



International Council of Community Churches

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Statement of Tribute and Thanksgiving Bishop Rene Vilatte (1854-1929)

The International Council of Community Churches give thanks to God for the life and ministry of Exarch and Bishop Rene Vilatte.

Bishop Rene Vilatte was born in Paris, France. Following the untimely death of his mother, he was raised by his grandparents in the French province of Maine, where he attended the Petite Église, a church that was community-centered and independent in nature. This experience would inform his later ministry.

Bishop Vilatte's ministry was exercised in a variety of denominational and geographic settings, principally in the United States and Canada. Ordained a Christian Catholic priest in Berne, Switzerland in 1885, he was consecrated a bishop in apostolic succession in 1892 in Ceylon, following his election as bishop by the laity and clergy to and with whom he ministered, a body that would be known as the American Catholic Church and later be incorporated as the Christian Catholic Rite of Community Churches. Bishop Vilatte established a number of congregations and co-founded the Society of the Precious Blood, a body of clergy and laity committed to church growth. In 1898 he transferred the Episcopal see to Canada where it remains today.

Many of the congregations established by Bishop Vilatte ministered to and with first and second generation immigrants to North America from Europe, principally France, Poland and Italy. Bishop Vilatte ordained and consecrated those who organized the African Orthodox Church in the U.S. and Canada. Bishop Vilatte's ministry to and with French Canadians was one of continuing strength and among the reasons for moving the Episcopal see.

Bishop Vilatte lived and ministered in an era of intense competition and harsh mutual denunciations among Christians of various communions. At various times he was declared excommunicate from communions in which he had no membership. Periodically he was the subject of attacks in print and from opposing pulpits. His own published works were printed before the community church movement grew in strength, but their emphasis on Christian love and loyalty without insistence on unanimity about matters of doctrinal indifference presaged the stance of the movement. In 1923 Bishop Vilatte retired to France where he died in 1929.

Today, Bishop Vilatte's episcopate continues through his successors. The cathedral church is located in the Ottawa-Gatineau area, at the border between the Canadian Provinces of Ontario and Quebec, under Bishop Serge A. Theriault. The Christian Catholic Rite of Community Churches is a member of the International Council of Community Churches.

Issued this third day of March in the year of our Lord 2014,

Rev. Donald H. Ashmall
Council Minister

"...that they may all be one."
John 17:21