

leaving French Canada severely weakened. A dozen Belgians remained behind and died in Canada.

The western missions among the Ukrainians and other eastern Europeans were organized by the Belgian Father Achiel Delaere, a friend of George Daly, and they benefited from the help of some of the French Canadians. These Belgians established a new monastery entirely dedicated to the Byzantine rite and to the languages of Eastern Europe: Our Mother of Perpetual Help (commonly called St. Mary's) in Yorkton, Saskatchewan became the mother house of a new Eastern Christian branch of the Congregation. This new mission was developed first by the Belgians, then was cared for by the French Canadians, was briefly in the care of the English Canadians and then itself became a separate Province.

People forget that the Sainte-Anne-de-Beaupre Province was bilingual in 1911. The monthly magazine dedicated to St. Anne was also published in both languages. In this tiny Canadian Province, there were too few English houses or Redemptorists to think of establishing a separate vice-province, much less another province. Furthermore, the Americans and the few English Canadians working with them did not want to give their three houses to the new Canadian Province. St. Patrick's in Quebec City, St. Patrick's in Toronto, and St. Peter's in Saint John, New Brunswick remained the responsibility of the American Redemptorists and served as a barrier to the expansion of the Belgian way of Redemptorist life and mission in English Canada. To see rival Redemptorist houses even in the same city was embarrassing. Beaupre, in those days before highways, was seen as far enough away from Quebec City..

The Catholic population of Canada itself was divided. Those who were Liberal (or Red) tended to go hear mass at St. Patrick's in Quebec City. Those who were Conservative (or Blue) could be seen at French-Canadian services. Blue became an official colour for Quebec separatists. The Sainte-Anne Province bulletin, *Notre Famille*, reported—a bit late, I believe—in 1989 that "Blue is IN." A preference

for the colour blue came to the fore rather early among French-Canadian Redemptorists and remained so until just recently..

The English-Canadian Catholic vision for the Church in Canada rests on the idea that Canada is English and, for the most part, Protestant. For Catholics to participate in the life of the country, they should at the very least speak the language of the majority of the people. For the English-speaking minority within the Catholic Church of Canada, and within the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer, this idea was incredibly powerful. This English-speaking minority created a faction to promote their – English – candidates to important positions within the Church. The French-Canadian Redemptorists believed that naming George Day – who was bilingual –as the director of the minor seminary would help appease matters.



The young George Daly, director of the minor seminary (juvenate) Saint-Alphonse in Beaupré. He influenced every Redemptorist Province in Canada.

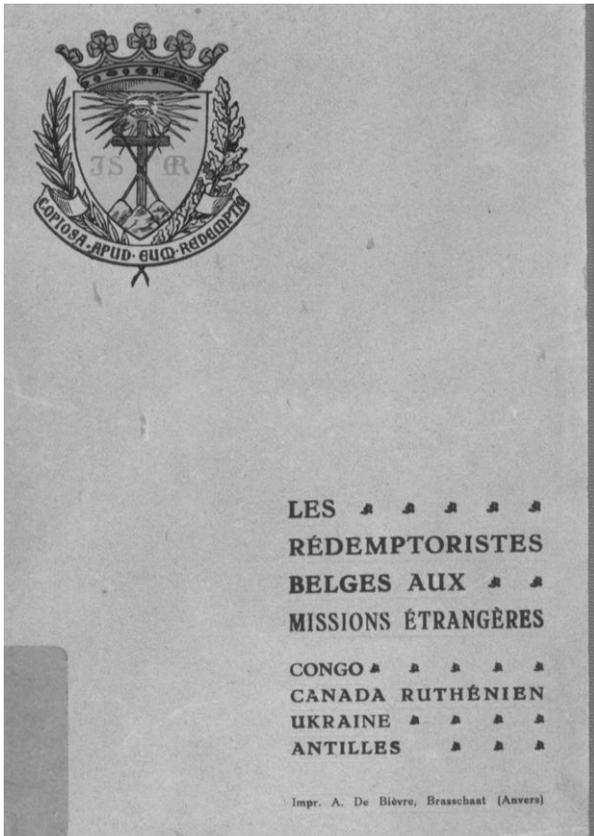
This was not enough for the other English-speaking Redemptorists within the Canadian Province. They worked to unite the English-

speaking Canadians in the Beaupre Province to those within the American (now called the Baltimore) Province. To French-Canadian astonishment, Father Provincial Lemieux agreed that English Canada would be better served by English-speaking Redemptorists and that western Canada required missionaries who knew English rather than French. Beaupré's English houses--St. Ann's in Montreal, St. Augustine's in Brandon, Manitoba, and St. Gerard's in Yorkton, Saskatchewan--were transferred to the Americans in 1912 to help establish the Vice-Province of Toronto only one year after the establishment of the Canadian Province. Catholic Canada outside Quebec would become English. In exchange, the French-Canadian Redemptorists received permission to give parish missions anywhere in Canada and among the French-speaking Catholics of the United States.

The First World War of 1914 allowed the English Canadians to separate from the Americans (who did not enter the war as readily as English Canada). The twentieth province of the Congregation, Toronto, was created in 1918. The English Canadians established two formation houses: a minor seminary (the juvenate) in Brockville and a major seminary (the studentate) in Woodstock, both in Ontario. The Woodstock seminary received a few French-Canadian students from Beaupré to learn English so that they could work in Beaupré's bilingual mission fields and in publishing English magazines, pamphlets, and books. As before, English Canadians established small monasteries in large cities: Vancouver, Edmonton, Calgary, Saskatoon, and Regina and they relied on large parishes for vocations. The French-Canadians hardly established any monasteries, accepted only small parishes, and filled the houses they did have with dozens of Redemptorists. For the longest time, they relied on parish missions to attract vocations.

So, even comparing the many foundations of the two provinces—Toronto and Beaupré—it is clear that Beaupré established many fewer monasteries in these early years and even those did not represent a great net increase in monasteries, since many were merely established when an earlier monastery was closed.

When the Redemptorist parish mission had ended, French-Canadians moved on. Most monasteries were only missionary stations. Sherbrooke in the Eastern Townships south of Montreal and Saint-Vital in Manitoba (quickly replaced by Sainte-Anne-des-Chênes) were built to replace Brandon and Yorkton sold to the Americans.



This is a sample publication by the Belgian Province which attests to the fact that the Belgians left for other missions once French Canada successfully formed an autonomous province.

Thus, beginning in 1912, we have the situation that exists today. There are three Canadian Redemptorist administrations according to language. The Canadian Province of 1911 divided after one year into the French-language Sainte-Anne-de-Beaupré Province, the English-language Toronto Vice-Province (now the Edmonton-Toronto Province) and the Ruthenian Vice-Province (now the Yorkton Province) for eastern Europeans. Redemptorists were the first religious Congregation in Canada and perhaps in the world to organize themselves according to the linguistic realities lived by Catholics within a single country; they were the first to abandon the tradition of over a

thousand years that organized Catholics territorially, into parishes, dioceses and, with the rise of religious orders and congregations, into

Summary

In 1912, the Canadian Province splits into the Sainte-Anne-de-Beaupré, and the Toronto Vice-Province (under Baltimore)

Beaupré establishes St. Mary's, Yorkton, Saskatchewan, 1913
 Sherbrooke, Quebec, 1913
 Saint-Vital, Manitoba, 1913
 Ste-Anne-des-Chênes, Manitoba, 1916

The Toronto Vice-province establishes London, Ontario, 1912

*Regina, Saskatchewan, 1913
 East Kildonan, Manitoba, 1914*

geographic provinces. Redemptorists organized themselves by language to be more efficient in their work among Canadians. Other Congregations in Canada waited until the tensions of the First World War forced them to divide along language lines, and not always as peacefully as did the Redemptorists.

Although blocked from establishing monasteries in western Canada by the Belgians and the English Canadians, the Beaupré Province did not worry, because it preferred the popular parish mission. In contrast to the other provinces in North America, Beaupré, following the Belgian model, preferred to fill a few monasteries with dozens of Redemptorists before establishing other monasteries. The year 1922 gave a new proof that holiness was possible

among the Redemptorists and especially among Redemptorists living in the French-Canadian fashion. The cause of Father Alfred Pampalon, a young Canadian who died in 1986 after several years of illness, was introduced in Rome. Furthermore, the major fire which destroyed the Basilica, the monastery, and most of the juvenate in Beaupré in March 1922 absorbed almost all of the French-Canadian Redemptorist Province's energies and finances. The novices were placed in Sherbrooke and that house began to grow in size and in importance in the life of the Province.



Alfred Pampalon, 1867-1896

Vietnam

The crowding in the remaining Redemptorist houses was quickly corrected by Cardinal Van Rossum, a Redemptorist, of course, who asked his Congregation to evangelize Indochina. So, only fourteen years after its creation, three years after the fire, the Sainte-Anne Province (in 1925) answered the call for missions even further afield. Sixty-six French-Canadian Redemptorists went to Indochina, now Vietnam. Eight died there. The others returned to Canada exhausted, broken or, in 1975, expelled. They lived through three wars: the French,

Japanese, and the Communist. They worked through the indifference of the people or the competition from other religions. Within a short time, nonetheless, buildings, missions, and an indigenous Christian population as well as local vocations flourished. The Saigon Province was created in 1964. When one of the founders of the mission, Father Labonté, died in 2005, Vietnam had 250 Redemptorists organized into 16 communities. In 1997, the cause of the Vietnamese Redemptorist brother, Marcel Van, was introduced in Rome. That which the French Canadians founded, far from withering from communist pressure, continued to grow and now readies itself to send missionaries to Canada.

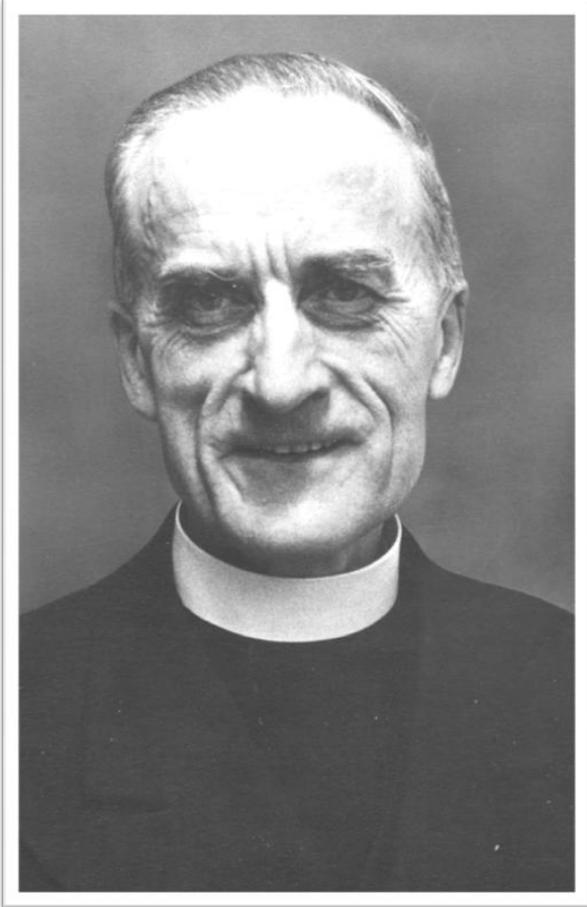
Japan

Beginning in 1946, the Holy See asked missionaries to go to Japan, because the end of the Second World War seemed an ideal time to evangelize the Japanese people. On May 8, 1948, as part of a flood of Christian missionaries entering Japan, three French-Canadian Redemptorists arrived in the diocese of Yokohama. Eventually, around forty Redemptorists from Beaupré followed them to Japan. To keep from being surpassed by the French-Canadians in the race to the Far East, the English-Canadian Redemptorists tried mightily to arrive on Japan's shores first, but their boat docked in Yokohama a few days later. The two religious provinces divided up Japan. Beaupré opted for Tokyo and the north. The Toronto Province chose the rural centre: the Maizuru mission.



Vietnamese refugees with icon of OLPH

In 1955, with the help of nine Vietnamese confreres, the Beaupré Province established the Tokyo Vice-province with twenty priests and ten brothers. The houses were in Tokyo (Ueno, Hatsudai), Kamakura, Ofuna, Kami-Suwa, and Nagasaki in the south, leap-frogging the English Canadians. Dreams of Catholic glory in Japan, as in the entire world reach their peak in the 1960s. Construction reaches new heights in 1964 in Ofuna, new churches and monasteries in Hatsudai and in Kami-Suwa.



Louis-Philippe Lévesque, 1890-1959.

One of George Daly's students, Lévesque became juvenate director, provincial, consultor general, and missionary to Japan, where he became the first Vice-Provincial. He died in Kamakura, Japan.

Unfortunately for the French Canadians, vocations were few. So, German Redemptorists arrived to take care of southern Japan. Beaupré transferred Nagasaki to the German-supervised Vice-province of Kagoshima in 1977. The English-Canadian Redemptorists, always fewer in numbers in Japan as in Canada than the French-Canadians, and struggling with insufficient personnel in both Japan and Canada, decided to withdraw from the Japanese missions

in 1982, transferring the Maizuru mission to Tokyo. Vocations are still few in a population where Christianity is seen as a foreign religion. Tokyo and Kagoshima began discussions and recently voted to join their forces. Has all spiritual rivalry between the Redemptorists in Japan come to an end?

Summary

Beaupré fire 1922
 Indochina, 1925
 Another fire in Beaupré, 1926
 Desbiens, Lac-St-Jean, 1926
 Estcourt, 1920
 Vice-Province of Hué, 1930
 Mont-St-Joseph Seminary, in
 Aylmer, Quebec, 1939,
 St. Gérard, Ottawa, 1940
 Devonshire, Ontario, 1943
 Moncton, New Brunswick, 1947
 Kirkland Lake, Ontario, 1948
 Mission of Japan, 1948
 Vice-Province of Tokyo, 1955
 Bouctouche, New Brunswick,
 1956
 Lac Grand-Poisson-Blanc, 1956
 Saint-Gérard Hermitage, Mont-
 tabelle, 1957
 Ile Ste-Thérèse, 1957
 Maison Saint-Clément, 1958
 Morinville, 1959
 Hamilton, 1960
 Saigon Province, 1964
 Car-Rouge, 1965
 Uruguay, 1966
 St-Edouard, Alberta, 1966
 Elk Point, Alberta, 1966
 Georgetown, 1967
 Beauport, 1967

Vatican Council

Redemptorists who served as military chaplains during the Second World War returned to fill the Redemptorist ranks and, with the graduates from the huge seminary in Aylmer, to help the religious revival that took place in Canada during the 1950s. The missions become larger and more impressive, covering entire pastoral districts, dioceses, and regions. Twenty years ago, I had the chance to interview a number of elderly missionaries who all stated that the 1950s were not the Dark Ages for Quebec but years filled with light and hope. Although Quebec was economically, politically and socially conservative—to avoid the word ‘repressed’—religiously, a revival prefiguring the changes of the Second Vatican Council was already happening in Quebec. In 1959, there were almost 300 great missions, about 1200 shorter missions, 26 mission renewals, with almost 700,000 faithful in attendance and a half-million confessions heard by the Redemptorist missionary priests.

At the start of the 1960s, the Province reached almost 400 members. The monasteries were full, the houses were organized, and the churches were growing in size and beauty. The Beaurpé Province, with its few parishes, made a major contribution to the cultural life and patrimony of the country: in architecture, decorative arts, and in music. For this short history, Céline Morin Simard, the organist at Ste-Anne-de-Beaurpé for the past forty years, wrote a background paper on the history of music at the Basilica in which she demonstrates clearly that Sainte-Anne-de-Beaurpé was the musical centre of the Province with innovative albums, the female choirs, pop, folk, and rock-and-roll liturgies. Where did all this music come from? It came out of the educational institutions: the juvenate in Beaurpé and then the studendate in Aylmer. Thirteen students in Aylmer under Georges Boisjoli combined folk and rock-n-roll to create the popular “Les Alleluias” (who also toured in English as “The Clergymen”) and formed a kind of Christian music which got massive air-play on the local radio stations of French Canada. These Redemptorists were later inducted into Quebec’s Rock-n-Roll Museum.

The Council, the renewal of the Church, and the sociology of French Canada where families became smaller and less likely to foster a vocation also brought a re-evaluation of religious life. To become a teacher, a nurse, a psychologist, or a social worker no longer had to happen within the context of a religious vocation. Many left religious life and turned toward politics to protect the language and culture of Quebec.

In 2011, there are approximately eighty French-Canadian Redemptorists. Obviously, over the past fifty years, the Sainte-Anne-de-Beaurpé Province suffered the same vocational crisis as other religious communities in North America and Europe. Religious superiors suffered the trauma of living through wave after wave of departures and then the illnesses and deaths of aging members with no vocations to replace them. More and more work was left to fewer and fewer people; and then to a single Redemptorist if not the laity. Exhaustion, cynicism, and burn-outs increased. Several began to think and then to talk about the end of the Redemptorist mission in French Canada, if not the end of religious life itself. Many anniversary celebrations sadly signalled the departure of a community and the closing of a religious house, even of a parish. Still, depression and paralysis did not affect every Redemptorist.

At the same time as the Council spread confusion, it gave a mandate to Redemptorists to renew their lives with new Constitutions and Statutes and higher standards in psychological maturity and in education. Most left their habits behind and tried new kinds of missions. For example, the Redemptorist Brothers participated even more in liturgies, parish, and catechetical activities. Novices and students of philosophy and theology who moved from place to place, and from Redemptorist school to other schools or universities testify to the changes in the quantity and the quality of the Redemptorist vocation in the contemporary period. Theology students left Aylmer for the University of Montreal in 1969. Cap-Rouge near Quebec City was established in 1970 for the philosophy students. At the end of the General Chapter in 1969, the Province created

a Provincial Chapter which became the highest authority within the Province. The Provincial, as well as his councillors who had been named by Rome in the past, were now elected. Redemptorists received greater freedom in choosing their missions, and they were urged to become personally and individually responsible for their missions, their daily activities, and their own spending. Between 1960 and 1970, the Province, along with the Catholic world, adapted to exciting times.

The Council passed a decree on modern communication, which rejoiced the hearts of all who worked in the publishing arm of the Province. The magazine underwent a colourful face-lift. Magazine subscriptions fell from an inflated 300,000 (several had been simply given away) to a solid 50,000, the same respectable number it had in the 1920s. The English magazine, *The Annals*, won the prize for best religious magazine from the Catholic Press Association of the United States and Canada in 1969 and continued to spread religious news, pastoral advice, and catechetical information throughout the English-speaking world, mainly in the Commonwealth and Ireland. In contrast, the English-Canadian Redemptorist magazine was closed down and subscribers were told to sign up for the American Redemptorist magazine, the *Liguorian*, not the *Beaupré Annals*. The French-Canadian publishing house threw itself into publishing booklets and books between 1970 and 2010, reaching four million items by 2010. In 1989, the *Beaupré* Province started an annual fair dedicated to showcasing books and publishers specializing in religion. Five thousand visitors came to *Beaupré* for the fair. Double that number, ten thousand, visited in 1990. The growth of new forms of communications – radio and television – went hand-in-hand with the decline of the formerly popular parish missions. One Redemptorist (Father Motard, one of the Alleluia singers) wrote, « Feu le Prédicateur » (The death of the preacher) to underline the disappearance of preaching as a pastoral service within the Church. He exaggerated, but the decline was obvious and Redemptorists therefore worked to renew the parish missions. The novenas at the Basilica were sent

over the radio beginning in 1932. In 1969, another step was taken : Father Émile Legault went into television with 26 episodes. Missionaries continue to preach missions and retreats and add Cursillos, Marriage Encounters, Renewals, prayer groups, twilight retreats, weekend retreats, distance education Bible courses among several other movements within the Church. With modern transportation, the pilgrimage season at Sainte-Anne's Basilica begins earlier than ever and ends later. More than a million pilgrims visited *Beaupré* each year beginning in 1978 and between twenty and forty pastoral workers are needed during the year to deal with them all.

Uruguay



During the Vatican Council, another mission was offered to the French Canadians. All missionary eyes were on Latin America; when Argentina asked for help with their mission in Uruguay, *Beaupré* sent three men in 1966 to help out. In 1968, responsibility for the region was transferred from Argentina to *Beaupré*. An entire generation of young French Canadian Catholics, of which I was one, received postcards and small gifts of typical leather work from relatives or friends working in Uruguay, and were inspired to learn Spanish, the language of an overwhelming number of

Catholics in the world. Barros Blancos and Tapes, two Redemptorist houses in Uruguay, became familiar words to French-Canadian youth, who dreamed of visiting Montevideo, just as a former generation dreamed of visiting Tokyo.

Differences in thinking between the Canadians and the Uruguayans and, more importantly, the lack of vocations in both Canada and Uruguay brought the French Canadians to withdraw from Uruguay and hand the territory back to Argentina in 1990.

Haiti



In the meantime, the French-Canadian Redemptorists accepted the challenge from the Belgians of a new mission in Haiti. For several years, individual French-Canadian Redemptorists had gone to the Antilles to help the Belgians. Some could be found in Porto Rico, Grenada, and especially in Haiti. The Canadians took over the Haitian mission field in 1980 with the specific task of establishing educational institutions so that the Haitian Redemptorists become self-sufficient in personnel. So, now, the Canadians serve as coaches to a rising young team in Haïti which quickly became a region, one step before becoming a vice-province, but the recent earthquake naturally delays the material growth of the Haitian Redemptorist mission.

New parish missions

The American Redemptorists rejoiced over the canonization in 1977 of the Redemptorist

Bishop John Neumann. Since he was one of the first Redemptorists in America, and a great promoter of the parish as the main field of Redemptorist evangelization, his canonization marked a turning point in French-Canadian Redemptorist thinking. For several years, the popular parish mission had been declining. In 1984, the General Government in Rome decreed that the parish itself was a mission of the Congregation. Now that the world-wide Congregation had decided that parishes themselves were missions, then the Sainte-Anne Province readily accepted more parishes.



With its experience of bilingual missions and of the tiny French parishes in Alberta, Manitoba, and in northern Ontario (one house, in Timmins, was rather close to and in competition with the English-Canadian Redemptorist parish in Minnow Lake, Sudbury), the Province sent a missionary team to Welland, Ontario, to revive and reorganize four parishes in the Niagara peninsula. In 1989, another parish project began in the Gaspé of Quebec. A new missionary house was established in Tracadie, New Brunswick, in 2005. So, French-Canadian Redemptorists joined the English-Canadian Redemptorists in their ideas about what a Redemptorist does in Canada.

Conclusion

Obviously, then, the history of the French-Canadian Redemptorists is unusual. It begins in Belgium – not in France or in Canada as it seems every other religious congregation or order had up to the end of the 19th century. The

way to the Canadian mission field had been smoothed for the Redemptorists by the moral theology of Saint Alphonsus, and the field became a contest between two groups of Redemptorists. On the one hand we saw the Americans and the English Canadians enthusiastically adopt the parish while on the other hand we saw the Belgians and the French Canadians prefer the parish mission. Now, both groups preached parish missions and both had parishes, but the emphasis was significantly different. The Congregation became the first Catholic religious congregation, perhaps in the world, to divide itself according to language. And after a lengthy spiritual rivalry on the mission field, Redemptorists in North America created a new type of mission activity. Still organized in mission bands, they united the mobility and extraordinary preaching which were their hallmarks in the popular parish mission and the cause for so many nicknames – Redemp-terrorist and Redemp-tourist being

two – with zeal in parish work to create renewed, even model parishes. These parish communities then were to serve as centres of hope for an entire pastoral district, a diocese, or even a region suffering from a lack of priests and practically abandoned parish buildings. After decades of practical testing, the General Government in Rome accepted and promoted this new type of mission activity as an authentically Redemptorist work. Every Redemptorist in Canada agreed that the Redemptorist mission of hope to the most abandoned should adapt to a new situation, but the mission itself would never be abandoned.

This change in thinking, from friendly rivalry to cooperation among Redemptorist provinces, happened slowly. Let us not exaggerate: there has always been cooperation. Some Redemptorists studied in other provinces forming lasting friendships, professors spent some time, even years, working in other provinces. Disas-



ters, such as fires, earthquakes, and financial troubles have always brought help from the other provinces to Beaupré and Beaupré has helped others. Even in the earliest years of the Province, there has been formal cooperation. The first Father Provincial, Alphonse Lemieux, was removed from office (there were no elections), because Father General Murray called him to Rome to work; Lemieux died in Rome. Other French Canadians have spent their lives in Rome, in administration or in the teaching of moral theology. Continuing our sports analogy, Sainte-Anne-de-Beaupré recently showed that it can serve as a spiritual and material coach for other Redemptorists, as in Uruguay and Haiti, by sending men and money.

The decision taken a hundred years ago stands. English Canadian Redemptorists would take English Canada as its mission field. The French Canadians would work anywhere in North America and even the world.

Ever since the General Chapter of 2003 agreed to the restructuring of the Congregation and Father General asked in 2005 that the practically autonomous provinces establish international communities, cooperation has increased. Beaupré enthusiastically accepted the idea and established an international community to work at the Basilica with the pilgrims who come from around the world and speak languages other than French. A new era began when the Province abandoned its reluctance and joined the interprovincial novitiate, first in Chicago and now in Toronto. Language is still a sore point, however, and only the future will know whether the novitiate answers Beaupré's needs.

In conclusion, the French Canadian Redemptorists have left their mark on the religious life of Canada, Vietnam, Japan, Uruguay, and Haiti. Saints Alphonsus, Gerard, Anne, and Our Lady of Perpetual Help are known throughout Canada and, perhaps one day, Father Pampalon, who was declared Venerable by Pope John Paul II in 1991 will be, too. In 1993, a new Redemptorist-sponsored fraternity, named after Saint Alphonsus, was estab-

lished in Quebec City; some of its members venerate Father Pampalon.

This brief overview can only give the broadest outlines of the hundred years behind the Sainte-Anne Province, but it does show that the French-Canadian Redemptorists have always tried to bring hope to others, despite the decline in their numbers since the 1960s. Even if the French Canadian contingent seems smaller, older, with an average age of 73, and with not much of a future, we need to remind ourselves that there are almost eighty of them, compared to 1911 when there was half that. While there are only now a dozen under the age of fifty, we must also remember that the Redemptorists only accept more mature, more educated men, usually already with a university degree, and so they are naturally older. Age is unimportant when the race is spiritual. If the minor seminarians are not included, there were more than a thousand men who went through the French-Canadian Redemptorist educational institutions. Half of them left to join other congregations, become diocesan priests, or to live their lives as educated lay people, each of them contributing to society in his own way. Almost five hundred Redemptorists have died in the Province over the past hundred years, each of them comforted by the hope given by Saint Alphonsus' promise that they would end their race in heaven.

With their work among the most abandoned whether in Villeray, Montreal, or among the St-Alphonse Fraternity in Quebec City, among pilgrims seeking faith or the religious tourists in Ste-Anne-de-Beaupré, with radio, television, books, and magazines, the Redemptorists have remained faithful to the ideals of the Redemptorist popular mission, to reach the greatest number. Within their spiritual journeys, the Redemptorists have to get over the trauma of a purely physical decline; they may be replaced by volunteers from Vietnam or from Haiti, but is this terribly important? The novices at the interprovincial novitiate in Toronto have come from the United States, the Antilles, England, Scotland, Ireland, Mexico, and Vietnam. These novices and the theology students who recently arrived from Vietnam will force the Canadians to believe that the Redemptorist

mission and Canada's contribution will overflow, as George Daly often said, the map of Canada.

Together, the French-Canadian Redemptorists with Redemptorists from around the world and their friends will overcome human limitations and failings to continue the work begun a hundred years ago, to bring hope in a plentiful redemption. There is always hope that these men – these Redemptorists who are also our sons, our cousins, our brothers, our uncles, and our friends – will always be spiritual athletes. We will applaud when they overcome hurdles; we will suffer with them when they fail. A spiritual life is possible; the proofs stand before us. We are here to cheer our athletes on the hundredth anniversary of their team, the Sainte-Anne-de-Beaupré Province and to wish them the prize that never fades. ***

Thanks are due to the Ste-Anne-de-Beaupré Province, to the *Revue Sainte-Anne* for access and permissions to use their archives and photographs, and to Serge Laverdure, CSSR, who insisted I write this speech and would not take 'No' for an answer.

Recommended further reading ... in your Redemptorist house library ...

Frederick Jones, CSSR, *Alphonsus de Liguori: The Saint of Bourbon Naples* (Dublin: Redemptorist Publications, 1992).

Theodule Rey-Mermet, CSSR, *Moral Choices: The Moral Theology of Saint Alphonsus Liguori* (Liguori, Missouri: Liguori Publications, 1998).

Paul Laverdure, *Redemption and Renewal: The Redemptorists of English Canada, 1834-1994* (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1996).

----, *Redemption and Ritual: The Eastern-rite Redemptorists of North America, 1906-2006* (Yorkton, Saskatchewan: Redeemer's Voice Press, 2007).

And of course, there is the weblink to the texts, photographs, television interviews surrounding the centenary celebrations:

www.redemptoristes.ca/100e.html



Group Photograph of the Celebrations of September 29, 2011

FOR YOUR CALENDARS:

Our next IRHS/NA meeting will be at
Shore Road, New Jersey.
The dates are **October 1-5, 2011**
(Monday to Friday).

We will plan to gather on
Monday evening (October 1st) at
Shore Road for a gaudeamus, and leave
on Friday morning (October 5th).

The address for Shore Road is:

Redemptorist Provincial Residence

7509 Shore Road
Brooklyn, NY 11209-2807
Phone: 636-464-6999

If you wish to attend and help in
organizing the 2013
conference open to the public,

Contact Rich Luberti, CSSR
rich_luberti@compuserve.com
(734) 693-2033

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It is with deep sorrow that we announce the
death of one of the original members of the
Institute, Fr. George Rassley, CSSR

Father Rassley entered into eternal life on May
8, 2012, at St. Clement Health Care Center for
the Redemptorists in Liguori, Mo. He was 83
years old. He contributed several articles to
the *Redemptorist History Bulletin*, was well-
known as a librarian, an archivist, an historian,
a photographer, and a packrat of all things Re-
demptorist.

Although Father George suffered from several
health problems over many years, and no one
could begrudge his leaving this world for a
better place, his encyclopaedic knowledge of
the Redemptorists in North America will be
sorely missed. ***

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