

Serge A. Theriault

# **Biographical Sketch of Msgr. O'Neill Côté**



3rd Bishop of the Christian Catholic Church  
*(Ordinariat des vieux-catholiques d'Amérique)*

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Trinity 2006

Msgr. Côté was born in Cloridorme (Quebec), Canada, October 20, 1939, son of Adrien Côté and Emma Clavet.<sup>1</sup> He was raised and did his primary school in Matane, and chose to become a teacher. He graduated from Ecole Normale at Rimouski (1966) after classical studies at Saint Joseph College in Memrancook (New Brunswick) and specialized in the teaching of English at Université Laval in Quebec City.<sup>2</sup>

He taught English and was Director of Students at Collège de Matane, then entered the Federal Department of Indian and Northern Affairs. He taught to the Inuits of Northern Quebec and became Senior Education Advisor in Montréal. One of his achievements was to help establish Manitou Autochtone College in La Macaza, Quebec.

### **Priesthood and Episcopate**

He studied theology<sup>3</sup> and animated, in Longueuil, the prayer group **Buisson Ardent**,<sup>4</sup> where was reorganized the Christian Catholic Church (CCC)<sup>5</sup> established in Montreal by Rev. Stephen Côté (1895). He became pastor of the church and was ordained priest on July 14, 1973 by

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<sup>1</sup> Brother of: Alban (Gisele Roy), Colette (Elie Tapp), Hughes (Iseult Boulay), Philippe (Noella Emond)...

<sup>2</sup> Teacher's certificate from Quebec Ministry of Education (1966.06.13). English diploma (1966.08.22) and Bachelor of Paedagogy (1966.12.19) from Université Laval.

<sup>3</sup> At Université de Montréal, McGill University and Saint Thomas College (B.Th.).

<sup>4</sup> With his wife Annette Emond, a Registered Nurse working at L.H. Lafontaine Hospital in Montreal.

<sup>5</sup> The CCC originates from a reform that took place in the French Canadian Parish of St Anne (Kankakee Co.), Illinois, in the middle of the 19th century. Lay leaders Drolet, Langelier, Martin, Mercier, Pelletier, Robillard and parish priest Charles Chiniquy (1809-1899) formed the first Board registered at Kankakee District Court on September 13, 1859. In 1885, churches were organized among French speaking colonists of Wisconsin, by Rev. René Vilatte (1854-1929), trained at St. Anne, IL, by Father Chiniquy. An incorporated Synod led by Guillaume Barrette, Edouard de Bekker and Augustin Marchand had him consecrated bishop (1892) by the Independent Catholic Church of Sri Lanka, Goa and India. He was succeeded by Bishop Casimir F. Durand (1879-1957) consecrated in 1926.

Hungarian Old Catholic Bishop Thomas Fehervary (1917-1984).<sup>6</sup> He also mitered Msgr. Côté when he became head of CCC on July 25, 1974.<sup>7</sup>



*Pictures of St. Stephen's Parish and of Bishop Côté's ministry.*

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<sup>6</sup> Bishop Fehervary was consecrated at Plock, Poland, in 1945, by Mariavite Rite Old Catholic Bishop Jakub Prochniewski, himself consecrated by Archbishop Gerard Gul of Utrecht (Netherlands) and by Polish Bishop J.M. Kowalski.

<sup>7</sup> The year when passed away Rev. J.N. Baudot (1879-1974) who was head of CCC after Msgr. Durand.

In 1978, the CCC formed the Independent Catholic Church of Canada (ICCC)<sup>8</sup> with the Liberal (Old) Catholic Church International (LCCI) in Ontario. Church Primate Peter W. Goodrich consecrated Msgr. Côté as Archbishop of Quebec & Maritime Provinces on July 2, with Msgr. Joseph E. Neth, LCCI Presiding Bishop and Msgr. William H. Daw, Presiding Bishop Emeritus.<sup>9</sup> The ceremony took place during synod in St. Francis Church, Niagara Falls (Ontario).



*Msgr. Goodrich, Msgr. Neth and Msgr. Côté*

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<sup>8</sup> Incorporated by Federal charter on March 5, 1979. From the ICCC came the Independent Catholic Church International led by Msgr. Goodrich (1981-1983). He was succeeded by Msgr. R.V. Bernard Dawe.

<sup>9</sup> The church in Ontario, organised in 1934 by Independent Anglicans, had as first bishop Msgr. William H. Daw (1955). In 1964, it joined with the Liberal Catholic Church of New York in the LCCI led by Msgr. Daw (1964-1974) and by Msgr. J.E. Neth consecrated by him (1971). Msgr. Goodrich became Primate of ICCC at the Synod held in Niagara Falls from June 30 to July 2, 1978. Now he presides the Independent Anglican Church Canada (<http://independentanglicanchurch.ca/index.html>) and CCC is a rite of the Internat'l Council of Community Churches, a member communion of the World Council of Churches.

*I will work with joy and good will to extend the Reign of God*, said Bishop Côté after his consecration. He wished all clergy to find self-realization in their apostolate and asked for the participation of all. *I need everyone's talents and charismas and wish that we all cooperate in the common ministry of the Church.*

### Achievements

Beside the parish church in Longueuil<sup>10</sup>, Msgr. Côté had under him a pastorate in Lanaudière-Maskinongé, a chapel in Montreal and a mission church in Ottawa-Gatineau, now become the Christian Community of St. Bernard and St. Gregory.<sup>11</sup>



*Msgr. Côté's wife Annette (2<sup>nd</sup>)  
at Mass in Gatineau*



*William Hancock from Longueuil  
Church at Synod in 1983.*

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<sup>10</sup> Dedicated to Saint Stephen in memory of missionary Stephen Côté.

<sup>11</sup> I became incumbent after my ordination in Decembre 1976.

Msgr. Côté was the right bishop for the Church in a society undergoing profound transformations (nationalization of health care services and education). *The Church*, he said, *can no more be identified to its works: one must be leaven in the dough in another manner*. He was a visionary leader, present to all, especially the needy to whom he always gave a special attention. His merits were acknowledged and he received distinctions, such as being made a Knight of the Order of Saint John of Jerusalem.

### **Sickness, Succession and Death**

In 1979, Bishop Côté was diagnosed as having multiple sclerosis. It was a severe type and it progressed so rapidly that in 1981, he had to resign his charge. I was elected to succeed him and he consecrated me on July 12, 1982. He passed away four years later on July 30. Mr. Luc Frioli, a trustee of St. Stephen Church Board, informed us around 10:00 A.M. The funerals took place on August 2, in the YWCA Chapel on Drummond Street in Montreal. His remains were interred in Urgel-Bourgie Cemetery in Saint-Hubert. Here is a picture of his stone.





*Burial site of Msgr. Côté, Urgel-Bourgie Cemetery, Saint-Hubert*

Msgr. Côté was a bishop close to his people, a good servant of Christ and his Church. May he rest in peace.

*Soli Deo honor et gloria*