

CHAPTER XI:

How The Parish Remembers Its Curates

In April 1874, Fr. Joseph M. Kerlidou, a young priest from France, was assigned to St. Joseph Parish, but on September 28 he was transferred to the new parish of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel in Charlotte, where a house had been prepared for him. Later he served St. Joseph Parish again as administrator during Fr.

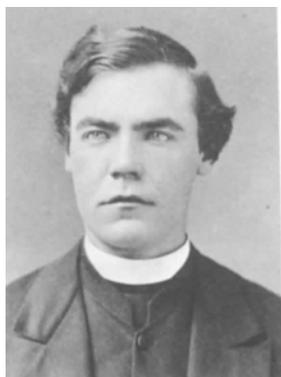


Rev Joseph Kerlidou, curate at St. Joseph Church, April 1874-September 1874

Cloarec's absence, February 7-May 31, 1879. He is remembered especially as the historian of Fort

Ste. Anne at Isle LaMotte, one of his missions. Here he conducted the excavations of Old Fort Ste. Anne and used the stones of the fort foundations to erect the Stations of the Cross at St. Anne's Shrine. These moss-covered stones form the supports for each station. St. Anne's Shrine was erected and consecrated under his leadership. He died at Fanny Allen Hospital on December 27, 1898 at age 49 and his funeral was held at St. Joseph Church in Burlington on December 31. He was buried in St. Joseph Cemetery at Isle LaMotte.

Fr. John Marie Coathuel was assigned to St. Joseph Parish on February 1, 1890. He was born in Brieuc, Finisterre, Brittany, and was ordained in Brittany by Bishop Louis deGoesbriand in 1874. His first assignment was Fair Haven; he served successively at White River Junction and Newport, was private secretary to Bishop deGoesbriand for five years, and then transferred to Hyde Park. His first appointment



Rev. John Marie Coathuel, curate at St. Joseph Church, April 1890 - September 1902

to St. Joseph Parish was in 1890; he remained until 1892, returned in 1893 and stayed until his death on December 7, 1902, at age 52. He is remembered especially for his concern for the poor. His Requiem Mass was sung on December 9 by Bishop Michaud and he was buried in Mt. Calvary Cemetery in the lot with the other two Bretons, Fr. Yvinec and Fr. Duglue.

Fr. Joseph Arthur Lacouture arrived at St. Joseph Parish in 1902. He was born in St. Ours, Province of Quebec on February 11, 1876, to Ephrem Lacouture and Emelie Bouvier. He studied at St. Hyacinthe Seminary and at the Propaganda Fide Seminary in Rome, Italy where he was ordained on June 9, 1900. He was assigned to Highgate,

Vermont, 1900-1901, with the mission of Bakersfield. He was sent to Barre 1901-1902 because of his ability to speak Italian. After one year at St. Joseph Parish (December 12, 1902 to December 1, 1903), he became chaplain at Fanny Allen Hospital, served Island Pond and Brattleboro, and returned to St. Joseph Parish on September 20, 1904. His assignment of nineteen years included



Rev. Joseph A. Lacouture, curate at St. Joseph Church, December 12, 1902- December 1, 1903 and September 20, 1904 -1923

sixteen as Fr. Cloarec's right-hand man and three as curate with Fr.

Proulx. He was a quiet, studious person of few words, lacking his fellow curate's social ease and ability to mix. By comparing his handwriting, it was determined that he copied and indexed all the baptism, marriage and death records of the parish, dating from 1834 until the arrival of Fr. Cloarec in 1871. To appreciate the time, skill and effort needed to accomplish this task would require a perusal of the original records. The accuracy of the indexing done by Fr. Lacouture is remarkable.

Bishop Robert F. Joyce, sixth Bishop of Burlington, was a friend of Fr. Lacouture and tells a revealing story about his social reticence. Fr. Joyce, Fr. Lacouture, and several other priests, gathered occasionally at St. Joseph Rectory to play cards. If Fr. Lacouture answered a telephone call during the game, play would cease temporarily. During these phone conversations, all they heard was "Oui ... Oui ... Oui ... Oui: ' When Fr. Lacouture returned, play was resumed without comment. However, this brevity did not apply to his letter writing when irritated. He had a sharp exchange of letters at one period with Fr. Gillis over the question of how to handle parishioners who tried to shift back and forth between St. Joseph and Cathedral Parishes.

After Msgr. Cloarec's death, Fr. Lacouture remained a curate during the first three years of Fr. Proulx's pastorate. As Bishop Rice reminded him at one point, Fr. Lacouture could have become a pastor fifteen years previously had he agreed to do so.

In March 1923, he accepted a pastorate at Sacred Heart Parish in Bennington where he wrote his Will in 1925. On April 17, 1926, he became pastor of St. Francis Xavier Parish in Winooski. In 1937, he set out to attend the Eucharistic Congress at Manila but was taken ill and was hospitalized en route. He recovered sufficiently to reach San Francisco where he died on April 9, 1937.

His estate was largely willed to charity (Appendix I-21). St. Joseph Parish received \$5,000. St. Hyacinthe Seminary received \$15,000 where he requested to be buried. One thousand dollars went to his friend, Fr. Robert Joyce.

The size of his estate was a surprise to many. Rev. Mark Tennien, M.M., the missionary priest, described Fr. Lacouture as slow to spend on himself but generous to the Church. He had contributed liberally to Fr. Tennien's mission appeals. Fr. Lacouture's funeral was held at St. Francis Xavier Church and he was buried at St. Hyacinthe Seminary.

The companion curate to Fr. Lacouture and assistant to Fr. Cloarec was Fr. Jean Marie Billon from 1905 to 1920. He was born in Locranan, Brittany on March 7, 1881 to Jean Billon, a farmer, and Marie-Anne Dagom. He studied at Pont Croix, Quimper and at Montreal, where he was ordained December 23, 1905. He came directly to St. Joseph Parish



Fr. Jean-Marie Billon, curate at St. Joseph Church, January

1, 1906 - March 21, 1920

that month. The prompt recollection of those who knew him is that he was loved by children and youth. They surrounded him the minute he appeared. He taught them catechism in the days when classes were held on Sundays in the chapel; the classes were divided from one another by sliding glass doors.

He was the founder of St. Aloysius Society for boys and young men (Appendix C-13). In addition to promoting a good Christian life among the members, this society stressed the importance of sobriety. A requirement for membership was a promise to abstain from alcoholic beverages until the age of 21.

After his long residence at St. Joseph Parish, and following the death of Msgr. Cloarec, Fr. Billon went to Rutland as administrator of Immaculate Heart Parish for eight months. He then received his first pastorate at St. Amadeus, Alburg in December 1920. He became permanent pastor at St. Francis Xavier Parish, Winooski, in December 1924 where he remained until his death on March 19, 1926. Funeral and burial were at St. Francis Xavier. The lot is one where several other priests are buried.

There is little in Fr. Billon's diocesan file other than his official papers. His correspondence includes only one letter which reveals his character. As pastor at Alburg he had written the chancellor presenting a couple's insufficient reason for requesting a dispensation from two banns. Instead of simply denying the request, the chancellor replied with a detailed explanation of the inadequacy along with an explanation of Canon Law. Fr. Billon responded that he was well aware of this and had expected the dispensation to be denied but added that it was his role to present the request as stated, and the chancellor's responsibility to deny the request.

St. Joseph Parish had enjoyed a long period of stability during Msgr. Cloarec's pastorate. The following years were to bring more frequent changes. The many curates who served St. Joseph Parish are listed separately in the section on clergy and religious (Appendix B-5). Priests of the Society of St. Edmund at St. Michael's College and the Community at Fairholt supplemented the services of the priests at St. Joseph Parish for many years. Perhaps the best remembered are Frs. Edmund J. Hamel and Joseph N. Couture. The Edmundites still maintain pastorates at a number of parishes in the Diocese of Burlington and assist willingly when the need arises.