
PASTORAL VISITATION TO "THE CRADLE OF THE MADAWASKA"



The parish of Saint Basile is rich in history. In his *Histoire du Madawaska*, Father Thomas Albert relates its story from the beginnings to the early twentieth century. The beautiful book, *Saint-Basile Berceau du Madawaska 1792-1992*, published at the parish's bicentennial, gives us detailed accounts of the area, even going back as far as prehistoric times in order to give a better presentation of the Maliseet people.

MOTHER PARISH

Situated in the Madawaska region and conscious of its bicentennial past, Saint-Basile Parish is justly proud of its origins and of its name of Mother-Church of the Madawaska. At the beginning of its history it was comprised of land on both sides of the Saint John River, from the Allagash River in Maine up to the Tobique. Colonised in 1785 with the arrival of Acadian pioneers, erected into a parish in 1792, Saint-Basile is the oldest parish along the entire Saint John River Valley. The first resident priest at Saint-Basile was Father François Ciquart, a Sulpician priest (1794-1798), who ministered along the Saint John River Valley down to Fredericton.

MANY PASTORS

The mandates given to the first pastors were very short-term: Fathers Charles Hott (1804-1806), Jean-Baptiste Kelly (1808-1810), Louis Raby (1810-1813), Louis Marcoux (1813-1818), André Lagarde (1818-1821), Michel Ringuet (1821-1826), Élie Sirois (1826-1831), Romuald Mercier (1831-1835). An exception to this rule was Father Antoine Langevin who ministered from 1835 to 1857. He left his mark on the Madawaska. He was followed by Fathers Hugh McGuirk (1857-1869), Jean-Baptiste Doucet (1869-1871), Théodule Dugal (1871-1875); it was during Fr. Dugal's pastorate that the Religious Hospitallers of Saint Joseph arrived in October, 1873. Then there were Fathers Trefflé Cordier (1875-1876) and Thomas Barry (1876-1880), followed by Father Louis-Napoléon Dugal (1880-1929): in the course of his 49 years' ministry, Msgr. Dugal became a legend throughout the Madawaska region. Then came Fathers Jos. Paul Levesque (1930-1932), Benjamin Saindon (1932-1948), Msgr. Ernest Lang (1948-1970), Rino Albert (1970-1984), and Napoléon Michaud (1984-1995). The actual pastor is Father Romain Trépanier, a Marist priest; the parish comprises 3 410 people in 1026 families. Chair of the parish council is Mrs. Viola Ouellet and the parish economic affairs committee chairman is Mr. Georges Boucher.

EVOCATIVE

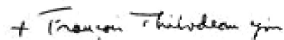
It was under the evocative name of Saint Basil that Bishop Jean-François Hubert of Québec to which the Madawaska belonged, that the new parish was erected November 12, 1792 in the Upper Saint John River Valley. Bishop Hubert has this to say: "*Since the mission in this place is commonly held in June, we have and do name as titular patron Saint Basile, Bishop of Caesarea and Doctor of the Church, whose feast day is June 14.*" Because of recent liturgical changes, the feast day is now celebrated January 2. This holy bishop who lived from 330 to 379 was one of the initiators of monastic life in the East. He was a champion of the orthodox faith; his *Treatise on the Holy Spirit* influenced the work of the First Council of Constantinople. Of him it is said that seldom are found in one man as much intellectual rigour, moral strength, and faith.

NOTABLE MEETINGS

On Friday April 7 I had the opportunity to meet teachers and pupils of the École Maillet, especially the Grade 6 with whom I was able to exchange for an hour and a half: their serious questions indicate the depth of their thinking. Forty-two of them were confirmed at the Sunday Mass. On Saturday, April 8 I visited the Religious Hospitallers of St. Joseph and the residents of the Cloutier Residence, the Senator Fournier Residence, and the Marchand Residence. As it was the episcopal anniversary of Bishop Gérard Dionne, I was able to record a few memorable souvenirs. The meal at the Golden Age Club, with so many parishioners, was memorable: what a wonderful welcome full of simplicity and fellowship. After having admired the remarkable fresco in the Golden Age Club, Father Romain Trépanier and I visited the Claude Picard Studio; several of his works recall the history of the Madawaska and evoke the founding people. After a short visit to the Madawaska Shopping Centre and a meeting with the parish pastoral council, there was supper followed by the Eucharistic Celebration. I gratefully thank the pastor and all who were involved in making this visit to our mother-parish a success.

SACRAMENTAL PREPARATION

During the evening of April 7 I had the pleasure of meeting those in the Edmundston Deanery involved in sacramental preparation. The words of Father Normand Provencher, O.M.I., quoted by Fr. Rino Thériault in his welcoming statement, were a good introduction to this demanding yet wonderful ministry: *"Each in its own way, the sacraments shape Christian identity and contribute to its concrete realisation. A Christian is a baptised, confirmed person who is invited to the Lord's table, a sinner reconciled with God and community, a sick person who has been comforted, and one married in the Lord. Sacraments always address believers in their individuality et their 'I'. Hence the importance of a personal undertaking for each sacrament. The sacraments are normally celebrated within a community since faith necessarily creates an 'us'. While shaping the believer's Christian identity, they give rise to and renew the Church."* [Liturgie, foi et culture, Vol. 34, p. 32] A grateful Thank You to those who collaborate so wonderfully in this task of evangelisation and celebration.



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