

The Society of the Precious Blood

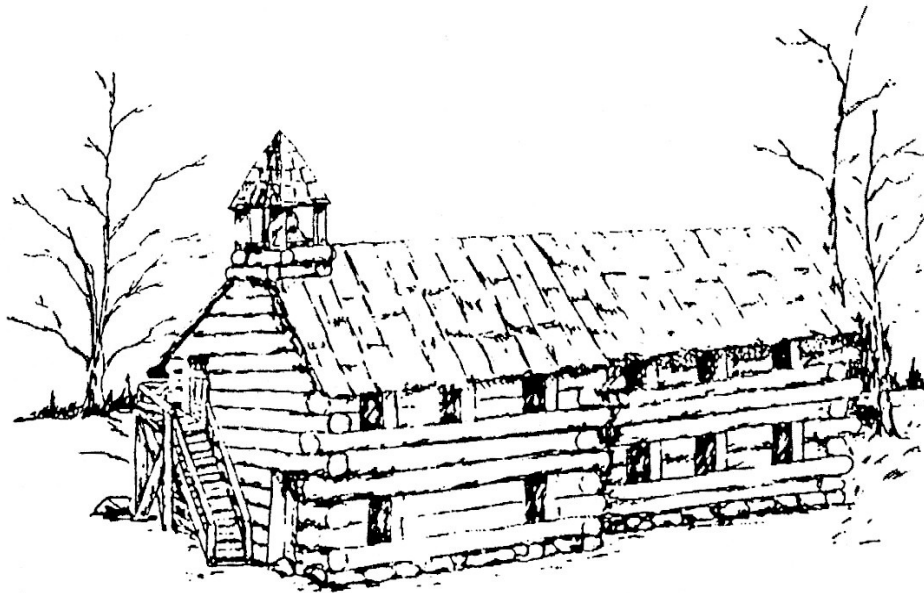


There is on our diocesan coat of arms, a heart that represents the Precious Blood. It shows the importance of the Society of the Precious Blood (S.P.B.) in our church. Christ wanted communion to be given under both species of bread and wine (Jn 6, 53). This is the reason why we give communion, not to the host only, but under both species.

Founding

The S.P.B. was founded in 1887 in Wisconsin by Msgr René Vilatte, under the name *Société Missionnaire du Précieux-Sang pour l'évangélisation des campagnes*.

There were French Canadians in the northern part of Green Bay Peninsula, who worked as laborers and foresters. It was an environment similar to Gatineau in Quebec, where Msgr. Vilatte had worked as teacher. One wanted capable missionaries do pastoral work and to teach in the church-schools as did in Quebec the French Canadian Missionary Society, and in St. Anne, Illinois, Father Charles Chiniquy.



The church-school of St. Anne (Kankakee), Illinois, and Father Chiniquy

Christian Catholic Context

The French Canadians founded at St. Anne the first Christian Catholic Church. It was in the middle of the 19 century, at the time of the exodus to the United States of a large number of Quebecers and Europeans, Belgian and French. They were poor people who wanted to improve their living conditions. They began reading the bible and under the effect of the gospel of grace, acted as saved people, abandoning alcoholism and getting involved in the pastoration and the government of their churches. They met the opposition of church authorities, and in St. Anne were excommunicated. *"You can exclude us from the Catholic Church of Rome, they said to the Bishop of Chicago, but not from the Catholic Church of Christ"*, hence the name Christian Catholic Church. They have since then lived their faith according to Holy Scripture, with Christ as only Chief.

First S.P.B. Missionnaires



Others joined the church, including John B. Gauthier (4th on the photo). He had been a teacher in Ottawa and in Illinois. After his ordination for the church in Wisconsin (Gardner, 1889), he became master of novices and gave S.P.B. a great impulse. He was a spiritual man and a good pedagogue. The children liked him and several became religious under his influence. Certain came with him to Quebec, to minister in Berthier and Maskinongé Counties, and in Montreal. One of them was Stephen Côté, who is at the origin of the parish of Greater Montreal.

Mission of the S.P.B.

The Christian Catholic Church would not have developed as it did without the missionary activity of the religious of the Precious Blood. They preached Christ according to Scripture. Today, our goal is always to do pastoral work under this impulse.

The first nuns, Sister Mary Ashmun and Sister Anne Schoen, joined the S.P.B. in 1894. They were teachers and worked in Wisconsin. It is said that they were originally associated with the Sisters of Saint Martha, a French Jansenist Order.

The S.P.B. tried different formulas, including the Benedictine Abbey of St. Dunstan in Wisconsin (1908) under Dom Bernard Harding, and Vilatteville in Mexico (1910), an ecumenical community devoted to holistic wellbeing (through biological agriculture, etc).

Today, the S.P.B. has its center in Gatineau, Quebec. The religious get together for prayer and they conduct worship on the third Sunday of the month at the Parish Church of St. Bernard and St. Gregory. The superior is Father Willard Dionne (4th on the photo).

