

In this summary, Father Rolland Litalien, p.s.s., describes the presence of the Priests of Saint-Sulpice in Canada. He begins with the missionary idea which inspired the founder of the Society, Father Jean Jacques Olier, and arrives at a presentation of the multiple contemporary accomplishments of the Sulpicians of the Canadian Province.

THE SULPICIAN IN CANADA FROM 1657 TO THE PRESENT DAY

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The founder, Jean-Jacques Olier, and his companions in France

Born in Paris, September 20, 1608, Jean-Jacques Olier did his studies first at the Jesuit College in Lyon where his father had been named the superintendant of the King, and then in Paris where he received his Master of Arts and Bachelor of Theology degrees, before being ordained priest on May 21, 1633.

His strong personality, his fine education and the influence of his family at the court, assured him the honours of the episcopacy, which he declined several times. He had decided instead to consecrate himself to the preaching of popular missions, thus participating in a modest way in the religious renewal brought about by the Council of Trent.

It is under the influence of Vincent de Paul that Olier joined some young priests to go and preach missions in the countryside. He did this for seven years, from 1634 to 1641. The general context in France at the time was one of profound religious ignorance with the following consequences: lukewarmness, indifference, lowering of morality and superstitions. The missions lasted from four to eight weeks. They always ended by general confession and Communion. The parishes were thereby transformed.

The problem which existed at the end of these missions was that of leaving the parishes in the hands of priests who were below the standard of what should be expected. Olier and a few companions concluded that to reform the Church, two complimentary activities had to happen simultaneously: the missions and the formation of priests. This is what led them in 1641 to found a Grand Seminary in Vaugirard, a suburb of Paris. Later, it was transferred to the center of the Capital, in the parish of Saint-Sulpice, the most populated parish in France (150,000 persons) of which Olier had become the pastor in 1642. Thus the name, the Priests of Saint Sulpice or Sulpicians was given to these pastors, formators of priests.

"The Foolish Enterprise" of Montreal

Olier and his companions were not only concerned with missions within France. They also wanted to participate in the missions in far away places. They were avid readers of the periodical "*Relations*" of the Jesuits of New France and they admired them very much. However, they were convinced that diocesan priests as well as the laity were to be missionaries as well.

From 1635, Olier had been associated with the Company of the Blessed Sacrament, which included priests and especially laymen like Gaston de Renty and Jérôme Le Royer de La Dauversière who would play a major role in the founding of the Society of Notre Dame of Montreal in 1639. The completely missionary goal of this Society was to colonize Montreal in view of converting the Amerindians. Olier was one of the first associates of this Society. Two other important Sulpicians would not delay in becoming members: Alexandre Le Ragois de Bretonvilliers and Gabriel Thubières de Levy de Queylus. Olier would be the director as of 1650. This Society supported during more than twenty years the "foolish enterprise" of Montreal as it was referred to, in 1642, by the inhabitants of Quebec.

Pastors, Lords and Missionaries in New France

The Jesuits felt that their work was especially with the native population. Fifteen of them had provided with great zeal the ministry in Montreal from 1642 to 1657. As the French colony grew, the time came for a stable secular clergy at the head of a parish with wardens. Paul de Chomedey de Maisonneuve, governor of Montreal, and Jeanne Mance, foundress of the « Hôtel-Dieu » hospital, had requested this of M. Olier. Shortly before his death, he had designated four Sulpicians who arrived in Montreal August 12, 1657. They were three priests: Gabriel Thubières de Levy de Queylus, the Superior, Gabriel Souart, the first Pastor, Dominique Galinier, curate, and one deacon: Antoine d'Allet.

Twelve years later, they were seventeen. They could have been nineteen but two had been killed by the Iroquois in 1661: Jacques Lemaître and Guillaume Vignal. In 1756, they reached a maximum of 46 in New France. In all, close to 150 Sulpicians, most of them wealthy, would come to Canada during the French Régime. During this time, there were no Canadian-born Sulpicians, probably because there were many European Sulpicians available. As well, there were few secular priests for the large diocese of Quebec. The priests were formed at the Seminary of Quebec. The Sulpicians had no responsibilities in this regard even though their house was called the Seminary of Saint-Sulpice. The word "Seminary" referred to a house of religious education. It was also used in reference to the "Seminary of the Ursulines".

These French Sulpicians consecrated the best of their energies as parish priests. Besides one year, when M. de Queylus served as pastor in Quebec (1657-1658), the district of Montreal was where they exercised their ministry. It was first in the "urban" parish of Notre Dame and at the chapel Notre-Dame-de-Bon-Secours and later as the population

spread, in eleven "rural" parishes on the Island of Montreal and the Seigniory of Saint-Sulpice. They were also responsible, for varying lengths of time, for parishes somewhat further away : Laprairie, Chambly, Longueuil, Boucherville, Verchères and Sorel on the South Shore of the Saint-Lawrence River; l'Assomption, Repentigny, Terrebonne, Berthier and Three Rivers on the North Shore; Dupas Island, in the middle of the Saint-Lawrence River between Sorel and Berthier. Almost everywhere, in addition to being pastors, they contributed financially to the construction of the churches, rectories and schools.

The Sulpicians of that era, and the practice has continued to the present day, served as chaplains to the first feminine Religious Communities of Montreal: the Hospitalers of Saint-Joseph, the Sisters of the Congregation of Notre-Dame and the Grey Nuns. In addition, they contributed financially to the works of these communities.

They became as well, since 1663, the "Seigneurs" of the Island of Montreal (472 km²) and, since 1664, of the Seigniory of Saint-Sulpice (293 km²). The Société Notre-Dame had accrued debts of 130,000 french pounds. In Paris, M. de Bretonvilliers, considered to be the most wealthy cleric in France, succeeded M. Olier as superior general of the Sulpicians. He accepted, in the name of the community, the onerous gift of these seigniories. It was not a purely charitable gesture, because a seigniory was an investment, a real estate which could produce a profit. In the XVII century, for the Sulpicians, there were no profits due to the considerable investments on the one hand and too few settlers on the other hand. The profits were more considerable thereafter. It was the same for the Lake of Two Mountains (500 km²), of which they were the "Seigneurs" from 1717. Historians agree that these seigniories were very well administered. All of this, added to the personal wealth of the Sulpicians, enabled the financing of parishes, works of charity and education, as well as of the missions.

The Sulpicians wanted to be missionaries to the natives. During the first decade, they were not numerous enough to leave Montreal. They nevertheless associated with the Amerindians which the fur trade brought every year. They learned their languages in order to catechize them and so prepare themselves to go to the far off territories. To acquire this knowledge, they were assisted by Father Pierre Chaumonot, Jesuit, who came for one and a half years to help them after the tragic death, in 1661, of M. Lemaître and M. Vignal. From 1668 to 1680, seven of them, led by Claude Trouvé, would evangelize the Iroquois at the Bay of Quinte, north of Lake Ontario. In 1669-1670, Dollier de Casson and Bréhant de Galinée would go on a lengthy trip of exploration to Lake Erie in view of establishing a mission. From 1686 to 1756, in collaboration with the Priests of the Foreign Missions of Paris, nine Sulpicians ministered in l'Acadie with the Micmacs and the Acadians. The last remote mission was that of François Picquet, among the Iroquois, where Ogdensburg, New York, now stands (1749-1760). The other missions were closer : that of Gentilly, on three islands in Lake Saint-Louis (1673-1676), that of l'île aux Tourtes (1704-1721) and especially those of the Mountain (1675-1705), of the Sault-au-Récollet (1696-1721) and of the Lake of Two Mountains (Oka - Kanasatake) from 1721.

Survivors during the Military Regime (1759-1764)

After the signing of the fall of Quebec, September 17, 1759, he who was the last bishop of New France, Msgr. Henri-Marie Dubreil de Pontbriand, already gravely ill, joined the portion of the French Army which was withdrawing to Montreal. He sought refuge at the Seminary of Saint Sulpice where his friend, the superior Etienne Montgolfier, who was also his Vicar General for the district of Montreal awaited him. He died there June 8, 1760, three months before the fall of Montreal. Saint Sulpice also welcomed nine seminarians, as well as some priests of the Seminary of Quebec which had been bombarded. Most of them would remain in Montreal till 1765. Life in common between these two communities was very harmonious. So harmonious in fact, that on September 15, 1763, the Canons of the Diocese of Quebec chose unanimously M. Montgolfier to be the first Bishop under the English Regime. However, General James Murray, the then Governor General of Canada, vetoed this because he feared the strong personality of the Superior of the Sulpicians. He preferred Canon Jean-Olivier Briand, a rather timid man and very financially dependent.

The Government in London wanted for Canada a national clergy composed uniquely of secular priests which it believed were more malleable. It therefore decided in 1763 that the religious communities of men, which it considered too dependent on France and Rome, would disappear slowly but surely. These religious could no longer recruit themselves and their holdings would become the property of the British Crown. This is what happened with the Recollets and the Jesuits. M. Montgolfier succeeded in assuring the future of the Sulpicians who had agreed to become British subjects in Canada, by obtaining on April 29, 1764 from the Seminary of Saint Sulpice in Paris the donation of their entire Canadian possessions in favor of the Seminary of Montreal.

From the English Regime to the Present Day: more and more formators of priests

Due to deaths and departures, the 46 Sulpicians, which they were in 1756, were reduced to 28 by 1764, of which one was the senior permanent cleric Jean Girard, musician and school teacher. Given that they could no longer recruit in France and that Canadian vocations were rare, they would be only 10 in 1787: 3 older French and 7 Canadians. But the French Revolution will help them... Driven from France and most of them having taken refuge in London, 17 Sulpicians will receive permission to come to Canada during the 1790's; it seemed, both in London and in Canada, that they would very unlikely preach the Revolution! Recruitment in France would be entirely permitted from 1840, so that by 1903, there would be 73 Sulpicians : 32 French and 41 Canadians. In 1921, three Sulpician Provinces would be created: a French, a Canadian and an American. The Canadian Province would work and recruit in Japan and in Columbia S.A. By 1965, it had reached a maximum of 172 Sulpicians.

They would continue to serve as chaplains to the first three communities of women to which would be added later on two other communities : in 1857 the Petites Filles de Saint-Joseph of which the founders, with Rose de Lima Dauth (Sister Julie), were the

Sulpicians Antoine Mercier and Damien Tambareau, and in 1951, the Secular Institute "the Servants of Mary Immaculate" of which the founder, with Gabrielle Lefebvre, was the Sulpician Onil Lesieur. Under the English Regime, they also continued to manage their three seigniories. On June 8, 1840, because of their loyalty towards London, they were finally confirmed in their holdings on condition that, in particular, the English merchants could become the owners of their building sites "for a certain price, indemnity, and consideration in that behalf, agreed upon, or to be fixed, ascertained and determined." This was the beginning of the end of the Seigniorial Regime.

Although there were difficulties, they persevered in their ministry towards the natives in Oka. Nevertheless, Louis-Charles Lefebvre de Bellefeuille, from 1836 till his death in 1838 went to evangelise with great success the Algonquins of the north-west in Abitibi and Témiscamingue. In so far as their numbers allowed, they continued to collaborate in parish ministry. In 1900 they were responsible for four parishes: Notre-Dame (whose territory was considerably reduced with its dismemberment beginning in 1867), Saint-Jacques, Saint Patrick and Oka; and two chapels: Notre-Dame-de-Bon-Secours and Notre-Dame-de-Lourdes. In the first quarter of the XXth century, they left Saint Patrick. In 1971, they took over Sainte-Catherine-Labouré Parish. Recently, they relinquished two parishes: Oka in 1997 and Sainte-Catherine-Labouré in 2003.

In Canada, some Sulpicians exercised more specialized ministries : Olivier Maurault (1886-1968), rector of the University of Montréal (1934-1955); Jean-Baptiste Desrosiers (1896-1963), founder and director of l'Institut Pie XI, a school for popular education (1938-1963); Wilfrid Éthier (1905-2002), founder and director of the Institut canadien d'orientation professionnelle (1943-1978); Albert Lapointe, (1921-), founder and director of the Foyers Notre-Dame and the Mouvement Couple et Famille from 1954 to the present day; Jean-Bernard Allard (1928-), director of the « Office national de liturgie » (1977-1987), member of the « Commission internationale francophone de liturgie » (1977-1987) and, for 15 years, consultant to the Congregation for Divine Worship (1984-1999); Robert-Claude Bérubé (1929-1991), director of the « Service information-cinéma » of the National Office for Social Communications (1970-1991) and world renowned authority on cinema; René Bernard (1931-), founder and director of the « Centre d'animation spirituelle » (1969-1975). Several were professors and some were deans at the University of Montreal in the faculties of Theology, Arts, Philosophy and even Music (Clement Morin from 1954 to 1968). One must also underline the fact that two Sulpicians served as General Secretary at the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops : Guy Poisson (1926-), from 1975 to 1979, after having been assistant secretary from 1969 to 1975, and Emilius Goulet (1933-), from 1995 to 1999.

The Sulpicians also contributed to the cultural life of Montreal. The Library of Saint-Sulpice became the National Library of Quebec in 1967. Even if recently the Sulpicians have withdrawn completely from college work, we can appreciate the work they achieved by the list of those institutions which they directed: the College de Montreal, during 225 years (1767-1992), the Seminary of Philosophy (1876-1969), the École sacerdotale Saint-Jean l'Évangéliste (1911-1927), the College Jean-Jacques Olier (1951-1965) and the College André-Grasset (1927-1994).

However, because of the situation, one concern became a major preoccupation : the formation of diocesan priests. In 1840, Msgr. Ignace Bourget, Bishop of Montreal, asked the Sulpicians to found the Grand Seminary of Montreal. More than 6000 priests have been formed there to the present day. The year 1888 marked the beginning of the Canadian College in Rome which welcomes student priests mostly Canadian. In Canada, the Sulpicians also directed the Grand Seminary of Saint- Boniface from 1954 to 1968 and are responsible for the Grand Seminary of Edmonton since 1990. As well, in spite of quasi financial bankruptcy in the 1930's, they went to far away places to continue their work of forming priests : to Japan (from 1933), in Latin America (from 1949 in Manizales) and to Zaïre, in Kinshasa (from 1968 to 1972 and from 1974 to 1975). They direct at the present time the Grand Seminary of Fukuoka in Japan, two Grand Seminaries in Columbia: in Cali and Cucuta; and two Grand Seminaries in Brazil: in Brazilia and Crato. In 1972, in Latin America, a provincial Delegation has been established with its head office in Bogotá.

Let us note finally that fourteen Sulpicians, Canadians by personal option or by birth, became Bishops, three of which became Cardinals. Belonging to the Canadian Province of Saint Sulpice, two Japanese Sulpicians became bishops in Japan and three Columbian Sulpicians became bishops in Columbia.

Between 1657 to 2008, more than 650 Sulpicians worked in the Canadian Province.

On July 2, 2008, in the Canadian Province of Saint Sulpice, there are 99 Sulpicians : 58 Canadians, 6 Japanese, and 35 Columbians. There are, as well, 10 candidates.

The Sulpician Bishops and Cardinals of the Canadian Province

Fourteen Sulpicians, Canadians by personal option or by birth, became Bishops, three of which became Cardinals. They are:

- 1) Msgr. Louis-Armand Champion de Cicé (1650-1727), apostolic vicar in Siam in 1701;
- 2) Msgr. Pierre-Herman Dosquet (1691-1777), Fourth Bishop of Quebec in 1733;
- 3) Msgr. Jean-Jacques Lartigue (1777-1840), First Bishop of Montreal in 1836;
- 4) Msgr. Patrick Phelan (1795-1857), coadjutor-Bishop of Kingston in 1843 and Third Bishop of that diocese in 1857;
- 5) Msgr. Armand-François-Marie de Charbonnel (1802-1891), Second Bishop of Toronto in 1850;
- 6) Msgr. Pierre-Adolphe Pinsonneault (1815-1883), First Bishop of London in 1856;
- 7) Msgr. Michael O'Farrel (1832-1894), First Bishop of Trenton, New-Jersey, in 1881;
- 8) Msgr. Emile Yelle (1893-1947), coadjutor-Archbishop of Saint-Boniface in 1933;
- 9) Cardinal Paul-Emile Léger (1904-1991), Archbishop of Montreal in 1950 and Cardinal in 1952;

- 10) Cardinal Edouard Gagnon (1918-2007), Bishop of Saint-Paul in 1969, and President of the Pontifical Council for the Family and Cardinal in 1985;
- 11) Msgr. Gérard Tremblay (1918-), Auxiliary Bishop in Montreal in 1981;
- 12) Msgr. Émilius Goulet (1933-), Archbishop of Saint-Boniface in 2001;
- 13) Cardinal Marc Ouellet (1944-), Bishop and Secretary of the Pontifical Council for the Unity in 2001, Archbishop of Quebec in 2002 and Cardinal in 2003;
- 14) Msgr. Lionel Gendron (1944-), Auxiliary Bishop in Montreal in 2006.

Five Sulpicians of the Canadian Province of Saint-Sulpice became bishops in Japan and in Columbia :

- 1) Msgr. Pierre Saburo Hirata (1913-2007), Bishop of Oita in 1962 and of Fukuoka in 1969;
- 2) Msgr. Alberto Giraldo (1934-), Auxiliary Bishop of Popayan in 1974, Bishop of Chiquinquirá in 1977 and of Cucuta in 1984, Archbishop of Popayan in 1991 and of Medellin in 1996;
- 3) Msgr. Rodrigo Arango (1925-), Auxiliary Bishop of Medellin in 1981 and Bishop of Buga in 1985;
- 4) Msgr. Joseph-Mitsuaki Takami (1946-), Auxiliary Bishop of Nagasaki in 2002 and Archbishop of Nagasaki in 2003;
- 5) Msgr. Héctor Epalza (1940-), Bishop of Buenaventura in 2004.

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