

1896 - SOUVENIR - 1996

Our Lady of Light Mission

Mulgrave, Que.



MONSIGNOR,

As requested by your Grace, I am forwarding to you today, some information concerning Our Lady of Light Mission. Evidently, a church erected but recently does not have a long history. My report will be short as well.

The Mission of Our Lady of Light takes in all of the Canton of Mulgrave, and the eastern part of the Canton of Derry. These two Cantons are part of what is generally known as "Outaouais North". Mulgrave and Derry consists but of a series of mountains and valleys, spotted here and there by lakes of various shapes and various sizes. Also mentionable, is the "Blanche" river which crosses the region from north to south, and empties into the Outaouais. The new mission is part of the Ottawa Diocese. It is located at a distance of forty miles from the Capital.

The inhabitants of this area are of Irish descent, French Canadian descent, and particularly of German descent, with a total of about sixty families, about forty are Catholic, and the others Protestants. Up until now, the Catholics from Mulgrave belonged to the parish of St. Malachy. However, the long distance that separated them from the Church, and the priest, and being in daily contact with the Protestants, these Catholics became indifferent. A certain number rarely go to Church at all any more. It was considered necessary to provide them with facilities such as to enhance their religious practice and duties. Moreover, the land in Mulgrave is but half cleared, and nothing stimulates more land cleaning and colonization in general than to provide the settler with Church and school.

Such were Monsignor, some of the reasons that prompted us to take the first step in this venture, that is, to request permission to build a chapel in this Canton. When the Catholics of Mulgrave learned that not only your Grace had given approval, but also encouraged them strongly to establish this mission with the least delay, they generously offered their labour, and thereafter, my only task was to channel their zeal, and at times, to restrain it.

It was on April 13, 1896 that work began. The men gathered on the shores of the lake, next to the projected building site of the new structure, to cut the required lumber. Nothing is more admirable than these courageous mountaineers, axes on their shoulders, trekking through the forest, still covered with a thick blanket of snow, towards the designated location where they would set themselves to the arduous task of felling the giants of the forest. In the evening, they took account of the number of logs readied during that day. After deciding when the next felling bee should take place, the men returned home. After completion of this first phase, the logs were brought to the river to be floated to a neighbouring sawmill to undergo their final transformation.

The site chosen for the building of the Church has the form of a natural terrace, backed by the mountain, which at that location rises to a remarkable height. Below the site flows the "Blanche" river, and to its left lies "Big Lake", so named because its expanse exceeds greatly that of the other surrounding lakes. The beauty of this spot was enough to command that it be the site of the new church. Also, it was with great joy that our settlers learned that the land for the church had been donated by its owners.

A few days later, construction began under the supervision of Mr. Lefebvre, who for the sum of one thousand dollars, erected a gracious chapel measuring fifty feet in length by thirty feet in width, adorned by a beautiful steeple. The entire building was painted and decorated with taste.

Finally, the big day arrived when the new Temple was to be consecrated. At this point I shall quote from the report entered in the "CHURCH REGISTER":

"the 10th. of December, 1896, Msgr. J.T. Duhamel, Archbishop of Ottawa, accompanied by Canon Michel, Vicar of Buckingham, and Father Groulx, of the Archdiocese, came to bless the chapel of Our Lady of Light.

Following the usual prayers and benedictions, a high Mass was celebrated by Fr. Groulx. Needless to say that on that occasion the Church was unable to accommodate the large number of people present. Besides the Catholics of the area, many had come from surrounding parishes. Many Protestants attended with respect at this first high Mass, which would be completely foreign to them. Following the Gospel, Monsignor gave the sermon based on these words from the Holy Gospel: "Aedificabo Ecclesiam meam." One could easily sense the benefit brought to the souls of our poor mountaineers by this simple, clear, and enlightened expose, on the fundamental dogma of our faith: the Roman Catholic Church is the only Church of Jesus Christ.

We had wondered for a long time what the mission would be named. A few days before the consecration of the chapel, we put the question to Monsignor, the Archbishop, who replied: Your Church will be named "OUR LADY OF LIGHT." Thus, it was to the Holy Blessed Virgin that this Church was to be dedicated. She would forever be the guardian and patron.

Since the beginning of this project, we rejoiced in the fact that soon the Diocese of Ottawa would add one more parish to its total (the one-hundred and ninth); also, that another Canton of our dear Province of Quebec would welcome the beneficial influence of the Catholic worship. However, in learning that it was the will of our head Pastor that this Temple become a sanctuary of Mary, we were all the more kindled with joy. Since that day, the chapel acquired new-found title to our veneration and our zeal."

OUR LADY OF LIGHT ! for the humble priest who was called to serve the new mission, this name was also a reason for rejoicing. Child of the Oblate Fathers in many ways, I had learned long before that this congregation had in its care a venerable sanctuary of the same name in France; also that from the Junior School of Light had produced many of our university masters, among others, the good Father Tabaret, whom I had the joy of knowing and having as spiritual director for the last three years of his life.

I would add that the booklet entitled "Pilgrimage of Our Lady of Light (Diocese of Avignon," by Father A.S. Oblate, informed my parishioners and myself, the origin and detailed history of that mission.

May the Mother of God do for our country that which She did for the beautiful Province.

Our little mission has been in existence for eight months; and already, by the grace of God, our project seems to be prospering. Our Catholics always show the

same willingness to help by their labour, and their money, their newborn parish; and even more consoling, is evident resurgence of piety and virtue. Let us hope that the resurgence will be complete, after they have received the grace from the retreat, which we will announce for the upcoming month.

(dated) August 15, 1897,
St. Malachy of Mayo,
F.K. Brunette, Priest.