

Bishop James Rogers and the History of the  
Diocese of New Brunswick



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## Chapter I

### Bishop Rogers' Early Days

James Rogers, the son of John Rogers and Mary Britten, was born in Ireland at Mount Charles, Co. Donegal, on the eleventh of July 1826. Before he had completed his fifth year of age his father and mother left Ireland for Canada. They brought the little boy with them, leaving behind to the care of Mrs. Rogers' married sister an infant daughter that they feared to expose to the hardships of the journey. They started in March 1831, their destination being Quebec, but due to lack of provisions, the captain found himself obliged to put into a place called Wallace in Cumberland County, N.S. Feeling too fatigued to continue their journey, the Rogers family decided to remain in Nova Scotia- at least for the present. The captain and crew parted with them with feelings of sharp regret for they, and particularly the small Jamie with his precocious and sedate ways, had become endeared to all aboard. Even at the early age, he avowed his holy ambition of one day becoming a priest and gravely reproved the rough but good-hearted sailors when he heard them use profane language. They were amused and not seldom embarrassed when this precocious little lad asked them if they had said their prayers, avowing as his reason for asking them the injunction of his mother to say his prayers carefully lest they all be drowned. He not always so grave, however, amusing himself frequently by riding on the sailors' backs as they climbed the lower rigging and after a time even ascending part of the way alone, and enjoying the various other amusements provided for him by the crew.

That his manner and appearance were somewhat striking and unusual even at that early age was evinced by the following fact. The man who piloted the ship to Wallace Harbor, a Mr. MacKay, carried the child ashore to the inn and there learned his name and that of his family. Twenty-two years afterwards, the same man came to seek Father Rogers for his first sick call as Pastor of Cumberland County, and upon seeing him was struck with the likeness to the child he had carried so many years before. Upon enquiry, he found that the child and the present Pastor were the same, and the knowledge founded the basis of a lasting friendship between the older and younger man.

John Rogers remained in Wallace for some months and then removed to Halifax, going around the coast in a small vessel- as there was at that time no other means of transportation. After his fifth birthday, little James was sent to school where he was in a great measure the wonder of the school and its master, both for the natural aptitude that he displayed in acquiring the rudiments of knowledge, and the precocious wisdom of the answers that he gave. The teacher- as also the trustees- and even the pastor, Father Laughlin, on the occasion of their visits to the school, took great delight in calling up the little Irish lad to explain the lessons he had learned that day. His answers showed a maturity of judgment wonderful in a child of his age, and equaled only by his faith and love for his holy religion.

When he began to learn his catechism, all other lessons were considered secondary and were laid aside until he had mastered the lesson from "God's own Book" as he called it. Asked by the teacher why he called it that name, he replied: "my mother says it is the book that has God's word in it." Sometime afterward, the teacher noticed that he no longer referred to the Catechism as "God's own Book"; but called it simply "the Holy Book." Being asked his reason of the change he replied: "It is not respectful to say God's name too often."

"The child is father to the man" and Bishop Rogers in after years showed very markedly the same characteristics of quick-seeing intellect, true and precise judgment, the same originality of expression and deep earnestness of purpose, the same childlike simplicity of faith and deep reverence for holy things, that showed themselves so evidently in the little Irish lad, Jamie Rogers.

His physical development kept pace with his intellectual, and the strength and endurance that enabled the bishop to withstand for forty-two years the hardships of the rudest missionary life was already in embryo in the sturdy little chap at school. The boys of the school of which he was a pupil had no playground and were forced to resort to the street in front of the school. One of their amusements consisted in walking on their hands, and he was considered the winner who could go walk the farthest. Jamie soon learned the way of doing it and it was not long before he was able to beat all his competitors of his own age- and even many who were older and stronger than he. More than once, the onlookers offered prizes to the most skillful, which prizes not seldom fell to his lot. The use he made of the money so earned, as also of the little gifts received at school by visitors pleased with his answers, serves to bring out the extraordinary character of the boy more than any deep analysis could do. It portrays at one and the same time the depth of affection, the earnestness of purpose and the wonderful self-reliance that are astounding in a child of his age.

Although she was but an infant when he left Ireland, Jamie missed his little sister sorely. Time, which in the minds of ordinary children seems to obliterate early memories and diminish affection for distant persons, seemed in the mind of this boy only to increase his love and strengthen his desire for the sister he had left behind. Upon coming to Halifax, he found out where the Irish emigrant vessels docked and repeatedly and perseveringly enquired from the sailors whether they had his sister on board. His frequent disappointments did not discourage him but served only to throw him back upon his own efforts. He told his parents nothing of the money he earned or received but quietly put it all away in a tin box. He had thus saved quite a little sum when one morning his father perceived him counting money by himself. Unseen by the child, he watched where the box was placed and when Jamie had gone to school, he brought it forth and counted it before his wife. Both were surprised at the amount and, in their natural fear for their child's morals, dreaded lest it was not honestly come by. They

decided to keep the box and say nothing about it until the child missed it. Some few days passed, and Jamie did not notice his loss but, at last, having received more money, he went to add it to his horde when he found that his treasure had been taken. Unlike most children, he raised no outcry but quietly sought for his box everywhere- though without avail. Being called to dinner, he was unable to eat, and his mother said to him.

“Why Jamie are you not eating? Is it sick you are?”

“No mama,” he replied, “I am not sick.”

“Well, have you been punished at school?”

“No mama, I have never been punished yet, but I am worried.”

“Worried Jamie dear! Why, what is there to worry a little boy like you? Only sin should worry you. Can you not tell your mother dear?”

“I have a secret, mama,” said Jamie, “but Father Laughlin knows, and he told me I needn’t tell my parents until-”

Here the little lad burst into tears and wept as though his heart would break.

“Thank God the priest is in it,” said his mother, “the good priest couldn’t tell you to do anything wrong. You should, however, have no secrets from your mother, my child.”

She told the story to her husband upon his return home, who called upon the priest that evening to obtain an explanation. Father Laughlin was very much amused and said:

“Yes, he came to me one evening with a piece of silver in his hand and asked me to keep it for him. He had been given it for his skill in walking on his hands. He wished me to put it away for him until he had obtained sufficient to send to Ireland for his little sister. Well my boy, I said to him, take it home and put it in your bank until you have a large sum, then give it to me and I will help you send for her. Upon his expressing a wish to surprise his parents by her arrival, I told him that he need not tell them about it if he did not wish to do so.” The father returned the box to the son, wondering much at the enduring love of the boy for his little sister from whom he had been separated so early in life, and explained to him that he expected his aunt in the next emigrant ship and the little girl with her. Jamie was delighted with the news and seemed to expect the arrival of his little sister every day, although his father had told him that it would be a long time before she could arrive.

A year passed before there was news of another emigrant vessel, and its arrival was the cause of Jamie’s first- and perhaps only- serious disobedience. In his care of those souls who are especially called to His service, God often punishes severely what may seem to us as minor faults. He who was to be the leading spirit and ecclesiastical head of the future disease of Chatham must early learn by a sad experience that disobedience is

unblessed by god, and that pride never leads to the successful performance of any duty but almost invariably to shame and confusion. Hearing that the vessel had arrived, little Jamie asked permission from the teacher to leave school before the regular hour of dispersion. His high standing in the school and his usual exemplary conduct obtained the desired permission without any questions being asked as to the manner in which he wished to dispose of the extra time. In his eagerness to know whether his little sister had arrived, Jamie, forgetful of his parental prohibitions, hurried with all his speed to the dock, boarded the vessel, and sought everywhere for the little tot that he so longed to see. Finally, disappointed in his search, he asked some of the crew whether they had a little girl on board. To their questions as to her appearance, his wonderfully retentive memory supplied the answers and he described her, her hair, her eyes and other features as he had seen her before leaving Ireland. As for her size, he did not know how old she was, but his mother had told him that she should now be able to talk and walk if she was still alive and therefore, she must be about “that high” -holding his hands apart to show how big she was. He was brought before the captain, who informed him that no emigrants were on board there as all had left for Richmond. “Then,” said Jamie, bursting into tears, “I will never see her again.” Some members of the crew to distract his mind from his grief brought him over the ship, showing him the various parts. When he was shown the rope ladders leading to the masts, he remembered the pleasure of his first sail and the smiles returned to his jovial countenance. With the cessation of grief came also a temptation to pride, and he boasted to the sailors that he could climb the ladders. The sailors said that they did not believe him, upon which he was very indignant and replied: “Do you think I would offend God by telling you a lie?” He did not remember that he could also offend God by vain boasting. To prove his prowess, he ran bravely up a few steps, and was in the act of turning to ask whether he should go higher when he lost his balance and fell to the deck- breaking his leg. The unconscious form was tenderly lifted, and medical assistance summoned immediately. The doctor judged it advisable to have him carried to his home strapped to a board, as that would cause him less pain than placing him in a wagon. As they were strapping him down, consciousness returned and with it the fears of conscience. He conceived the idea that in punishment for his fault they were going to drown him, and he beseechingly prayed them to spare his life. “Oh, dear gentlemen,” he said, “do not throw me overboard. My father and mother will die without me and I will never come on board a vessel again.” The doctor reassured the little sufferer and he was carried to his home. His mother met them at the door and his first words to her were: - “Mama, I ask God's pardon and yours. I'll never go on board a ship again.” Doctor Hume, who set his limb, was surprised at the fortitude with which the little James bore the pain. Having finished the operation, he sat beside the child's bed and said to him: - “How is it, my little man, that you did not scream? You are a little hero.” The small boy replied: - “I just thought how much God suffered when they were putting nails in His feet, and asked Him to help me bear what you were doing to me.”



“You will be a wonderful man if you live,” said the doctor.

“I hope I will be good,” said the child, “for I want to be a priest.”

The idea of becoming a priest one day was his constant thought. When his father showed him how wrongfully he had acted and explained to him how his sister would come with his aunt, the little lad of eight years of age expressed deep contrition for his fault. He understood also that there was no longer need of increasing his little treasure and offered the box with its contents to his father. It was declined, however, and the father said: - “Jamie, I do not want your box, keep it and get what you like with it.”

“Then,” said the earnest little fellow, “I will save it to be a priest!”

A short time after the accident, a baby sister was born in the family and when brought to the bed of the sick boy, he almost leaped to the floor for joy.

“Is it my Irish sister?” he cried.

“No,” said the nurse, “but it is another little sister God sent you because you were looking for the other one.”

“Is not God good,” he replied, making use even at this early age of an expression which we find almost continually in the mouth of the venerable and respected Bishop. The faith in God and the deep realization of the goodness of Divine Providence instilled into the young heart by the instructions of his Christian and God-fearing parents, bore fruit in after-years in a life that seemed one continual act of the presence of God and whose sole aim and ambition was to increase the glory of the Savior on earth and to spread His love among souls.

Upon recovering from his illness, which was of about three months duration, little Jamie with the help of his mother and teachers commenced the immediate preparation for his first confession. Just before his first confession he went to his mother asking her what more he should do to prepare himself to make a good confession. In the true spirit of Christian charity and humility, she replied:

“James, before you ask pardon of God, you must first ask pardon of any boy whom you may have offended.”

“Oh, ma'am,” replied the lad, “I never offended or hurt any boy, only one boy who stole my bag of marbles. I went and asked him for them nicely and he told me a lie. I said that was two sins for him, a lie and stealing. Then he came over to strike me, but the master was there and stopped him. The master called him and told one of the boys to take the bag out of his pocket and give it to me.”

“Well my son,” said his mother, “you must see that boy and ask his pardon.” The next evening, when the boys were going to confession, James waited until this boy entered, and when he did so, called him over to a corner of the vestry where- before all his

companions- he went on his knees and humbly asked his pardon. The lesson in humility was not lost upon the bigger boy, who in the after years became one of Bishop Rogers's best friends. – “He that humbleth himself shall be exalted.”

At the age of ten, James received his first Holy Communion, spending the whole day in the presence of the Most Blessed Sacrament in thanksgiving for the great grace that he had received. His love for the Blessed Sacrament became very great. He heard mass every morning and never missed his visit, making it either at recess time or on his way from school. His regularity drew the attention of more than one person but particularly that of a lady, Mrs. D-who lived opposite the school. Meeting him one evening leaving the Church after his visit, she asked him why he went so often to Church. “I go,” he replied, “to visit the Blessed Sacrament and to pray for my parents' spiritual and temporal welfare.”

“Will you pray also for me?” asked the lady.

“Yes ma'am, if you give me your name:

“My name is Mrs. D-”

“Oh,” said Jamie, “I mean your Christian name.”

The lady told him her name in full and was much amused when he drew out a little notebook and wrote her name in it. To him a promise was a scared thing, not to be lightly given, and once given imposing an obligation to be faithfully acquitted. The action of the boy was so serious and resembled so much that of a priest noting down an intention of mass that Mrs. D- felt impelled to ask him what he intended to be when he grew up. To this he replied: “A priest ma'am, with God's will and help.”

To these manifestations of interior virtue that spoke so eloquently of the working of grace in the heart of the little boy, were not wanting exterior marks of God's future designs in his regard. One evening, he was praying in the Church and was so absorbed in his devotions that he did not perceive the sexton locking the Church for the night. As he was only eleven years old and very small for his age, his tiny figure was unnoticed in the high pews and the sexton thought the church was completely empty. The boy, having finished his devotions, turned to leave the edifice but found to his surprise that he was locked in. Having endeavored in vain to find an exit, he entered the sanctuary in order to be nearer the Blessed Sacrament and spent more hours in prayer. His Lordship Bishop Walsh, then Coadjutor Bishop, had visited the Church the previous evening and in leaving had forgotten his mantelletta cloak upon the armchair placed for his convenience in the sanctuary. Little James, at last overcome by drowsiness, looked about for a place that might offer some modicum of rest, and by the light of the sanctuary lamp perceiving the armchair with his cloak, wrapped himself up warmly, cuddled cozily in the deep cushions, and was almost immediately fast asleep.

Father Connoly, afterward Archbishop Connoly and Bishop Rogers' greatest friend, came into the sanctuary at six o'clock the next morning to fetch the Bishop's cloak. In the dim light, he perceived the bundle on the chair and, catching it, he started to leave with it- with the result that he deposited little James very unceremoniously upon the floor. The surprise was mutual, but Father Connoly, seeing who it was, told James to run over to the presbytery, wash his face, straighten out his clothes, and return to serve the Bishop's mass- and after that he would ask an explanation of his presence there at such an hour and in such a way. When the incident was told by Father Connoly to the Bishop after his mass, His Lordship said in the presence of several persons in the vestry: "Whoever lives to see that boy a man, will live to see him wear a mitre."

The father and mother of James had spent a night of agony, the father walking the streets and searching till morning. He even went to the Church for mass, but his boy was not to be seen. It happened that during the time that the father visited the Church, James was serving Father Connoly's mass in the sanctuary and his father missed him. Upon the return of his son the father was not inclined to put implicit trust in his word and said to him sadly but sternly: "I have never yet made even an attempt to strap you James, but your conduct last night obliges me to do so." The poor little fellow took off his jacket and knelt on the floor but, before the first blow had been given, Father Connoly entered and explained matters, thus averting the threatened punishment. Many years afterwards, Archbishop Connoly often spoke in a pleasant way to his friend Bishop Rogers of "the strapping I saved you from!"



## Chapter II

### The Little Irish Lad “Becomes Father Rogers.”

From the age of ten, James practically earned his own living. He did not discontinue his attendance at school, but worked in stores after school hours and on holidays. Thus, with his studies and other work, his time was fully occupied and any leisure moments he had he gave to God in the Blessed Sacrament. His services were very much in demand, for he was prompt and regular and he kept every promise he made with religious fidelity. Add to this his sterling honesty, his quick apprehension, and his activity of body and it is far from astonishing that he easily found work suitable to his years.

When he was about twelve years of age, he suffered a repetition of his former sorrow through the loss of his second sister by death. When somewhat over four years of age, the little girl took scarlet fever and died. James was inconsolable. He fretted more and more every day, and each time his eyes were turned to the little cot the tears poured down his cheeks. His only consolation seemed to be in visiting the Church with a friend of his and offering fervent petitions to God to send him another little sister. His prayers were heard, and God sent another little girl into the family. James was her godfather at her christening, and from this fact as also because he considered her the direct answer to his prayers, he assumed a proprietary interest in her that lasted as long as life. “You must be a good girl, my darling sister,” he often told her, “for if you are not, God will punish me.”

“Why should God punish you, if I am not good,” she asked.

“Because it was I who got you,” he said, “I prayed to God to send me another little sister, and he did- He sent you.”

To exert an influence over her childish mind, he made her believe that the pigeons, and one in particular which was a great pet of his, would tell him of her doings. Bobby, as he called his pet, often came and perched upon his shoulder and when asked if the child had been naughty, bowed its head while making a cooing noise, and the child believed that it was telling on her. For years that bird kept the little one from many a fault for she imagined that it spoke in Latin to her brother.

At the age of thirteen, James left school to work in an office, but attended special classes however, taught by Father O'Brien. He became also at this time the principle wage-earner and support of the family. His father had been left by an attack of cholera with his health very much shaken, and a further attack of pleurisy intervening, he was so much enfeebled that he was no longer able to continue his trade. He was obliged to content himself with giving lessons in book-keeping to what pupils he could secure. With this additional burden upon his shoulders, young James never for a moment lost sight of

the goal of his holy ambition. He wished to be a priest, and a priest he would be. Therefore, after his days' work, he studied with Father O'Brien, kept his regular attendance at morning mass and never neglected his visits to the Blessed Sacrament.

Of such material are heroes molded, nor did James fail to prove himself a hero when the occasion offered. One day the son of the merchant in whose employ he was while playing on the wharf fell into the water. James immediately tore off his coat and shoes and jumped after the drowning lad. When he reached him, the boy was sinking for the third time and- as James approached- he found himself seized with a frantic grasp that came near to causing him to drown also. By dint of surprising physical force and a most determined effort of his powerful will, he succeeded in retaining both heads above water until they were reached by a boat upon which both lost consciousness. Upon recovering the use of his senses, he said to his rescuers: "It was nothing but prayer that saved us, for I felt so much like smothering from the way the other boy was holding me that I was hardly strong enough to keep his head above the water."

The charity so remarkable both for its extent and for its delicacy in Bishop Rogers was not found wanting in the youthful James. Nor was it bounded by his means, for frequently he was heard to express the wish to have more money that he might give greater help to the poor and especially to poor boys, -a saintly covetousness rarely to be met with in our selfish and material age. Frequently on bringing home his wages, he asked his father to spare him a certain part of it. Unlike most youths who either retain their entire earnings or part of them for pleasure and amusement, James asked for part of his in order to relieve some case of distress that came under his notice. Little wonder is it therefore that when affliction came, Divine Providence raised up friends for him who was ever ready to befriend the poor of Jesus Christ.

James' father did not improve in health but gradually grew weaker. When he saw the end approaching he called his son to his bedside and said to him: "James, when you were a small boy, a certain gentleman came to me and asked me to give you to him, promising at the same time to educate you for whatever state of life you might desire. I replied that my boy was all that I had and that I could not part with him in that way. To lessen the disappointment of the good gentleman I told him that if I died before you had reached the age of manhood, I would send you to him provided that he promised to bring you up a good catholic. Now, my son, when I am dead and buried, go to him if he is alive and redeem my promise. If he aids you, go to College immediately, and if Almighty God gives you the grace to be a priest, be a good one and remember your old father in your masses. Don't give up looking for your aunt to know if your sister be living or dead. She is somewhere in Canada. Be a man and console your poor mother. Let her go to board and take the child with her. I shall ask one of the priests to look after both so that you can be at rest about them if you go to College." Having given his last blessing to his wife and family, this truly Christian father was called the next morning

to his reward. James' grief at the loss of the father he loved so well was heartbreaking. The consolations of holy religion in a heart so filled with childlike faith and love however soon brought that peace of resignation to God's holy will that diminished the sharp pain of nature, and James set about manfully to fulfill the dying wish of his lamented parent.

He sold the household furniture and put his mother and sister to board. He entered into communication with the gentleman of whom his father had spoken. This gentleman offered him a position as partner in his business should James wish to come to him. If the boy wished to go to College, he was to have the use of \$500 which were placed in the bank at his disposal. Upon consulting with the Archbishop as to what was best to be done, James was told by His Grace that he would not need the money for his college course, as the Diocese was to look after him. "Take it, however," said the Archbishop, "Not for yourself, but for your mother and sister." James wrote to the gentleman saying that he would need it for his mother; he would take it as a loan and pay it back in a few years after his ordination. This condition the gentleman refused to accept, saying "You will take it as I wish, or not at all. What I give, I give." The charitable benefactor died shortly afterwards and, to relieve James of any sense of obligation, he left the amount to him by will. Thus, did Providence open up the way for the chosen soul, removing every obstacle that might prevent the youth from attending the holy state to which he aspired. His mother was cared for as also his sister until such time as he would be in a position to look after them himself. When the sisters of charity came to the city, he placed his sister with them and there she has remained until the present time. For, upon the completion of her studies, she entered the Novitiate of the Order and made her profession as Sister Martina, the good devoted religious, so well and so favorable known throughout the Maritime Provinces.

James spent three years in Halifax completing his classics, and at the same time making wonderful progress in his ecclesiastical studies. At the end of that time, Archbishop Walsh ordained him sub-deacon on August 21, 1850, the day before giving him Holy Tonsure and Minor Orders. On that occasion, the Archbishop remarked that the need of priests was so great that he did not think it unfair to deprive the young man of the advantage of Seminary life which would mean so much to him in his future ministry, he would ordain him priest and send him out to the missions. Having his welfare at heart and knowing that the Seminary training, though delaying his advent to missionary work, would mean greater security and efficiency for the rest of his life he sent him to the Grand Seminary of Montreal taught by the devoted Sulpician Fathers. There was no railway transportation at that time when the young Levite left Halifax by vessel. Perhaps the evil one foresaw the loss to his cause that would eventuate from the ordination and unselfish life work of the young man now on his way to the Seminary, for the vessel in which he sailed was almost wrecked in a storm. She was so badly damaged and leaked so much that all on board had to take turns at the pumps in order to keep her afloat. Such

was the strain upon them that they reached their destination in a most exhausted condition.

The young sub-deacon spent one year in the Grand Seminary at the end of which on June 14, 1851, he was raised to the Holy Order of Deaconship by Bishop Bourget in the Pro-cathedral of Montreal. Instead of proceeding directly home he, with permission of his superiors, passed a few weeks in Quebec for the propose of searching for his “Irish sister.” As his family had left Ireland for Quebec as their original destination, he rightly concluded that when his aunt came out to join them, she would first go to that city and, not finding her friends, would take up her home there or in the neighborhood. With the aid of Father McMahon whose guest he was, he searched the city and environments and had the great happiness of finding his sister alive and well in one of the suburbs of the city. He made arrangements to have her placed with the Ladies of Notre Dame to complete her education. She also afterwards became a religious, being professed in the Congregation of the Sisters of Charity as Sister Martha and closing a most useful and holy life by an edifying death in St. John, N.B. a few years before the death of the Venerable Bishop himself.

Having thus fulfilled the wishes of his dying father and given to his mother the extreme happiness of knowing that her long lost child was alive and cared for, James, now a Deacon, pursued his way to Halifax. Shortly after his arrival, he was ordained priest by Archbishop Walsh on July 2<sup>nd</sup> of the same year 1851. “The little Irish boy” who proclaimed his ambition to “be a priest” from his earliest years, had now reached the culmination of his desires. Every obstacle had given way to the energy and perseverance of his character. Divine Providence had led him visibly along the pathway marked out for him. He was now a minister of God and it remained for him to prove himself worthy of the grace and honor that he had received. “If Almighty God gives you the grace to be a priest, be a good one” had been the injunction of his dying father, and in our next chapter we hope to show how faithfully this injunction was carried out.



### Chapter III

#### Father Rogers

Scarcely had Father Rogers been clothed with the power and dignity of the Priesthood, hardly were the sacred oils dry upon his anointed hands, when he, the “altar Christus” was called upon to take up the cross of an active and arduous ministry and follow in the footsteps of his Divine Master. The harvest was so great, the laborers so few, that upon the entrance of the young Levite into the vineyard the Master immediately set him to work to cull out the vines and gather in the ripening fruit. A few days after his ordination, he was sent as assistant to Rev. Canon Geary in the mission known then as Sissaboo, afterwards called Clare on St. Mary's Bay. Canon Geary, who had not met his young assistant before, was surprised at his youthful appearance and remarked that the Archbishop must have made a mistake in his age- for Father Rogers did not look more than eighteen. In point of fact, the young priest was almost twenty-five but, being short of stature and having as yet only a slight foreshadowing of the corpulency of later years; with abundant dark hair and a fresh comely face, the appearance of Father Rogers certainly belied his years. There was need of all his youth and strength for the work of the Lord in the arduous mission in which he labored. Canon Geary had charge of the whole of the west coast and as the weight of years commenced to press heavily upon him, the lion's share of the toll fell to the lot of Father Rogers. His was the duty of attending the sick calls and of celebrating the Holy Sacrifice and administering the sacraments in the most distant churches of the parish.

We, who live in the days of modern conveniences, can but ill appreciate the labor undergone in their missionary work by those pioneer priests who have so well earned the eternal rest that is the present recompense of their indescribable fatigues. No railways were there then to carry them swiftly and comfortably to their journey's end, carriages were seldom seen and even then were the property of only the very rich, and even the relative ease of a journey on horseback was often denied to the missionary priest either because of his poverty or for lack of passable roads upon which to travel. It was, therefore, no unique experience for Father Rogers, and even for the older Canon Geary to strap on their backs the necessaries for the Holy Sacrifice, as a soldier straps his knapsack, and start out on foot for a day's journey through the unbroken forest, to arrive at their destination footsore and weary only to be obligated to enter into the confessional and relieve the spiritual distress or satisfy the devotional longings of many who had come perhaps even farther than they.

Father Rogers, who in his childhood and youth saw the hand of God in all things, and who in his later years sought an example for even the minor affairs of life in the words and ways of Christ and His Saints, no doubt reveled in a spiritual bliss during these

journeys communing with the God he loved so well and seeing in every flower or shrub or living thing the beauty of the Creator and the wonder of His handiwork. To him, his journey- undertaken at the Will of His Father- was but the mission of Christ who “went about doing good.” The poor parishioners were to him the successors of the poor of Judea. To the man and priest, who as a little boy waited the sufferings he bore on the setting of his broken leg with the sufferings his Savior bore for him on the cross, should the knapsack he was obliged to carry press heavily on his shoulders ‘twas but a symbol of the weight of the cross upon the shoulders of his Divine Prototype; did he feel the weariness of that journey ‘twas but a slight taste of the weariness of that saddest of all journeys to Calvary; did his feet become sore and heavy, they did but step in the bloody footprints that marked the pathway of his suffering God.

Sometimes the journey was rendered easier by the arrival of the Indians with their canoes, but that this aid did not always prove an unmixed blessing is evidenced by the following incident. Father Rogers had lain down to rest preparatory to a journey to Bear River where he was to say mass the following day, and had fallen into a deep sleep. He was rudely awakened by a rough shaking and opened his eyes to find a big strapping Indian standing over him and another a little farther in the background gazing fixedly upon him. Startled from his usual composure by such an untoward occurrence, the priest demanded rather sharply of the intruders what their business was. In a calm and philosophic way, the second Indian, who was the interpreter, told him that they wished him to come and prepare an Indian woman dying of the smallpox. To this call of duty Father Rogers hastened to obey. He procured the Blessed Sacrament, wrapped himself warmly, and joined the Indians who were waiting for him at the door. Here the Indians told him that he was too small to walk in the snow and joining hands they made a kind of chair upon which they carried him to the river where the canoe was hauled up. Before reaching the other side of the river the canoe upset, however, and all three were flung into the ice-cold stream. The Indians appeared more or less accustomed to such mishaps, for in an incredibly short time they had the canoe righted and Father Rogers seated as before. Now, however, he was much less comfortable; his face was blue with cold and his teeth chattered as he shivered from the effect of his involuntary bath. Arriving at the bank of the river, they again took him up and set him down at the door of the sick woman. On no account would they enter the place, but waited outside the door until the priest had administered the last rights of the Church to the poor dying creature. He had scarcely completed the anointing and was speaking to her by means of the interpreter, who called out from the doorway, when she passed away. He informed the men that they should bury her immediately but such was their fear of the dread infection that they would not approach her. The priest was obliged to wrap the remains in a blanket and drag them as reverently as circumstances permitted to the hole in the ground which the Indians had made in anticipation of her death. They then covered her in, and the last prayers were said. It became imperative for Father Rogers to seek some warmth, which

was found in a camp nearby. He wrapped himself in a blanket and, after a hot drink brewed by the Indians from some herbs, he fell into a deep sleep from which he awaked refreshed in every sense. He donned his now thoroughly dried garments and was brought by the Indians back to his home none the worse for the night's adventures.

For eighteen months, he exercised the ministry under the pastor-ship and guidance of Canon Geary when on May 9<sup>th</sup>, 1853, he was appointed Pastor of Minudie, Cumberland County. Here he exercised alone the sacred ministry for two years, after which time an assistant was sent to aid him. He remained for two years longer when he was called upon to prove that he was the “good pastor” ready in imitation of his Savior “to give up his life for his flock.”

The Bermuda's are a group of small islands belonging to Great Britain, and lying in the Atlantic Ocean, southeast of Cape Hatteras. Bermuda, or Long Island, is the principle of them, the other more important being St. George, Ireland, Somerset and St. David's. They are of rocky formation covered with a thin layer of soil very fertile and producing vegetation which remains green throughout the year. The climate is mild but moist and there are no fresh water sources. The inhabitants are obliged, therefore, to gather the rainwater and to depend upon this for their supply. Owing to the climate and lack of fresh water, no doubt, fever becomes prevalent. In 1856 it had been raging for some time and had carried off many victims, among them the two priests who had successively consecrated themselves to the care of the convicts in the penal settlement and the inhabitants of the various islands.

The Bermuda's belonging to the Archdiocese of Halifax were served by the priests of that Archdiocese and, at this time, a third devoted follower of Christ, one ready to endure the life of exile imposed by the distance, and prepared to accept the almost sure death from fever that seemed the lot of missionaries to these islands, was anxiously sought for by the Archbishop. He was found in the person of Father Rogers who in his zeal for the Master's glory, his love and sympathy for these poor souls deprived of the consolations of religion, considered the sacrifice of this life a duty as well as even a pleasure- could he be spared but long enough to do some good in their midst. In this, as in all that we have written, the hand of God is evident preparing the soul of the future Bishop for his work as Chief Pastor of the future Diocese of Chatham. He who was to be the Chief should first prove himself a true Pastor by making the greatest sacrifice that man can make for his fellow man. God did not accept the sacrifice of life, however, for He had greater work for Father Rogers to perform, but can we doubt that He accepted the interior offering and that in return He filled the priestly soul with an increase of sacerdotal graces.

Father Rogers prepared himself for death before leaving, for one of the great inconveniences of the life of the priest in Bermuda was that while diffusing to others the graces and spiritual consolations of the Sacrament of Penance there was no fellow priest at

whose feet he could lay the burden of his own conscience or from whose lips he could hear the healing words of absolution, and strengthening words of encouragement. It was for Father Rogers perhaps, nay probably, the last confession of his life and as such he made it. He then arranged his worldly affairs, took leave, sorrowful but full of deep resignation to God's will of his beloved mother and sister, and sailed for the Bermuda's in the month of May 1856.

Having become acquainted with his new station, Father Rogers was much pleased with it. With his keen foresight of future wants, he perceived the necessity of building a Church for the people. Up to the present, Mass had been said only in the convict chapel and this he found inconvenient and unbecoming. He knew that as long the people were obliged to attend in this chapel, a real parish organization was impossible and, therefore, he decided to build a parish church. Both means and facilities were wanting, but the spirit of self-sacrifice and prayer was not. He wrote to the Archbishop to obtain the required permission and stated that as a commencement he would give his year's revenues towards the building. He was ready to give his life; hence he did not hesitate to sacrifice his means of sustenance to further the work of God. Work done at such a sacrifice must be blessed by God and the surest sign of such blessing is the mark of the cross upon it. Having obtained the permission from the Archbishop, Father Rogers began the new church on the lot previously obtained by his predecessor Father Madden and had the frame raised when, in the night, a strong gale of wind threw the structure to the ground. Man's work finds discouragement in such accidents, God's work finds only inducements to new efforts and new sacrifices. Father Rogers cheerfully set to work and raised the frame again and succeeded in having it boarded in before the next gale came. Little by little, as his penury, relieved slightly from Halifax, permitted, he worked at the building finishing the exterior of it and finally had the great happiness of saying the first mass in it before leaving the Islands.

He had been about two years in Bermuda when he was recalled in the month of May 1859, and appointed pastor at Church Point- being succeeded by Father Holden. Archbishop Walsh had died the previous fall, and Bishop Connolly of St. John was promoted to the Archiepiscopal See of Halifax. He immediately sent for Father Rogers to come with him at Halifax as his Secretary. In the early days of the formation of the Dioceses of the Maritime Provinces, the office of Secretary implied much more than that of a mere amanuensis. It meant that the priest called to fill it should indeed be prepared to aid the Archbishop in his correspondence, but also should be one who by his knowledge and judgement could counsel the Archbishop even upon the most weighty affairs. It called for a man ready to replace the Ordinary in his absences- which were frequent- as also to replace any of the missionaries when needed. Hence was Father Rogers chosen to fill this important post, for none had as he the collection of qualities required for the position. In addition to the work as Secretary, so great and so varied, he was

made Rector of the College and when one of the priests of the west was removed, he replaced him in the ministry as well.

He had not been a year in this office and performing the work just as described, when notification was received of the formation of a new diocese by the division of the Diocese of New Brunswick into those of St. John and Chatham, and the appointment of Rev. James Rogers, by a Pontifical Bull bearing date of 8<sup>th</sup> of May 1860, as the first Bishop of the Diocese of Chatham.

That Father Rogers had not been ambitious of ecclesiastical dignity is evidenced by the alacrity with which he accepted the Mission in Bermuda, leading more probably to martyrdom than to the mitre, that it was unexpected is evident from the very early age, 34 years at which it was conferred upon him, but a glance at the foregoing pages show also as clearly how Divine Providence led the young emigrant lad to the pathway of the priesthood and along the pathway of labor and of sacrifice to the sacerdotal plenitude, to the participation in the Apostleship of those whom Christ said: "Go ye therefore and teach all nations."



## Chapter IV

### Northern New Brunswick During the French Possession

As in all Canada, the native inhabitants of Northern New Brunswick were the Indians. Those who fished and hunted on the eastern coast were the tribe known as Sourigois (Micmacs) while a few scattered bands of the Milicetes, or Echemins led a nomad life at the head of the river St. John and on the banks of its tributaries. The two New Brunswick tribes were known as the most docile and unwarlike of all the Indians of Canada and were early brought to a knowledge of the true religion by the efforts of the French missionaries. While Acadia, as the Maritime Provinces were then known, was under the dominion of France, the government gave every facility to the missionaries and seconded their every effort to evangelize the poor children of the forest.

Shortly after the Recollect Fathers had established themselves in 1620, on the river St. Charles, Quebec, they sent some of their number to evangelize the Indians of Acadia. Some work had been done by the missionaries who accompanied the settlers of Port Royal in 1604 and the subsequent years but we do not read that these missionaries had gone as far north as northern New Brunswick. On the other hand, the Recollect Fathers sowed the seed of eternal life from Nepisiguit, now Bathurst, to Miscou and there to the mouth of St. John, - Port Royal and Cape Sable.

Difficulties innumerable lay in the way of these zealous missionaries in bringing the light of faith to the red man. To penetrate the unbroken wilderness along the coast from Bay Chaleur to Bay Fundy with their mission in view, required something more than the adventurous courage of the explorer or the bravery of the soldier bent merely on victory with the hope of its reward- the honor the world pays the brave for valiant deeds. Like the latter in the way, these brave soldiers of Christ had conquest in view- conquest requiring self-sacrifice and noble, painful striving and privation at every step. This conquest was the conquest of souls. With hearts animated by these noble ideas, they went forth to the hardships of the missions of the New Brunswick coast, and for five long years bore with the patience and fortitude of martyrs' trials and fatigues that have no equal. Among these Fathers who labored with apostolic goal to plant the cross of Christ on the shores of Acadia- and in doing so had to spend all their energies in exhausting fatigues and exposures, and in a few short years of active mission life, had to lay aside the Shepard's staff forever- we find the name of Rev. Joseph Sebastian. This laborious, self-sacrificing priest was missionary at Miscou between the years of 1620 and 1623. In the latter year, he undertook a journey to the principle house of his order on the St. John River, calling at Port Royal on his way, but he succumbed to the fatigue and exposure of the voyage and went to receive his reward. In 1624, owing to failing strength and the increasing difficulties of their mission, the Recollect Fathers were obliged to retire temporally from the field and the joined their companions at St. Charles.

In 1635, the Rev. Charles Turgis, of the Jesuit order, was sent as missionary to the Island of Miscou, an island in the Gulf of St. Lawrence. He was sent there with Father Demarche, also a Jesuit, to administer the sacraments to twenty-three French colonists who were about to build houses and make a settlement on this island. The following year he was left alone as missionary, his companion having been called to France.

Not long after the departure of his brother priest, a severe affliction visited the little band of colonists. That dread disease, scurvy, attacked the settlers, and Father Turgis was one of the first to fall victim to it. In the midst of his isolation, privation, and suffering, he consoled himself that his tottering frame and trembling arm were yet strong enough to enable him to discharge his sacred duties to the sick and dying, with but little aid from the strongest of his stricken flock.

Soon, however, he had to be carried to the bedside of the dying to administer the last rites to them. Until, at last, the uplifted hand of the dying priest fell, and the loving faithful heart ceased to beat, and thus he passed away from earth, but not before he had prepared for death all but one of the stricken settlers.

The Rev. Andre Richard, a fellow Jesuit, succeeded Father Turgis at Miscou. In 1636, the year after he came to Canada, he gave a mission at Cape Breton in company with the Rev. George D'Endemare, and on the Island of Miscou another with Father De Lyonne. He studied with much zeal the Micmac language and he spoke it with great fluency. On a point of land in the Nepisiguit Harbor, he selected a site for an Indian village, or at least a house for the accommodation of the Indians and himself. Father D'Endemare probably assisted him in the Miscou and Chaleur Missions. He was also assisted by Father Dalbeau, who was replaced by Father Martin De Lyonne. In the summer of 1637, the Rev. James De La Place arrived at Miscou to aid Father Richard and De Lyonne where he worked with much zeal at laying the foundation of a little chapel on this Island. He returned to Quebec in 1641 and went back to France on the 6<sup>th</sup> of Sept 1658.

Father De Lyonne continued to aid Father Richard in Miscou as also in all the neighboring districts. In 1646, he gave missions on the Miramichi and afterwards attended the mission of Chedabucto. While there, a contagious disease attacked the settlers to whose care he devoted all his time and energy. The contagion raged with much violence and yet, although the devoted priest was on foot night and day attending the sick and dying, he was the last to take it. Hearing that one of the settlers living some distance from the others had just fallen victim to the disease, he made all haste to reach his bedside. On his way, he had to cross a brook which was only partly frozen; the ice gave way under his weight and he sank into the water. Little minding the wetting he received, he hurried on eagerly to reach the sick man's house. He administered the last sacraments to him, gave him all the consolation in his power, and without changing his clothes, returned to his home. He was almost immediately taken ill and was forced to take his bed, feeling that at last the contagion had made him its victim. Two days afterwards on January 16<sup>th</sup>, 1661, he was called to his reward.

Towards the year 1673, another colony of Catholic emigrants came from France- St.



Malo- and settled at Bay Du Vin. To attend to the spiritual wants of these and other settlers on the Miramichi, Father Thury was sent a few years later. Analysts speak of this missionary in very eulogistic terms. He was most devoted to the wants of the settlers at this period, and religion made much progress in every mission on the Miramichi during this pastor-ship. We learn that Rev. Louis Peter Thury came from France in 1677 and was ordained in December 1689. He died on the 20<sup>th</sup> of November 1705, aged 53 years.

In 1683, the Rt. Rev John Baptist De Saint Valier, second Bishop of Quebec, gave confirmation at all the principle French and Indian villages on Northern New Brunswick. By this time, the labor of the missionaries had borne abundant fruit with the Indians of the country- who were now all converts to Catholicity. The white man and the red man, praying to the same Father in heaven and worshipping at the same altar on earth, called each other “brother.” Peace and good will existed between the two peoples and the future was full of promise for the settlers.

Passing over an interval of thirty years or so, we come to the pastoral charge of Father De Lestage and Breslay. The Rev. Gelase De Lestage, of the Recollect Order, exercised the ministry at Miramichi 1720. About the year 1721, the Rev. Rene Charles De Breslay of the order of St. Sulpice, a very zealous and scholarly priest, at the invitation of Bishop De Mornay- Coadjutor of the Bishop of Quebec, exercised the ministry of Miscou.

From 1758,- the commencement of the Seven Years War, and the renewal of hostilities between France and England- until 1761, the settlers of Northern New Brunswick lived in fear of war, and the renewal of hostilities between France and England; until 1761, the settlers of Northern New Brunswick lived in fear of war and its horrors, and in constant dread of banishment- if not extermination. The difficulty of breaking or clearing thickly wooded forest land led them to hunt and to fish while tilling the soil. In consequence of this, they depended upon the trade that had been so long carried on between France and these colonies of hers for many of the necessaries of life. Once this trade was interrupted, and supplies cut off in any way they had, of course, to suffer. Truly, these poor people were entering upon gloomy and evil days, days full of tribulation, taxing human endurance- in many cases beyond the breaking point- and making brave spirits rely on him alone who tells us “to cast all our solicitude on Him.” In this trying crisis they were too brave, too religious to give up all hope, all heart. Putting their trust in God, they resolved to cling to their homes to the last, Expulsion had already visited many of their countrymen and fellow colonists a little further south and partial banishment, at least, awaited themselves. Even extermination into death from war and resulting pestilence awaited one thousand of them.

In 1757, the settlement on the Miramichi, particularly at Beaubear's Island, Beaubear's Point and vicinity, suffered much from interruption in their trade with France and the failure of their crops. In the summer of 1758, they expected two ships

from France with clothing and food supplies, but these were captured by the English. The failure of their crops, and capture of the vessels that they expected would bring them aid, caused a famine and pestilence followed famine. The result was that Beaubear's Town and vicinity, the headquarters of the French on the Miramichi, with its founder, Peter Beaubear, and its inhabitants, ceased to exist. To add to the last touch of desolation to the misfortunes of the struggling colony, in 1759, Wolfe, on his way to Quebec with British fleet, destroyed the villages and settlements from Miramichi River to Bay Chaleur. The final blow dealt this vanquished and prostrate people for "being in the way" as historians express it, was when the settlement of Petite Rochelle, on the Restigouche, was destroyed by the English quadron under Captain Byron in the summer of 1760.

We have now come to the close of the French period of possession and on looking over the past history of Acadie, one perceives that in the ways of Divine Providence the early French settlers and their zealous missionaries had a great mission to accomplish- and how faithfully it was fulfilled. The heathen Indians that knew not God were not only brought to the light of faith, but made to feel the fellowship of man. In no other part of the Dominion of Canada was this Christianizing work accomplished at so early a date, and with the same success, as in Acadie. Here the seed fell upon good soil- the minds and hearts of the Micmac's and Milicotes, who not only opposed no obstacle to the sowers and their mission but "received in the word of joy." The seed so deeply planted hath in the passing of years grown, blossomed and brought forth abundant fruit and during the centuries that intervene the beauty of the growing plant in the vineyard hath been such that never hath even one defective branch fallen into decay or been lopped off from the parent stem,- the Micmacs of Northern New Brunswick have never had to deplore the perversion of one of their number from the faith taught them by their beloved missionaries- the "Black Robes"- "By their fruit shall ye know them."

## Chapter V

### Northern New Brunswick Under English Dominion and The Diocese of Chatham

In 1759, Canada was ceded to the British by the French. The struggle had been so evenly maintained and each victory so dearly bought that the English were quite willing to accept the cession upon terms most favorable to the French inhabitants. They were to have complete civil and religious liberty, retain their language, their laws and their customs. All that was required of them was to take the oath of allegiance to the British crown. Such was not the happy lot of the French of Acadie, known now as the Maritime Provinces. In 1749, ten years before the cession of Canada, an emigrant colony left England and, arriving in the Bay of Chedabucto, chose a site and built the town and citadel of Halifax. A colonial government was organized with a governor appointed by the British Parliament and the new colony was given the name of Nova Scotia. There were three or four settlements of Acadian French living peaceably and from whom there was not the slightest reason to fear any difficulty. Yet, in the years 1755, these poor people were taken by the brutal soldiers of the colonial government hustled on board vessels as so many cattle, fathers and mothers separated from each other and from their children and deposited penniless and heart broken in various settlements in Massachusetts, Pennsylvania and Louisiana. History contains no more odious episodes in all its annals. In it, cruelty and brutality have reached their culminating point. The sufferings of the Acadians in this barbarous outrage, as well as their noble manner of bearing it, have brought to them the sympathy and admiration of all peoples and classes. Not many of them ever returned, but the blessing of God has visibly rewarded those who did, for they increased and multiplied until, at the time of the arrival of Bishop Rogers in Chatham, they constituted one of the largest and most important parts of the catholic congregation of the Maritime Provinces.

Cooney, in his "History of New Brunswick", published 1832, says about the situation at the commencement of English Rule- "In the year 1759, the few French remaining at Miramichi, along with those at Richibucto, Buctouche, Petitcodiac and Memramcook made their submission to Colonel Frye of Fort Cumberland. In January following, the Rev. Mr. Manack, one of the Roman Catholic Missionaries of these districts, attended by the principle French inhabitants and four Indian Chiefs, returned to the same place and formally subscribed to their submission, thereby binding themselves and those whom they represented to come to Baie Verte, with all their effects, as early in the spring as possible. In the course of the winter and after the hunting season was over, eight other Indian Chiefs, making in all twelve, tendered their submission.

The following is a list of their names, and or the respective districts they governed:

Louis Francis, Chief of Miramichi

Denis Winnower, Chief of Tobogunkik (Tabusintac)

Etienne Archabo, Chief of Pohoomoosk (Pokemouche)

Claude Atanage, Chief of Gediak (Shediac)

Paul Lawrence, Chief of La Have

Joseph Algemoure, Chief of Chignecto (Cumberland)

John Newit, Chief of Pictou

Baptiste Lamorne, Chief of St. John Island (P.E.I)

Rene Lamorne, Chief of Nalkitgoniash (Antigonish)

Jeanot Piquidaudet, Chief of Minas

Augustin Michael, Chief of Richibucto

Bartlemy Aungualett, Chief of Keshpugowitk (Kouchibouguac)

The above persons are supposed to have been the most distinguished men of the Eastern or Micmac nation- at that time estimated above five thousand souls.

The Indian Chiefs were sent to Governor Lawrence at Halifax, who allowed them, after having received a renewal of their submission to his Britannic Majesty, to retain their respective dominions and exercise their usual prerogatives. The French totally abandoned Miramichi and dispersed themselves through the countries of Westmorland and Cumberland, and thus, in the brief space of three years, did the whole Northern part of this province relapse into almost original solitude.”

Without having sufficient information when writing up the subject, Mr. Cooney was led into exaggeration when he says that “The whole northern part of the province relapsed into almost original solitude!” On the contrary, more than one place in this section of the province became a real refuge to Acadians returning from the expulsion as well during these dread days as for years afterwards. The Church Registers at Caraquet, for instance, record Baptisms, marriages and burials of Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia, and New Brunswick, performed by priests attending Caraquet and making it their home during their missionary labors.

In 1767, Caraquet was a French settlement of considerable extent and about this time many French settlers from other quarters sought refuge there. There was also at this time many Indian families settled at different points along the Bay Chaleur. The missionary in charge Rev. Charles F. Bailly, succeeding the Rev. Father Maillard, resided at Caraquet and gave missions as far as Nipisiguit (Bathurst). In October 1788, Bishop Briand appointed him Vicar General of Nova Scotia and the adjacent islands (Cape

Breton and Prince Edward Island). He was made coadjutor to the Bishop of Quebec, June 30<sup>th</sup>, 1788 and died at Quebec on May 20<sup>th</sup>, 1794.

The Rev. Antoine Girouard exercised the ministry from Bay Chaleur to Miramichi in 1788. This missionary was very much devoted to his scattered flock and made great sacrifice for them. He was born at Boucherville in 1762, and died at Varennes on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of August 1832, aged 70 years. The Rev. Joseph M. Bourg and Rev. J. Castanet succeeded him in the missions of Nova Scotia and also of the Caraquet district.

In the meantime, midst the British emigrants who arrived in the colony and settled in various parts of the province we find a number of Scotch and Irish catholic families. Thus, in 1790, Father Jones of Halifax wrote that there were 250 Scotch Catholics arrived with a priest named McEachan on Prince Edward Island where there were already 50 Scotch families, as also 28 at Merrignonish, 20 at Miramichi, 8 at Pictou. He tells also of 66 Acadian families on Prince Edward Island, 26 at Cheticamp, and 30 at Tracadie.

The church at Moody's Point, Bartibogue, was built in the year 1800 and its Registers record baptisms, marriages, and burials from the year 1801. The names of visiting clergymen as we find them in their order in these records are as follows:

Rev. Rene Peter Joyer, 1801; Rev Urb Orfroy, 1806 to 1810; Rev. F. Huot, 1811; Rev. Charles Frances Painchaud, 1812; Rev. Thomas Maguire, V.G; Rev. F. Huot, 1813; Rev. Charles French, 1814; Rev. J.E Morrisset from 1817 to 1818; Rev. J. Cook from 1819 to 1820; Rev. J. B. Kelly, 1820; Rev. Charles Cook from 1821 to 1823.

About the year 1816, the venerable Bishop of Quebec, Mr. Plessis, having made his pastoral visit, realized that the ever-increasing population of this district could not be properly be governed by a bishop residing at such a distance as Quebec. Former Bishops of Quebec, as also Father Burk- the Vicar General at Halifax- had already represented to the Holy See the necessity of such a division, but Government influences had obtained the postponement of the project. Finally, these representations were acted upon by the Propaganda and Nova Scotia was erected into an Apostolic Vicariate with Father Burk as its Apostolic Vicar. He was consecrated on the 5<sup>th</sup> of July 1818. In the meantime, New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island remained attached and subject to the See of Quebec their religious interests being in care of the Vicar General, Bishop McEachan who resided in Prince Edward Island. In August 1829, these two provinces were separated from the Diocese of Quebec and formed into a new bishopric with separate jurisdiction. Rt. Rev. Angus MacEachern- formerly Bishop of Rosen and Vicar General of Quebec- was appointed its first Bishop and formally took possession of his See on Nov 11<sup>th</sup>, 1830.

On September 30<sup>th</sup>, 1843, still another dismemberment was made in the Maritime Provinces. The increase of the population as well as the difficulty of

transportation in the winter rendered it very difficult for Bishop MacDonald who had succeeded Bishop MacEachern to attend to all the spiritual wants of the vast province under his care. A new diocese was formed of the entire Province of New Brunswick and Rt. Rev. William Dollard was appointed its first Bishop.

Bishop Dollard was born in Ireland, Nov 29<sup>th</sup>, 1788. Early in his priestly career he came to Canada fired with apostolic zeal and animated by the spirit of self-sacrifice that led so many missionaries to give their work and even their lives for the extension of God's kingdom in souls. From 1823-1826, Father Dollard resided at Moody's Point, at the mouth of the Bartibogue, and attended all the Miramichi district from the bay to the remotest settled tributary. He was revered by his flock. The old people now living who have the slightest recollection of him either as priest or as Bishop speak of him as a man possessing in a rare degree gentleness of manner and great firmness of character. His humility partook of child-like simplicity, making the poor Indian feel as much at home in his company as the most influential man calling to see him. He made long journeys winter and summer on foot as well in canoes and on horseback during which he exercised the ministry among French, English, Scotch, Irish and Micmac's. All loved him alike, looking upon him as a true friend, educated gentleman, as well as zealous pastor of blameless life. Frugal and abstemious in eating and drinking- wearing the plainest of clothes, accessible to the caller, be he Indian or white-man, night, noon or morning, - he possessed rare qualities of head and heart that made him the loveable trusted father, friend and pastor.

He received Episcopal consecration on June 11<sup>th</sup>, 1843 at the hands of Bishop Turgeon of Quebec, assisted by Bishop Signal and Bourget. After eight years of devoted missionary work in the episcopacy, he died at Fredericton on the 29<sup>th</sup> of August 1851, aged 62 years. He was at that time alone with his assistant priest Rev. Fr-----who immediately sent word to Bishop Walsh at Halifax. The message was sent by courier as there were then no telegraphs or even regular mails and the news did not arrive at Halifax for a week. In the meantime, Fr----decided that he could not keep the remains and therefore sang the funeral service and interred them. Upon his arrival at Fredericton, to which place he came post-haste upon the reception of the sorrowful tidings, Bishop Walsh found that the remains had been interred for some time. He was inclined to have them exhumed and the proper funeral service for a Bishop sung over them but considering the length of time that they had been interred as also the undoubted wishes of the defunct, he contented himself with masses and prayers for his soul, leaving to Him -Whose faithful servant the late Bishop had been- to give him upon the last day the honor due to that body which had ever been the "temple of the Holy Ghost." Thus, he who was such a true missionary in his life and works, who had accepted the episcopal dignity simply because it would enlarge the field of his zealous missionary enterprises, died the death and had the burial of a missionary and we have not the slightest doubt is now enjoying the eternal recompense of the faithful servant found awake and watchful at the advent of the Master.

On May the 4<sup>th</sup> of the following year, the Diocese of Halifax was made into an Archdiocese having as its Suffragan Sees Arichat, Charlottetown and New Brunswick, and Bishop Walsh of Halifax was created its first Archbishop. The vacancy in the See of New Brunswick, caused by the death of Bishop Dollard, was filled by the appointment of Rev. Thomas L. Connoly O.S.F. He was consecrated on the 15<sup>th</sup> of August 1852 and took up his residence in St. John. On Aug 10, 1858, Archbishop Walsh died and in the following April, Bishop Connoly was promoted to Halifax and became the second Archbishop. The Diocese of New Brunswick thus became vacant for a second time.

Having had some years' experience of the great difficulty of attending the whole Province of New Brunswick as one diocese, the new Archbishop with his Suffragans of Arichat and Charlottetown, took advantage of the vacancy of the See of New Brunswick to represent to the Congregation of the Propaganda Fide, not only the advisability but even the necessity of the erection of a new diocese. The population was ever on the increase and the means of communication were still of the most primitive kind so that, in the interests of religion and of souls, the formation of a new diocese comprising the northern portion of New Brunswick separate from that of St. John- to which would remain the southern portion- became imperative. That the Congregation of the Propaganda saw the force of this reasoning evinced by its action in erecting the new Diocese of Chatham by Pontifical Brief bearing date May 8<sup>th</sup>, 1860. In it we read "Whereas Our Venerable Brothers, the Archbishop and Bishops of the Ecclesiastical Province of Halifax in North America have represented to Us that the Diocese of St. John in New Brunswick is too extensive and that it is expedient for the furtherance of the salvation of the faithful of Christ that a certain part of said Diocese should be erected by Us into a separate and distinct diocese and not committed to the care of its own Bishop. We, knowing that the increase of number of Chief Pastors will result in greater salvation of souls, having previously consulted Our Venerable Brothers of the Holy Congregation de Propaganda Fide, have decided to make such division." The Brief then states the limits of the new diocese which is to comprise the Counties of Victoria, (now Madawaska and Victoria), Restigouche, Gloucester, Northumberland and the northern portion of Kent. In the new diocese there were at the time 33,624 Catholics while 54,378 remained in the Diocese of St. John. The town of Chatham was chosen for the Episcopal See and gave its name to the new Diocese. There with other parishes with larger and more important catholic congregations than Chatham, as for instance Caraquet in Gloucester Co. and St. Basil in (the then) Victoria Co. This part of the Diocese, however, was but partially inhabited and but little developed and it was therefore more advisable to choose Chatham, which was situated on the beautiful Miramichi River, a waterway that leads to and from the greater part of the county of Northumberland. It was to be expected that the arrival of vessels and steamers as well as the development of the lumber trade for which such facility existed on the Miramichi would soon make of Chatham one of the most important cities in the Province. It was moreover considered that the proposed

Intercolonial Railway from Quebec to Halifax would bring a notable increase of trade and population to the Miramichi River and thus add to the importance of the town chosen as the administrative centre. Hence was the Diocese of Chatham erected, and by another Pontifical Brief hearing the same date May 8<sup>th</sup>, 1860 the Rev. James Rogers, a priest of the Archdiocese of Halifax was appointed the first Bishop.



## Chapter VI

### Bishop Rogers' Consecration, Arrival in Chatham, and Visits to Madawaska and Other Places

Upon reception of the Bulls, Father Rogers made preparation for his consecration. The See of Charlottetown had become vacant and Rev. Peter McIntyre was chosen to succeed as Bishop. There being no cathedral at Chatham, Father Rogers arranged to be consecrated with Father McIntyre in the cathedral at Charlottetown. In taking leave of his mother to go to his consecration, the humble and loving Bishop-elect knelt at her feet and asked her to pardon not only all the faults he had committed against her, but also all the faults she had ever seen him commit in any way. His Christian mother, rejoicing in her heart over the promotion of her son, feared that his elevation might prove source of pride to him and she gave him a long motherly advice as he knelt at her feet, telling him in simple earnest terms how humble he should be at having been called to such a responsible office and never to allow himself to feel that he deserved such a promotion. "I pray to God for you, my son," she said, "that you may have the grace to direct your diocese as a good holy Bishop should," and then she gave him her blessing. With humility in his heart and his mother's blessing on his head, the young priest went to kneel before the representatives of God and receive the plenitude of the priesthood. The consecration took place at Charlottetown August 15<sup>th</sup> 1860, Feast of the Assumption of our Most Blessed Lady. Archbishop Connolly officiated, assisted by Rt. Rev. John J. Mullock of St. John's and Rt. Rev. J. Dalton of Harbor Grace, Newfoundland. There were also present Bishops McKinnen of Arichat and Bp. Sweeney of St. John, the latter having been consecrated on April 15<sup>th</sup> of the same year.

Immediately after the consecration, the Episcopal party left Charlottetown to assist at the dedication of a splendid brick church at Tignish, which the zeal of the Bishop of Charlottetown had almost finished before his election to the episcopal See. After the ceremony, His Grace the Archbishop enquired whether it was not possible to pass directly from Tignish to Chatham, a distance by water of about 80 miles, instead of returning by land to take the boat at Summerside for Shediac and thence by land to Chatham. He was told that there were no boats sufficiently large or pretentious to bear the party of Bishops, as no vessel could be found but the small fishing boats and that these were at the moment not too clean. The Archbishop, however, anxious to continue his journey, insisted on taking one of such boats and therefore, accompanied by the new Bishop of Chatham, the Bishop of St. John, Father Geary- Vicar General of Halifax- and Father Power- the chaplain of the Archbishop-, His Grace bade adieu to the other prelates and set sail at 8:30 a.m. for Chatham, arriving there at 6:30 the following morning after long and tedious sail of 22 hours. The boat was so small and so overcrowded that those who

were her passengers could not even stretch their limbs, nor rest their heads to sleep so that the long period in the one position proved to be most wearisome and fatiguing. Bishop Rogers tells us that he kept his spirits up by the thought of all the fatigue and privations endured by his predecessors as they made their way either on foot along the shore or in the woods, or with the Indians in their canoes and he felt that it would be cowardly and shameful to utter the least complaint. "Upon nearing the lighthouse at Escuminac at the mouth of the Miramichi" writes Bishop Rogers; a few years afterwards, "we beheld the Church of Our Lady, known by the name of "Stella Maris" -Star of the Sea- which is situated on the same bay four or five miles from the lighthouse. It was the first church of my diocese that I saw, and was built five or six years before in fulfilment of a vow made when in danger of death by drowning by a zealous missionary who at that time resided at Kouchibouguacis, a settlement of good French Acadians on the river of that name- about seven miles north of Richibucto. The missionary attended Escuminac along with other scattered missions. He was journeying one day to one of these missions known as the "Village" and made a visit to Escuminac in order to celebrate Mass on Sunday in the small old church which yet stands near this one built later on. Communication was at that period anything but easy. It was necessary in order to go from one settlement to another- either to walk along the shore, go by row boat or sail-boat, or to make use of canoes sometimes made of birch bark like those of the Indians or more frequently of a large pine log hollowed out. The owner of such log canoe undertook to carry the priest, a young man, and five women who were all desirous of assisting at Mass. They started very well being propelled by a large sail and steered by an oar in the hands of the owner. In the midst of the bay, the wind became stronger and the waters of the bay rougher. Even in this case they could have managed to cross in safety had not the steering oar broken and their frail little vessel, without a helm, became the plaything of the waves which soon caused it to upset. The five women were drowned. The owner of the canoe and the young boy were able to seize upon the canoe. The priest kept himself afloat for some time by swimming. At last completely worn out he was about to sink when the man seized him and encouraged him to hold onto the canoe. They were upset into the water at nine o'clock in the morning and at five in the evening were thrown on the shore and picked up almost dead. Though the vigorous attentions given when by those who found them, they were brought back to consciousness. As soon as that had noticed that the oar was broken and that they were in danger the priest exhorted them to put themselves under the protection of God, and to prepare themselves to receive whatever He would send them be it life or death. He asked them to make an act of contrition and he gave them absolution, after which they continued to say the beads together until the canoe upset. The devoted priest and servant of Mary prayed continuously while in the water to her who is called the "Star of the Sea" that she might save him. His appeal was not in vain. To thank God and his Immaculate Mother he built as soon as his duties

permitted the beautiful little church at Escuminac as a souvenir of his deliverance. The Archbishop, on the occasion of one of his episcopal visits, had solemnly dedicated it.”

He thus expresses himself also concerning his first view of the church of St. Ann at Church Point, the Indian Mission: “The various information I received concerning the events which took place at the different points we passed in our boat, interested me most deeply; they were given me by the Archbishop of Halifax and the Bishop of St. John, who knew the facts personally and who by experience, were well versant in the history of the missions destined to be the new field of my labor. When we neared the church of St. Ann, although the darkness of the night prevented me from seeing it clearly, I felt that it had a special interest for me. It was the oldest mission, the first place in which an altar of the Catholic religion had been erected on the Miramichi and where the little mustard seed of the Church of God had taken root and grown and spread its branches so that it at present formed a diocese with a bishop now come to fix his See close by. As we directed our course slowly against the tide, packed closely as we were in the small free space of the fishing boat, while the night cold pierced us and the rain fell in torrents upon us, our thoughts turned to those poor Indians whom our heroic and saintly predecessors had first converted to Christianity; we thought also of the fatigues, the privations, the sacrifices, and the works undertaken by these apostolic men, of the fortitude and the fidelity with which the converts, those noble children of the forest, had preserved their faith and their piety and all this filled our heart and overwhelmed us with admiration.”

Arriving at Chatham, they approached the wharf when they were hailed by someone on the lookout for fishing boats: - “Hello, boys! Have you a load of fish?” They quickly echoed back the witty answer: “No, sir! A load of Bishops.” Their arrival in Chatham was unexpected. The people had counted on their coming by way of Summerside and Shediac and as the nearest telegraph office to Tignish was 70 miles away, it had been impossible to notify them of the change in their plans. The result was that the Bishop of Chatham with his prelatial companions came upon the people in the midst of their work of decorating the streets, erecting triumphal arches and various other works for its purpose of showing respect to their new Chief Pastor. To satisfy their desire of expressing their welcome, Bishop Rogers took part in a large and enthusiastic procession of carriages from Chatham to the neighboring parish of Nelson. The following morning, Aug. 22<sup>nd</sup>, the solemn installation of the new Bishop took place and he took formal possession of his Diocese. Bishop Sweeney of St. John, who had formally been parish priest of Chatham, celebrated the Pontifical Mass and Bishop Rogers addressed his first instruction to his people on the Gospel of the day.

He remained but a few weeks in Chatham during which time he was presented by the people with a purse of \$1,000.00 to aid him in furnishing his residence. He then made a visit to the County of Victoria, not only for the purpose of becoming acquainted with

this part of diocese but also to fulfill a mission confided to him by the Propaganda concerning the district of Madawaska in Maine.

In 1842, the dispute concerning the boundary of Maine having reached an acute stage, two commissioners were appointed to come to a final settlement. "The American Government appointed Daniel Webster, and this British Government sent out Lord Ashburton, a very amiable old gentleman who let Webster have almost entirely his own way, and who consented to giving seven thousand square miles of the best timber and agricultural land out of the twelve thousand in dispute." The disputed territory had been settled by French Canadian families and the question as to the ecclesiastical jurisdiction over them. The Propaganda decided that they still belonged ecclesiastically to the Bishop of St. John, nor was this changed by the formation of the Diocese of Chatham. Bishop Rogers was commissioned, however, to visit the region in question and to report on two points: 1<sup>st</sup>, would be more desirable that the missions therein should be allowed to remain under the jurisdiction of the Bishop of St. John, transferred to the Bishop of Portland, Maine, or to the New Diocese of Chatham? 2<sup>nd</sup>, what were the wishes of the people themselves, that is to which of these Dioceses would they desire to belong?

Bishop Rogers, having visited the whole district, reported in substance as follows: to the 1<sup>st</sup>, that it made little difference to which of the three diocese the district would belong, as each Bishop was prepared to do his utmost for its spiritual welfare- but, considering the community of origin and language, the similarity of customs and manners, the intimate intercourse of the people in the Maine Madawaska and the New Brunswick Madawaska, it seemed to him advisable that both districts should be united under the one jurisdiction; to the 2<sup>nd</sup>, that with very few exceptions all would wish to be thus united under one Bishop.

It does not appear that any action was taken upon this report, for we find that the Bishops of St. John and Chatham had a mutual understanding by which the district in question, though belonging to St. John, was attended by the Bishop of Chatham until the year 1869, when it was finally transferred to the Bishop of Portland. Having completed his mission, Bishop Rogers returned to Chatham to celebrate the Feast of St. Michael, the Patron of the new Diocese, on September 29<sup>th</sup>. On the 2<sup>nd</sup> of October, he administered for the first time the Sacrament of Confirmation to a large number of the children of the Parish. He then made a second visit to Madawaska which he himself describes in these words: "According to the arrangement made while in Madawaska, I returned there to finish my pastoral visit, commencing with the most distant church, St. Francis Xavier, where I administered the Sacrament of Confirmation on October 12<sup>th</sup>. In one mission, that of St. Basil, the oldest and most important Acadian Mission in Madawaska, I found a splendid new church, which, although built of wood, an edifice of the first order for a missionary country. This church being almost completed, I acceded with pleasure to the request of the zealous Pastor to inaugurate the new temple by administering in it the

Sacrament of Confirmation to 502 aspirants who had made their first communion at different periods. The ceremony was sublime and touching. The devoted Sisters of Charity had a short time before, established a house of their community at St. Basil, and already on this occasion the influence of their holy work in educating the youth of Madawaska was made manifest in a striking manner. The piety and regularity of the children, kneeling in the Church or approaching the Altar to receive Holy Communion or Confirmation, their sweet young voices chanting the hymns that the good sisters had taught them and invoking the Holy Spirit, their consecration as Children of Mary and placing themselves under the protection of their Guardian Angels and Holy Patrons in the services of Jesus Christ whose faithful soldiers they promised to remain until death; all this was a spectacle so touching that each one present shed tears of holy emotion. In July of the following year, the venerable Archbishop of Halifax, under whose administration while Bishop of St. John, the installation of the Sisters and the laying of the foundation stone of the Church had taken place, kindly accepted the invitation we had given him of presiding at the solemn dedication of the Church. On leaving Madawaska, I made a brief visit to each of the other churches and missions of my diocese in order to be personally informed of the state of religion in each locality, to meet the worthy priests, the good people, examine the condition of the churches etc. In the course of the three following summers, I made the pastoral visit of the principal parts of the Diocese and during these first visits administered Holy Confirmation to over 5,000 persons.”

We have cited the above portion of a letter in order to show the wonderful activity exercised by Bishop Rogers at the commencement of his episcopate. To those who are unaware of the difficulty of travelling in those days, the journeys from Chatham to Madawaska and to the other parts of the Diocese do not speak of much hardship. We must, however, remember that there was not one railway in the whole Diocese at that time and a visit to Madawaska meant to drive by road to Fredericton, thence to go by water to Woodstock and the remainder of the way again in a carriage. We have just seen that Bishop Rogers returned from Madawaska for Sept. 29<sup>th</sup>, that he confirmed in Chatham on Oct. 2<sup>th</sup>, and again in Madawaska Oct. 12<sup>th</sup>, after which he visited the other parts of the diocese all by carriage. Nor do we cite this as a single incident in his life since until after he had passed the allotted three score and then he continued the same wonderful activity. Night or day seemed the same to him when it became a matter of driving to some point which he wished to reach. The year after his arrival in Chatham, he was the recipient of a large spacious carriage and a pair of horses. The horses were often replaced, but he used the same vehicle until the end. Wrapped in his great coat, he slept the sleep of the just as the carriage driven at a fast rate brought him on his work of charity and religion. More than one amusing incident is told of these drives, but the following we have chosen to relate.

Bishop Rogers' driver for many years was a certain Irishman who was not an absolute teetotaler. It appears that on some of the long night drives, Mr. Phee provided

himself with a certain cordial of which he was particularly fond, alleging as his reason that it would be necessary should the horses meet with an accident. He did not dare, however, to indulge before the Bishop, but after driving for a time in silence he would make some remarks to the Bishop until he found him asleep. On one occasion, the night was very chilly and Paddy was perhaps a little overanxious to feel the warmth of his cordial. Having driven a few miles, he called out over his shoulder: "A cold night, me Lord." Receiving no answer, he again essayed: "A pretty cold night, me Lord." No answer being forth-coming, Paddy considered the Bishop deep in slumber and the coast clear, so he brought forth his flask and took a long draught therefrom. He had hardly taken the flask from his lips when- what was his shame and confusion- he heard behind him, from the muffled figure that he thought so deep in sleep: "Yes, Patrick, a very cold night indeed!"

## Chapter VII

### Bishop Rogers writes to the “Propagation of the Faith,” Paris; Describes His Labors and the Development of the Diocese Under His Care

Chatham, New Brunswick,

December 4<sup>th</sup>, 1886.

Gentlemen: -

According to the promise I made to you, I write to give you an account of my humble efforts in my new diocese since my arrival to assume the burden imposed upon me by the Father of all the Faithful, our illustrious actual sovereign Pontiff, Pius IX-----

I must say that, although during the course of my visits I found, as was to be expected in any new country, that certain regrettable abuses existed which required the immediate application of the proper remedy, I found nothing defective in the zeal and devotion of the good priests, in the spirit of piety and simplicity of the people, nor in their love for their religion and their pastors. On the contrary, everywhere in the diocese was manifest a splendid, I might even say an enthusiastic, spirit, a sentiment of true catholic piety, upheld by the example of the few holy priests who worked in the vineyard and whose labors and merits are in return appreciated with gratitude by their docile and faithful flock. This was evinced by the universal joy shown by the visit of the Bishop. The roads for the distance of some miles from the churches were lined with trees, the houses were decorated more or less artistically according to the skill of their owners, groups of men stationed at regular distances formed in line as a guard of honor, fired volleys of musketry as we passed; others in large numbers accompanied us on horseback and in carriages to the church. Upon our arrival the bells pealed forth their notes of joy and all entered the church to receive the blessing of their new bishop and to hear the short instruction which in the fullness of his heart he made it a duty and a pleasure to give them. During several days the work of the mission proceeded, the bishop and priests hearing the confession of the people, one member of the clergy preparing the candidates for confirmation, while others, at specified hours, preached every day and read subjects of meditation, examination of conscience, etc., etc. One day was set aside by the Bishop to hear the various disputes brought before him for settlement. Once his advice or decision given, all sentiment of enmity ceased and the disputants shook hands as a mark of reconciliation and prepared themselves to profit by grace of the mission by a good confession and the worthy reception of their Divine Redeemer in the Sacrament of His love, the most Holy Eucharist.

At the Bishops leaving, the same manifestations of respect that marked his arrival were repeated. Volleys of musketry, the ringing of bells, flags flying from all the houses, and a long line of carriages accompanying the Bishop signaled his progress for miles from the church. This picture, gentlemen, is no exaggeration. It even underrates the reality as it occurred in the Acadian

missions where the good people still preserve their primitive piety, the purity of their morals, the simplicity of their lives and their fidelity to the faith of their ancestors.

Since my first visit, I have again passed through different districts, and through some of them even several times, in a private or unofficial manner for the purpose of seeing and conferring with the worthy priests in parochial matters or the general state of religion. Last fall I again made a pastoral visit to a large part of my diocese and I was consoled and much pleased at seeing the progress made in all things pertaining to the spiritual and temporal welfare and the education of the people since my last official visit. In the missions on the Bay Chaleur when I made my first visit there were only four priests; one, Father Mooney, died at Shippagan in October, 1863; another, Father Malloy of Bathurst, left the diocese last year because of failing health. These two priests have been replaced and four others have been added, which makes at present eight missionaries in this district viz: (commencing at Dalhousie and following the coast to the Miramichi Bay) Father O'Leary at Dalhousie, Father Robert (of the Congregation of the Holy Cross) at Petit Rocher, Father Morriscy at Bathurst; Father Pacquet, vicar-general, and Father Gagnon at Caraquet, Father Roi at Shippagan, Father Gauvreau at Tracadie, and Father Joseph Theberge at Neguac.

When I made my first visit to Madawaska, there were only two priests, there are now four, viz: - Father McGuirk at St. Basil, Father McDonald at St. Francis Xavier, - in the diocese of Chatham; Father Sweron at St. Luce and Father Nugent at St. Bruno, - in the diocese of St. John. Several new churches have been built, new missions opened and educational houses established.

In the parish of Father Pelletier, St. Louis Church Kouchibouguacis, Kent County, I administered the Sacrament of Confirmation a few weeks ago, in two new and beautiful churches finished exteriorly but not interiorly, which churches were built these last years according to plans I had given and in districts where no catholic churches had heretofore existed. They are the Church of St. Aloysius of Gonzaga at Richibucto and that of St. Charles Borromeo, in a new Acadian settlement about five miles from the Aldouin river, also called the Northwest. On the 29<sup>th</sup> August 1865, I dedicated a small new church, that of St. John the Baptist in the Town of Dalhousie, where there was none before; it is built on land bought two years ago. In the Town of Newcastle (capital of Northumberland county) where there was no church, a splendid property has been bought, and the cornerstone of a beautiful church, whose construction is now well advanced, was laid in November 1865. A mission of the Sisters of Charity coming from Halifax was established there in a new convent built near the church in 1864. The good religious successfully direct an institution for the education of the young girls of the catholic population of the Miramichi.

At Bathurst, another mission of the same religious community was founded in February, 1864. Since then a large convent and school, not yet finished, has been built for them and their pupils. This institution is pleasantly situated near the parish church and about the center of the coast line of the Bay of Chaleur is destined to spread the benefits of religion and to complete the



education of the English and French catholic young girls of all the neighboring parishes as the institution of Madawaska is doing for the parishes of that region. These three institutions placed in the most important centers of my diocese have already produced consoling results. The Academy of Madawaska has sent several pupils to the novitiate of the Mother-House at St. John to become members of the community. One of these having finished her novitiate and religious instruction in the Mother-House has returned to the institution of Madawaska where she now teaches. From the Bay of Chaleur, also, four postulants, and from Miramichi eight, have already entered the novitiate of the Mother-House at Halifax for the same purpose; they are very happy and give every hope of becoming good religious who will return to their respective districts to edify and instruct youth.

On the 17<sup>th</sup> of August, 1864, I dedicated solemnly and in the presence of a large concourse of people from the neighboring parishes, a splendid stone church at Caraquet. This parish is the oldest and therefore the mother-mission of the good Acadians of the Bay Chaleur. The parishioners, under the learned and zealous guidance of their devoted pastor, Father Pacquet, have for years been contributing their own labor towards the building of this beautiful church. Their hopes and labors were crowned with deserved success on the day when the Bishop and priests of the diocese as also many venerable priests of Canada came to honor their beloved pastor and his people by assisting at the dedication. The previous fall, on the occasion of my visit, I had confirmed in this church about 400 children of both sexes who had already made their first Holy Communion. During the mission that carried on at that visit Rev. Father Lefebvre of the Congregation of the Holy Cross, Superior of the College directed by his community at Memramcook, who at my invitation had come to accompany me on the visit, preached every day and, by his ardent eloquence, electrified his hearers. The worthy pastor of the parish, the people and the priests present all felt inexpressibly happy and grateful to God over the success of the mission and their Bishop participated in their sentiments with all his heart.

The neighboring parish, Tracadie, and its worthy priest, the Rev. Ferdinand Gauvreau, deserve a word on part in passing. About thirty-five years ago, this gentleman, then a young priest, was sent from Quebec by his Bishop to aid his uncle the Rev. Celestin Gauvreau then in charge of the Acadian mission of Memramcook at the head of the Bay of Fundy. He was afterwards given charge of the mission where he worked with zeal and earnestness to the year 1851, when he was sent to Tracadie. While at Memramcook, his active and intelligent mind was continually at work in caring for the spiritual and temporal welfare of his people. He introduced different ameliorations in the manner of cultivating the land and of fishing shad in the neighboring waters of the Bay of Fundy. But the greatest benefit that he procured for his parishioners in their temporal affairs was to assure them by his wise and energetic efforts, the right and title to their real estate- which they had almost lost.

To explain this, I shall say that the first Acadians established at Memramcook did not hold their lands by direct grant from the Government, but from a certain M. des Barrs to whom the Government had given them and who would not sell them outright but leased them for nine

hundred and ninety nine years in consideration of an annual land rent. Certain ones regularly paid their rent, but others neglected to do so and in consequence their arrears reached a considerable sum. The heirs of M. des Barrs, desirous of obtaining these beautiful and rich districts purposely refrained from pressing for payment with the idea of giving the simple and confiding Acadians a sense of false security and thus preparing the way to dispossess them later on. Some years before an important property at Minudie, in Nova Scotia, occupied by eighty or one hundred Acadian families, had been lost in this way, as the arrears were greater than the poor people could pay and they foolishly consented to give up their lease of nine hundred and ninety nine years for a new lease of twenty years without rent to be given to each head of a family at the expiration, of which time all their right to the properties would entirely cease.

Father Gauvreau spared no energy in preventing the splendid parish of Memramcook from undergoing the same fate. He went to Halifax to obtain legal advice on the matter. He found an eminent juris consultant, the honorable William Young, afterwards President of the court of Nova Scotia, by whose counsels and with infinite labor, he succeeded at last in persuading the people to enter into a new agreement by which, upon payment of the sum asked, their leases were converted into clear titles, and which permitted them, in a more simple and better way, to remain masters of their lands and to obtain entire possession of them.

Another important work of Father Gauvreau when pastor of Memramcook was the construction of the fine stone church of that parish which he commenced and continued for several years personally directing the work of his parishioners. When he left Memramcook the exterior was finished. His successor, Father Lafrance continued the work by finishing the interior and by establishing an academy or college for the education of boys of the parish. The college, however, languished until about three years ago when the Fathers of Holy Cross were given charge of both it and the parish. This circumstance marked the commencement of an important era in the history of the good Acadians in all parts of the county.

Father Gauvreau left Memramcook with regret. He could never think of his old parishioners without emotion. I learned the particulars of the sacrifices he had made when from 1853 to 1856, I resided as missionary at Minudie which he had formally been a mission attended by the priest of Memramcook, and where the good people took great pleasure in recounting the history of their former beloved pastors.

When, upon the occasion of my last visit to the missions of the Bay of Chaleur, Father Gauvreau and Father Lefebvre met for the first time, it was for me a source of real joy to be able to present to each other these two worthy missionaries of Memramcook. Congratulating, on the one part, Father Gauvreau on the way in which the holy work of moral and intellectual renovation of the people he had so well loved and for whom he had spent himself, was being now carried on so happily and so successfully by his present successor; and, on the other, complimenting Father Lefebvre upon finding himself with his predecessor who had been able to avert from the people and clergy of Memramcook this misfortune of seeing their beautiful parish fall into the hands of strangers; who had built their present church; and who had

worked with such efficiency for the welfare of his flock. In the evenings passed at Caraquet and Tracadie, after the work of preaching and hearing confessions, while enlivening our evening repast, and while reposing our minds and bodies for the work of the morrow, the conversation of the two venerable pastors Fathers Pacquet and Gauvreau with Father Lefebvre and myself, as also those others who found themselves present, was of the most interesting description. Father Pacquet also came from Quebec as a young priest about 36 years ago to help his venerable uncle, Father Gagnon, who died filled with merit, at Barachois, near Shediac, and whose remains have been interred there in the crypt of the parish church. Father Pacquet, before 1848 when he was sent to Caraquet, had attended all the catholic missions from Cape Tormentine to Miramichi. Everywhere his name is revered. He was in every respect a missionary of the highest merit. He and Father Gauvreau had, since their arrival in these missions, seen many changes in which they themselves took a large and active part. They are in fact living repertoires of the history of catholic progress in New Brunswick. A few years before their arrival there were only one missionary for Memramcook, one for the missions of the Gulf near Shediac, as far as Miramichi, one, residing at Caraquet for the district from Miramichi to Restigouche and one at St. Basil in Madawaska. Two of these venerable predecessors of Father Pacquet and Gauvreau are yet living. Mgr. Blanchet, now Archbishop of Oregon City, resided at the "Village" some miles south of Richibucto and visited north to the Miramichi where he encountered Mgr. Cook, actual Bishop of Three Rivers who resided at Caraquet, and whose mission extended from Miramichi to Canada. In the district that Mgr. Cook attended alone there are now eight priests and 16 churches not including Chatham, but from Bartibogue along the coast to Dalhousie. In all New Brunswick there were then only four or five priests; now there are two dioceses, viz: St. John, with one bishop, 30 priests, more than 60 churches, 1 college, 3 convents of Religious Sisters directing institution for young girls, and more than 50,000 Catholics; and Chatham, with one bishop, 14 priests, 1 college, 3 convents for instruction of young girls, and 35,000 Catholics.

Thus have we sufficient to edify us and to cause us to thank God for the fruitful blessings which He has continued to shower upon the humble labors of those whom He employs in this portion of the vineyard. Our conversation, indeed, was always rendered pleasant by the many anecdotes of missionary life in relating which each took part but of which the two more aged were able to furnish the most abundant share-----

But I return to Tracadie; --The people of this mission formerly lived almost exclusively upon the product of the fisheries as do now their neighbors of Shippagan and Caraquet, but for various reasons that branch of commerce ceased to be profitable to them as it is for their neighbors. Many therefore took up lands some miles from the coast and although as is generally the case with those who open new farms they had to bear with greater or less privation they nevertheless began to increase in numbers and in comfort. It is not easy for a fishing population to turn to agriculture with all the knowledge and energy required to succeed. This became especially evident in Tracadie. The partial but not complete exercise of the industry they first loved, the fishing, turned them from the farms with the result that both branches became poorly cared for and produced poverty instead of the comfort they promised. But the most remarkable

particular to be noted about Tracadie is the existence of that hideous malady, often mentioned in Holy Scripture: the leprosy.

It was generally known for a long time that certain cases of this disease existed in the neighborhood of Tracadie, but it was only in 1844 that the authorities took official notice of it. A medical commission was named which made its report to the Government and in the above mentioned year an act of the Provincial Legislature was passed, and renewed again with certain modifications in 1850, authorizing the Lieutenant Governor of the Province to establish a local Board of Health with all necessary power for enclosing within a hospital or lazaretto all in their district afflicted with this disease. The Board of Health being duly approved, established the lazaretto first on Shel Drake Island, situated in an isolated position in the middle of the Miramichi River and about eighteen miles below Chatham. The unfortunate lepers, torn from their homes found it impossible to support their mournful imprisonment far from the priest, the church, and their neighbors. During that time (1846-49) Bishop Sweeney, then missionary at Chatham (within the limits of which mission the Island of Shel Drake was) visited them often, ministered to their spiritual wants and did everything possible to alleviate their distress. Father Lafrance, of whom we have already spoken as having preceded Father Gauvreau at Memramcook, and who, some time before, had been appointed the first resident priest at Tracadie went also from time to time to console his poor afflicted parishioners. The clergy employed all their energy and influence in favor of the poor lepers and at last the government transferred the lazaretto to the place it now occupies about half a mile from the parish church of Tracadie where a large tract of land has been bought and enclosed. Humble, but sufficiently comfortable and convenient apartments were built and a porter, cook, etc., were hired to look after the lepers. A doctor was also employed for this purpose. The resident priest of Tracadie was officially named chaplain by the Government with a small salary (merely nominal) attached to his office. The hospital for the lepers is so constructed that a wall divides the building into two parts, one for the men and the other for the women. A small addition to the principal building serves as a chapel or oratory upon which a glass partition looks from each of the parts assigned to the men and women respectively. The chaplain celebrates the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass there at least once a week, hearing the confessions and fulfilling the other duties that his office requires. Thus, the present condition of the lepers of Tracadie within sight of their parish church and having the services of the priest as often as they require him is relatively a paradise in comparison with the state they found themselves in on Shel Drake Island. Notwithstanding this amelioration it is easy to understand that persons afflicted, separated from their families and their children as soon as the symptoms of leprosy were found on them, kept in a state of imprisonment and forbidden all communication with the outside world, could become at times irritable and discontented. The poor lepers often complain of the persons employed to care for them saying that they are not always kind, nor are they always faithful to distribute what is given for their support or to permit the little pleasures that the government allows them. Without doubt their complaints are generally exaggerated and sometimes after investigation it was found that they were without reason; other times, however, it was found that they were really true. Whether those who are

charged with giving them the necessary care in their affliction, comply faithfully or not with their obligations, these poor lepers are not less worthy of commiseration, and the holy influence of religion is necessary to them to enable them to bear afflictions, real or imaginary, and to carry cheerfully the heavy cross that it has pleased the Heavenly Father to impose upon them. That is why the office or chaplain to the lazaretto is very important since it brings such great consolations to the afflicted patients, although, it is no doubt at the same time a source of troubles and difficulties, as also of great merit to the devoted priest.

Often when I visited the lazaretto and attempted to speak a few words of consolation to those therein enclosed, I felt the deepest sympathy for the good priest whose daily function it is to accomplish this duty truly requiring the spirit of St. Camillus de Lellis to support it. Since my first visit I have thought how desirable it would be to establish there some hospital Sisters to devote themselves to this charitable work of consoling and caring for the poor sufferers whose number varied, during my different visits, from 20 to 30, the present number. But then the consideration of greater and more pressing needs requiring my attention and my financial means being insufficient not only to soothe physical sufferings but even to supply the required aid for the salvation of souls obliged me to postpone my projects in favor of the lepers until my infant diocese could supply the religious wants of its people by an increased number of priests, the building of churches or chapels where none existed before and where the need of them became felt, and the establishment of institutions for the Christian education of youth. Other obstacles to the immediate execution of my designs were the lack of approval and necessary cooperation on the part of the Government, the absence of proper lodgings in which to place the Sisters and the uncertainty as whether the protestant element which rules in our government and legislature would give us financial aid or even permit us to make the proper preparations to bring the Sisters to direct the hospital. Last spring, I made a petition to the Government but political agitations which often change the personnel, have impeded them from coming to any decision in the matter. Hence the worthy Pastor of Tracadie, Father Gauvreau, continues to be the only administering angel to give the consolations of religion to this cruelly afflicted portion of his flock. At my last visit eleven young lepers were confirmed in the little chapel of the lazaretto where I offered the Holy Sacrifice. On that occasion good Father Lefebvre delivered a very touching and consoling instruction to all the poor lepers who, although they, as the pauper Lazarus, are covered with ulcers and rejected here below, may hope to be admitted to into the Kingdom of God and to rejoice forever in the bosom of Abraham.

I have the honor to be etc.

James Rogers

Bishop of Chatham.



## Chapter VIII

### Bishop Rogers in Another Letter to the "Propagation of The Faith," Paris; Tells of His Work in Chatham and its Vicinity

Chatham, December 20<sup>th</sup>, 1866

Gentlemen, --

I have related to you the facts and incidents throughout the diocese but without speaking to you of Chatham. Today I intend informing you of what has been done in my episcopal city and its vicinity.

The Diocese of Chatham comprises the northern half of the Province of New Brunswick containing a few square miles more than the southern half of the Province, which constitutes the Diocese of St. John- but is much less populous. The people are collected along the coast; the interior is still the virgin forest, and the means of the communication, such as roads etc., are much more difficult than in the southern part of the country. According to the last census (1861) the population of New Brunswick was 252,047 inhabitants of whom 85,253 were Catholics. In the Diocese of Chatham were 54,379 souls, of whom 33,624 were Catholics. To attend this population, I had in my diocese but seven priests, viz: Fathers Pacquet at Caraquet, Meloy at Bathurst, Mooney at Shippagan, Gauvreau at Tracadie, Pelletier at Kouchibouguacis, McGuirk at St. Basil and Egan at Nelson.

The worthy missionaries generally resided in the centre of their missions, where their parishioners were most numerous, and where, since the missions had been formed for some years, it was better that they should reside. In the course of time the population increased. New centres of business and commerce were formed and gave employment to a great number of people who had no catholic church, however. In these places, and in fact generally throughout the Diocese, those who were the loaders in business and, in consequence, exercised the greater influence, were Protestants: the Catholics were employed as laborers. I perceived that in such a state of things, our laboring Catholic population and particularly our youth, who were placed in the midst of persons opposed to our faith-(the priest residing some miles away and constantly occupied with his ever increasing flock) were exposed to the danger of neglecting and perhaps even of abandoning the faith. The need of actions to meet this danger occupied my earnest attention. Priests had to be named, churches built, catholic schools established, and books and pamphlets procured and circulated to nullify the effects of the bad reading matter so prevalent. This work could not be done all at once, especially with the small amount of means that I had at my disposal. It would take time, money, prudence, energy and perseverance in order that our catholic population depending on Protestants

neighbors richer than they, might gradually but surely better their position and educate their children to become the pillars of the church and of catholic society in the country. To obtain priests was the most important work, but this was by no means as easy as might be supposed. In fact, the Bishops of America, far from being able to come to our aid in this matter, had not sufficient subjects to meet the needs of their dioceses whose population were increasing every day. The devoted Bishop of St. John, who needed one or two French-speaking priests, recently addressed himself to Quebec where he thought they were more numerous, but in vain. I also knew that should I address myself to some seminary of missionaries to obtain subjects, a rather long time would intervene before I could have any who would have completed their ecclesiastical studies and who would be able to speak both French and English, as both tongues are indispensable in our fixed population. Hence a certain time must pass before I could place priests where there were none; but these places, and above all the town designated as my See by the Holy Father- that is, Chatham, as also its environs- claimed my immediate and careful attention.

Chatham is one of our four neighboring small towns on the Miramichi River, about 32 miles from its mouth. Chatham first and then Nelson are on the south bank of the river. Between them on the opposite bank are Douglastown and Newcastle with about three miles between them. Chatham is the largest and most populous, but Newcastle is the shire-town of the Northumberland county, and bids fair to equal Chatham in business and population. The development of business in these four towns is one to milling and exportation of lumber as also to ship-building. The timber cut in the winter at the head of the river is floated down in the spring to the mills in or near the towns, where during the summer it is sawed and loaded on vessels for Great Britain or Ireland. Besides those occupied thus, a large number work on the farms along the banks of the river and its tributaries, and it is to be regretted that there are not more, since farming would be more remunerative, more beneficial to the country, more favorable to the morals of the people, and make them happier. The population of the whole county of Northumberland, according to the last census is 18,801 souls of whom 8,707 are Catholics. These may be divided as follows, at Chatham and surrounding districts 2,000, Newcastle 1,300, Douglastown 400, and Nelson 300: a total of 4,000 forming about 600 families in the towns, while the remaining 600 or 700 families are employed by the farming or in cutting timber and driving it to the mills. The laboring population of the towns varies according to the amount of work, sometimes it is double that of the permanent residents and sometimes, on the other hand, the towns are almost half deserted. Thus, a large portion of my flock, at Chatham and neighboring towns are what are termed a "floating population." None are rich and some are very poor.

The humble condition of the new episcopal seat obliged its first bishop to imitate, at least during the first years of his ministry, the apostolic simplicity and poverty of the founders of new dioceses at all times, but particularly in the early ages



of the church. I saw that conditions in my new field of labor would force me to work rather as a simple missionary bishop in the different parts of my diocese than as a bishop residing in his episcopal city, surrounded by his auxiliary clergy such as the episcopal dignity, as well as the duties of administration demand in older dioceses. I went cheerfully to work, being desirous of conforming to the circumstances and inconveniences pertaining to my position until God, in His goodness, would send the desired improvements. As I have already said, I often went to the most distant portions of the Diocese striving to supplement the insufficiency of priests by hearing confessions, visiting the sick, etc. and on all occasions strengthening the people by instructing them; for I found that the advice of St. Paul “preach at all times the word of God” was particularly applicable to my diocese—

Owing to the severity of the winter, business and work, upon which also the entire population of Chatham and the surrounding towns depend for support, are not carried on except in summer- that is from the middle of May, when the ice leaves the river and allows the mills to run, until about the middle of November. During that period of work, not only the men but even boys of twelve years of age and under are employed in the mills, the latter for the easier work which they can do as well as the men. The young men of twenty or thereabouts are frequently employed in loading and stowing the cargo of vessels. This work, by forcing them into intercourse with sailors from all parts of the world, seemed and proved a source of danger to them. We found moreover, that a certain number of them had not made their first communion. To preserve youth, the hope of the church, is the duty of every pastor at all times and in all circumstances, but for us it became supreme and of the very first importance and we could not postpone its fulfilment for a week without being wanting in the solitude that our office of Pastor imposed on us. It was not easy, however, to procure efficacious means of action. In our new country it was difficult to find, outside the large cities, good English-speaking professors. The various other ways of making rapid progress induced teachers to abandon an occupation so fatiguing and ill-paid, for other and more lucrative employments. It was this circumstance which prevented the Brothers of Christian schools of our provinces, as also other religious orders, from recruiting sufficient English-speaking subjects to meet the needs of important English-speaking towns and parishes. The Archbishop of Halifax and the Bishop of St. John had asked for Brothers, but without obtaining them. It is only within the last two years that they have succeeded. I earnestly desired to obtain some for Chatham, but I know that it was useless to dream of it before these Bishops had procured them. I could do nothing but call to my aid three or four ecclesiastical students to come and teach the children. To do this constrained me to establish a seminary in my house, the only convenient place, since these students, in teaching the children, should not neglect but should continue their own studies. The direction of this small seminary meant an addition to our responsibility, our anxiety, and our work, as well as to those of the priest who aided me, and we were in a poor state for

this new duty which would embarrass us and impede the accomplishment of our other duties. We had, however, to bear with these inconveniences or consent to leave our young children in their danger which would be thus indefinitely prolonged. You can easily guess our decision. A school for boys was established and conducted by four seminarians who, while teaching, studied also under my direction or that of my assistant priest and in my house, the only convenient place, and in consequence the cradle of the new seminary. Each day after giving the allotted time to the young Levites, I visited their school. In my absence, the assistant priest took my place. There followed from these efforts the most happy results for the boys. The young seminarians instructed and catechized their little flock with great zeal and devotedness. Young men of twenty-four or twenty-five years of age being without work in the winter attended the school with delight. The enthusiasm thus aroused enabled us to establish schools for the girls, of which we now have four in the town- ably directed by young teachers. These latter as well as boys' school were the object of my deepest solicitude. I visited them often, conferring small prizes to excite diligence and emulation. I established a Christian Doctrine Society for the young persons of both sexes for the purpose of assembling them on Sundays. They assisted at Mass with the singing and hymns and in the afternoon, they taught catechism. We appointed a day for confessions, choosing those feasts most appropriate for general communion- which they received regularly nine times a year, that is: on the feast of the Holy Innocents the Purification; the Feast of St. Joseph; the Feast of St. John (6<sup>th</sup> May), in the Octave of Corpus Christi and the Assumption; the Feast of St. Aloysius of Gonzaga; the holy Angels; St. Cecilia; etc. At the beginning, we tried to make of the day of their first communion a day not only of spiritual joy but also of innocent corporal recreation by preparing a little feast, a breakfast after mass and games during the day. In the evening all wended their way to the church singing the Litany of the Blessed Virgin, and the day was terminated by Benediction of the Most Blessed Sacrament. The Society of Christian Doctrine gave annual prizes, as also clothes, to enable the poor children to attend regularly. They also kept a library of pious instructive and edifying books.

The efforts thus made succeeded even beyond our hopes. The enthusiasm of the children was caught by their older brothers and sisters as also by others older still. The missions that we gave at Advent or in Lent were followed by the people with the greatest devotion. They approached the Sacraments, came regularly to the church, and contributed- even beyond their means- to found institutions calculated not only to meet actual needs of the people but also to assure the spiritual welfare of future generation. Our richer protestant neighbors were astonished at such success.

Thus, the good work prospered under the protection of the Blessed Virgin Mary and her spouse, St. Joseph; for all the children were enrolled with the Scapular of our Lady of Mount Carmel and were equally devout to her spouse and to their Guardian Angels. Our Divine Redeemer, who, on various occasions, expressed His love for

children, promising that He would regard as done to Himself whatever was done to the least of these little one, bountifully rewarded our feeble efforts on their behalf in blessing all our other undertakings--

I was also considering the plan of enlarging our church, which had already become too small. It had served as a mission chapel twenty-eight years ago when Chatham was attended by the priest residing at Nelson and neither priest nor people dreamed that it would become a cathedral. After some weeks of thought I decided that the enlargement I would make would not be convenient and that it would be better to wait until we could build a new cathedral should Chatham continue to grow. Our means, moreover, were small and I resolved to limit myself to the necessary changes such as enlarging the sacristy and sanctuary so that the religious ceremonies could be properly carried out, as also the extension of the gallery to give more space for the people. I did not put from my mind, however, the idea of the new cathedral, but often thought of the procuring of a site, and the choice of style of the building. In the course of the summer of 1861, I made the above-mentioned changes in our little chapel.

In January 1862, it became necessary to build near the church a school for our boys, and to leave the one they occupied for the girls. In building this institution, I designed to study economy by having in it the house of the teachers. My object was to obtain Brothers as soon as possible, and I found that the building which served me as residence and where I kept the seminarians who taught our children was very inconvenient. I resolved therefore to commence at least this year a new building which I hoped to frame and board in as such work could be done by free labor, or at least a very small cost. My resources had been depleted by the work done at the church. I expressed my wishes to the people, who held a meeting in the evening to consider them and, as a result, decided unanimously and enthusiastically that the work should commence immediately. The next morning, they prepared themselves, and the following day we went about fifteen miles to a fit place in the forest to cut and prepare the wood for the frame.

I became very anxious for the success of the enterprise. The people were in the best of dispositions and it became very important to give a wise direction to their efforts lest their later interests should in any way be compromised by their first movement. The idea came to me that were the site of the future cathedral determined, we could place the building we were commencing in such a position in relation to the Cathedral that it could serve as a seminary or bishop-house or both as required. This determination required for its execution the purchase of the site, which demanded pecuniary means and we had none; nor were we sure that the land could be bought. Moreover, we were afraid that should the owners learn that we wished to procure their land, they might ask an exorbitant price. In this situation, I confided my embarrassment to some of the principal citizens and asked their advice. I had not before spoken of buying new land because, not having the means, I considered it would be premature to speak of it, but

now the necessity of making a good beginning was paramount. The results of our deliberations was that three lots of land were bought by means of a note bearing interest and signed by certain of the parishioners. Afterwards, other lots were bought so that the whole extent of ten acres were procured for the site of the cathedral and other institutions. It is situated on the highest part of the town, overlooking the river and all the surroundings. Should the town ever become large, the value of such a property may not be estimated.

Once the property was bought, the work of the new building went forward with rapid strides. The people divided themselves into three classes: one group working at the wood for the frame, another at the stone for the foundation, and the third at the excavation. All worked with enthusiastic emulation. The day after the land was bought, the diggers, with picks and shovels, assembled- awaiting the signal to commence work. Having decided the exact site of the future cathedral, we measured the lines for the seminary, placing it parallel to the actual church at the head of the cathedral, so that the latter would later on be flanked by these two buildings and would stand out in front between them.

The building that I was commencing for a seminary would later on serve as a bishop-house, while the one I occupied would be given to the Brothers of Christian Doctrine and the actual church would do for their classes when the cathedral was built. By this arrangement all the present buildings would be used with advantage and in economical way, since no work already done would have to be destroyed. The new seminary would make a convenient Bishop-house, of which we will have need, and will be accommodating for the clergy of the diocese, who may assemble there for theological conferences, spiritual retreats, etc. The present residence with its outbuildings, gardens, etc. will suit admirably for the three or four Brothers who will be sufficient for the present needs of our children.

Finally, the boys' school situated in another part of the town, as also the schools of the girls, can be enlarged to receive Sisters to direct a convent. Such was the plan we conceived for our infant establishment at Chatham and we have tried to follow it faithfully during the whole work.

The seminary was built and occupied that year. It was so far advanced by the sixth of May (one of the feasts of St. John, the Apostle that Jesus Christ loved so well because of his youth and his innocence) that our children and those who attended with them the devotions of the month of May, held there after communion a festival reunion- which gave great pleasure to all. On the second of July, the part destined for classrooms was finished and the boys entered into it. On the 16<sup>th</sup>, they passed their brilliant examinations. On the same day, the girls took possession of their school and the ceremony of the crowning of the statue of the Blessed Virgin- whom they had chosen as their patron with St. Joseph, St. Michael, and St. Patrick- was very touching. On the

29<sup>th</sup> of September, Feast of St. Michael, patron Saint of the parish, the young professors of the boys' school, the domestics, etc. occupied the new house where up to the present time (the Brothers not having yet come) they are diligently occupied in teaching the children under our own guidance and that of the assistant priest who lives with them.

The following year (1863), a quantity of cut stone was brought on the site of the cathedral not with the intention of commencing the constructing immediately, for many years must pass before we can dream of it, but in order to have everything ready when circumstances may permit us to commence.

Having arranged matters as well as possible in Chatham, I turned my attention to Bathurst, shire-town of Gloucester County, on the Bay of Chaleur. The worthy priest of that mission had worn out his health by day and night attendance upon the sick with typhoid fever, which raged as an epidemic among the people during the preceding winter and spring. Thinking that it was necessary to lessen his work in order to preserve his health, to labor in the vineyard of the Savior where laborers were so few, I placed him temporarily at Petit Rocher- which had been a part of his mission. Having no one to place in Bathurst, I served that mission myself.

The good people at my recommendation, following what had been done at Chatham, enthusiastically undertook to build a convent to be directed by the Sisters of Charity that I had procured, and who had come with me from Halifax in the month of January, thus braving the hardships of a journey in midwinter of three hundred miles over ice and snow- a journey that none but true heroines of charity would undertake. The following summer, the new school was built and another mission of the same Sisters was founded at Newcastle, where since last year up to the present I attended the parish while overseeing the building of the new church now under construction. During the preceding years, notable improvements have been made in the four small missions which up to that time were served from Chatham, viz: - "Stella Maris" at Escuminac, St. Margaret's at Bay du Vin, St. Peters at Bartibogue, and St. Anne the Indian Mission at Burnt Church.

In every part of the Diocese, therefore, a helping hand has been given. The necessary works have been aided, Churches have been built where there were none, those that were built have been rendered more fitting for the needs of the faithful, and although- with the exception of three or four in the old missions- they are not all finished nor equipped with vestments and ornaments for the fitting service of God, I have all confidence that God will inspire fervent souls to supply by their charity what is still wanting. The number of priests has increased from seven to fourteen- not including the five that the Diocese has lost-, there are eight theological students preparing for the priesthood in different seminaries, and everything possible has been done, especially in the towns, for the pious and Christian education of youth- the future hope of the church and of society-----

I have the honor etc.,  
James Rogers  
Bishop of Chatham.

## Chapter IX

### Bishop Rogers Tells of His Work Among the Indians

We have translated and reproduced the two long letters of Bishop Rogers describing the first years of his episcopal ministry for a double reason. Being written by himself, they are of most undoubted authority as a narration of his own personal doings in detail, and moreover they show forth in a striking way the zeal for souls that burned as a consuming flame within his sacerdotal heart. In a spirit of holy desire, his love seems to brood over the neglected ones of his flock, his mind to conceive the remedies to be applied and his energy to spring immediately to the fore in applying the remedies as efficiently as his circumstances permit. Nor does a mind like his limit itself to the present needs. Piercing deeply into the darkness of futurity, he plans from the very commencement with a view to future development and necessities. In all he sees God's work. He himself is but a laborer in the vineyard. Glancing backwards upon his relation of the work done, churches built, parishes founded and ordained, to such an extent that a few short years have absolutely transformed the face of the Diocese, we read no note of self-glorification. We find instead a heartfelt rejoicing in the work of God for his beloved children, a deep earnest thankfulness that the Divine blessing is so apparent, and a simple confidence in the goodness of Providence for the future.

Who will tell, for his lips are silent in death, and even when living they refused to speak of it; who will tell of the spirit of profound self-sacrifice that pervaded and governed the years of which he writes? How many days of work and hardship, how many nights spent on the road in his carriage, or in his bare little room answering accumulated mail or planning the morrow's work, how many trials and difficulties, heart burnings and acts of ingratitude, how many hours spent on bended knees before the Blessed Sacrament, beseeching Him who is the Good Shepherd to protect His own and to help the humble little bishop at His feet to care for his flock, could be written in between these lines that tell so joyously of the work being done but speak not of the instrument God uses in doing it nor of the hardships encountered in its accomplishment. 'T'is well that God sees men's hearts and that the Recording Angel notes our every deed for the works of the humble would be but too often forgotten while those of the vainglorious are blazoned forth in letters of fire.

Hence, we make no apology for introducing into the life of the humble servant of God the details that might seem irrelevant did they not show the very aptness of the man's character for the position he occupied. As he himself states, his was not an episcopacy of dignity. He was not to be surrounded by a band of clerics ready to do his bidding and to relieve him of all duties but those of the greater acts of episcopal administration. His diocese and its conditions called for a missionary bishop, a friend, a

guide, a father of his people. It called for even more. It required a friend who could enter into the most intimate relation with the people- a guide to conduct them in the minor as well as the greater things of life, in their temporal as well as in their spiritual welfare, in their family as well as in their national existence, a father to love them all, every to the least and the poorest- for all were poor- to cheer them in their efforts and to aid them in their aspirations for better worldly position as well as the nobler and higher gifts of God. Years had passed, and little had been done for the spiritual or temporal elevation of the thousands of catholic emigrants pouring into the northern part of New Brunswick; Bishop Rogers arrives and almost immediately the scene is changed. Not by great deeds that ring in nations' ears was his work accomplished but by the many, the innumerable, apparently smaller- though oftentimes greater- acts of fatherly benevolence, friendly counsel, earnest encouragement tempered by humility and self-sacrifice.

That his heart was large enough to hold in its embrace even the lowliest of his children, nay, that though the least in the eyes of the world they were not the least in his affections, is shown by the following translation of part of still another letter which he wrote to the Propagation of the Faith at Paris.

Feast of the Epiphany, January 6<sup>th</sup>, 1862.

Gentlemen, --

I promised to give you some details concerning the mission to the Indians of my diocese. I must first remark that the Indians are less numerous in our districts than they have been. It is not difficult to assign the cause. In proportion to the increase of the number of new colonists, a larger portion of the forest was cleared and put under cultivation, resulting in a diminution of game, one of the principle means of subsistence for our Indians who still lead a nomad life. The means taken to induce them to adopt the customs of civilization to settle on farms and cultivate the land, to learn to exercise the different trades of other peoples, have never been sufficiently practical to attain their object. It would be wrong, however, to attribute this result to the natural incompatibility of the Indian character with the civilization of the white man. On the contrary, the Indians enter freely into intercourse with those who have gained their confidence; they are docile and industrious, bearing patiently both labor and fatigue, exercising great self-control and capable of a high degree of intellectual culture, with hearts good and affectionate. Their physical and social decline should be attributed solely to the vicissitudes through which the country passed as also to the circumstances on which they find themselves.

When these provinces belonged to France, the government favored the sending of missionaries to the Indian tribes. All the Indians who roamed through Nova Scotia, Cape Breton, Prince Edward Island (the Provinces the known as Acadie, and which included New Brunswick) became a part of the Christian flock. The Indians tenderly loved the



missionaries from whom they learned also to love the French colonists and to have with them most intimate and friendly intercourse. They perceived that the latter observed the precepts of brotherly love taught by their pastors; for it must be acknowledged to the honor of the French colonists of Acadia and Canada that from their very first settlement on American soil they were faithful to the practice of the Christian religion in all its beauty and primitive simplicity. All historians, who have written of them, unanimously attest this fact, and their testimony is confirmed by that of all intelligent and impartial travelers who have visited the colonies to the present day. Indians formed in such a school became fervent and faithful Christians, as is proved by their subsequent history of which I will give you the principle features ----- After the expulsion of the Acadians, the Indians- upon hearing of the cruelty exercised towards their neighbors and friends- could not control their indignation. There being no priest in the province to calm them, they frequently attacked the English colony at Halifax, and also killed a large number of colonists at Dartmouth so that the settlement there had to be temporarily abandoned. Hence, even from the first arrival of the English, a hostile sentiment existed between them and the Indians. Excepting in the foregoing attacks, this sentiment did not manifest itself by violence, but it produced a certain coldness that prevented the Indians from having complete confidence in the English and the latter from taking much interest in the welfare of the Indians.

Had not the unfortunate change come upon Acadie by which the Indians were deprived of their missionaries, there is no doubt that the influence and teaching of the latter aided when necessary by the protection and material help of the government, would have one day led the Indians to cultivate their natural talents, to accept the customs of civilization, and to apply themselves with diligence and regularity to the various branches of industry exercised by other people. They would have then become useful inhabitants, contributing by well-directed work to the development and general progress of their country.

From the commencement of the English occupation, there were no longer special missionaries for the Indians of Acadia. There were not even enough priests for the necessities of the white colonists who arrived in large numbers. In many localities, a number of catholic immigrants unfortunately gave way before the difficulties that the deep anti-Catholic sentiments of those about them opposed to the profession of their faith. Their children brought up in protestant surrounding, have in a great measure become the professed adversaries of the religion of their ancestors.

In such penury of priests, the Indians could not have more than a small and secondary share in the solicitude of the missionaries, but this share, so ardently desired, was always given them with fidelity and joy. If we also look upon the difficulties surrounding them, it is even astonishing to remark how they continued to practice their religious duties with what faithfulness they retained, and taught their children for many

generations the moral and dogmatic principles of Christianity with which the first missionaries, the Jesuits, had imbued them.

It is easy to see from the foregoing that the catholic clergy, so few in number, could not up to the present undertake the execution of any plan for the improvement of the temporal condition of the Indians. The fulfillment of the spiritual obligations of their ministry absorbed all their time and all their energy.

In my relations with the Indians, first in Nova Scotia as missionary-priest, and later in New Brunswick as bishop of my present diocese. I have often thought that it was of the greatest importance for them to have a zealous priest to reside in the districts where they are most numerous and to give them all his time and work. By learning their language, and with a little experience and talent to counsel them and direct their affairs, he could in a few years lead them to exercise agriculture and various other industries. He could thus accompany himself with profit in teaching the young, the hope of the future, in obtaining other teachers for them and in overseeing the schools which with his aid they would open. It was by thus remaining in their midst that the Jesuit Fathers who converted them succeeded so well in instructing them in the truths of religion. Is it not to permanent residence with them that the Indians of Paraguay have been raised by the Fathers of the same Order in such a high degree of Christian civilization?

The lack of priests and pecuniary means prevents me at present from realizing this plan in my diocese, but I entertain the hope of soon being able to undertake it and put it into execution. The faithful Indians deserve special sympathy from us, and that for various reasons, but especially because of their attachment to the true faith first taught them and their constancy in rejecting all efforts, all advantages, that tended to deprive them of this inestimable gift.

The first missionaries chose St. Ann as patron saint of the Indians. Her feast is celebrated on July 26<sup>th</sup>, a time of the year which is the most favorable for their reunions. At that season that weather is fine, the rivers and bays calm and tranquil, so that the Indian with his birch-bark canoe, having on board his wife and children, his gun, his tent and his provisions, can go with safety a long distance to the place of reunion. It is also the time of the year when the missionaries can leave the more easily his other congregations, occupied in farming and fishing to give himself up a few weeks to the various mission works midst these noble children of the forest. On my first arrival at Chatham, I promised the Indians of the Miramichi to celebrate in their midst at Burnt Church, the first feast of their dear Patron St. Ann. They received this news with joy, hastened to communicate it to their most friends and commenced their preparation for the event. Some days before the wished-for day I was occupied with various duties in the most distant parts of my diocese. On the 17<sup>th</sup> of July, I assisted the dedication of the new church at St. Basil by His Grace, the Archbishop of Halifax. The three following days were taken up with other interesting ceremonies in the same parish, particularly the

examination of the boarders of the institution known as the Madawaska Academy under the direction of the Sisters of Charity at the distribution of prizes. Upon leaving, I came down the St. John River as far as Tobique, where I stopped on Sunday 21<sup>st</sup>, to visit the Malecite Indians there. I had administered the Sacrament of Confirmation in their churches at the end of the mission given to the good people in the preceding month of October. Now I was obliged to hasten in order to be with the Miramichi Indians for the Feast of St. Ann.

Scarcely had I reached my residence the evening before the feast, when a fleet of canoes arrived at Chatham to carry me to Burnt Church. The Indians were somewhat disappointed to learn that I could not leave with them that day, and in consequence that they could not make all the demonstration with which they wished to honor the visit of the Bishop. Numbers of letters arrived during my absence, claimed my attention. Because of these and various other occupations, I could not leave Chatham till midnight. I left at that hour for the church of St. Ann, accompanied by two Indians entrusted with the care of the canoe which I had chosen for my journey. As our light bark descended the river, I wrapped myself in my shawl and stretched myself on a soft bed made of straw covered with a buffalo robe that the Indians had prepared, and slept soundly the whole journey- which lasted four hours. I was awakened by the volleys of musketry which saluted our approach, and the church bell continued for half-an-hour to ring out a joyous welcome and to announce our arrival. The many inhabitants of the wigwams arose and responded to the understood signal, and at four o'clock- the hour of dawn- they were assembled in the church to receive the Bishop's blessing and to commence the exercises of the mission. - -

We interrupt Bishop Rogers' letter to tell the following: -

In relation to the custom of firing a volley of musketry at the reception of the Bishop, a rather amusing answer of one of the Burnt Church Indians to a Chatham merchant is related. The Indian had come to buy a supply of powder for the occasion, and while making up the package for him the merchant said: "Why are you buying so much powder now brother, there are no wild geese to shoot?" To which the Indian replied in a half contemptuous tone "No! No shoot 'em wild-geese, shoot 'em Bishop."

The preceding week, -continues Bishop Rogers' letter, - the zealous priest of Chatham had instructed the young Indians and prepared them to receive worthily the great Sacrament of the Holy Ghost. The Pastor of Nelson, the Very Rev. Father Egan, Vicar General, also came to help in the good work. The Indians were much attached to him who, before a resident priest was stationed in Chatham, had served their mission for several years and had built their present existing little church.

The mission continued during seven days, and on the eighth was held the solemn procession of The Blessed Sacrament. The Indians had erected and beautifully decorated two repositories at which the procession stopped and Benediction of the Most Blessed

Sacrament was given. Upon returning to the church the “Te Deum” was sung and the final Benediction given, by which the mission was closed.

The missionaries who had preceded us had taught the Indians that the same divine law enjoins upon us the practice at the proper time of penance, fasting, and prayer that exhorts us to renounce self and take up our cross and follow Christ, permits also a moderate relaxation and enjoyment of the friendly feasts that occur. Holy Scripture furnishes us indeed with examples of rejoicing and legitimate feasting on like occasions: as for instance, the marriage at Cana and the return of the prodigal son. Jesus and Mary sanctified and blessed with their presence the rejoicings at Cana; Our Savior, Himself, desiring to picture for us the joy in Heaven upon the conversion of a sinner, describes the happiness of the father, as also the music and amusements that accompanied the banquet prepared to celebrate the return of the long lost son. Similar motives led the good Indians at this time to “kill the fatted calf” and to amuse themselves. The days of grace that had just been given them had also seen the prodigal son return from his wanderings; large numbers of sinners had been reconciled to God. There was joy in Heaven over these conversions, and why should not the friends of God show their joy upon earth? Moreover, marriages are celebrated on these occasions, and at the time to which I refer there had been the publication during the mission of the bands of ten or twelve couples, who by their mission had prepared themselves to receive worthily the Sacrament of Matrimony, the type and symbol of the love and union by which Christ is united to His Spouse the Church.

When the mission had closed, the priest took a part of the afternoon to confer with the relations of the contracting parties, verifying with the aid of an old Indian well versed in the genealogy of the tribe the various degree of relationship between the parties. The following day the marriage union was solemnly contracted before the altar, followed by the marriage mass with the nuptial blessing. The newly married all received Holy Communion at the Mass, which was preceded and followed by a short instruction upon the Divine institution of the Sacrament of marriage, the mutual obligations undertaken by the contracting parties and their duties towards their children, The ceremony finished, the bridal parties then received the cordial felicitation of their relatives and were conducted to their respective homes for the wedding breakfast.

After the breakfast, the amusements commenced in the open air. Music, dancing, various games, running, jumping, and trials of strength and agility, Indian archery and other enjoyments rejoiced during the rest of the day and the day following, the hearts of these simple children of nature. The older men were content to watch and applaud the younger in the course of their games, but sometimes even they became so animated, that resuming the spirit of their youth and forgetting the stiffness of their limbs and the other infirmities of age, they could not resist the impulse to join in some Indian dance or other favorite amusement to the inexpressible joy of all present.

It is by such festivals, innocent, patriarchal and prudently directed as they are, where the young are protected from all excess and irregularly by the presence and cooperation of their parents, that the annual reunion of these good Indians and the mission given to them on that occasion is closed, after which they disperse to their various localities, renewed in mind and body, heart and mind, and better prepared to bear with patience the many privations imposed upon them by their nomad and improvident way of living.

The first missionaries, The Jesuits, had translated into Indian not only the Catechism, but also the prayers taught to the children and youth before the time of their first communion. They did more. They made use of and perfected the hieroglyphic writing already in use among the Indians before their arrival. They taught them also the plain chant exercising them in the singing of hymns and various parts of the Divine Office, which they translated and wrote for them in the ideographic writing above-mentioned. The result of this pious industry was to have the sacred chant adopted by the Indians as a favorite pastime at the same time instructive and edifying. Every evening as the family circle gathered in the wigwams, these holy hymns were repeated. On Sunday when the whole band collected to sing Vespers and other Psalms, the imposing harmony awoke the echoes of the forest and rivaled the melody of nature's singers. The children and young people, captivated by the harmonious sounds, take the liveliest interest in the singing and the holy chant becomes for them tenderest childhood to silvered old age, the object of their most cherished delight.

The principal events of Sacred History from the creation of the world to the redemption of mankind:- the birth, suffering, death, resurrection, and ascension of our lord, -His second coming to judge all men, the lives of many of the saints: all these facts, so necessary for them to know and to remember, are made familiar to all and handed down traditionally to the younger generation by the efficacious and at the same time agreeable channel of religious singing.

To conclude this letter concerning the Indians, I will relate another peculiarity of their character. In whatever locality their camps may be erected, notwithstanding the long distances to be traversed and the great difficulties to be overcome, they never fail at Christmas and Easter to go to the nearest Church where Mass is being offered. They would not for all in the world omit to assist at the religious celebrations of the Church at these great occasions.

Another characteristic worthy of remark is the charity and hospitality which they exercise towards each other. Seldom does it happen that some stranger from another tribe is not met with in an Indian camp. Wherever the traveler presents himself, he is made cordially welcome. Also, when sickness or poverty afflicts a family or member of a tribe, the others are only too glad to do all in their power to procure aid. Should the sickness become dangerous, they will stop at nothing to bring the priest to the bed side of the

ailing one, and at his death they make every effort to have the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass offered for the eternal repose of the soul of the deceased.

I have the honor

James Rogers,

Bishop of Chatham

## Chapter X

### Bishop Rogers Takes Part in Politics: Visit “ad limina” The Vatican Council and Papal Infallibility; Visits Austria in Search of Financial Aid

From the time of Bishop Rogers' arrival in Chatham, the question of intercolonial confederation became more and more agitated in all political circles. In New Brunswick particularly, the scheme met with decided opposition. In March 1865, a House of Assembly hostile to the scheme was chosen, and the anti-confederation ministry came to power. In April 1866, however, the government was forced to resign and a general election followed, which resulted in the utter defeat of the anti-confederates and the triumph of the friends of union.

Bishop Rogers felt that the interests of the flock under his charge were at stake, and took an active interest in the election. As a true leader, he sought not only the spiritual welfare of his people, but also their temporal advancement. That he held very decided views on the advantage to accrue to the people of Northern New Brunswick from the union of the Provinces is evinced by the following citation from an open letter written by him to the Confederation candidate in Northumberland.

“In the present important crisis in our political history, when all interests Imperial and Colonial, combine to urge on, in accordance with the earnest wish of the Home Government, the speedy accomplishment of the great measure of UNION, so conducive to our commercial and social intercourse, the increase of our population, the development of our agricultural, piscatorial and mineral resources, and to the prosperity, generally- industrial and political- of our Country, I would be astonished to find even one intelligent man opposed to it. What then is my astonishment to find so many? What is the reason of their opposition, especially of those who reside in the Northern Counties? Is it that they wish to see the stream of our young, intelligent, and stalwart population flowing on out of the country until there is not a man left in it? Is it that they take a pleasure in seeing the tears of parting friends- children from parents, husband from wife, friend and neighbor from old associations and ties of affection- when want of honorable employment here, and stern necessity to earn their bread, oblige them to turn their backs on all that is dear to them? Can it be that some self-interested men who possess a few thousand pounds wish to see the country become depopulated and real-estate so depreciated, that they may thus take advantage of the state of things to make profitable speculations in purchasing property which they know must become valuable by and by? Is it that some who have hitherto done a little business successfully- in their narrow, selfish views- fear that the opening of the country would bring alongside of them competitors more expert, accommodating and successful than themselves? Or is it that some little mighty potentates, who, like Milton's Lucifer, “would rather reign in Hell

than serve in Heaven,” fear any change lest their local importance might become diminished, when the general increase of population and prosperity will raise up amongst us a host of active, intelligent, enterprising minds to aid and direct us.”

His candidates succeeded in the election. Before it took place, however, Bishop Rogers had sailed for Rome to make his visit “ad limina”. It was his first visit to the Eternal City, and it proved for him a source of the greatest spiritual consolations. His letters at this time show that the idea of his own flock was not forgotten in his visits to the different shrines. To his various personal friends and to the religious communities he wrote in a tone of deepest faith and spiritual enjoyment. He guided himself in his visits very much by the recurrence of the feast days of those he left at home, and almost every letter tells how on such a feast, celebrated by such a community or person in his diocese as one of their great feasts, he said mass at or visited the shrine for the intentions of said friend.

He rejoiced in being so near the person of the Holy Pontiff and speaks of him with a childlike love and simplicity that is touching. He was also on the most friendly terms with Cardinal Barnabo, prefect of the Cong. of the Propaganda. The Cardinal wrote to him some very intimate, personal letters during the short interval that elapsed between the Bishop's departure from Rome and the Cardinal's death.

While in Rome, he had the great happiness of assisting at the solemn celebration of the 18<sup>th</sup> Centenary of the martyrdoms of St. Peter and Paul, and the canonization of the martyrs of Gorkum and other saints. The canonization in which the Church exercises her gift of infallible knowledge affected him deeply. He, with other Bishops present at these ecclesiastical festivities, received the dignity of Assistants at the Pontifical Throne. In thanks for the distinction he, before leaving Rome, read an address to His Holiness in which he resumes the great works of the Pontificate of Plus IX; expresses the admiration and edification caused by the ceremonies of that year and presented to the Holy Father the profound homage of the Bishop and Diocese of Chatham, asking the Apostolic Benediction for himself and all under his care.

The temporal welfare of his diocese also occupied his attention, for we found that he obtained letters of recommendation from the Propaganda and went to Belgium to obtain aid from the Society of the Propagation of the Faith. He was enabled to collect in all the sum of £2,000- which he forwarded to Canada and employed it in various diocesan works. He was at that time building his new school and college, having moved the old church back and erecting a large building across its front. The church was retained as the Pro-cathedral, the west end was to serve as the Bishop's residence and seminary and the east end as a school for the girls. The then existing school was to be given entirely to the boys, and he entered late negotiations with the Congregation of Notre Dame to take charge of the school for the girls. With the slender resources at his command, the erection of this building was a great undertaking, particularly as the civil war in the United States had paralyzed commerce and diminished the resources upon which he



hoped to rely. While in Belgium, he assisted at the Ecclesiastical Congress of Malines. Shortly afterwards, Cardinal Stenlex- Archbishop of Malines- died, and Bishop Rogers assisted at the funeral obsequies by which he was, as he said, extremely moved and edified. Upon his return home, he devoted the greater part of his time to personal supervision of the construction work of the new building. He was not permitted to complete it, however, before being again called to Rome to attend the sessions of the Oecumenical Council of the Vatican. The call came at a most inconvenient time for him, but his spirit of obedience to the Holy See urged him to undertake the journey although he had returned from Rome only the preceding year. So much was his time occupied that when the stage came to take him to Shediac whence he was to proceed to Halifax, he was found in the basement of the new building giving directions to his workmen. With the activity of the true missionary he prepared himself for his long journey in a quarter of an hour, and took his place in the stage leaving Chatham on Nov. 16, 1869. From Halifax, he took the "City of Boston" to Liverpool- arriving there after a most pleasant and therefore uneventful passage. He proceeded directly to Rome in order to be present at the first session of the Council.

Among the most useful works of the Vatican Council, the most important is without doubt the definition of the Infallibility of the Pope. A certain number of Bishops were not favorable to the definition of the decree at this time. There was some discussion as to the evidence of the truth of the doctrine as purpose to the Council to be defined as an article of faith and also as to the opportuneness of the time for its definition. It was thought by many that it was not sufficiently proven, and if defined would have the effect of alienating non-Catholics- particularly in English speaking countries. It would put an end to the movement then extant on the part of the intellectual Protestants towards catholicity.

In the number of those who did not favor the definition, we find Bishop Rogers. There is no doubt that he, with the other Bishops of the minority, fell into error of judgment, but it is also as certain that Bishop Rogers acted from the most conscientious motives. In his correspondence, we find that many times before the definition of the dogma he asked for prayers that his mind might be enlightened with the light of the Holy Ghost, and that he might be strengthened to perform his duty towards God and the Church. He said that he was convinced that it would not be to the advantage of religion that the dogma should be defined, but at the same time expressed his entire willingness to abide in full by the decision of the majority. Thus, he wrote: "If the Church so defines, it will only be to us an occasion of practicing another act of humble and sincere obedience, not more disagreeable to us personally than our present adherence to duty in opposition to those we love and venerate. In the meantime, we need the prayers of our friends to obtain from on high light and strength for us to do God's will, either in conquering ourselves if we are wrong, or in persevering against such fearful odds if our opinion is the right one." Again, he wrote: "of course, we never for a moment

had another thought but to bow with affectionate and sincere submission to whatever the Church would decide. We may be mistaken, and we hold ourselves in the intention to lay aside our own reason and judgment and submit in this as in every other mystery or dogma of faith as soon as the Church decides this is to be one.”

On the 4th of May, Bp Rogers, along with twenty other Bishops- among whom were the Bishops of Rimouski, Arichat, Charlottetown, and St. John- obtained permission to leave the Council and return to their Diocese. He remained in Rome, however, waiting for a decision in the vexed question of the Infallibility. The definition was retarded by the discussion, and did not take place until the 18<sup>th</sup> of July. On that same day, he left Rome in company with the Archbishop of Halifax. At Pisa, they separated- the Archbishop going to Switzerland and Bishop Rogers to the “Solitude” of the Seminary of St. Sulpice at Issy where he made a retreat. The following week, he visited the Hotel Dieu Sisters at Lafleche, and afterwards the other houses of the community in France.

While at Baugé, he wrote a short Pastoral in English and in French, which he later had printed at Louvain and in which he communicated the decree of the Council to his Diocese. He gives his reasons for so doing in the following words: - “I had intended to procure the Decree of the Council at their publisher's here (in France) and getting him to print for me a short Pastoral Letter in French and English, had not the derangement of my plans caused by the war prevented me. When I abandoned my plan of doing so in France, I gave it up until my return home. But as the newspapers speak of some of the anti-infallibility bishops intending to persevere in their non-acceptance of the infallibility dogma, I felt it right to lose no time in publishing my feelings and action on the subject. When called upon to examine and weigh the arguments of the question, and give my opinion in Council during the time of deliberation, I tried humbly and faithfully to do so. But once that the moment of deliberation is passed, and the decision given, then prompt and unqualified submission and adhesion to the Decrees is the duty which I ever intended, and which in the regular course as far as the occasion required, I faithfully fulfilled.”

To us of the present day with our knowledge of the Infallibility of the Pope elucidated and explained by many theologians, it may seem incomprehensible that there should be any misunderstanding of the terms used. When we consider the circumstances of Bishop Rogers, the indefinite ideas held by various authorities before the Council, and the lack of precision in theological terms, we may perhaps more clearly conceive how he erred in his judgment concerning the Infallibility of the Pope. His life had been spent in missionaries' labors with little or no time to devote to abstruse questions of theology. When called to the Vatican Council, his mind was more occupied with the problem of educating the children of his Diocese than with the controverted questions. In a memorial, he tells us that during his course of theological studies and all his ministry up

to that time, he had ever held the infallibility of the Pope as a true and proven doctrine. Upon arriving at Rome, he was thrown immediately without any preparation into the great question. In calling the Council, no previous notice had been given of the intention of bringing up this dogma for definition. He had little time for study at his disposal owing to the sessions of the Council, the various other questions upon which he must vote, and the necessary social relations imposed upon him by his position. He was much in the company Archbishop Connolly, who favored the arguments of Mgr. Dupanloup, and the result was that the bearing given to his studies was rather against than for the truth which he had hitherto believed. He seems to have conceived that the term "ex cathedra" should mean not "the Pope personally" but in union with "the rest of the teaching body of the Church, merely the Bishops successors of the Apostles." He could not in the time he had study sufficiently the question of the Infallibility of the Pope apart from the Bishops to be sure of the truth of the doctrine, and hence he wished for delay in the definition that the truth might be more evident. For him, "the necessary time was not given, nor facilities for fully studying and maturely examining such new matter, so as to be certain as to its doctrine and convinced of the utility of defining it." Hence was his anti-Infallibility stand in the discussion of the question- although he did not register his name against it. In no ways was his faith deficient for, as we have seen, he was ever prepared to obey the Church and no sooner was the dogma defined than he accepted it whole-heartedly as a loyal and true son of the Mother Church. After the definition, he went to Paris in the hope of obtaining financial aid for his diocese from the Propagation of the Faith of that city. The Franco-Prussian war had broken out, however, and the news of the first reverses of the French caused a panic in Paris. All business was paralyzed, and the city was threatened with a siege. Realizing that it would be vain to expect financial aid in the such a crisis, and that he would be exposed to be enclosed within the walls of the city for an indefinite period, he decided to go to Austria and there solicit the aid he needed so much. Owing to the war and the fact that the more wealthy persons of the kingdom were at that season at their country seats, his mission did not meet with the fullest success, and in the month of December 1870, he returned to the Diocese of Chatham where he met with an enthusiastic welcome.



## Chapter XI

### Leprosy in New Brunswick, its Origin and History; Religious Institutions Founded by Bishop Rogers and The Sisters of the Hotel Dieu, of the Congregation of Notre Dame, and of Charity

Various accounts are given of the origin in New Brunswick of the dread disease, leprosy. The most plausible of these, as also the oldest, tells how a French vessel, "The Indiana", left the port of Morlaix in France in 1758, and was wrecked at the mouth of the Miramichi River. She is said to have been employed in oriental commerce and thus to have become infected with the germs of leprosy. The shipwrecked sailors found a refuge midst the people along the coast of Neguac, Tracadie, Caraquet and Grand-Anse. Their advent and intermarriage with the people of these various settlements is supposed to have spread the disease and, after some years, a number of cases declared themselves. The first distinct case mentioned was found in Tracadie in 1815 in the person Ursule Benoit, called Ursula Landry, who, born in Grand-Anse and known to be descendant of an immigrant sailor from St. Malo, was married to a Benoit of Tracadie and came there to live. It is surmised that her ancestor was one of the original sailors of "The Indiana". Her husband and others also contracted the disease and died of it. Tradition further adds that leprosy was brought to Caraquet by two sailors. May these have not been also a part of the shipwrecked crew of "The Indiana"?

The doctors of the time, where there were any, did not recognize the nature of the malady and took no very special precautions to prevent infection. Hence, it was that when Father LaFrance became Pastor of Tracadie, he found a large number of cases existing, and the plague continually spreading. In fact, Tracadie was the parish most infected. Father LaFrance represented the state of affairs to the Provincial Government in 1844, and earnestly sought that effective remedies be applied. He did not as yet know with certainty the nature of the disease but with the aid of a Mr. Blanchard of Caraquet, he drew up a report in which he stated that he considered it identical with the tubercular leprosy that raged in Europe in the thirteenth century. He requested the construction of a Lazaretto at Tracadie and the sequestration of the infected persons.

Upon receiving Father LaFrance's report, Governor Colebrooke understood well the gravity of the case, and placed the matter before the Government. He was authorized to act as he judged best, and he appointed a medical commission consisting of Drs. Key, Foldway, Shaw and Gordon to investigate the nature of the malady. The commission unanimously declared the disease to be "Grecian elephantiasis", and that it was contagious. With a further authorization from the local government, Governor Colebrooke appointed a "Board of Health" for the counties of Northumberland and Gloucester, consisting of Messrs. Joseph Gunard, George Kerr, Alexander Rankin, Alexander Key, M.D., Rev. F.X. LaFrance, and Charles J. Peters with power to carry on the work of stamping out the disease. The first action of the Board of Health was to

elect its officers. Joseph Cunard was chosen President, George Kerr as Secretary, Dr. Key as attending physician of the lepers, and Father LaFrance as Chaplain. The stated object of the Board was not to cure those already infected- for all deemed the disease incurable- but to remove the danger of infection by means of isolation. They therefore sought a convenient place for the building of a Lazaretto in which the sufferers might be easily sequestered and from which escape could be made very difficult. For this purpose, they chose Sheldrake Island, opposite Moody's Point, in the Miramichi as the site for the future Lazaretto.

Sheldrake Island had formerly been selected as the quarantine for incoming vessels to the Miramichi Harbor, but in the following year the station had, for convenience sake, been transferred to Middle Island, which is about a mile below Chatham. Sheldrake was therefore vacant at the time of which we write and belonged to the Magistracy- or Justices of Peace of Chatham. Mr. Cunard, in the name of the newly appointed Board of Health, leased it for a year and the board decided to utilize the already existing buildings for the care of the lepers.

Father LaFrance strenuously objected to the choice, declaring that the Island was not sanitary, that the lepers would not remain so far from homes and relations and that the Lazaretto would be a failure. He was given time to make his objections known to the Government, but we cannot say whether he did so, as no account of them appears. In any case, the choice of site was approved by Governor Colebrooke and the Lazaretto was opened. The buildings were in a state of disrepair, but the Board considered them sufficiently good for the lepers and ordered all infected with the disease to proceed to Sheldrake. Very little difficulty was experienced in persuading them to go, for they hoped to be well cared for and to receive such medical attendance as would cure their disease.

What was their disappointment when they were ushered into the tumbledown buildings furnished only with common plank beds and a little bed clothing! No other provision was made for their coming, the Board alleging that as they had no idea how many inmates there would be, they thought it wise to wait until the arrival of the lepers before making the necessary provisions for them. One man and one woman composed the staff supposed to care immediately for so many sick. The reason so little help was procured was that the Board imagined that the lepers would care for each other, would work around the buildings, clear and drain the Island and change the dreary swamp into a veritable paradise. They had not conducted on two facts: the first, that these people- on leaving home to be shut up for life on an island- had not the slightest intention of earning their living, but looked to be well cared for by the Government; the second, that the lepers bear an unconquerable antipathy to others similarly afflicted. One leper will not touch anything used by another, they would not use clothes washed by a leprous woman; they did not wish to sleep in the same dormitory as other lepers, nor sit at the same table with them; they were overpowered by an insurmountable feeling of disgust at the sight of the wounds and sores of others.

As a result, the Utopian schemes of the Board crumbled into dust. The lepers found themselves disappointed in their hopes and they rebelled against the Board, whom they blamed

for the state in which they found themselves. They paid no attention to the efforts of the guardian to keep them isolated and in order. They would not work, and as it was impossible for one woman to keep things clean for over thirty diseased persons, a state of repugnant and disgusting filth soon became rampant. Revolts, insubordination, and escapes became the order of the day. Food and clothing were wasted without limit, and confusion reigned supreme. Father LaFrance did his utmost on the one hand to reconcile the lepers to their state, exhorting them to accept it in the spirit of Christian resignation, while on the other, he strove to induce the Board of Health to more efficient efforts. The distance of his parish from Sheldrake and the many missionary duties he was obliged to perform, impeded him from giving all the attention to these matters that he wished to give.

The difficulties on the island increased and finally reached a climax on Oct. 15, 1845, when the buildings were burned to the ground. The Board of Health, in writing the occurrence to the Governor, more than hinted that the fire was due to the dissatisfaction of the lepers. In point of fact, it afterwards became known that, finding the severe measures of the Board intolerable and being detained on the Island by force, two of the lepers in their rage and despair set fire to the buildings- which were completely destroyed. In a month's time, however, they were rebuilt on a similar scale. The total cost of the buildings themselves amounting to 88 pounds of sterling or about \$440. They could not have been very large or very commodious at so small a cost, nor did they serve to put an end to the insubordination and the escapes.

In 1847, a new difficulty arose. The Justices of Peace of Chatham, finding a number of contagious diseases on board the vessels arriving in Port, decided to remove the quarantine station back to Sheldrake Island, and ordered the Board of Health to vacate one half of the island. This met with decided opposition on the part of the Board, and the matter was carried to the Government. The decision seems to have favored the Magistracy of Chatham, for in March 1848, the latter placed their buildings on sleds on the ice at Middle Island and had them hauled down to Sheldrake. All did not go smoothly, however, for the Board, with armed assistance, met the workmen at the shore and refused to allow the buildings to be landed. Three magistrates who came on the Island were arrested, and both sides came to blows. The Magistrates, being released, retired with their companions and the buildings were left on the ice. On the following day, the struggle was renewed. Mutual recriminations and arrests ensued, and in several attempts to bring their buildings to land, the magistrates were repulsed.

There matters rested until an appeal was again made to the Governor, whose decision again favored the Magistrates of Chatham. On the 11<sup>th</sup> of April, the buildings were finally placed on the Island, wells were dug and infected immigrants were landed from the incoming vessels. At the same time, it was decided to remove the lepers to Tracadie, and a new Board of Health was appointed with authorization to construct another Lazaretto and to place the lepers therein. The new buildings were, for the most part, completed by the month of July, and Father LaFrance and Mr. Robinson were charged to bring the lepers to Tracadie. This they did immediately, and on the 25<sup>th</sup> of the month, the new Lazaretto was opened.

The Board of Health, profiting by the experience at Sheldrake, laid severe injunctions upon the guardians concerning the visits of the people, as also the maintenance of the institution. At first, the infected sick appeared to be content, particularly as they had with them to care for them Dr. Charles LaBillois, of Caraquet, to whom were attributed several cures of leprosy in that district. He did not remain long, however, for the Board gave him no remuneration- nor did the Government- and he had not an abundance of personal means upon which to subsist. Discontent at his departure manifested itself forcibly among the lepers, but severe measures kept the recalcitrant ones under control. Two of them, however, only concealed their feelings for a time but finally showed their insubordination by again burning the Lazaretto in the fall of 1852. The greater part of the inmates were entirely ignorant of this nefarious design, and all, excepting the guilty ones, condemned the action unreservedly. It was too late to commence a new building before spring, and the sick were obliged to pass the winter in two small buildings that had escaped the ravages of the fire- and where they suffered the greatest hardship and misery.

In the spring, for the third time since the commencement of the Lazaretto, the buildings were rebuilt. The main building was 65 feet long by 25 wide. The isolation was now made complete, even to such an extent that the friends of the lepers complained to the Governor that they were not allowed to see their relations, or at least not more than once or twice a year. The reasons given by the Board of Health for the stringency of the rules were that the visits of friends were very often followed by attempts on the part of the lepers to escape, that many articles disappeared from the institution, and that the lepers were always most discontented and hard to manage after such visits.

The desire of the lepers for Dr. LaBillois increased, and finally the Board persuaded him to return to Tracadie. Again, however, he was illtreated in the matter of financial remuneration and found himself a second time obliged to depart. During his stay, the lepers were docile and contented and followed his treatment carefully. It cannot be shown that he cured any cases, but he certainly brought moral as well as physical relief to the institution and its members. The opposition of the other members of the Board to Father Gauvreau, who had succeeded Father LaFrance as pastor and member of the Board- and who combatted earnestly for the return of Dr. LaBillois-, prevailed, and Dr. Gordon who lived in Bathurst and could visit Tracadie only five or six times a year was appointed attending physician with a salary from the Government. Father Gauvreau resigned from the Board.

After the departure of Dr. LaBillois, the Board relaxed its vigilance and many disorders crept into the Lazaretto. There was no one to keep order and the lepers left to themselves wasted and destroyed at will. Poor families in the parish received from their leper relations clothes and various other objects they coveted. The leper women, who were extremely fond of pork, raised swine by giving them bread, beef and whatever else came to hand. They killed the animals and kept the pork in barrels and boxes at their bedsides. The result is almost beyond conception.



The moral confusion became as great as the temporal. The lepers were desperate, and the members of the Board dared not set foot in the institution unless well protected by a sufficient bodyguard. For a long time, Father Gauvreau appealed in vain to the Board and to the Government, but at length the latter awoke to the gravity of the situation. The Board was dismissed and a new one appointed- of which Father Gauvreau accepted willingly to be a member. Dr. Nicholson, a specialist, was designated to live in Tracadie and care for the lepers, and at his death was succeeded by Dr. Smith.

It was about the time the new Board was appointed in 1860, that Bishop Rogers was chosen as Bishop of Chatham. We have seen his letters how upon the occasion of his first visit to Tracadie, the deplorable state of the lepers touched his heart and appealed to his charity, and he sought in every way to find a means of alleviating their lamentable condition. At the same time, with the eye of a Chief Pastor, he perceived another disease rampant in the parish, and one that might be considered more baneful to the future welfare and prosperity of the people- namely, that of ignorance. The schools had been closed, and when Bishop Rogers visited this portion of his field of labor he realized that not only must the bodily pains of the lepers be alleviated, but even greater efforts must be made to draw the children of the parish from the slough of ignorance into which they were fast falling. He, therefore, desired earnestly to introduce a community of religious Sisters who would, at the same time, care for the lepers and open schools for the children of the parish. He made known his wishes to Father Gauvreau and the Board of Health, who promised to give him all the support in their power. Together, they signed a petition to the Government at Fredericton, where it was well received but was accepted only at the following session, and the Bishop was told to choose the congregation that he wished to introduce.

While endeavoring to find in Canada a congregation that would meet the double purpose which he had in view, the Bishop found himself obliged to go to Rome for his visit "ad limina" and he left the matter in the hands of Father Paquet, of Caraquet, his Vicar General, whom he also named Administrator of the Diocese during his absence. Bishop Rogers had already written to the Gray Nuns of Montreal but had received no answer from them. Father Paquet addressed himself to the Religious Hospitallers of St. Joseph of the Hotel Dieu of Montreal, for he had visited them years before and had been a witness of their skill in nursing and dispensing remedies to the sick. He did not in this particular follow implicitly the wishes of the Bishop, since the Hotel Dieu Sisters were cloistered, while Bishop Rogers, with the idea of the school as well as the Lazaretto, was seeking an un-cloistered order, thinking that the efficiency of un-cloistered sisters would be greater in both branches. Upon receiving the request of Father Paquet, Rev. Mother Mance and her chapter, took it into favorable consideration but requested time for deliberation, lest they expose themselves to act imprudently. After two months, they informed the Administrator that the community accepted the offer but wished first to send two sisters to look over the ground and learn the needs, the facilities, etc. Sisters Page and D'Avignon left Montreal on the 8<sup>th</sup> of May, Anniversary of the Erection of the Diocese of Chatham, went to Tracadie via Chatham, and reported the results of their visits to their Sisters and to Bishop Bourget of Montreal.

When the saintly Mother Mance made known the intention of the Community to send some of the Religious to care for the lepers in New Brunswick, she asked for volunteers saying that a box would be placed in a convenient spot and that all who wished to volunteer to care for the lepers could put their names in. When the box was opened the name of every Sister in the Community was found therein.

After various enquiries on the part of the Sisters as to whether the Government would put any obstacle in the way of their mission, and as many reassuring replies on the part of Fathers Paquet and Gauvreau, the Sisters decided to leave on July 25<sup>th</sup>, 1868 for Tracadie under the guidance of Mother Page as superior. On the other hand, preparations were made to receive them in the Lazaretto, lodgings were prepared, and the absolutely necessary utensils procured, but still the Government delayed the vote of an amount for their support.

Bishop Rogers had just returned from Rome and took the matter in hand. He thus tells of the coming of the Sisters: -

“The community of the Nuns Hospitallers of the Hotel Dieu of Montreal had enthusiastically, in the spirit of the most ardent charity and self-sacrifice, accepted the invitation of the Administrator- Father Paquet- to come nurse and care for the poor Lepers of Tracadie in the Diocese of Chatham. The Volunteer Nuns, having due permission from the Superiors of their House and from the saintly Bishop of Montreal, Mgr. Bourget, had their baggage packed and were all ready to leave, and now only awaited the needed documents, one from the Spiritual Authority of the Diocese, the other from the New Brunswick Government as the lepers were the wards of said Government, segregated in its Lazaretto and maintained at its sole expense and authority. My arrival before the completion of the negotiation by Father Paquet caused me to take up the matter where he had left it. One document prepared at Montreal to be signed by the Diocesan Authority embodied what the good Sisters were perfectly right in requiring, viz: 1<sup>st</sup>, that in spirituals the Sisters should have perfect freedom to exercise their Religious Rules and Usages and have the good offices of a priest to direct their spiritual duties; 2<sup>nd</sup>, that in temporal matters- as they came to work for others in nursing the lepers- they should have due provision made for their temporal wants, etc.

Now both of these conditions, though perfectly just and reasonable, were beyond the limits of my means and authority to guarantee. Everything in the way of permissions and encouragement I could and did most willingly promise, but as I was not master in the Government Lazaretto, I had no authority to guarantee either provision for the temporal wants or immunity from interference in their cloister or other usages of their religious rule. Within the precincts of the Government Lazaretto such guarantees should come from the Government.

As there was much delay on the part of the New Brunswick Government in replying affirmatively to these requisitions on behalf of the Religious Sisters and fearing that they might become discouraged so as to refuse to come, I sent the following telegram in answer to Rev. Mother Mance, Superioress, Hotel Dieu Montreal: “If Government refuse allocation, impossible for me to support Sisters at Tracadie; but if the Sisters will accept a position at Chatham, I will

give them one near my residence and all the help in my power. So, if you please, let Sisters come to Chatham, and leave to Providence to perfect the charitable enterprise”.

On the strength of this, they embarked for Chatham, accompanied by Father Gauvreau of Tracadie. After leaving the steamer, they were installed at Chatham in the little house which had been built for Presbytery by Father Sweeney (now Bishop of St. John) and served for Episcopal Residence after Chatham was erected into a Diocese. The Rev. Mother Page, Supress, being asked what she preferred, since no further information as yet came from Government about Tracadie, elected to retain Chatham; but later she consented to go accompanied by another Sister, with the Bishop, to visit Father Paquet at Caraquet, to take counsel with him. On our way to Caraquet, we stayed a night at Tracadie, and next morning visited the Lazaretto. We found the poor lepers very much excited. They had been led to think that the Bishop wanted to keep the Sisters at Chatham and to have the Lazaretto transferred to Chatham. This caused me to make an Address from the door of the Lazaretto to the lepers and to the many others who had come, in which I explained the true state of the case. We had obtained the good Nuns, only we could not place them in the Institution without the approbation of the Government and without guarantee of their temporal support. I had now got them to Chatham, and it became the duty of all in Tracadie to obtain approbation and support from the Government.

We continued to Caraquet and found Father Paquet very ill but- in our conference with him, Father Gauvreau and Rev. Mother Page- very wise and practical in his remarks. I explained that as Bishop, the spiritual father of the good Nuns, I could not consent to their going to Tracadie without due guarantees that they would be treated with the respect, and due provision made for their temporal maintenance. In offering them a position at Chatham, it was to insure a home for them in case they would not be retained in Tracadie; and now since the old parish church of Caraquet was still there alongside of the new church, the old one could- at but little cost- be converted into a Hotel Dieu where the good nuns could receive and nurse sick persons, not lepers: no- Chatham was preferable. Father Paquet offered to become responsible for the support of the Sisters at Tracadie until the Government would consent to support them, if I would consent and also the Sisters.

Now, as the poor lepers much needed the care of the good Sisters, who were only too anxious to relieve them, and as there were neither sick patients nor hospital accommodation at Chatham, I gladly accepted the offer of Father Paquet as a compromise temporarily convenient- until Fathers Paquet, Gauvreau and others would obtain the full approbation and guarantee of the Government which, in time, was given. Then, after returning to Chatham, good Mother Page and all the band of Sisters who had come from Montreal to Chatham, left for Tracadie on the 29<sup>th</sup> of September, the Feast of St. Michael- Patron of the Diocese.”

The Sisters were received in Tracadie with demonstrations of the greatest joy and after Benediction of the Most Blessed Sacrament in the Parish Church, were led in procession to their new habitation. They immediately set to work, and the Lazaretto was transformed as by magic from a filthy sty to a clean and proper abode. The lepers were cared for personally by the Sisters,

their wounds washed and cleansed, their clothes kept neat and proper. Waste and destruction ceased and the reign of economy began.

It was found, after a time, that the buildings were very insufficient for the needs of the sick, and efforts were made to have them replaced by larger, more sanitary, and more commodious ones. Such efforts were long in vain. It was only after the visit of Dr. Tache, Federal Minister of Agriculture and the taking over of the institution by the Federal Government that any hopes of betterment were given. The visit of Archbishop Lynch, of Toronto, and his instances made perseveringly to Sir John A. MacDonald and Sir Hector Langevin, paved the way for reclamations made by the federal members- Messrs. Burns, Adams and McAllister, accompanied by the depositions of Father Babeneau (Pastor of Tracadie since Father Gauvreau's death), and Dr. Smith, the attending physician- which induced the Government to build the present large stone Lazaretto, and fix it up conveniently for the care of the lepers.

With the advent of new members to the Community, particularly from the neighboring parishes, the Sisters were enabled to open a hospital for the other sick patients. By private donations and their own economy, they also erected a large orphan asylum as a wing to the original building. They also undertook to teach the children of the parish, and thus the confidence in Divine Providence, which the Bishop expressed in his telegram to Rev. Mother Mance was amply rewarded, for he had the happiness of seeing the small institution started in charity for the unfortunate lepers develop into a flourishing community, with whom the lepers remain without force or restraint of any kind and as contented and well-cared for as they could be here below. To this realization of his initial hope has been added to hospital, school and orphan asylum as a reward from Divine Providence for the faith and confidence he expressed and for the devoted charity of those who volunteered to nurse the poor lepers of Tracadie.

It is not within the scope of a work like this to more than mention the self-sacrificing spirit of charity and devotion which leads the holy Religious of Tracadie to give themselves, their lives and their service to the care of the unfortunate lepers. Theirs is a work of humble silence, no loud boastings or sound of trumpets proclaim their heroism to the world. In the seclusion of their convent they follow cheerfully and placidly the footsteps of a Father Damien, and the world speaks not their name. They work for the Father in secret, "and the Father in secret will reward them".

The establishment at Chatham was but temporarily abandoned. In November 1868, Bishop Rogers visited the Hotel Dieu of Montreal to know whether the Sisters would still be willing to open a house of their community in Chatham. He found them desirous of doing so, and arranged for their coming. They arrived, four Sisters of whom Mother d'Avignon was superior, on July 16<sup>th</sup>, 1869, and took up their residence in the same small building into which the first Sisters had entered before going to Tracadie.

It had been the Bishops intention to bring the Sisters of the Congregation of Notre Dame to teach the girls of Chatham, and he had even obtained a promise from them to come when the school, then being built, should be completed. In the year 1870, the Hotel Dieu Sisters offered to take charge of the girls and as the Congregation Sisters were willing to cede in their favor, the Saint Michael's Female Academy was opened shortly afterwards. A few years of struggling efforts, cheered indeed by the deep paternal interest of Bishop Rogers, the hearty encouragement of the Clergy, and self-sacrificing support of the people, were crowned with well-deserved success and the last days of Bishop Rogers were rendered peaceful and happy by the assiduous attendance and filial devotion of the Sisters- for whom he had always been the kindest father and friend. By that time, the hospital and Academy of Chatham had grown to be one of the most important works of the Diocese. A new stone Academy had been built and beautifully equipped, the Hospital had been enlarged and furnished in the most efficient way, and the community had so increased in numbers as to clearly show that the hand of God visibly protected it.

Nor were these two charitable institutions the only monuments left by Bishop Rogers to perpetuate his zeal for the care of the infirm and the Christian instruction of youth. We have seen in the letters of the Bishop Rogers that in 1860 he had visited the school of the Sisters of Charity in St. Basil. They had come in 1859 at the invitation of Rev. Hugh McGuirk and had taken charge of a school erected by him on land left for that purpose by his predecessors as Pastor, the Very Rev. A. Langvin, Vicar General of the Bishop of St. John. They continued their good work until 1871 when the school law, passed in the Legislature of New Brunswick, deprived them of the Government aid upon which they depended for the most part for their means of sustenance. They continued to struggle along for two years more when they were recalled by Archbishop Connolly to Halifax.

At the time of their recall, Father McGuirk was ill at the hospital in Chatham and while there, he consulted with Bishop Rogers and Mother d'Avignon upon the advisability of asking the Hotel Dieu Sisters to take charge of the abandoned institution. Correspondence was opened with the Mother House of Montreal- and Rev. Mother Page who, upon her recall from Tracadie, had been elected Superior of the Montreal Community- decided that she, with Mother d'Avignon of Chatham, would visit St. Basil and obtain personal information of the possibility of the foundation. The visit, which was made in September 1873, favorably impressed them, and as a result, Rev. Mother d'Avignon was transferred from Chatham and came with six others in the month of October to open the new house. Upon their arrival, Bishop Rogers set out from Chatham and after a long and painful journey, arrived at St. Basil where he installed the new Sisters on the 10<sup>th</sup> of November.

The infant community was destined during the first years of its existence to undergo privations similar to those of the other communities of the Order in the Diocese- if indeed they may not be said to have been greater. By dint of the strictest economy and most devoted self-sacrifice, they managed to keep the institution alive. In 1876, such was the penury of the Sisters and the straits to which they were reduced, that the Mother House of Montreal decided upon

investigation- to abandon the mission as impossible. The faith and confidence in God of the Sisters, and particularly of Sisters Guerin and Maillet, induced them to ask for one more trial. Their request was granted, and they took up the burden anew. Nor was their confidence without its reward, for from that time the community made steady progress. As time passed, they were enabled to open an orphanage and school for boys and girls, in addition to the hospital. They built larger buildings as their needs increased and even completed the brick wing of a large institution, every brick of which was made on their own land by their own workmen. Such indeed was their progress that before the death of Bishop Rogers the Community had developed into the largest and most flourishing in the Diocese.

We have thus seen the establishment by the Bishop of three needful institutions in the southern, eastern and western portions of the Diocese. Nor was the north-eastern section neglected since a fourth establishment of the Order was established in 1888 at Campbellton, thus completing a system of organization in the four most important districts that portrays the foresight, prudence, and judgement exercised by Bishop Rogers in the building up of the infant diocese committed to his care.

The organization for the instruction of female youth was made complete and all-embracing by the founding of the Convent schools and Academies under the direction of the Sisters of Charity at Bathurst and Bathurst Village, and of the Congregation of Notre Dame at Newcastle, Caraquet and St. Louis. The system or network of convents thus established at various periods in the early years of his administration was so judiciously arranged, and so completely fulfilled his expectations that, although up to the time of his death, the Diocese made immense strides in material and spiritual progress, Bishop Rogers found that nothing more was to be desired in the matter of the female education than simply to encourage these institutions to grow and expand in the various localities in which they were commenced. He frequently referred to them in the joy and gratitude of his heart to God as the “great tree which had sprung from the mustard-seed, the smallest of all seeds.”

## Chapter XII

### The New Brunswick School Question; Opening and Closing of St. Michael's College by the Christian Brothers

Shortly after his return from Rome, Bishop Rogers found himself in the midst of a very important agitation the result of the New Brunswick School Law abolishing the separate schools in that Province. Prior to Confederation, many catholic or separate schools existed and received a pro rate proportion of the Government funds for their maintenance.

Bishop Rogers writes: "when the Canadian Delegates were about to go to London to cooperate with the English Statesmen in drafting the Act of Parliament for our Canadian Confederation, it was mooted by the then Vicar General Hannon of Halifax (afterwards Archbishop) that if Archbishop Connolly could go to London and interest the members by personally conferring with them, he might get the just principle of the Quebec School Law, permitting minorities to have separate schools, extended to the whole Dominion. All the Bishops of the Ecclesiastical Province of Halifax met at Pictou, N.S. in October 1865, for the consecration of the new R.C Church built there by the then Pastor, Father MacDonald, now Bishop of Harbor Grace, Newfoundland. Before separating, Archbishop Connolly mentioned what had been proposed and volunteered to go to London. His offer was accepted and he was authorized to go as a Delegate of all his Suffragan Bishops to advocate the desired clause giving separate schools when required for minorities, (whether Catholic or Protestant) throughout all Canada.

In the contemplated Act, the question of education should either be among those pertaining to the general Parliament of the Dominion, or be one of those to be legislated upon by each local Province. Archbishop Connolly preferred the former, for we all remembered that the Separate or Denominational School Law of old Canada was passed when the two Provinces of Upper and Lower Canada were united, having but one Legislature. The Quebec members made no difficulty in voting to give the Protestant minority of Quebec Separate Schools; but the Ontario members objected strongly to give the same measure to the Roman Catholic minority of Ontario. Bishop Charbonel of Ontario, aided by his colleagues and clergy, (especially by his Secretary, Mgr. Bruyere) earnestly pressed for that measure of justice and wrote in the newspapers in answer to the Chief Superintendent, Rev. Mr. Ryerson and other opponents. It was at length granted, but only because of the numerous votes of the members of Quebec and because the Protestant members knew that if the measure would be refused to the Catholic minority of Ontario, the Catholic majority of Quebec might retaliate and similarly vote down the measure now enjoyed by the Protestant minority of Quebec. Had not both Quebec and Ontario members been united in one Legislative Assembly at the time, the Protestant members would not have granted the separate Roman Catholic schools for Upper Canada. The same would happen in any of the other Provinces outside of Quebec. Knowing this, Archbishop Connolly advocated that

the question of education belongs to the general Parliament, so that in voting the few sparse Catholic members from constituencies outside of Quebec might have the aid and support of the numerous Catholic members from that Province. The Delegates from Quebec however, after advising with their friends at home, insisted that the question of education belong, not to the General Parliament, but to the local Legislature of each Province, so that they might always have control in their own Provincial Legislature of their educational Institutions, Colleges, Convents, etc. Though much disappointed, neither Archbishop Connolly nor his colleagues blamed the Quebec Delegates for refusing to jeopardize their own special privileges and rights, even in behalf of their co-religionists of the rest of Canada.”

As had been seen from Bishop Roger’s letter, the efforts to make the question of education a matter for the Federal Government to deal with failed, and in the British North America Act education is left to the Provincial Legislatures. The following Provisions of the law (Section 93) are the ones bearing more directly on the question, since they regulate the interference of the Federal Government when laws are made by the Provinces: -

(1) “Nothing in any such law shall prejudicially affect any right or privilege with respect to denominational schools which any class of persons have by law in the Province at the Union.”

(2) “All the powers, privileges, and duties at the Union or by law conferred and imposed in Upper Canada on the separate schools and school trustees of the Queen’s Roman Catholic subjects shall be, and the same are hereby extended dissentient schools of the Queen’s Protestant and Roman Catholic subjects in Quebec.”

(3) “When in any Province a system of separate or dissentient schools exists by law at the Union, or is thereafter established by the Legislature of the Province, an appeal shall lie to the Governor General in Council from any act or decision of any Provincial authority affecting any right or privilege of the Protestant or Roman Catholic minority of the Queen’s subjects in relation to education.”

(4) “In case any such Provincial law as from time to time seems to the Governor General in Council requisite for the due execution of the provisions of this section is not made, or in any case any decision of the Governor General in Council or any appeal under this section is not duly executed by the proper Provincial authority in that behalf, then and in every such case, and as far only as the circumstances of such case require, the Parliament of Canada may make remedial laws for the due Execution of the Provisions of this section.”

In 1871, an Act was passed in New Brunswick Legislature doing away with the separate school system which heretofore had existed. It is said that two catholic members voted for the bill in opposition to their coreligionists and that their action affected three or four wavering Protestants and caused them also to vote for it. Had all Catholics remained firm and the wavering Protestants been brought over, the bill would not have received a majority. In the Legislative Council to which the bill was referred, after passing the lower house, the Hon. Owen McInerny moved the following amendment: “All schools existing at the time of the passing of this Act, and



all schools hereafter established, whether separate or common schools, provided they comply with the requirements thereof, be entitled to their share pro rata of the district assessment and other funds, for the support of the schools, such shares to be determined and fixed by the Trustees of the district where such school or schools is or are situated.” The vote on this amendment stood even, six to six, and was passed in the negative under the rules of the House which are that all ties count as a negative vote.

The Act, therefore, as it originally was, became law. By it a Free Public-School System was established in which the Province was divided into districts with Trustees for each district. A new Board of Education was appointed. The effect of this Act with its provisions was the establishment of so-called non-sectarian schools. All denominational schools were deprived of Government aid; all the teachers were required to have passed a term or more in the Normal School before they could obtain a License or Diploma to teach; a new series of school books was introduced thus, constituting a system of teaching in the schools which excluded all religious instruction. As a consequence, the many religious Sisters who were teaching in the Province and who had not passed the term at the Normal School were unable to continue as teachers unless supported by the people without Government aid. The many school buildings built by the Catholics were no longer able to be used as schools by the Government, and they were to be taxed to build new ones. In a word, the Catholics, realizing the necessity of religious training for their children, found themselves obliged in conscience to support their Catholic schools and obliged by law to support public schools to which they could not send their children.

The evident injustice stirred feelings to their depths and in virtue of the provisions of the British North America Act, cited above, an appeal was made to the Governor General in Council to disallow the Act. Bishops Rogers and Sweeney headed petitions which were signed by the entire catholic clergy and laity and forwarded the same to the Governor General. When the Bills passed by the Provincial Legislature were forwarded to the Governor, they were referred to Sir John A. MacDonald, Minister of Justice, who reported advising that assent be given to all the bills. He based his decision on the facts that the bills related to the whole system of schools in New Brunswick and therefore are not applicable to denominational schools, and there were no denominational schools established by law in New Brunswick before the Union. Messrs. Anglin, Castigan, and Renaud, Catholic members of New Brunswick, fought earnestly during the discussion, showing the injustice done to the Catholics and asking the disallowance of the bill. Some Quebec members also joined their forces to the members of New Brunswick. In the meantime, Bishop Sweeney of St. John went in his own name and that of Bishop Rogers to see the Bishops of the Ecclesiastical Province of Quebec, then assembled in that city, to ask them to kindly exercise their influence with the members of Parliament to have the school law vetoed. It was probable that the opposition, then led by Messrs. McKenzie and Blake, would have overturned the Government on the question. But the Bishops of Quebec, while sympathizing with Bishops Sweeney and Rogers, and disposed to help them, were unwilling that the Government be defeated on that question. In this, the Bishops of New Brunswick acquiesced, lest such action might excite a fanatical counteraction injurious to peace and harmony among

citizens especially in the Maritime Provinces. Mr. Anglin and the other members were informed of this preference of the Bishops and desisted from their efforts to defeat the Government on the question. It was finally decided that the matter should be referred to the Privy Council for decision and five thousand dollars was vote for that purpose. The decision of the Privy Council being unfavorable to the Catholics, they were obliged to submit. Many refused to pay the taxes and confusion reigned in some districts.

Bishop Sweeney of St. John made an agreement with the Protestants of the city- by which the schools were in a measure separate- and finally a slight measure of relief was granted when a minute of Council was made by the Lieutenant Governor on August 6<sup>th</sup>, 1875, approving of the replies made by the Committee of the Executive Council to certain propositions submitted by Messrs. Burns, O'Leary, Blanchard, Theriault and Johnson- Members of the Provincial Assembly. As this is the present basis of Catholic Education in the Province as recognized by law, we deem it advisable to give it in full:

Prop. No 1. That the pupils residing in all populous places where there may be a sufficient number of children to form two or more schools, should be permitted to attend those schools outside the district in which they reside.

Reply. The power to admit to schools of another district is invested in the trustees.

In the case of a district in which there are two or more schools, the trustees may, subject to proper provision for grading, allow children from any part of the district to attend any of the schools without the bounds of the district.

Prop. No 2, - That regulation be made to provide for the granting of Licenses to persons holding certificates from the Superior of any Religious Order, or when such person holds no such certificate that provision be made for the Examination of such persons at their place of residence or at their school rooms.

Reply. – Any person who has undergone training at a recognized Training or Normal School in any other country or holds a Diploma from a Chartered College or University is eligible for examination for Licenses under Regulation 30 of the Regulations of the Board of Education.

The certificate of the Superior of any of the Roman Catholic Teaching Orders is recognized as rendering the holder eligible for such Examination and it would not be necessary for such person to attend the New Brunswick Training School. When such certificate is not held, attendance at the Training School is required.

Prop. No 3,- That in the Schools taught by the Christian Brothers or Sisters of Charity or which may be attended by Roman Catholic children the teacher shall not be compelled to use books that may contain anything objectionable to them from a religious point of view; referring now more particularly to History and Readers prescribed by the Board of Education.

Reply. – The greatest care has been taken to keep the school books free from matter objectionable to any on religious grounds and it will be the aim of Educational Authorities to render the textbooks suitable for all.

In reference to the prescribed History of England, the Council are prepared to recommend the favorable consideration of the Board of Education the adoption and insertion of notes compiled from Lingard upon such portions of the text as may be deemed objectionable in a religious point of view when presented to the Board on behalf of the Roman Catholic Minority.

Prop. No 4. – That provision should be made that the Trustees shall allow religious instruction in the School Rooms under their control after the regular secular school hours, said hours to be shortened to the extent allowed for religious instruction.

Reply. – It is obvious that if the Trustees be required to allow the Teachers to give denomination instruction after school to the pupils assembled for public purposes under the authority of the school act, the direct tendency of such provision would be to render the selection and appointment of teachers a matter to be determined rather by their denominational views than their fitness to discharge the specific duties required of them during school hours.

When by negotiations with the governing Bodies of Schools existent at the passage of the School Act arrangements are made by Trustees under 36 vic.cap.12, sec.58, no restriction is placed upon the use of the Buildings after the close of the school.

With this “modus vivendi”- that of only partial tolerance the Catholics of New Brunswick were obliged to remain content, but it was far from a measure of justice and Bishop Rogers felt the disappointment keenly. One of his greatest desires in the organization of his newly formed Diocese had been to place the catholic schools on a good solid basis. He fully realized that to build for the future the youth must be used as a foundation and that a Christian and catholic education given to the children was the greatest safeguard for the future welfare of the Diocese. To meet with such an obstacle as the New Brunswick School Law just at the time when he saw his efforts bringing forth their fruit, caused him a deep wound and particularly when he felt that the unfavorable circumstances in which he would henceforth be obliged to renew his efforts were due in a great measure to the apathy of certain Catholics who refused their influence or even voted against their coreligionists made him always look upon the New Brunswick School Law as the work of traitors. He refused to accept it even to the day of his death; he was disinclined to accept the advantages offered by the “minute in council” of 1875. He frequently registered the protest against the injustice done to the Catholics of New Brunswick, declaring that they lived under the School Law because compelled to do so but without accepting it in any possible manner.

One of the indirect effects of the School Law was the closing of St. Michael’s College in Chatham, a blow which left an unhealed wound in the heart of the poor Bishop. He himself tells in a letter written in 1880 of the coming of the Brothers to Chatham and of the reason of their threatened departure. Writing to the Superior of the Brothers in Montreal he said:

“I applied several times to your House at Montreal for Brothers to direct the education of the Boys in Chatham. With the subsidy received from the Government it would have been easy to comply with the conditions required by your Institute. Brother Liguori in 1863 engaged to furnish me with three Brothers, two of whom would teach two classes in English, while some of our own ecclesiastical students would teach Latin and Greek. For my part I sent an advance cheque on account and vacated my residence (the same little house in which since the fire I now temporarily reside) for the use of the three Brothers who would have the house as their residence and teach in the large hall of the College. In vacating my residence for the Brothers, I took up my quarters and that of my Priests in the apartments on the second flat of the College, while the ecclesiastical students occupied their own quarters in the third or higher flat. But Brother Liguori found that he could not furnish the Brothers as promised and returned my Bank cheque with apology. Notwithstanding the disappointment, we kept up the little college and again applied for your Brothers in 1872 or 1873 when I visited Montreal in person to try to obtain them, but without success. Then the present school law came into operation driving all denominational Institutions, among others our Catholic College and Academies, of the special subsidy hitherto voted or granted to them.

With much effort, the Catholic people of New Brunswick- both in the Diocese of St. John and that of Chatham- kept up their Institutions by extraordinary contributions, continuing their demonstrations and protestations against the present Godless School Law until it became impossible in some instances to continue the sacrifice.

At one time the Government appeared willing to administer the law favorably for us so that Brothers and Sisters could teach under it with their licenses or diplomas as at Halifax. We resolved to accept the conditions and sent the following telegram to your House at Montreal: -

“Chatham, Feb 11<sup>th</sup>, 1876. – To Rev. Brother Superior of the Christian Brothers, Rue Cote, 40, Montreal, - Could you accept now our boys’ school at Chatham? We are organizing to conduct our schools under the law, but have not yet engaged teachers. If you could furnish us with Brothers to teach one hundred boys or more, we would be glad. The moment is favorable.”

James Rogers, Bishop of Chatham.

The reply to this received by telegram was: - “Impossible for the present”.

Meanwhile, our Diocese had become burdened by debts caused by the general work of the Diocese, but especially by the establishment of the various Religious Communities in the Diocese. The cost of building their convents, especially at Chatham, Bathurst and Newcastle, left us a heavy debt which became increased each year by the efforts to sustain all our education institutions after the Government subsidy had ceased.

To add to our embarrassment, the financial depression which affected commerce and business in different parts of the world, caused the bankruptcy of many business men, amongst them that of a merchant in Chatham, from whom we had got our supplies for the construction and enlargement of the buildings in Chatham, the College and Hotel Dieu. When we had not

money to pay our bills, he expressed his willingness to receive our Promissory notes. When he became insolvent, our promissory notes to him had to be paid as they became due. To effect this, we had no alternative but to borrow \$10,000.00 on mortgage of all the Church property in Chatham for five years. At this time we also owed other sums to various parties amounting to \$20,000.00 making all our Diocesan debts to \$30,000.00, the annual interest of which consumed nearly all our local revenue, and had it not been for the opportune subsidies of the Propagation of the Faith from year to year since the commencement of our Diocese, we could not have tided over our difficulties or have carried on the work of diocesan administration and development in a new poor country like ours where the various institutions had to be erected, priests and churches multiplied, with so little local resources to meet the inevitable expense.

Now it was at this critical juncture of our affairs when we had given up all intention of again asking for your good Brothers, so frequently had we been refused in the past when the Government subsidy would have made it easy for us to receive them- when the financial condition of our diocesan administration obliged us to resolve on avoiding every work which might increase our debt, and on directing all our exertions to diminishing it that your worthy predecessor Brother Armin Victor, en route from Halifax to St. John, wrote me to say that now he could give me Brothers for Chatham, but that in teaching there “they should be independent of all Government control”.

The following is the copy of my telegram in reply, which forms the basis of my agreement with them to teach in Chatham: -

“Chatham, April 8<sup>th</sup>, 1876. To Rev. Armin Victor, St. John, N.B. Your letter from Annapolis received. I had hoped your Brothers could teach here under the School Law same as at Halifax. Difficult for us to maintain schools without aid from Government, but we will try for one year. Therefore, come with three Brothers immediately.”

James Rogers, Bp. of Chatham.

Brother Armin Victor arrived, but the Brothers for Chatham, being still at Halifax, did not come until some days later.

In showing our buildings to Brother Armin Victor I intimated that formerly my plans were, - had the Brothers come when applied for- to have an Academy, or College, at the residence of the Brothers, since the building was large enough to permit it, and a day school of say two classes at St. Patrick’s Hall. If the Brothers preferred for their own convenience to follow that plan still, I would consent thereto; but could not make any guarantee or promise in regard to it. The critical financial state of affairs made it imperative on me to adhere to the terms mentioned in my telegram. The critical state of our affairs was well known to all around me, - Priests, Sisters, people, - and was repeatedly mentioned to Brother Armin Victor as explanation that I could not be as generous with his good Brothers as I would have been formerly if they had come when I asked. Therefore, their Pensionat or College, if set a going, should be entirely at their own risk and responsibility.

Although my telegram bound me for only one year, nevertheless I was disposed to continue as long as we should find ourselves able, and it would be agreeable to the administration of the Brothers. But when the fire occurred in the second year and deprived us of everything, - house, church, college, etc., I found myself unable to continue the former conditions.

We were overwhelmed by our disaster and so uncertain as to what the future might bring, that for several weeks we could form no definite idea of the plans to adopt. Full of gratitude that our lives were spared and that the Convent and Hotel Dieu had not been burned, we humbly confided in God's protection and patiently awaited the manifestation of His will, not knowing what shape the future might assume, but willing to follow any course that might appear best.

Our people had several public meetings for deliberation, and they finally resolved to erect a wooden structure on the original stone foundation, which, though injured, was not destroyed by the fire. This decision is what has been carried into effect. . . . I perceived that the Brother Director (Praesidius, but known here by the name of Brother Joseph) preferred to remain in Chatham (rather than go temporarily to the vacant house recently bought at Bathurst). His good friends and compatriots of his native Parish, Neguac, who had furnished the frame of the building which had been burned, now generously offered to furnish the frame of the new building and I consented.

However, if the Brothers had accepted Father Varrily's invitation to remove temporarily their Community and College over to Bathurst, to the house mentioned (now occupied by the Nuns of the Cong. of Notre Dame) I still think, as I thought and expressed then, it would have been better for the Brothers themselves, would have relieved us at Chatham for the time and the presence of the Brothers teaching in Bathurst would have fostered that taste and given an impetus amongst the boys and their parents, to the holy work of Christian education, productive of much good in the large parish of Acadians and Irish, who speak French and English, and are much more numerous than our Catholic flock at Chatham. The Brothers' Novitiate I am confident, would have gained there several good pious subjects.

I presumed not, however, to decide in the affairs of the Brothers. I left to themselves- to their superiors, - to select and decide in all that exclusively concerned them. Mindful of my obligations to them and to others, I confined myself within the limits of the same, and left to the Brothers to deliberate and decide for what concerned themselves. I mention these details to show how willing I was to accede to their views as far as I could do so with a safe and prudent conscience.

Now with regard to my obligations, - you will please remember that my obligation to fulfill the conditions was only for one year in definite and express terms, and for reasons given in my telegram. Even if the fire had not occurred, I would be free to discontinue, as would also the Brothers, according to the stipulation or agreement. But however well disposed and able I might be before the fire to continue the conditions of the first year, the change in my position caused by that calamity which blotted out the existence of all that formed as it were the heart of our

diocese, and deprived us of the buildings in which to lodge ourselves or the Brothers to assemble our flock for the Divine Worship, made it simply impossible for me to continue the original contract. The Brothers themselves could not be ignorant of this. So, when good Brother Armin Victor came to Chatham just after the fire, he spoke to me in a kind sympathetic manner, offering on behalf of his Brothers to co-operate in every possible way to help us to bear up against our misfortune. Amongst other kind offers made by him was the modification of the conditions so that I should be required to pay only \$200 each for two Brothers instead of \$240 each for three. I felt grateful for his kindness, but knew not, at the moment, whether we could- or not- keep the Brothers on any conditions. My mind was absorbed by other more essential preliminary considerations after which, in due time, what regarded the Brothers would have its attention. But at the moment I could not answer yes, or no, to the good kind Brother's proposition, but only expressed my gratitude for making it.

After some weeks had elapsed and the chaotic state of our affairs had become somewhat organized, I considered the good Brother's proposition, especially when I read it again repeated in Father Varrily's letter from Ottawa. I sent to the Brother Director a portion to pay the salary in full up to the end of the current quarter, and took that occasion to accept with thanks Brother Armin's proposition, which to prevent all further misunderstanding I recapitulated in my letter, dated April 1<sup>st</sup>, 1878.

Now even if Brother Armin Victor had never spoken of any modification of conditions, it was certainly within my competency and right as one of the contracting parties, to do so, if I should think well and if my statement or proposition were not acceptable to the other party, notice of dissent should be given me at once. But no such notice was given. On the contrary, in my next letter dated Sept 10<sup>th</sup> enclosing a subsequent payment, I referred to that previous letter of the 1<sup>st</sup> of April according to the terms of which that payment of the 10<sup>th</sup> of September was made; and I have now before my eyes the receipted bills made out by the Brothers for their salaries according to the said conditions ever since.

Therefore, when after more than two years the first intimation of dissent is communicated to me in your letter of the 25<sup>th</sup> of last May, citing the extract from Brother Armin Victor's letter to the Brother Director dated April 17<sup>th</sup>, 1878, and your own interpretation that the new conditions were only to come into existence at some future indefinite time to be determined by the Brother Provincial, I am simply astonished! I abstain from comment for the same motives that have hitherto prevented me from writing in reply to that letter, motives of profound respect which from early boyhood I have cherished for the Institute of Christian Brothers founded by the Venerable J.B. De Lasalle.

Before concluding, however, I beg to make a few remarks respecting the debt in which you say, you found your community at Chatham: -

1<sup>st</sup>. That debt, whatever it be, can in no way be attributed to my fault, or my failure to fulfill my engagements with the Brothers. On reviewing my course towards them, the unceasing interest in their behalf and in their personal comfort and general success (without intruding in

any way into their internal relations or administration) and on examining the accounts now before me I find that I have been most generous to them in proportion to my means.

2<sup>nd</sup>. According to their receipted accounts I paid them from July 1876 to July 1880..... \$3,014.93. But this by no means includes all which the Brothers received at Chatham. In consenting to let the Brothers direct at their residence in Chatham a pay school or College on their own account I did not draw their attention to the well known fact that each one of the 20 or 30 boys belonging to Chatham who might attend the College as half-boarders and would pay for their ordinary tuition \$20.00 besides the \$10.00 for additional charges, in some cases for extras such as drawing, music, etc., would tend to diminish the contributions towards the support of St. Patrick's schools. In point of fact, this has been the case. The distinctions made between the boys attending the College and those attending St. Patrick's schools, diminished the zeal and fervor of the parents of the latter. They had helped to build the College, and must feel a little sore at not seeing their own children, but rather the strangers from outside the Diocese, enjoying it while the parents who send their boys as half-boarders to the College- after paying the \$20 to \$30 each- do not feel able or disposed to repeat the contribution for St. Patrick's schools. The loss to our annual collection for the School Fund by the moral discouragement of those parents who do not send their children to the College, and the material diminution of the contributions of those who do, cannot be accurately estimated- but must be at least \$400.00 or \$500.00. The gain to the funds of the Brothers cannot be less than \$320.00- a sum equivalent to the diminution of the first conditions about which you complain.

Therefore, whatever debt your worthy community may have contracted in Chatham, it is not correct to attribute it to us. There must have been other causes- want of prudence or economy in the administration, or rashness in procuring on credit extravagant furniture and apparatus which could have been dispensed with, at least until better able to meet the expense of it. However that may be, it is not within my province. I have nothing to do with the internal administration of the affairs of the Brothers' Community. I was not even consulted; my opinion was never sought nor given in reference to the expenses which brought on these debts.....

In the hope that you will reconsider your decision communicated to me in your last letter of the 6<sup>th</sup>.inst. of withdrawing your Brothers from Chatham- which decision would indeed be a blow of cruel injustice to us after all the sacrifices we made on their account since they came to Chatham, - and with profound respect and cordial good will

I have the honors

James Rogers, Bishop of Chatham.

I have cited this letter at length in order to show the reasons why Bishop Rogers refused to cede in the matter of permitting the Brothers to leave. As a consequence of the difference explained in his letter, the Brothers were withdrawn from Chatham, and the College remained vacant up to the time of the Bishop's death. Their departure was not for him a mere matter of financial difficulty, but he looked upon it in the light of principle, claiming that if they would not



be faithful to past engagements, he could not rely on any they would make for the future. He was not in any degree an opportunist, and when he thought the principle involved nothing could move him. The closing of the College, so promising in its beginnings, so fruitful in vocations and so deeply needed by the youth of Chatham, was for him truly a “cruel blow” and one from which he never fully recovered. He was often heard to say that “the mitre was lined with thorns” and his disappointment in St. Michael’s College was one of the sharpest with which he had to bear.