

# HISTORY OF THE PRECIOS BLOOD CATHEDRAL

## Part II

### Our Founding Faith Endures

The following summary of our ongoing faith journey outlines very briefly, events that are as much regional as local, and is intended to provide context to the prevailing issues and social climate that shaped the establishment of Sault Ste. Marie and continued to lay the foundation for the Catholic faith we are proud to share today.

In the Summer of 1671, following the **Pageant of St. Lusson** at the Sault du Sainte Marie, **Superior Claude D’Ablon** directed **Fr. Jacques Marquette** to bring a small band of refugee Hurons to the secluded safety of Mackinac Island, which soon proved unsuitable for agriculture. They moved on to the more fertile land on the north side of the Straits, where Fr. Marquette established **the Mission of St. Ignatius Loyola** – now **St. Ignace**. This strategic and more easily defended location would in time take precedence over the mission at the Sault, however the Jesuits maintained the Sault mission until at least 1694.

**It is told in the ‘Relations’ of 1671/72 that Father Marquette returned to the Sault briefly to make his annual Retreat and pronounce his final vows, but it was from St. Ignace, in May of 1673 that he set out with Louis Jolliet on their remarkable journey of discovery along the Mississippi. This intrepid and highly esteemed Jesuit, whose courageous voyage would define so much of North America, became ill with an intestinal disease which took his life in May of 1675 as he was making his way back to St. Ignace. Sadly, he died at the age of 38.**



He had been replaced at St. Ignace by Jesuit **Fr’s. Phillippe Pierson** and **Henri Nouvel** who received his remains two years later. The burial site was discovered by a group of Algonquins who had been taught by Fr. Marquette at **Saint Esprit** (near present day Green Bay) and his remains, which they prepared according to their custom, were returned in a respectful solemn procession of 30 canoes. Following a funeral mass, the remains were interred in the middle of the Mission Church. Today, an inscribed monument erected in 1882, marks his resting place near the site of the original Mission at St. Ignace.

The close relationship between the Sault and the Straits from very early in the Jesuit 'site planning' is described in a letter from Superior Dablon written at the Sault where he states:

***“Missilimakinac is an island of note in these regions. It is a league in diameter, and has such high, steep rocks in some places that it can be seen at a distance of more than twelve leagues. It is situated exactly in the strait connecting the Lake of the Hurons and that of the Illinois, and forms the key and the door, so to speak for all the peoples of the South, as does the Sault for those of the North; for in these regions there are only those two passages by water for very many Nations, who must seek one or the other of the two if they wish to visit the French settlements”.***

This first mission at the Straits accompanied a growing fur trade community, and in 1690 a small French military presence was established as **'Fort Du Buade'**, in order to protect French commercial interests.

**The 'shared' community life caused increasing difficulty for the Jesuits, whose primary intent was the spiritual welfare and safety of the Indians (Huron and Ottawa). The priests soon found themselves competing for the souls of the native people with the traders who offered beads, blankets and brandy. This issue would plague the work of the Jesuit missionaries wherever they ministered through these early years of settlement.**

The Church had fought the sale of alcohol with **Bishop Laval's** threat of excommunication, but the Jesuits found it necessary to appeal to the Colonial Government, obtaining an ordinance from the King to control the sale of alcohol, and by 1686, a special order was enacted that strictly limited the transportation of brandy to the Straits. These regulations were for the most part ignored by the new commandant **Antoine de la Mothe Cadillac** who was stationed there from 1694 to 1697. His personal interest in the expansion of the fur trade outweighed the priests concerns for the welfare of the people in their care.

In 1701, Cadillac, acting for the King (Louis XIV), established **Fort Detroit**, as the new military and commercial power in France's plan to regain control of the lucrative fur trade. **This event undoubtedly hastened the demise of the Sault Mission**, and also led to the downfall for a time, of The Straits of Mackinac, **which had by now replaced the Sault as the central hub of trading activity.** (Bayliss)



The migration of the native population south to Detroit was such a devastating blow to the Jesuits that they felt compelled to burn their Church and residence and return to Quebec, however, they were directed to return the following year and rebuild. This they did, led by **Fr. Joseph Marest S.J.**, and having depleted the soil at St. Ignace, they chose to re-establish in 1708 on the south shore at a site they called **'Saint Ignace de Michilimackinac'.**

Cadillac's enterprise at Detroit prospered for a time, however changing political events, and increasing hostilities between the French and warring Fox tribes of Wisconsin caused them to rethink their military strategy and they eventually returned to the Straits, building Fort Michilimackinac in 1715, alongside the re-established Jesuit Mission. The historically accurate replica of this Mission/Fort situated on the shoreline at Mackinaw City, can be viewed from the 'Mighty Mac' and visited in the summer months, providing an interesting opportunity to learn much about life in those early years.

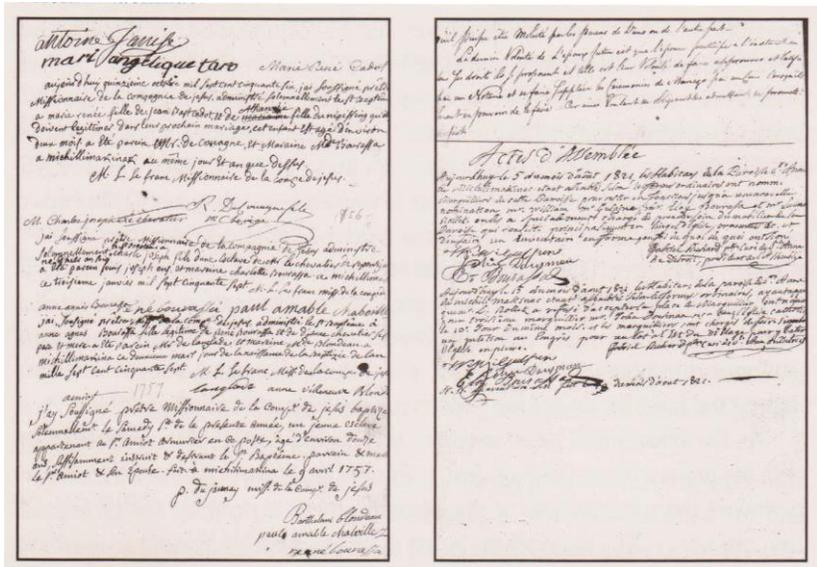


The '**Relations**' provide a wealth of information concerning day to day life at the Mission and speaks clearly to the ongoing struggle of the Jesuits as they worked tirelessly to Christianize the natives alongside the growing French community.

With the return of the fur trade, the priests found themselves again in bitter conflict with the French administration and much has been recorded regarding the continued enmity between Cadillac and Fr. Marest over the destructive administrative policies concerning trade with the native tribes. As the number of Europeans continued to increase at the Mission sites, the role of the Jesuits began to change. Many of the white newcomers were poor role models for the Christianized natives, and in addition, they looked to the Jesuits as 'their own'. The priests were increasingly called upon to act as peacekeepers in difficult and often dangerous situations. The following speaks to the ongoing difficulties they endured.

Father Marest S.J. Superior, speaking for the welfare of the natives wrote in 1702:

***"The missions (presumably both Michilimackinac and the Sault) are reduced to such an extremity that we can no longer maintain them against an infinite multitude of evil acts – acts of brutality and violence; of injustice and impiety; of lewd and shameless conduct; of contempt and insults. To such acts the infamous and baleful trade in brandy gives rise everywhere, among all the nations up here, where it is carried on by going from village to village, and by roving over the lakes with a prodigious quantity of brandy in barrels, without any restraint. Had his Majesty seen but once what passes, both here and at Montreal, during the whole time that this wretched traffic goes on, I am sure that he would not for a moment hesitate, at the very first sight of it, to forbid it forever under the severest penalties".***



Father Marest continued this relentless struggle until 1722 when, at the age of 68, he was recalled to Montreal, where he died in 1725. Hand written records dating from 1695 indicate that the priests provided spiritual care to the ever increasing French population, and there are numerous notations concerning baptisms, marriages and funerals throughout the 1700's.

One of the most prominent Jesuits of this period was **Father Pierre DuJaunay S. J.** who served *Michilimackinac* between 1734 and 1765. *Highly educated and dedicated to the Indian people in his care,* he compiled a massive French- Ottawa dictionary of 851 pages. His numerous letters reveal that he and others stationed with him, travelled frequently to mission outposts around the Great Lakes, as the needs required, as well as to maintain contact with their brother Jesuits in the field. **The Sault would certainly be among the destinations, because of the small community growing there.** It is recorded also that Fr. DuJaunay made a number of trips to Montreal and Quebec to meet with his superiors and other officials and where his association with the Ursuline Sisters provided beautifully embroidered alter linens and other valued religious items needed at the missions.

As in all French Canadian settlements of the time, the local parish was the spiritual and social center of the community. Between 1742 and 1765, Father DuJaunay performed 25 weddings and 120 baptisms among the European community including military personnel. **A number of these names were noted as 'residing at Sault du Ste. Marie' and included Pierre Locat 1747, Sieur Beaulieu (1753) and Joseph Couvret (1754),** indicating the growing French community at the Sault.

The Seven Years War in Europe influenced events throughout North America at this time, and involved Europeans and Natives alike. Sides were taken and fur trade rivalries escalated. **The Sault was once again considered a strategic site for its proximity to the vast Northwest as well as its valuable location on the most direct route to Quebec.** (Bayliss)

The close of the 17<sup>th</sup> century then, marked the end of the first missionary efforts at the Sault, and yet, a small outpost of mostly transient natives and voyageurs continued to make the Sault du Ste. Marie an important destination on the increasingly competitive fur trade route to the vast northwest. The large 'fur brigades' from Montreal often carried itinerant priests and religious who would minister to any who welcomed them along the way, and many of them would certainly have stopped at the Sault.

According to Bayliss, the Church in Michigan states that the Sault Mission closed sometime between 1694 and 1700" (reference)

**St. Mary's Church in Sault Ste. Marie, Mich. confirms the continuous presence of priests - mainly Jesuits, at Sault Ste. Marie (apart from the original early visits of Jogues, Raymbault, Menard and Allouez) from Marquette in 1668 through to Father Charles Albanel S.J. who died in the Sault on January 11<sup>th</sup> 1696.**

**The following lists those priests, and indicates that several of them also served at Michilimacinac, giving evidence that the two missions were clearly connected through those years, with the Straits being predominant from 1673 until the time of the Suppression (1773 – 1814)**

Claude Dablon S.J.	1668	(present at Pageant of St. Lusson)
Gabriel Drouillette S.J.	1670	"
Louis Andre S.J.	1670	"
<b>Francois Dollier de Casson &amp;</b>		
Rene de Brehant de Galinee	1670	Sulpicians, who briefly visited with de la Salle
*Henri Nouvel S.J.	1673	also served at Michilimacinac (1674 – 1683)
*Pierre Bailloquet S.J.	1670's	also served at Michilimacinac - 1683
Charles Albanel S.J.	1683 – 1696	<u>died at Sault du Ste. Mari,</u>

The establishment of British control over all the French posts in the Great Lakes, was met with little resistance from the local population, and life remained much the same for some time. The British were tolerant for the most part, and allowed the practice of Roman Catholicism to continue without challenge. Father DuJaunay recorded details concerning the care and feeding of several Englishmen wintering at the Fort. The English were not so tolerant in their dealings with the Indians, many of whom resented the incursion of English military and traders who did not deal with them in friendship as had the French. The growing animosity resulted in an uprising at Fort Michilimackinac in 1763 in which a number of English soldiers and traders were killed. **Alexander Henry, whose prominent place in Canadian history is strongly linked to the Sault**, was present there, and survived with the help of his Ojibway friend and ally who disguised him as a native. Henry has left vivid accounts of the event. It is also well documented that Father DuJaunay, at his own peril did much to aid the English and prevent further deaths. It was written in a letter to Montreal in September 3, 1764:

***"The Natives had already destroyed a large part of the fort when Father DuJaunay, a Jesuit, opened his house to serve as an asylum to what remained of the soldiers and of the English traders: but to save their life, he greatly endangered his own. The hostile youth, irritated at seeing half of their prey snatched away from them, tried to make amends for their loss at the expense of Father DuJaunay; and the old men of the nation had difficulty pacifying them."***

Father DuJaunay then travelled with fifteen non hostile natives on a peacekeeping trip to Detroit with a letter from **Captain Etherington**, to **Major Gladwin** requesting assistance and supplies. His letter describes his gratitude to the Jesuits for their aid and calming influence with the Indians. He states:

***“I have been very much obliged to...the Jesuit for the many good offices he has done for us on this occasion. He is a very good man and had a great deal to say with the Natives, hereabout...”***

Even though a tenuous peace had been restored to the region, the British domination of Canada as well as internal conflicts in France and within the Church, adversely affected the Jesuits missions. Father DuJaunay was recalled to Quebec and return was very doubtful. It is recorded that he brought the Mission’s sacred vessels to the safety of Detroit before departing. **He died in Quebec in 1780 at the age of 76.**

In North America, where Canada was now under the rule of Protestant England, and the Church of England now the predominant religion, edicts from Rome concerning the expulsion of the Jesuits could be easily neglected or ignored, and ‘The Society of Jesus’ died a slow death. England had allowed the practice of Catholicism to continue in Quebec, although the position of Catholics was certainly tenuous at best. When **Bishop Jean-Olivier Briand** received the news of Suppression, he felt the circumstances called for discretion, and it was decided to let the Order simply ‘die out’ without molesting them. He called those remaining, together, and told them of their fate, later reporting in a letter the following:

***“Our Jesuits here still wear the cassock, still have the reputation of Jesuits, carry out the duties of Jesuits, and in Canada it is only the governor, I and my secretary, who know they are no longer Jesuits, (they, excepted). I am giving a report to the sovereign pontiff of all my actions...informing him that I have established the same superior and attorney who will manage the estates under my orders.”***

The Jesuits attempted to stay together. Father DuJaunay and several others were attached to the Jesuit College in Montreal. The last of the original French Jesuits to die in their much loved **Nouvelle France**, now **Canada**, was **Father Jean-Joseph Casot** on March 16<sup>th</sup> 1800. (Boynton)

It may be that one or two Jesuits, possibly ill or aged, stayed on in other locations into the years of the Suppression, but for the most part, as the Catholic Church in North America organized its administration, the Sault was served by a number of secular priests, from approximately 1815 until the return of the first Jesuit, **Father Pierre Point S.J.** who took up residence in 1846 in the newly established town of Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan. Interestingly, Jesuits did not return to the Straits area following the Suppression, however they were not forgotten, and their legacy and ministry live on.

The long established Catholic community at the Straits suffered greatly the loss of their missionaries and longed for a replacement. Over the years, the old Jesuit Mission Church built at the fort around 1705, had been replaced in 1743 and dedicated to St. Anne, the mother of Mary, who was considered to be the Patroness of French Canadian voyageurs. The parish continued under lay leadership, with the occasional assistance of travelling priests, such as **Father Pierre Gibault**, who wrote to Bishop Briand in 1768:

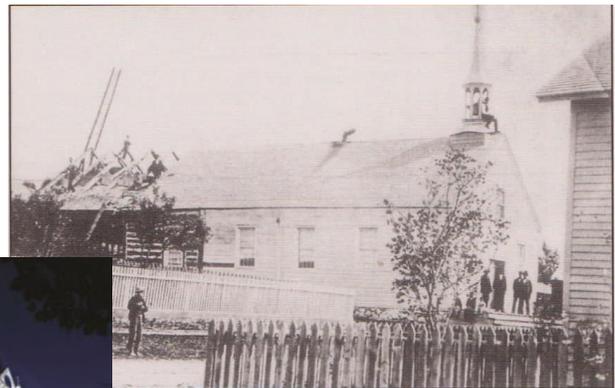
***“On arriving at this post, after dinner, I went to the confessional which I did not leave for ten hours. I also had some baptisms to perform, but only one marriage ceremony. I am distressed that I am not able to remain long enough to respond to the eagerness of the great number of voyageurs who asked me to hear their confessions. In a word, God has not been wholly forgotten by these people. I have been visited by the Indians of Father DuJaunay; they regret his loss as if it was the first day”.***

Even without a priest to lead them, the faithful continued to practice their religion as best they could. They gathered for public prayers in the Church, kept private devotions in their homes, used lay leaders to perform sacraments and looked forward to the occasional visits of priests such as Father Gibault. They continued to care for the Church and adjacent priest’s house, hopeful for the return of a Jesuit.

During the American Revolution, in 1780 the British authorities moved the Michilimackinac community to the safety of Mackinac Island, and to encourage the French community to follow, they moved the Church of St. Anne to the island as well, situating it below the fort in the natural harbour. In the 1820’s St. Anne’s was moved a final time to its current location a short distance east of the harbour. In the mid 1870’s the church was rebuilt in the impressive Gothic style, although it has had several major renovations to bring it to the beautiful ‘heritage’ place of worship it is today.



Father Otto Skolla's 1845 sketch of Ste. Anne's Church and priest's house on Mackinac Island. Magdelaine Laframboise's house is shown on the left.



Henry Schoolcraft the Indian Agent residing at the Sault, passed through in 1820 and noted the site of the former Chapel and Jesuit residence at Michilimackinac, which was pointed out by his guides and still known as 'Pointe a la Mission.'

In 1822 **Jedediah Morse**, making a report to the Secretary of War felt that "the improved state and appearance of the Natives was the fruit of the Jesuits labors." The Ottawa Indians at Fr. DuJaunay's mission station at **L'Arbre Croche** continued to request a Jesuit priest, writing to President James Monroe and the U.S. Congress in 1823. The last know remembrance of the Mackinac Jesuits came in 1825, when **Father Francis Badin** visited L'Arbre Croche, and an elderly Christian Ottawa pointed out the place where "the black robe (wamitigoshe) used to walk up and down while reading his breviary."

**Always, they persevered in their efforts to bring the love of God and the Gospel of Jesus Christ to all. Although they endured tremendous obstacles and hardships throughout these early years, we can be fairly sure that had the Jesuit Suppression not intervened, these courageous pioneers of the Catholic faith would have held steadfast to their hard won foothold in North America and to the small communities they had founded in the name of Jesus.**

