

Father Badin Comes To Notre Dame*

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Successful pioneers are always strong characters. To be successful they must be brave, and fearless, and they must be men who can envision the future that they are making possible. They are men of action more concerned with the work to be performed than with the niceties of its performance. Such a pioneer was Father Theodore Stephen Badin the pioneer priest of northern Indiana. Father Badin has been described¹ as being small in stature, rather squatty, lacking that huge frame one usually expects in the sturdy pioneer. But what he lacked in size he made up in zeal even in old age when gray hair and furrowed cheeks marked his appearance. The lines of his face were sharp and a bit severe, indicative of the real self discipline and strong determination that accomplished all that he did. His sharp, penetrating glance bespoke the strong spirit and boundless courage that took this small body day after day over river and prairie and through wilderness to the homes of the savage, and the camp of the emigrant. In addition his letters show that he had a penetrating sense of humor that found many laughable things, but which frequently caused discomfiture to those of his neighbors who dared to go beyond their limitations. Such was the sixty-four year old priest in charge of the revived St. Joseph Mission which lay between the towns of South Bend, Indiana, and Niles, Michigan, as he signed the documents that gave him possession of the land now called Notre Dame, on November 10th, 1832, one hundred years ago.²

Father Badin's pastorate, old Saint Joseph Mission, had been like most of the old missions the victim of war and greed, and only a few Indians who lived along the St. Joseph River remained as witnesses of what had gone before. But now that the troubles of war had passed, and the new and permanent advance of white civilization had reached once more the outposts of the northwest, it was fitting that these old missions should be revived. Detroit, Cahokia, Kaskaskia, Green Bay and Saint Joseph, scenes of the labors of the French Jesuits of

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¹ Description in letter in a private collection in the Notre Dame University Archives.

² Photostats of letters patent, and certificate of purchase in the Notre Dame University Archives.

the seventeenth century became once more the centers of renewed missionary activities. For his part in restoring the old St. Joseph Mission, as well as by his own personal background and position, Father Badin was easily the most important missionary figure in the valley of the Saint Joseph, and it is peculiarly fitting that his final resting place should be at Notre Dame in the very heart of the region for which he labored.³

It should be remembered that when Father Badin came to Notre Dame in 1832 as pastor of St. Joseph Mission he was aided by a tradition of nearly a hundred and fifty years. Father Hennepin, companion of the brave Sieur le La Salle, had visited these regions in 1679 and found Miami Indians living upon the prairies around the St. Joseph-Kankakee Portage.⁴ His fellow countrymen, those early French Jesuits, had founded the first Mission of St. Joseph about the year 1685.⁵ A few years later, Father Claude Allouez, S.J., the Francis Xavier of the American Indians, according to tradition, came to found permanently the mission post. Father Allouez had become acquainted with the Miamis in the Green Bay region in 1670,⁶ and, after a rather brief period of labor among the Illinois about Kaskaskia, had returned to his beloved Miamis to work with them until his death. Tradition based upon Indian stories and conjecture from known facts have placed the time of his death on the night of August 27, 1689 and the scene of his burial just south of the present city of Niles, Michigan.⁷ Father Allouez's work was continued by Father Claude Aveneau and Father Jean Mermet, who were succeeded by Father Jean Baptiste Chardon.⁸ There were times when the Mission received only visitations from the traveling Jesuits, but these visits with the periods of permanent residence by the missionaries give to the mission a connected story of continued activities from these early years until the time of the expulsion of the Jesuit Fathers from the missions in 1763. Among the names of the missionaries contained in the baptismal register of the Mission now preserved in Quebec we find those of Michael Guignas, Jean Saint Pe, Peter DuJuanay,

³ His body was transferred to the present log cabin chapel in 1904.

⁴ *Father Louis Hennepin: A New Discovery of a Large Country*, ed. by R. G. Thwaites (Chicago 1908), I, 141-145.

⁵ George Pare, "The St Joseph Mission," in *Miss. Valley Hist. Rev.* XVII, 27-30.

⁶ *Jesuit Relations*, ed. by R. G. Thwaites (Cleveland, 1899), LIV, 226-237.

⁷ Geo. Pare, *supra*.

⁸ George Pare and Milo M. Quaife, "The St. Joseph Baptismal Register," in *Miss. Valley Hist. Rev.*, XIII, 201-239.

Jean Baptist de Lamorine and finally Peter Potier, all noted workers. How far these missionaries traveled through the northern part of the present state of Indiana may never be known but we may easily suppose that besides maintaining the permanent chapel at St. Joseph they went to all the camps of the Miamis and their confederates that were within a few weeks travel.

But the conditions so favorable to missionary activity that had aided these early Jesuits soon changed. First the French government persecuted the Jesuits. Then the French who were generally favorable to Catholic missionaries, were driven from Canada. On the other hand the young American Church moving out from Baltimore was unable to supply enough priests to administer such wide territories, and as a result missionary work about the St. Joseph Mission was necessarily suspended. The last entries in the old baptismal register are those of Father Pierre Gibault,⁹ the patriot priest of Vincennes and Kaskaskia. Apparently these records were made only on the occasion of visits to the neglected mission.

The labors of the Jesuits among the Indians of the St. Joseph Valley had not indeed been in vain. The Indians of that area acquired the reputation of being the most civilized of all the tribes of the Middle West, and they did not forget the ministrations of the "black robes." Time after time the Indians sent requests to Quebec to their old bishop to send them priests. But that bishop had none to send; furthermore the territory of the northwest had been taken from his jurisdiction. The Indians then turned to the new American branch of the Catholic church with the same result. For many years the Indians went to Quebec or to Vincennes to receive the sacraments.¹⁰ To their children they handed down the prayers that they had learned from the early Jesuits, as well as traditions of the ministrations of the priests. A new diocese had been established in the west at Bardstown, Kentucky, in 1808, but the bishop, Benedict Joseph Flaget, had no priest to spare for the Indians in the north. Finally when Father Gabriel Richard came to Detroit the Indians began to plead with him to administer to them, or to get for them a resident priest. To Father Richard they recited the prayers and the ten command-

⁹ George Pare, *supra*.

¹⁰ An old manuscript in the Notre Dame University Archives.

ments which they had learned from their parents, as proof that they had kept the faith, although in their lifetime they had never seen a priest at St. Joseph's.¹¹

When Father Edward Dominic Fenwick became the first bishop of Cincinnati¹² and administrator of the Michigan Territory, Father Richard¹³ wrote to him of these Indians urging him to send a priest to them. But neither did Bishop Fenwick have priests to spare. Finally in 1830, Father Frederick Rese, later Bishop of Detroit, came to the Mission of St. Joseph.¹⁴ A few days after his arrival, he baptized thirty of the Indians,¹⁵ including Chief Pokagon and his wife Elizabeth, on July 24-25, 1830. Within a few weeks Father Theodore Stephen Badin, lately returned from Europe, who had been visiting with his brother Father Vincent Badin at Detroit, started for the St. Joseph Mission accompanied by Angelique Campaux as interpreter. Once more at the prayer of the Indians, the mission of St. Joseph was ministering to its faithful.

Father Badin's path was not an easy one. The old mission site had passed into other hands and the mission supplied by the federal government, Carey Mission, was in the possession of Baptist missionaries. Father Badin consequently bought for his first station fifty arpents of land near¹⁶ the Indiana-Michigan line and built there a chapel. He was an experienced missionary and began at once to see that the other accompaniments of successful missionary work—education and industry—were given to the Indians. He wrote to Bishop Fenwick in June, 1832: "We made Pokagon sow wheat and reap last year for the first time in his life. The present harvest will still be better. He and his neighbors have made rails and considerably enlarged their cornfield this spring."¹⁷ For a school, Father Badin made a trip to Kentucky in 1831¹⁸ to secure for his mission some sisters from one of the communities in the Catholic settlements there. Finally he secured two Sisters of Charity from Nazareth, Kentucky, Sister Magdalen (Miss Anne Jack-

¹¹ *Annales de la Propagation de la Foi*, IV, 546 et seq.

¹² Papal Bull nominating Fenwick, in Notre Dame University Archives.

¹³ Letter of Stephen T. Badin to Bishop Fenwick, May 9, 1829, in Notre Dame University Archives.

¹⁴ Letter of Gabriel Richard to Bishop Fenwick, Aug. 17, 1830, in Notre Dame University Archives.

¹⁵ Later Baptismal register of the mission, in Notre Dame University Archives.

¹⁶ *Annales de la Propagation de la Foi*, VI, 160.

¹⁷ *Catholic Telegraph* (Cincinnati), I, 311, July 14, 1832.

¹⁸ Badin to Fenwick, April 11, 1831, in Notre Dame University Archives.

son) and Sister Lucina (Miss Mary Whitaker), who came to the St. Joseph Mission in 1833.¹⁹ From the state Legislature he obtained incorporation of his proposed orphan asylum.

In all this it is worthy of note that Father Badin represented not only a renewal of the old mission, but a change in the spirit of the work. Unlike the old missionaries, he drew his authority from the new American hierarchy. He himself was the first priest ordained in the United States, the ceremony having taken place on May 25, 1793,²⁰ at Baltimore, Bishop John Carroll, officiating. His first work had been among those transplanted Maryland Catholics in and around Bardstown, Kentucky. In all his labors he was interested then and later, not in founding temporary missions, but in preparing for the permanent American church. He endeavored to make suitable American citizens out of the Indians, and consequently sought and obtained the coöperation of the national government in his labors. Just as the early priests at Saint Joseph had cared for all the territory in the vicinity of the St. Joseph Valley, so also Father Badin traveled about northern Indiana and southern Michigan, going west as far as Chicago²¹ to care for his scattered people. He always kept in mind the permanent church that he foresaw. In a letter of 1834 to Bishop Purcell, second bishop of Cincinnati, he tells how he had purchased sites for churches in South Bend, Fort Wayne, Huntington, Logansport, Wabash and Peru.²² For Illinois he made a petition to the government for a section of land upon which to establish a school,²³ and, when he purchased the beautiful site upon which the University of Notre Dame now stands, he had plans for a future educational establishment.²⁴

A tradition handed down to the Fathers of Holy Cross says that there were bands of Indians living on the shores of the present lakes of Notre Dame before Father Badin came to live there. Nevertheless at the time that Father Badin made his purchase in 1832 nothing had been done to clear the forests or to cultivate the land. Shortly after buying the land Father Badin built for himself a home on the southern shore of St.

¹⁹ Badin to Fenwick, Feb. 15, 1834, in Notre Dame University Archives.

²⁰ Badin to Archbishop Purcell, April 22, 1851, in Notre Dame University Archives.

²¹ Later Baptismal register of the mission, in Notre Dame University Archives.

²² Badin to Purcell, Sept. 22, 1834, in Notre Dame University Archives.

²³ Badin to Fenwick, 1832, in Notre Dame University Archives.

²⁴ Manuscript in the hand of Father Alexis Granger, C.S.C., in Notre Dame University Archives.

Mary's lake, near the site of the present "log cabin." His cabin chapel, according to a description of one of the early brothers at Notre Dame, was twenty feet wide and thirty-five feet long and had at the back a small room about eight feet square where Father Badin and his successors lived.²⁵ About this cabin only a small portion of land was cleared. Here it was that Father Badin endeavored to start his orphanage, the first of its kind in that region. He named his institution *Sainte Marie des Lacs*. In 1833 he brought with him to the mission Father Louis Deseille, a young Flemish priest of the diocese of Cincinnati, who was to be his successor. Father Badin continued, in the best traditions of St. Joseph, his ministrations in the surrounding territory, and never ceased to have at heart the welfare of his establishment near South Bend. The title of the land, however, he transferred to Bishop Bruté, the newly appointed Bishop of Vincennes, in 1835,²⁶ on condition that an orphan asylum or some other charitable or religious institution be established upon the grounds.

Father DeSeille did not immediately reside at Father Badin's establishment, but continued to live at Pokagon village, the place at which Father Badin had first resided when he came to the Mission. But that was only the center of his activity. From there he traveled throughout the many villages of southern Michigan and northern Indiana. By reason of the division of jurisdiction when the Sees of Detroit and Vincennes were erected, he came under the jurisdiction of Bishop Frederick Rese, the first bishop of Detroit. In 1836 we find him writing to that bishop thanking him for his approbation for an appointment to the new church at Bertrand, Michigan, but indicating his intention to follow his Indians into Indiana.²⁷ This intention he finally carried out on May 11, 1837.²⁸ Father DeSeille was not destined to live long in his new home for he died amidst his beloved Indians in the cabin chapel at *Ste. Marie des Lacs* on September 26, 1837, without the company of a fellow priest. When Father Louis Neyron, the nearest priest, arrived a few days after the death, the Indians had not buried the corpse. They could not bear to

²⁵ Annotated diagram in Notre Dame University Archives.

²⁶ Photostat copy of deed in Notre Dame University Archives.

²⁷ DeSeille to Rese, Jan. 14, 1836, in Notre Dame University Archives.

²⁸ Later Baptismal register, in Notre Dame University Archives.

part with their beloved Father, and further they could not believe that one so holy could decay.²⁹

By the transfer of the St. Joseph Mission to the diocese of Vincennes, and because most of the Indians served from the Mission now lived in Indiana, the appointment of a successor to DeSeille fell to the bishop of Vincennes. To this northern Mission, Bishop Bruté sent his most beloved priest, the young Benjamin Petit,³⁰ who arrived early in 1838. Father Petit, one of the charming characters of Indiana history, attended St. Mary's of the Lake, South Bend, Pokagon, Bertrand, Michigan City, and the various Indian villages in southern Michigan and northern Indiana, until the removal of the Indians.

About this time (1838), the United States government decided to remove these last Indians from their homes in Indiana to new reservations in Kansas. Father Petit chose to accompany his beloved Indians on the dreaded journey. It has been truthfully said that this story of the removal of these Pottawattomies is perhaps the darkest page in the history of the dealing with the Indians by our Government. The sufferings of the Indians broke the heart of this young missionary, and he himself died shortly after in St. Louis in 1839. This removal of the Indians marks the close of what might be called the first period in the history of the new St. Joseph Mission which extended from the pioneer Father Badin to the gentle Father Petit. Now the Mission was no longer attended principally by Indians but by whites, and of these whites those of French origin were no longer in the majority. The site of the Mission had been moved from the old place near Niles to the new mission center of northern Indiana and southern Michigan, *Ste. Marie des Lacs*, the site of the present Notre Dame.

The missions of the north were not long left vacant and we find, according to the entries in the later baptismal register at Notre Dame, that Father S. A. Bernier attended the missions in South Bend, Bertrand, Pokagon, Michigan City, Elkhart, Laporte and Tippecanoe until 1841. At that time Father Bernier was transferred to the diocese of New Orleans and was no longer seen in Indiana.³¹ Also in 1841 Father Michael

²⁹ Edmund Schmidt papers, in Notre Dame University Archives.

³⁰ *Annales de la Propagation de la Foi*, XI, 382 et seq.

³¹ Bernier to Bishop Blanc of New Orleans, Feb. 18, 1840, in Notre Dame University Archives.

Shawe, the first pastor at Madison, Indiana, visited the Mission of St. Joseph. By this time Bishop Bruté had passed on to his reward and the new bishop, Clestine Haillandiere, had taken over the reins of the diocese.

Father Haillandiere had been sent by Bishop Bruté to Europe in 1839 to get additional clergymen for the diocese. Both realized that without help from abroad the multiplying missions of the state could not be cared for. Before his return to America, Father Haillandiere was informed from Rome that he had been made coadjutor to Bishop Bruté. On the death of the Bishop, a few weeks later, he became the second Bishop of Vincennes. It was during his visit to France that Bishop Haillandiere secured the good will of the newly organized Society of Holy Cross of LeMains, France. As a result, in 1841, Father Edward Sorin³² and seven brothers of the new community came to America and proceeded to Vincennes. At first they were stationed at St. Peter's in Daviess county. However, the new community had been invited to found a college and as there was already a college in existence at Vincennes the Bishop offered to the young priest, for he was just 28, the land about the Mission of *Ste. Marie des Laes* on condition that a college be started within two years.³³ Thus without much ceremony, the final chapter in the old St. Joseph Mission began.

Father Sorin was indeed the successor to the pastors of the old St. Joseph Mission because he took over the station held by the later official pastors of that Mission and because he continued the work of caring for all the missions in southern Michigan and northern Indiana. When Father Sorin and his band of assistants arrived at the site of the later Notre Dame on November 26, 1842, little progress in the surroundings of the Mission of Father Badin had been made since that pioneer had built the chapel ten years previously. Father Sorin set to work, however, to repair the chapel and to take care of the neighboring Catholics, Indian and white. Indeed it is worthy of note that seeing the neglected condition of the savages, especially in Michigan, and fully cognizant of the work of Fathers DeSeille and Petit Father Sorin even

³² Documents in the Provincial Archives of the Congregation of Holy Cross at Notre Dame, Indiana.

³³ David R. Leeper, *Some Early Local Footprints* (South Bend, 1898), Second Series, 4.

mentioned to his superior his preference for the life of the Indian missionary.³⁴ However such could not be his work as he had promised to start a college within two years. Father Sorin sent back to France for additional priests and set to work to build the first college building on the shores of the two lakes. Of course, he changed the name of the institution from St. Mary's of the Lakes to *Notre Dame du Lac*, Our Lady of the Lake. It is perhaps significant that in the three periods of the history of this Mission center we find three names, St. Joseph Mission, St. Mary's of the Lakes and *Notre Dame du Lac*.

The first building was completed in 1843³⁵ and the University was chartered in January 1844. Soon other priests and brothers came from France. Fathers Granger, Marrivault, Goesse, and Cointet took up the work of teaching in the new College and continued the missionary traditions. Notre Dame remained the great mission center of the St. Joseph Valley until after the foundation of the diocese of Fort Wayne in 1857.³⁶

It is not the purpose to relate the activities of the College although the work of Notre Dame today is of the same kind as that performed by all the missionaries from Allouez to Gibault and from Badin to Petit, but to call to mind on this centenary of Notre Dame as a mission center that when Fathers Badin and DeSeille, as pastors of old St. Joseph's Mission, transferred their headquarters to St. Mary's, Notre Dame became the rightful heir to the age old traditions of that mission. After the founding of the College, Notre Dame was truly the mission center of northern Indiana and southern Michigan just as its predecessors had been. Father Sorin as President of the new College could not concern himself chiefly with missionary work. The principal missionaries were Fathers Marrivault, Baroux, Goesse and Cointet. The baptismal registers of nearly all the churches on both sides of the Indiana-Michigan line bear the signatures of one or more of these gallant priests. But to the saintly Father Francis Cointet belongs preëminence in this work. In 1854 when his health forced him to relinquish his active duties and he was soon

³⁴ *Circular Letters of Very Rev. Edward Sorin, C.S.C.* (Notre Dame 1885), I, 259 et seq.

³⁵ Papers of James F. Edwards, in Notre Dame University Archives.

³⁶ Notes of the Council of Missionaries etc., in Provincial Archives of the Congregation of Holy Cross, Notre Dame, Indiana.

taken to his reward, he more than anyone else might be called the successor to Father Badin. As he was going down the Mississippi to New Orleans in 1851, in search of the renewed health that was to be denied him, he wrote back directions to the missionaries.⁸⁷ The document is preserved among those at Notre Dame. In it after giving detailed instructions about the conduct of mission activities he concluded with a summary of the missions cared for from Notre Dame. The conclusion reads:

The regular missions are attended as follows: Mishawaka, the first and last Sunday of every month; South Bend, occasionally; Goshen, every third Sunday of every three months; Plymouth, three Sundays in the year generally the third or the fourth; Leesburg, twice in the year; Kankakee and Tippecanoe, occasionally by Father Baroux; Mr. Downey's Salt Cement at twelve miles beyond Plymouth, twice in the year, at the same time as Plymouth. Bertrand, every Sunday. Niles every last Sunday of the month. Michigan City, every second Sunday. Laporte, the first Sunday of every other month. Valparaiso and Pleasant Grove occasionally. St. John's the first and third Sunday of every month. Turkey Creek, the fourth Sunday of every month. New Buffalo, the fourth Sunday of the months that have five. Kalamazoo, the third Sunday of every other month. St. Joseph, the last Sunday of every month. Mendon, the third Sunday of every fourth month. Pokagon and Brush Creek as Father Baroux will arrange it. Paw Paw occasionally. Coldwater, Pigeon, Sturgis, Union City, and Leonidas occasionally, etc. etc.

Thus it may be seen that while Notre Dame as a University can claim scarcely a hundred years in the field, as a center of Mission activity, it can justly claim that its predecessors first carried the gospel to the savages of Indiana and Illinois nearly two hundred and fifty years ago. Father Badin in many ways typifies the transition period in the history of the Catholic missions in the west but nowhere does this great pioneer fulfill this part in history better than in the transfer one hundred years ago of his headquarters from the old St. Joseph Mission, symbol of the past, to *Ste. Marie des Lacs*, symbol of the modern Notre Dame. Perhaps some day evidence may be turned up to show that Allouez or even Hennepin or some of the later missionaries preached or said Mass upon the shores of the lakes of the present Notre Dame. But whether they did at that time or not, were they to return to their mission fields today, would they not recognize in Notre Dame their successor?

⁸⁷ F. Cointet's Instructions for the Priests of the Society of Holy Cross employed as missionaries in the dioceses of Vincennes and of Detroit, in Notre Dame University Archives.