

# Saints

This file contains 8 texts:

- Of Holy Virgins (1996)
- A Fascination for Raped and Murdered Teenage Girls ( 2005)
- Homage to St. Pancras (2001)
- The Ladies' Shrine (1994)
- She Did not Understand the Question (1997)
- St. Cuthbert (1996)
- Mary Magdalene, the Church's Anima (1998)
- The Baptist's Day (1996)

# Of Holy Virgins

(Smoke Signals # 20, November 1996)

Well, St. Catherine's Day (November 25) is upon us once more. Not so long ago it was still an important and joyful festival. In college, it was a special day for those studying philosophy, because Catherine was the patron of students and in particular of philosophers. In grammar school, we got the afternoon off to watch Abbot and Costello or Laurel and Hardy movies - though we had to sit first through terrifying documentaries about forest fires and household accidents - the movies were courtesy of the Lands and Forest Department, through the village barber's brother who worked there as a prevention officer. The comedy films were actually enticements to come and see the documentaries about... families dying of monoxide poisoning because of an improper stoking of a coal furnace,... a fat man choking on a fish bone in a restaurant,... a man electrocuted when his radio fell into the bathtub... and a grease fire on the kitchen stove reducing a house to cinders. But the greatest privilege of all was the permission to eat taffy ("**tire de la Ste Catherine**") at will all through the day even during classes.

The "tire" was a concoction made by boiling together brown sugar, molasses and butter and prepared ahead of time; it needed to be stretched out repeatedly till the right consistency was obtained and the bite-size pieces were then wrapped in waxed paper. It had nothing to do with the mastic-like commercial variety that is now sold for Halloween. Taffy-pulling was an elaborate ritual, but my mother never missed it... And to this day, my daughter Catherine comes home for it on her name-day.

The tradition apparently goes back to the earliest times of the colony, if the old second-grade Reader can be trusted. Mother Marguerite Bourgeoys one day ran out of French candies to reward the children and to attract young Indians. She imagined making substitute sweets with molasses, that staple of Old Quebec, still recalled in our "**Faubourg à la m'lasse**" district in Montreal. I remember that at my grandparents', the table was always set and an old whisky bottle filled with molasses (or should I call it treacle, because the word my grandfather used cannot be used now,... and indeed should not have been used then) dominated the setting. And molasses was poured on all food, including the meat.

St. Catherine was also the patron of young unmarried girls and eventually also of spinsters. At puberty a girl would become a Catherine ("*être Catherine*"), but the pivotal age was 25, when any girl still unclaimed would "**coiffer la Catherine**" (= crown St. Catherine's statue) and become a "*catherinette*" (typically a spinster working in a characteristic trade in millinery, haberdashery or needlework). The expression had to do with the custom of unmarried girls to assemble on the saint's feastday and to crown her statue with a garland of flowers; since only a virgin could perform this rite, a confirmed spinster was at 25 admitted among those who were entitled to this honour. Actually, the only people to hold the feast these days is the local lesbian community, as the secular "*fête des vieilles filles - the spinsters' day*". In Québécois idiom, a catherine is

also a fancy sled with which young men went courting... and also a large chamber-pot (!). As well, low-bush blackberries are called catherinettes.

The devotion to St. Catherine arose in the Middle Ages and her story was endlessly retold. She was part of the celebrated 14 Helper-Saints, whose efficiency in answering prayers was legendary. Her name refers to her purity (catharos = pure). Of royal birth, she lived in Alexandria where she studied the liberal arts in which she surpassed all her contemporaries. She was very beautiful. In c. 310 she confronted the Emperor Maximianus for his persecution of Christians. The emperor assembled the 50 wisest philosophers of his realm to convince her to renounce her faith, but she converted them all and even won the empress to Christ. She was condemned to suffer on the wheel-rack (or on four spiked wheels), but the instrument broke (by the hand of an angel) and she was finally beheaded (milk flowed from the wound). Her attributes are a crown (her origin), a book (her learning), a broken spiked wheel and a sword (her martyrdom).

As the Collect for the day recalls, her body was carried by angels onto Mount Sinai ("*O God who on Mount Sinai didst give the law to Moses and afterwards through the ministry of Holy Angels didst mystically give rest thereon to the body of Blessed Catherine... grant that... we may be brought unto that mountain which is Christ*"). In the 9th c. the presence of her remains on Jebel Katherin, the companion peak of Sinai, was revealed to a monk of the nearby Monastery of the Burning Bush. The bones exuded oil which the monks collected for the pilgrims. One day while a monk was collecting the oil, three finger-bones became detached which the monk took with him. The bones were eventually given to Robert Duke of Normandy, the father of the Conqueror, and were enshrined in the Abbey of the Trinity in Rouen.

The body was later carried down from the mountain to the monastery where it still lies and since the Middle Ages has been the focus of a celebrated pilgrimage. It is in a marble sarcophagus, though the head and one hand are kept in separate precious reliquaries, also containing various jewels, including a gold sovereign (!). So much so that the monastery is better known as St. Catherine's. "*And every woman in the world who bears the beautiful name of Catherine owes something to this remote monastery of Mount Sinai, which sent the name of St. Catherine of Alexandria spinning like a fire-wheel over the Christian world.*"

From Normandy, the devotion spread to England, where Queen Mathilda founded a hospital and church of St. Catherine by the Tower, and to the rest of the Continent, and particularly into the Low Countries. There, the devotion made great strides and flourished in the late Middle Ages in the golden age of **the Beguines and the Sisters of Common Life**. This calling to a life of prayer and chastity was very popular with young women in search of the "good life" and desirous to get away from their domineering family and unwilling to face the tyranny of a husband, but ready to support themselves by their industry. In the 1300s Liège was said to harbour some 1500 béguines. Contrary to regular monasteries, the vows were of chastity, of piety and sometimes of obedience (rarely of poverty!) and they were only for the duration of the stay; there was no enclosure; the women were under the loose direction of a "Grande

Demoiselle" but quite free from male ecclesiastical authority (hence they were frowned upon by church leaders). Some beguine-houses (Begijnhof) still survive, though they are put to secular use (as in Amsterdam), associated with a monastery (as in Bruges), and only occasionally used as originally intended (Ghent). Typically, there is a large garden (beluik) with a chapel surrounded by quaint little row-houses. The beguines followed a spirituality based on the "Imitation of Christ".

Among the images the beguines used in literature and art was that of the **closed garden**, the "hortus conclusus" or that of the **sealed fountain**, "fons signatus" of the Song of Solomon, which were the symbols of their virginity. In painting, this was depicted as the Blessed Virgin holding the Child Jesus amid a beautiful flower garden (paradise), the flowers representing the virtues, joys and sorrows of Our Lady, as well as those that the beguines bring to the Christ in their souls (of which the garden is also an image); a fountain often flows in its midst.

An important variation was to represent the Holy Mother and Child accompanied by two or more virgin saints, such as St. Catherine and St. Barbara. She was thus the **Virgin among virgins** ("*Virgo inter virgines*"). The saints add nothing to the picture, but enjoy the paradise in godly company. They are engaged in a so-called "*sacra conversazione*" or "*conversatio mystica*" which is not a conversation at all, since nothing actually occurs and the personages generally pay no attention to one another. It is essentially a symbolic world in a timeless environment.

In their life of faith and chastity, these women aimed to establish a more intimate relationship with their divine Saviour, much like that of our Lady, who is paradoxically both the mother and the bride of Christ. This divine betrothal was achieved through contemplation and the mystical union. This was particularly exemplified by St. Catherine, who is often represented offering a flower to the Child Jesus while He puts a ring on her finger as she becomes His mystical Bride, a "*Sponsa Christi*". Catherine was therefore a model for all consecrated virgins, as the order for their consecration recalls: "*Receive the ring of faith, the seal of the Holy Ghost, so that from henceforth thou shalt be called the faithful spouse of Christ and that you never have any other spouse.*"

The most famous of such paintings is undoubtedly the triptych made by Hans Memling in 1479 for the high altar of St. John's Hospital at Bruges in Flanders. The hospital was run by both brothers and sisters, and two of each commissioned the altarpiece and are represented together with their patron-saints (James, Anthony, Agnes and Clara) on the outer panels. The inner panels show Our Lady reading a book held by an angel, with the Holy Child on her knees, and next to her St. Catherine and St. Barbara. St. Catherine (shown with wheel and sword) symbolises the contemplative side of the life of the brothers and sisters, and St. Barbara (reading a book next to her symbolic tower) represents the active side, St. Catherine receives on her finger the ring of her "mystic marriage" from the Child Jesus. On each side stand the patrons of the hospital, St. John the Baptist and St. John the Evangelist. The painting ranks among the most beautiful and touching I have ever seen and in itself is worth the trip to Bruges. It has an air of otherworldliness that surely must approximate that of paradise, as much as it is possible on this side of the veil.

**All this is very nice, but none of it is true.** Indeed, in 1969, the Roman Church deleted the feast from the calendar because there was no historical evidence that Catherine ever existed at all. The feast is in brackets in our own calendar and has disappeared from the BAS. The story is said to be the fanciful creation of a Carolingian writer.

Not so, pretend others, Catherine did indeed exist, but she was not even a Christian. According to this view, she was the last of the pagan wise women. She was a beautiful and famous pagan philosopher and mathematician in Alexandria by the name of Hypathia. Born c. 370, the daughter of Theon, a teacher at the famous Museum where she herself would later teach. She was killed by stoning in 415 by an angry Christian mob, excited by fanatic monks with the approval and perhaps complicity of St. Cyril of Alexandria. This Hypathia is known from the 7 surviving letters Bishop Synesios of Cyrene, who once studied under her, wrote to her. A local writer, Jean Marcel (Paquette) has produced a book on the subject entitled "*Hypathie ou la fin des dieux*" (Montréal: Leméac, 1989).

Other saints venerated in the same context were:

**St. Barbara**, an equally fictitious compatriot of St. Catherine, was kept locked in a tower by her father to protect her great beauty from unsuitable suitors. She passed her time in devotional reading and became a Christian. She had three windows set in the tower in honour of the Trinity instead of the two her father Dioscorus had planned. He tried to get her to renounce her faith and executed her with his own hands. He was immediately struck by lightning (as he well should!). Barbara is therefore invoked as patron of gunners, miners, artificers and by extension of knights and soldiers. She is represented reading besides her tower.

**St. Dorothy** of Cappadocia was arrested for her faith; in prison she resisted the sexual advances of women who wanted to defile her and converted them. During her trial, lawyer Theophilus taunted her, asking her to return after her death (by beheading) to bring back for him some of the eternal flowers and fruits of paradise - which she did, and so he converted and he too died a martyr. She is usually represented carrying a basket laden with apples and roses.

**St. Agnes**, a genuine Roman child martyr, was sent by her father to a brothel because she would not marry as her father required. There her hair grew to hide her nakedness. She was killed by being stabbed in the throat. Her emblem is a lamb, symbol of her purity and tender age and also a pun on her name (Agnes - Agnus).

Another celebrated triptych also at Bruges, that of the Deposition of Christ, also painted by Memling (for Brother Adrian) represents St. Wilberfortis and St. Mary the Egyptian as the companion saints: **St. Wilberfortis** was a beautiful maiden who "grew a beard" to discourage suitors and preserve her virginity; she was ultimately crucified by her irate father. **St. Mary the Egyptian**, on the other hand, was no virgin, but rather an Alexandrian prostitute who bought her way to the Holy Land by sleeping with a ship captain; she converted in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and retired to the desert where she lived a life of penance for 60 years; she is represented naked (her

clothes eventually wore off in the desert sun) partly covered by her long hair, holding the three loaves of bread which were her only food during all that time.

All these women died to maintain their chastity (or atoned for its loss) and would therefore be "natural" examples for nuns and beguines. As virginity and chastity lost their appeal with the beginning of modern times when the likes of Erasmus disparaged consecrated life by telling stories, such as that of Catherine (again!) the "*virgo mysogamos*" (the marriage-hating virgin) who, after experiencing in a religious house the abuse of lecherous clergy and sapphic co-religious, became a "*virgo poenitens*" (a regretful virgin). And Luther reminded women of their God-determined fate: "*Men have broad shoulders and narrow hips, and accordingly they possess intelligence... (Women) have broad hips and a wide fundament to sit upon, keep house and bear and raise children*". The beguines were persecuted by the male clergy and corralled into convents and cloisters, "*to live their chastity behind bars rather than in the world*". The devotion to the "holy lay virgins" lost its original intensity. And all these saints are now nearly completely forgotten, except in name.

One wonders why these stories from **Voragine's Golden Legend**, mostly fanciful, captivated the imagination of so many generations of Christians and helped them along in their spiritual lives. I cannot but see in them **Fairy Tales for the Soul**. Just think of the story of St. Barbara. Does it not recall a similar tale by the Brothers Grimm? Is not Barbara in a way a spiritual Rapunzel? A Rapunzel who is imprisoned in the tower of paganism and idolatry and finds through her own industry and studies (cf. Rapunzel letting her hair grow?) her liberation by discovering Christ her prince and lover who, after many trials and eventually martyrdom, brings her to His Kingdom where they live happily together ever after?

One can only hope that one day someone will read the Golden Legend with the same eyes with which psychologist Bruno Bettelheim ("*The Uses of Enchantment. The Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales.*" New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1976) and priest-psychoanalyst-rebel Eugen Drewermann ("*Grimms Märchen tiefenpsychologisch gedeutet.*" Olten, 1985) re-read the fairy tales and that they will decode their inner meanings for us. I am sure it will be like discovering fabulous (no pun intended!) lost treasures!

# A Fascination for Raped and Murdered Teenage Girls

(Smoke Signals # 42, January 2005)

In the summer of 2001, I was in Rome for five days and, to give some focus to my stay, I decided to visit the shrines of some of the female martyrs that figure so prominently in early Roman devotion. Remember in the old days when the Canon of the Mass listed seven of them, "*Felicitate, Perpetua, Agatha, Lucia, Agnete, Caecilia, Anastasia*", the first two and the last married women, the others young virgins, but martyrs all. By the way, have you noticed how the new liturgies, supposedly so politically-correct and inclusive, rarely ever mention female saints - when did you last hear a female saint (except Our Lady) mentioned at St. John's, and perhaps Mary Magdalene every 6-7 years when her feast falls on a Sunday? And the 4-5 holy women included in our Litany of the Saints during Easter Vigil?

I first stopped at three churches, all very old and in the basilican style, which honour doubtful virgin-martyrs of the second century. The churches of **Santa Pudenziana** and **S. Prassede** on the Esquiline Hill near S. Maria Maggiore recall two sisters, the daughters of Senator Pudens who sheltered S. Peter in his home during the persecutions. Legend holds that they collected the blood and bodies of martyrs and put them in a well - still to be seen in the Church of S. Pudenziana. There is little archaeological proof that the sisters ever existed or that they were themselves martyrs; the Martyrology lists them both as virgins, but only Pudenziana as martyr. Yet, two of the most venerable churches in Rome stand in their "memory". The apse mosaic of S. Pudenziana (5<sup>th</sup> c.) is in the style of "classical Rome" and depicts Christ enthroned among the apostles - two Roman matrons (the saintly sisters?) crown Peter and Paul with laurel wreaths. The mosaic of S. Prassede is in the later Byzantine style (9<sup>th</sup> c.)

**Santa Sabina's** on the Aventine Hill is the headquarters of the Dominicans since 1936; they have ministered in the basilica since the time of S. Dominic. The church has been lovingly restored to its original state (422). Sabina was a rich widow converted by her servant Serapia and martyred under Hadrian.

I managed to visit four other shrines of later martyrs, the two Agneses, Cecilia, and Susanna (which also honours Felicity).

**Santa Susanna's** is cared for by Cistercian nuns since 1586 and its titular cardinal is the now sadly notorious Bernard Law, former archbishop of Boston and protector of Catholics of Anglican rite (and now scandalously elevated to the dignity of archpriest of Santa Maria Maggiore). It is the American church in Rome and the Paulist Fathers minister there. The present building (1603), which replaced an early basilica, is by Maderno is one of the finest and purest Renaissance churches in Rome, with a single nave, a semicircular apse and two side chapels (dedicated to Our Lady of Graces and St. Lawrence).

Frescoes in the style of tapestries in the upper nave recount the story of the Biblical Susanna's encounter with the lustful elders and her justification by the Prophet Daniel (by Baldassare Croce, +1628) - The six scenes include Susanna spied upon by the

elders while she is bathing, her accusation of infidelity, the intervention of Daniel, his questioning of the elders, the stoning of the dirty old men, and Susanna's thanksgiving. Paintings on the sanctuary wall tell of the martyrdom of the Christian Susanna: the young girl threatened by Diocletian's son, her refusal to worship the idol of Jupiter (which crumples before the strength of her faith), and over the altar her martyrdom by beheading and her reception into heaven. On the left is the martyrdom of her father St. Gabinus and on the right that of St. Felicity whose relics are also in the church; under Antoninus Pius, she witnessed the martyrdom of her seven children before being herself beheaded.

Susanna born in Dalmatia was a noble woman, a relative of both Emperor Diocletian and Pope Caius; the emperor intended to marry her to his adopted son Galerius Maximianus. She had, however, embraced Christianity and was committed to virginity. When ordered to worship Jupiter, she refused and was beheaded in her own home (which she shared with her father Gabinus and her uncle Pope Caius) in 293.

**Santa Cecilia's** church is beyond the Tiber in Trastevere; it is a much older building (9<sup>th</sup> c.), though often restored. The apse mosaic is original showing Christ surrounded by haloed saints: Peter, Paul, Agatha, together with Cecilia and her husband Valerian. The builder of the church, Pope Paschal is there too, but his halo is a blue square (he was alive at the time). Cecilia was a patrician maiden betrothed by her father to a young man of her class, Valerian. On her wedding night, she confessed to her new husband her vow of chastity and threatened him with the anger of her guardian angel, should he touch her. Valerian was eventually baptised and the young couple spend their time doing charitable work and burying martyrs. They were arrested and Valerian went first to his martyrdom. Cecilia was condemned to be suffocated in her bath, but after three days a soldier slit her throat.

She was buried in the catacombs of St. Callixtus. Her uncorrupted body (and that of her virginal husband) was found by Pope Paschal I in the 9<sup>th</sup> c. (instructions received in a dream) and put in the basilica he built to honour her in the place of her house (kept as a sanctuary since the 5<sup>th</sup> c.) and martyrdom (a side chapel where the old water-pipes of the bathroom can be seen). The body was still uncorrupt in 1599 when the tomb was opened by Cardinal Sfondrato. He had a marble copy made by the sculptor Maderno who was present at the scene: the saint is lying languorously on her side as if asleep. "*Behold the body of the most holy virgin Cecilia, whom I myself saw lying incorrupt in the tomb. I have in this marble expressed for you the same saint in the very same posture.*" The body crumpled into dust following this exposure to the atmosphere. The too beautiful sculpture has been placed under the main altar in the church. The tombs are in the crypt. In a side chapel, there is a curiosity: the ornate tomb of cardinal Rampolla, Leo XIII's secretary of state; he was on the verge of being elected pope in 1903 when an Austrian cardinal indicated the veto of Emperor Franz Joseph – and we got St. Pius X instead.

Why is she associated with musicians? A life of the saint says that at her wedding as the organ played, she sang to the Lord in her heart. A more cynical

interpretation holds that she played music as a deterrent as her new husband waited for her in bed on their wedding night. Still, she is the patron of musicians, and great music has been written in her honour. In my schooldays, in a more catholic Quebec, we had time off on her feast-day, November 22, for a concert and other musical diversions.

There are curiously two major shrines to St. Agnes in Rome, as there are two feasts in her honour in the liturgical calendar, January 21 and 28. The second feast, "Sanctae Agnetis Secundo", is a sort of octave feast, commemorating the ancient Roman custom of gathering on the tomb of martyrs once on the day of their death and also a week later. Her office in the Breviary is most extraordinary, with paradoxically much conjugal language. Witness these responsories from Mattins: *"Already his body is joined to my body and his blood is on my cheeks, he whose mother is a virgin and whose father never knew a woman. I am married to him whom the angels worship..."*, *"When I love him, I am chaste, when I touch him, I am pure, when I receive him, I am a virgin"*, *"I have drunk honey and milk from his lips"* and *"He has set inestimable pearls to my ears... he has given me a collar of fine gold and large gemstones"*.

Agnes was a very young girl, only 10 when she was consecrated to Christ, and 13 when she was martyred. She spurned the love of Eutropius the son of the prefect who had her humiliated and killed ca. 305 under Diocletian.

The first church is **Sant' Agnese in Agone** or Saint Agnes Within, an elaborate Baroque church (1652) with a great cupola by Rainaldi and Borromini on the celebrated Piazza Navona which is set in what used to be Domitian's stadium - "agone" refers to the "public games" held there. This is the place of her martyrdom. The great arches supporting the tiers of seats are still visible under the church. These "fornices" were the haunts of prostitutes (hence our word fornication) and that is where Agnes was brought to be exposed naked and given into prostitution. Accounts say that her hair grew to hide her nakedness and that angels covered her with a white cloak. When Eutropius tried to possess her, he was struck dead (or blind). Agnes survived being burned at the stake and was killed by the sword. In a small side chapel, it is possible to view and venerate her skull, tiny as that of a child.

The second church **Sant' Agnese fuori le Mura**, Saint Agnes Without, is on the Via Nomentana beyond the Porta Pia. It is an ancient basilica built by Pope Honorius (+638) near an older, now destroyed, church built 3 centuries earlier by Saint Constanza (Constantina), the daughter of Emperor Constantine, who was cured of leprosy by St. Agnes. It arises over the catacombs where St. Agnes was buried. Her bones are now under the altar, where they were last deposited by Pius IX whose seal can be seen on the sarcophagus. Her sister Emmerenziana, also a martyr, is nearby.

This church has been minutely and lovingly described by Margaret Visser in her most interesting book on the symbolism of Christian churches (*The Geometry of Love. Space, Time, Mystery, and Meaning in an Ordinary Church* (Toronto: Harper Flamingo, 2000)). The basilica has been much restored. Noteworthy are the original apse mosaic representing Agnes, dressed as a Byzantine princess, between Popes Honorius and Symmachus and a statue of the saint over the altar by Nicolas Cordier (1605) made out

of an antique statue of the goddess Isis for whom he provided a new head and new hands.

As a play on her name, Agnes (= pure) is associated with a lamb (Agnus). Each year, two lambs, one crowned with red roses (marked SAM, S. Agnes martyr) the other with white roses (marked SAV, S. Agnes virgin), are blessed on her feast-day by the Pope, put on the altar at St. Agnes' and raised at Castel Gondolfo. Their wool enters into the confection of pallia, the insignia that the Pope bestows on archbishops and which they wear over their chasuble at Mass. Young girls who fast on the eve of her feast and eat a egg with salt at bedtime will dream of their future husband.

# Homage to St. Pancras

(Smoke Signals # 43, January 2001)

Why St. Pancras, you say? Go and look at the panels set before the altar at Fr. Wood's Memorial, and you will find paintings of four youthful saints proposed as models to the boys of St. John's School; they are Saints Lawrence, Edward, George, and Pancras. Pancras is shown holding the Blessed Sacrament. He died a martyr at age 14. The Roman Catholics used to push Saint Tharsicius an otherwise unknown martyr instead. Both somehow became martyrs of the Sacrament and they are often confused one with the other: the Roman Martyrology tells of Tharsicius a young acolyte being killed by thugs as he went to deliver Communion to Christians prisoners during the times of Pope St. Stephen I (+257). When they tried to rob him of the Sacrament, it had mysteriously disappeared and thus escaped profanation. There was even a hymn honouring him in my college days, but it was nonsense and pure doggerel:

*De ton sépulchre glorieux/Où le front pur et gracieux,/Les lèvres demi-closes,/Calme, tu dors parmi les roses,/Lève-toi, revis sous nos yeux. - Doux martyr de l'Eucharistie,/Réponds à nos désirs ardents,/ À tes jeunes frères apprends/Ton amour pour Jésus Hostie...*

Pancras was especially venerated in England because Augustine of Canterbury dedicated his first church to Pancras and his relics were presented as a gift to the king of Northumberland. A district in London is named St. Pancras after him. There used to be a church of St. Pancras, Soper Lane, in London, near St. Mary-le-Bow, but it was not rebuilt after the Great Fire. There is a St. Pancras New Church on Woburn Place, the first Greek revival church built in London in 1819-1822, which successfully incorporates structures and details borrowed from famous Athenian monuments (Acropolis, Erechtheum, Tower of the Winds). There is also a St. Pancras Old church in the same area, which may be of Anglo-Saxon origin, but was heavily restored in the late 19<sup>th</sup> c.

The name also later applied to St. Pancras' train station. This is an extravagant Victorian pile (a "tomato brick megaschloss"), comprising the station proper and the Midland Grand Hotel over it; it is both a masterpiece of engineering by William Henry Barlow (it is built over a graveyard, an ancient church, a canal, gasworks and the Fleet River) and one of the best achievements of Gothic Revival architecture by Sir George Gilbert Scott. It escaped a planned destruction in the 1960s and has now been magnificently restored at a great price. It is said that the original hotel had only 4 bathrooms for 600 rooms, but at the time of construction (1868), these were still novelties - flushing toilets were indeed the most popular attraction at the Crystal Palace during the Great Exhibition in 1851 and 827 000 people (up to 11 000 a day) used the fancy "retiring rooms".

The restored station is now England's glorious gateway to Europe through the Chunnel. Inversely, the French people who come to England no longer have to undergo the symbolic humiliation of entering the country through Waterloo Station. My old mentor at Toulouse's Université Paul Sabatier, Professor Angelier, used to delight in remarking to me how strange it was that English name all their monuments for defeats instead of victories as the French do.

The Jesuits at the Gesù on Bleury Street offered their traditional young saints, Stanislas Koska and Aloysious Gonzaga, to the boys of the neighboring Collège Sainte-Marie. But they also tried to promote a local boy, **Maurice Froment**, 1922-1942, from Collège Saint-Ignace in Rosemont, who died from some debilitating disease while he dreamt of joining the order; he left a spiritual journal which was used to follow his inner journey (Labelle, J.P. *Maurice Froment, Devenir prêtre*. Montréal, Bellarmin, 1954). Others religious orders and groups also had their own candidates; the Redemptorists had **Alfred Pampalon**, 1867-1896, a saintly priest who died young of tuberculosis. He was declared venerable in 1991 by Pope John Paul and is now curiously promoted as a patron of alcoholics and drug addicts at Ste Anne-de-Beaupré. The Brothers of the Sacred Heart had **Paul-Émile Martel**, 1915-1933, a fine little boy, a novice under the name of Frère Denis, who is now quite forgotten. The Sisters of Jésus-Marie were more successful with the Blessed **Dina Bélanger** 1897-1929, a musician and mystic. All the orders were trying to imitate the great success that the Carmélites of Lisieux had achieved with the promotion of **Saint Theresa of the Child Jesus**, 1873-1897, but she was of a different class. I remember that even at my boarding school of Saint Alexandre de la Gatineau, the fathers made a feeble attempt to promote a young seminarian from our midst - **Jean-Louis Deschamps**, 1937-1956 - who died young of kidney failure after having been vested into the order and making his vows on his deathbed; he was a shy, pious and sickly boy who left no spiritual writings and there was soon not much to say about him. I still have a picture of him gazing into heaven from his sickbed.

Perhaps the most famous of the Quebec aspirant boy-saints was **Gérard Raymond**, 1912-1932. His cause was promoted by the Petit Séminaire de Québec. A few years ago, I found pamphlets from the "Amis de Gérard Raymond" championing his beatification in a south-shore church downstream from Québec City (L'Isle-Vette, if I remember well) and a mass in Québec City still marks each year the anniversary of his death. He was a young man who like so many others of his generation died from tuberculosis at the age of 20. His life centered round his home and the Séminaire de Québec and it seemingly offered nothing unusual: "*He endeavored to be and was nothing but a regular student*". Yet he strove to surpass the mediocrity of his fellow-students and to attain perfection. He described in 7 copy-books and 3 note-books the daily details of his spiritual journey. His confessor, Fr. Oscar Genest, used large extracts of these and added comments to produce anonymously and print privately a first biography of the boy in 1933, the year after his death under the title "*Une âme d'élite*". His spiritual journal was similarly published in 1937.

The book is about the boy's life which is totally without incident where even the most trivial event is interpreted in terms of his future spiritual life; for instance, his childish love of climbing up on furniture and his fear of black holes are seen as foretelling his soul's coming battles. The two dominant themes of the biography are his search for perfection and his constant quest for bettering himself. All his adolescent life is a preparation for his future life as a missionary "*in a pagan country, culminating in a true martyrdom, that of blood*".

Since Christ redeemed the world by his suffering, a future priest must also be a "man of sorrows". And so, from chapter to chapter, follow in succession the issues of self-denial, sacrifice, rule of life, resolutions, self-mastery, penance, spiritual exercises, and abnegation that pervade his "*terrible daily life*". He is described as having an "*intense thirst for sacrifice, a strong taste for suffering*". He continually endeavours to master his body, to check his self-esteem, to control his speech, and to be ignored by others. He wears a hair-shirt and sleeps on a board garnished with "*sweet little nails*".

To love, to suffer, such is God's will: "*I wish to be a victim for sinners, I wish to be a martyr*". He never became a priest, but his illness allowed him still to be a martyr. The biographer noted that the dying boy, his pale head on the pillow, a trickle of blood running down from his lips, was the very image of the martyr he always dreamt of being.

He aspired to become a saint and this he endeavoured to achieve through his simple daily life, by a "*generous acceptance of his fate and a total and constant accomplishment of his duties*". By doing this he strove to identify himself as closely as possible with Christ and thus participate in his saving work - "*the salvation of the world requires sacrifice and suffering, it calls for blood*". In his own way, he tried to follow the example of St. Theresa of the Child Jesus whose "History of a Soul" he had read. In order to succeed, he could never falter - "*in his journal blows a wind of penance that can be surprising and fearsome. Many will think that he exaggerates, but it is the characteristic of all great souls to exaggerate*" notes his biographer, while adding "*admirable child whose existence verges on heroism*".

Yet, Gérard Raymond could love only through suffering and pain, and his quest for sanctity has been seen as morbid. In a psychoanalytic study of the journals, Claude-Marie Gagnon (*La littérature populaire religieuse au Québec, sa diffusion, ses modèles et ses héros*. Université Laval, 1986) finds a "*network of obsessive associations*" building up into "*a personal myth*". "*The association of suffering to an amorous passion for a male object of desire (Christ), together with a submission (castration) to a strict father figure (God the Father) suggest an homosexual fantasy*". The "*sexual desire is linked to a death wish*".

To the present day reader, the journal calls to mind an ascetic culture that verges on masochism. It is not sure that this is authentic Christian sanctity. True saints seem to be more balanced psychologically. And Gérard Raymond remains too intimately linked with a spirituality that is now obsolete and deemed unhealthy to become a saint of universal appeal. In this, he is quite different from his model, the Little Saint Theresa.

Yet his story fits well into the long Christian tradition of hagiography, the history of the saints. The earliest examples are the Acts of Martyrs written for the edification of the faithful but also to prepare them to the possibility of a similar fate in those times of persecution. Martyrdom does indeed constitute the first mode of sanctity in the Church because it brings immediate salvation. After the end of persecutions, a further image of sanctity developed first around Saint Anthony the desert father, whose life Saint Athanasius wrote and made into an early Christian best-seller. The new Christian hero is the Christian athlete whose exactions are nothing but excessive; his martyrdom

is now his long ascetic life in difficult circumstances. Gérard fits into this second tradition, but what he lacks is the maturity and serenity so apparent in Saint Anthony. That is why Anthony still influences his fellow Christians 17 centuries after his death, while our Québec boy is destined to oblivion, despite the continuing efforts of a few friend to keep his memory alive. His journal puts too much emphasis on suffering and not enough on love. He may indeed be a true saint, but his example hardly inspires us today.

# The Ladies' Shrine

## Is There a Hidden Message in St. Anne's Chapel?

(Smoke Signals #24, April 1994)

*If you want to be Mary's friend  
Be sure to be dedicated to her mother  
Serve her with good faith  
Jesus and Mary will not let it go unrewarded.  
1499, Die Historie van Sint-Anna, Wouter Bor*

I am sure you have sometimes wondered about our St. Anne's Chapel. Why is it not simply a Lady's Chapel as in other Anglo-Catholic churches? You have heard the story that it is a memorial chapel built by our Founder in remembrance of his mother. Indeed, her name was Anne Key and a chapel dedicated to her patron seemed quite appropriate. But do you think we would have got a chapel if the good lady's name had been Melissa, Melody or Pamela? My feeling is that there is more than meets the eye in this little chapel, and let me try to offer an expanded reading.

**The Legend of St. Anne.** The parents of Our Lady are not mentioned in the Gospels. Their names and stories originate in a text called the **Protogospel of James**. Though attributed to James, the brother of Jesus, the text was written only in the 2nd c.. in Egypt or in Asia Minor. It is a polemical book defending the absolute purity and virginity of Our Lady. Though never part of the New Testament canon, this writing nonetheless generated a number of our liturgical feasts: the Conception (December 8), the Nativity (September 8), the Presentation of Our Lady (November 21), as well as the feasts of St. Joachim (August 16) and St. Anne (July 26).

The story was further expanded during the late Middle Ages and the development of the legend peaked around 1500; this resulted in the addition of a further generation, that of Jesus' great-grandparents. In its heyday, the legend went something like this: a devout young Jewish girl called Emerentia(na) or Esmeria went to Mount Carmel to live in seclusion (in a way joined the Carlemites!), in the tradition of the prophets Elijah and Elisha. As her parents insisted that she be married, she consulted a holy hermit who saw in a dream a tree bringing forth a beautiful branch carrying a splendid flower (Mary) and a remarkable fruit (Christ), as well as other branches. The branches were interpreted as the lineage God chose her to bring forth. She therefore went to Temple to pray for a suitable husband. Six suitors presented themselves, but they sought marriage for the wrong reasons, be it beauty (she was gorgeous), greed (she was rich), or mere unchastity or desire of the flesh (she was sexy)... The suitors were somehow killed off: in some versions, they fell dead when they attempted to touch her, in others, they were carted away by devils, who were attempting thereby to prevent the Incarnation. A seventh suitor called Stollanus was chosen and became the true husband: he somehow longed for a chaste and virtuous marriage. The newlyweds lived in Sephora and despite their chastity two girls were

born to them in old age, when she was 61 and he 71. The two girls were Anne, the mother of Our Lady and Hysmeria (Ismeria), the mother of her cousin Elizabeth (who married Ephraim). The legend also added a son Eliud, whose own son Elimen was said to be the ancestor of St. Servantius, the 4th c. bishop of Maastricht, Tongeren and Liège.

Then appeared Joachim, a rich God-fearing man of the House of David who married Anne. Again the marriage was for the same good reason: chastity and again false suitors were driven away. The couple led a righteous life, dividing their possessions, a third for Temple, a third for the poor, and a third for themselves. Not surprisingly, given their chastity and lack of lust, they still had no children after 20 years of marriage. One day Joachim's offering in the Temple was refused by the high priest, on the ground that all just men have children. Joachim retired in humiliation to the desert for 40 days. Meanwhile, Anne mourned her barrenness and the disappearance of her husband. One day while Anne, dressed in her wedding gown, was crying at the sight of bird's nest full of nestlings, she was consoled by an angel. The angel also told Joachim to return home. The couple met and kissed at the Golden Gate of the Temple, upon which Anne became immediately pregnant. So was Our Lady conceived by a public kiss, an image forbidden in 1677 by Innocent XI as too physical (!).

After Joachim's death, Anne lived alone, in charity, industrious-ness, and chastity, not as the arrogant and sensuous older women of tales. Yet she re-married on God's direct orders given by an angel, first with Cleophas, who was either Joseph's or Joachim's brother and bore a daughter, Mary Cleophas. Again widowed, she married Salomas, from which arose another Mary, called Salomas or Salome. Mary Cleophas married Alphaeus and their children were the future apostles James the Less, Simon Joseph the Righteous, and Jude. Similarly, Mary Salomas wed Zebedee and their children were James the Greater and John the Evangelist. So the three Marys were half-sisters.

The marriage of Our Lady repeats the same rigmarole. Mary grew up in the Temple, but as she neared puberty, the high priest wanted to get her out "*lest she pollute the sanctuary*"; he assembled widowers as prospective husbands, and when the staff of St. Joseph flowered and that of the others did not, the choice became obvious. The widower status of Joseph has been used in other traditions to explain the existence of Jesus' brothers, as being born of an earlier marriage. This also made Joseph an old man, which a Medieval play has saying: "*In bed we shall never meet, for I wis, maiden sweet, an old man cannot rage*".

**Original Sin.** A problem underlying this whole story is that of original sin. Ever since St. Augustine, it had been thought that original sin was transmitted during sexual intercourse through sexual desire, since the satisfaction of desire even in marriage was sinful. This explains the late maternities which pervade these stories and recall the Biblical accounts of the miraculous pregnancies of Sarah and Hannah (the probable source of Anne's name and tale). The births are due more to the miraculous intervention of God than to the lustful inclinations of the parents. Chastity in marriage

does not mean no sex at all, it means lustless sex only for procreation - remember Pius XI's encyclical *Casti connubii*: the births occur at an age when natural birth is no longer possible and when lust has supposedly subsided (oh yeah!). In late Medieval times, there was much discussion about the birth of Mary. On the one side, were the "maculists", mainly the Dominicans, who held that Mary was conceived in sin as we all are, but that she was cleansed in her mother's womb in preparation for her future mission. On the other side stood the "immaculists", among them the Franciscans, the Carmelites, and the Carthusians, who argued that Our Lady was, by special divine dispensation, without sin since her conception. The immaculists eventually won and it was later found indecent that Anne who gave birth to the immaculate Mary should have married again and had two more children, so that part of the story was quietly dropped.

**The Holy Kinship.** The reason for the three marriages was to solve the problem of Jesus' brothers by making them first cousins and knitting the New Testament story into a family affair. From this period date numerous paintings of the extended Holy Family. A typical one is the *Ortenberg Altarpiece* (c. 1410) by an unknown master now in the Darmstadt Landesmuseum. It represents Mary in the centre with the Child Jesus. Next to her sits Mary Cleophas with her four children, two in arms (Simon and Joseph), two at her side (James the Less and Judas Thaddeus). Mary Alphaeus, St. Anne and St. Joseph are also there. Elizabeth sits nearby with John the Baptist, Ismeria (Anne's sister), as well as their descendant bishop St. Servantius. Mary Salome with St. James the Great and St. John the Evangelist complete the picture. Engaging in "sacra conversazione" with the Holy Family are Saints Agnes, Dorothy, and Barbara.

Other representations show Anne and Mary sitting on parallel thrones, with Jesus in His grandmother's arms (Cologne, *The Master of Holy Kinship*, c.1500). There are numerous similar paintings by Metsys, Cranach and others. This will become the "**new female-dominated Trinity**" to be replaced after the Reformation by a new Trinity of Jesus-Mary-Joseph. The most curious of the Holy Kinships is in the *Kunsthistorisches Museum* in Vienna by Bernard Strigel (c.1520) in which the roles are played by Emperor Maximilian (Cleophas), Mary of Burgundy (Mary Cleophas), Philip the Fair (Jacob the Younger), Charles V (Simon), and Ferdinand (Joseph the Righteous). After 1558, the real names were painted over and the connection with the Holy Family lost.

**The Social Message.** The devotion to St. Anne and to the Holy Family in the 15th c. corresponded to a new emphasis on family in society. Marriage had become an important ceremony to be performed in church before witnesses and before the priest. Legal marriage and marital fidelity were the pillars of the new bourgeois - merchant - urban - middle - class society developing in the Low Countries and the Rhineland. Christ was no longer represented as a king, but as a child among his (bourgeois) family. From this time also arose a keen interest in family trees in which the new rich merchant classes were looking for noble roots, despite the humanists' reminder that nobility lies

in the heart . "To pride themselves on lineage and power is the prerogative of great, but foolish families" (Brant). Anne's role in the lineage of Christ is reflected in the liturgical references to her as "*Stirps beata*" (blessed stock) and "*Radix sancta*" (holy root).

Women were to learn their proper place in society. Anne was used as a role model for wife, mother, grandmother, and widow. The importance of women as educators of children was greatly stressed; children were to be brought up in virtue, good manners, chastity, devotion, decency, modesty... Still, raising Our Lady who was sinless must have been a breeze compared to the usual lot of boisterous kids most of us have to deal with. St. Anne is generally portrayed teaching Our Lady to read. And the old English word "Nan" for Grandmother, echoes that connection, and so does the word "nanny".

The emphasis was on virtue for which the life of Anne served as example for both men and women. She reflected day and night on God's commandments, she had a strong faith, she led a holy life, she did good works, she made a careful choice of companions... But the message was mostly for women: St. Anne was never seen loitering on the street, she indulged in no idle talk, she did not dance, she did not go to the theatre, she stayed home and worked diligently, she was an exemplary mother.

This was also a period where grandparents, especially widowed grandmothers, were taking on a greater place in family life. In this instance, the story of St. Anne takes on a further inspiration from the account of Anna the prophetess in St. Luke's Gospel, herself drawing much on the image of the old Roman Sybil, the Seer. The Church disapproved of remarriage of widows, especially of an older woman with a younger man or vice-versa. Anne therefore was known to defend the chastity of widows. She was also the image of the wise elderly lady, the antithesis of the old witch of Medieval tales, of the lustful old crone... and of the battle-ax of modern lore.

Her power as Mary's mother and Jesus' grandmother was limitless. She was invoked as protection against illness, defamation, poverty, slander... and she predictably helped snuff out the lusts of the flesh...

**The Devotion to St. Anne.** Pious societies were formed to spread these devotions to Jesus' kinfolk. A famous one was the Brotherhood of St. Anne in Frankfurt (1479), which met at the Carmelite Monastery and was made up mainly of foreign merchants who came to Frankfurt for the trade fairs and were ministered to by the Carmelites. Notice the continuing association with Mount Carmel. They commissioned a famous altarpiece made in Brussels in which the legend of their patron is represented in 16 scenes.

In 1493, the brotherhood acquired a relic (an arm-bone) of their patron from Lyon. At about the same time in Mainz a mason found another relic (a skull) in a wall of the Dominican St. Stephen's Church, stole it and gave it to the Franciscans in Düren, near Aachen. A great dispute ensued and even Emperor Maximilian got involved.

The traditional relic of St. Anne was in Apt in southern France where her body and shroud had been brought by St. Auspicius who saved them from desecration in

Marseilles where they had been deposited by none other than Lazarus and Mary Magdalen. Apt is the origin of our own relic (also a bit of arm) at St. Anne-de-Beaupré.

The devotion to St. Anne was greatly revived in the 17th c. by the barrenness of Queen Anne of Austria and the « miraculous » birth In 1638 after 23 years of marriage of her son Louis-Dieudonné, Louis the God-given, the future Louis XIV. The queen had travelled to Apt to touch the relics of her patron. Following the birth of Louis, the shrine was richly endowed by the queen, and further relics (fingers) were obtained.

At the same period (1623), in Brittany, a peasant called Yves Nicolasic found a statue in a field representing a woman suckling two infants, which was interpreted as St. Anne with Mary and Jesus (!), though it was probably a Roman statue of the Bona Dea. The memory of Anne de Bretagne (+ 1514), thrice married and twice queen of France together with the devotion of the reigning queen led to the dedication of Brittany to St. Anne and the erection of a shrine to her at Auray. The shrine is popular to this day and it was visited last year by the Pope. The Great Pardon on July 26th each year is a high point of religious life in Brittany, when a great procession assembles the people in their traditional costumes.

Marie de l'Incarnation brought the devotion to New France which was dedicated to St. Anne. Relics were sent and a precious garment for her statue embroidered by Queen Anne of Austria is still kept at Beaupré. St. Anne was proclaimed patron of Québec in 1876. The shrine at Beaupré is directed by the Redemptorists, who invented the chaplet of St. Anne, a devotion which consists of three cycles of one Our Father and five Hail Marys, one in honour of Jesus, the second in honour of Mary, and the third in honour of Anne... that old Trinity again.

**The Holy Family.** The devotion to St. Anne and to the extended family of Jesus gradually subsided in modern times, except in backward places such as Québec and Brittany. Still most married couples identified more readily with the chaste union of Joachim and Anne (and her remarriages) than the non-union of Joseph and Mary, in which Joseph is too often represented as an impotent old sap. The devotion to the restricted Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph steadily gained ground, reflecting no doubt the advent of the modern nuclear family.

So next time you admire the fine glass in St. Anne's Chapel, remember the lessons, both theological and moral, hidden behind these innocent scenes.

# She Did Not Understand The Question

(Smoke Signals # 25, May-June 1997)

Whatever one accuses the present Pope of, it cannot be of sloth, for he is a busy man indeed. More than any of his predecessors, he has peopled the higher tiers of heaven with quite a lot of new saints; a tally done about a year ago listed 272 new saints and 731 new blessed. Saints of all nations and races, of all callings and walks of society. I wonder if there are a lot of children among them. What are the saints proposed to children these days? Think of Fr. Wood's altar in our church; the front panels are originally from a 19th c. Oxford school and they present 4 young saints to young boys' admiration: Edward, George, Lawrence, and Pancras. These saints are hopelessly out of date, and they would fire few young people's imaginations these days. I suppose each generation needs its own saints.

When I think back on my own generation, the saints that come to mind are a few classics, which were old hat even then: Gerard Magella, Stanislas Kostka, Alphonso de Ligori... But there were also our own special saints, with whom we identified and whose stories permeated our lives, through pamphlets, comic books, movies, tales, sermons... These heroes were epitomised by St. Domenico Savio and St. Maria Goretti.

Maria Goretti was the most interesting of the two because she had died a martyr, and we were amazed in 1950 when she was canonised during Holy Year in the presence of her mother and while her murderer Alessandro Serenelli was still alive. She was a poor and illiterate 12-year old Italian peasant girl who was killed in 1902 by a neighbouring lad who tried to rape her.

She was hailed as the Agnes of the 20th c. The original Agnes was a 4th c. Roman martyr, killed for the faith while still quite a young teenager. She was very popular and indeed was honoured twice in the calendar on January 21st and January 28th (St. Agnes secundo) on a pseudo-octave day. The Golden Legend recalled her virginity and her mystical betrothal to Christ. "*I am in love with Christ in whose chamber I shall enter, whose mother is a virgin, and whose Father knows no woman... When I love Him I remain chaste; when I touch Him, I remain pure; when I receive Him, I remain a virgin. His Body is united to my body and His Blood reddens my cheeks.*" Contrived sentiments for so young a child that were later additions. Although her accusers had attempted to defile her by offers of marriage and a stint in a whorehouse, it is obvious that it was because she was a Christian that she died.

In the case of Maria Goretti, the situation was less clear: she had died because she would not satisfy one man's lust. The central event was not so much the murder, but the circumstances. Maria is reported to have cried, "*What are you doing? No, no, no, don't touch me! It's a sin. You will go to hell... God forbids it: it's a sin!*" Maria became a martyr not of Christian faith, but of Christian morals. So far so good, but some good priests overdid it.

The classic biography of the saint is Monsignor J. Moretti's "*A Martyr of Purity, St. Maria Goretti*" (1950). The style is soapy and sentimental, and exaggerations are

such as to make the book unreadable today. And some bits are literally sick. Great emphasis is given to the autopsy: there were 18 knife wounds and 4 contusions on the body; none was immediately fatal, and Maria died of peritonitis. What rejoices the good priest is that, despite the glorious wounds she suffered, "*the flower of her virginity had survived spotless from all contamination*". Such insistence on physical virginity instead of true virginity was a new development, and not a particularly happy one.

In a curious recent book (*The Cloister Walk* - New York: Riverhead Books, 1996) Kathleen Norris, a Presbyterian enamoured of the Benedictine life, makes an interesting study of Maria Goretti, establishing parallels with Marilyn Monroe and Kristen French. While she deplores the "better dead than raped" attitude of the Church, she insists that "there are things worth dying for". So perhaps St. M. Goretti is due for a comeback.

In the early 70s, Jacques Fauteux asked Lise Payette on Radio-Canada why Maria had said no and his answer was "*Because she did not understand the question*"; which caused a scandal. Today no one would know what he was talking about, or if they did they would not care.

# St Cuthbert

(Smoke Signals, #14, April 1996)

Well, St. Cuthbert's Day on March 20th has come and gone once more. I like old Cuthbert, although he is not particularly politically-correct. He had a great dislike (or was it fear?) of women and would allow none near him. Even in death, he maintains the ban, and anyone who has visited Durham Cathedral can see inlaid in the floor the brass-line which restricts women to the last bay of the church near the back door. The ban applies even to Our Lady. Indeed, the Lady Chapel is at the West end near the door, instead of at its usual place behind the main altar. The problem is that St. Cuthbert's tomb is at the East end, and all attempts to build a Lady Chapel near it resulted in the structure falling down. Hardly a candidate for a patron to Christian Feminists! But, he might be relevant in other ways; I would suggest that he would do admirably well as a patron for Deep Ecologists or Ecosophists, you know those greenest of the greens who preach the new religion of Ecology and who equate the life of a cockroach with that of a human. St. Cuthbert spent most of his life on the Outer Farne Islands near Holy Island of which he was the bishop. He much preferred the company of the seabirds to that of his fellow humans... So perhaps he has work to do in our present times.

A fellow-entomologist, Bernd Heinrich, who teaches at the University of Vermont, recently took a "Cuthbert" retreat. He spent a sabbatical year alone in an isolated Maine cabin with no water or electricity in the company of a raven. This intimate communion with the forest he later described in a book entitled "*A Year in the Maine Woods*" (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1994). I dream of a similar retreat one day along a stream, spending a year with the mayflies and stoneflies... A note was added from the proof-reader: "*When you are a widower.*"

# Mary Magdalene, the Church's Anima

(Smoke Signals # 32, June-September 1998)

Men - well I suppose most men - tend to be endlessly fascinated by women. Sometimes, it is with one woman in particular, but more often it is with woman in general. Each man has a unique view of the perfect woman, yet there are common elements in all men's perceptions, so much so that Jungian psychologists posit the existence in the unconscious of an innate representation of woman, which they call the "*Anima*". This Anima is not only the result of each person's particular experience of womankind and of the female elements (bisexuality) of one's bodily constitution, but it is also apparently the fruit of the collective human experience since prehistoric times. This image tends to be singular, though complex and typically bipolar: young and old, virgin and mother, fairy and witch, siren and hag, saint and whore... It is projected onto actual persons (friends, lovers, spouses, crushes...) and generates the feelings of attraction, revulsion and apprehension,.. and bridges the unconscious with reality.

The Church has also had to come to grips with the existence of women; and to this day, women are looked at with suspicion and fear, yet also (secretly) with awe and enthralment. Yet, in a way, the Catholics have succeeded better than the Protestants: "*Protestantism's neglect of the feminine leaves it with the odium of being nothing but a man's religion.*" "*The neglect of the feminine is but one aspect of Protestantism's abandonment of the dogmatic symbols, codified ritual, and ecclesiastical authority that serve Catholics as "spiritual safeguards" against the powerful forces of the unconscious. Left alone with God, Protestants must accept the grave risk of facing unaided the terrifying power of the images that have sunk back into the unconscious.*" (Jung)

The Catholic view of women is remarkably incorporated into two women, **Our Lady** and **St. Mary Magdalene**. The first represents the glories of motherhood without the slightest taint of sexuality, while the other typifies the defilement of sexuality without the merest hint of fertility. Thus, reproduction and sex are curiously disjoined, for the glorification of the former and the reprobation of the latter. While Our Lady as Virgin and Mother has always been seen as the noblest of God's creatures, worthy to become the Bearer of God, Mary Magdalene has been diversely assessed throughout the history of the Church.

## 1. The Disciple and Follower of Jesus.

The Gospels present Mary Magdalene as one of the followers of Jesus: "*and the twelve were with him, and certain women, which had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities, Mary called Magdalene, out of whom went seven devils*" (Lk 8:1-2). The women are said to "*minister unto him*" (Mk 15:41) and provide for him "*of their substance*" (Lk 8:3). Mary was further present at Calvary (Jn 19:25) and she went to the tomb of Jesus on Easter morn to anoint His body (Jn 20:1), where she met Him (Jn 20:14-16) and became the first recorded witness of His resurrection. She is the **apostles' apostle**, bringing to them the news of the risen Christ.

In the early Gnostic texts found in 1945 at Nag Hammadi, Mary is often called Marian, and described as the "companion of Jesus", His consort, His partner, and His

spouse . She is a disciple on the same footing as the males and in many respects she appears to be their leader. She is the visionary who is privy to esoteric knowledge and the messenger who brings secrets information and who mediates between the apostles and Jesus. Her role is predictably challenged by the others, and particularly by Peter who is jealous of Jesus' affection for her. Jesus is said to have "*loved her more than all the disciples and (...) kissed her often on the mouth*" (Gospel of Philip), which offended the other disciples. Her role as first witness of the resurrection was soon taken from her by Peter who becomes the "major official witness to the resurrection", a role to this day claimed by the Pope whose mission is to be the central Easter witness.

As Jesus' special companion, Mary is assimilated to the terrestrial counterpart of the celestial Sophia or Wisdom. Her early trip to the empty tomb makes her the type of all Christ-seekers: the early Church will use to describe her the image of the Shulamite of the Song of Solomon seeking her lover. As the epitomic seeker, she represents the Synagogue seeking Christ, but after being witness to resurrection, she then represents the Church and becomes the new Eve. As the first Eve lost humanity in the garden of Eden, Mary discovers the restored humanity in another garden. that of the tomb. This primordial role of Mary Magdalene is still recalled in the Easter sequence "Victimae Paschali Laudes" (*Tell us, Mary, what did you see?*) which in earlier times used to be re-enacted on Easter Morning, a deacon, his head covered with an amice, playing the role of Mary.

Tradition holds that Mary Magdalene followed John and Our Lady to Ephesus, where she died a martyr. Her tomb was indeed venerated there in the sixth century, and Gregory of Tours (+594) enigmatically reports, "*It is in this town that Mary Magdalene rests, with nothing to cover her*". In the 10th c. the body was transferred to Constantinople by Emperor Leo VI, from where it was stolen by the Crusaders. It was later reported to be in Rome at St. John's Lateran.

## 2. The Multifarious Mary

Such an image of Mary Magdalene is essentially that of the Gospels and preserved as such in the Eastern churches. In the West, Mary has been variously assimilated to other women referred to in the Gospels, some of which were also called Mary. They include: **Luke's "sinner"** who washed Jesus' feet with her tears, drying them with her hair, and anointing them with ointment from an alabaster box. (Lk 7:37ss). This woman appears in the Gospel just before Mary of Magdala is first mentioned (Lk 8) and is therefore naturally assimilated to her. **Mary of Bethany**, the sister of Martha and Lazarus (Lk 10:38). She is associated with the contemplative life, since she "*sat at Jesus' feet and heard his word*" (Lk 10:39). She also anointed His feet (or head, Mk 14:3; Mt 26:7) with spikenard and wiped them with her hair (Jn 12:3). **The Samaritan woman** (Jn 4:7ss), often considered the first disciple to the Gentiles. **The woman caught in adultery** (Jn 8:3).

The original Mary is said to have been delivered from 7 devils, in which Tradition reads the 7 deadly sins. There is no mention in the Gospels that she was particularly guilty of any sexual sin nor that she was a public sinner. However, ever

since St. Gregory the Great (+604) in his sermons 25 and 33 (the first traditionally read at the 2nd nocturn at Matins on Mary's feast-day), Mary Magdalene has become at least three women in one: the original Mary of Magdala, Mary of Bethany, and Luke's sinner. She is the image of extremes, both in sin and in grace. Her life is reinterpreted as a spiritual journey, representing the passage from sinful woman to Christ's beloved, "*from sinful woman to perfect man*", as St. Ambrose strangely puts it. Her feast Day first appears in Yarrow in Bede's Martyrology on the 11th day of the Calends of August, our July 22nd.

### 3. The French Magdalene

Mary Magdalene's story takes on a new twist in the Abbey Church of Ste-Marie-Madeleine de Vézelay in Burgundy. This is one of the most remarkable Romanesque churches of France begun in 1096 and famous for its great pink and grey arches in the nave. It was both a pilgrimage site and the starting point for one of the pilgrim routes (Via Lemovicencis) to Compostella. It was also the starting point for the 2nd Crusade, preached by St. Bernard of Clairvaux in 1146.

The new story popularised in Vézelay was known as early as 750 in England. It held that Mary Magdalene together with Martha, Lazarus and the two other Marys was put to sea on a rudder-less and tackle-less ship and left to drown. The ship eventually landed at Marseilles. Lazarus became first bishop of the city and Magdalene worked as a missionary, an apostle and preacher in the neighbouring countryside. She later retired to Aix-en-Provence for 30 years of solitary and contemplative life in the cavern of Ste-Baume, "*so desirous was she to see Jesus again that she could not bear sight of another male*". During all those years, she did not feed, but was regularly carried to heaven by angels for her celestial nourishment. The story becomes inextricably intermingled with those of St. Agnes and St. Mary of Egypt. She is thus said to have spent her time naked, covered only by her long mane of hair.

Mary Magdalene became the patron saint of the Vézelay monastery c.1050. There are many contradictory stories to explain the presence of the body at Vézelay and its transfer from southern France (through robbery?). When in 1265, serious doubts arose concerning the authenticity of the relic, the monks staged a dramatic "re-discovery" of the body. During a solemn opening of the tomb, an extraordinary amount of female hair was found and held to authenticate the relic, although it was most certainly planted beforehand by the monks.

In 1279, the "true" body of Mary Magdalene was "discovered" in the crypt of Church of St. Maximin in Provence where it apparently had been hidden during the incursions of the Saracens in 716. The body was complete except for a missing leg. A series of miracles immediately proved the authenticity of the relic - and simultaneously disproved that of Vézelay. Jean Gobi (c. 1315) compiled a Book of the Miracles which showed that Mary was invoked for repentance (she was a repentant sinner), bodily and spiritual healing (she was cured by Christ), against leprosy (she anointed Christ's body), persecution (as she was persecuted by the Pharisee), blindness (first to see and recognise the risen Christ), deafness (she listened to Jesus) and so on...

To this day, the main pilgrimage site to Mary Magdalene is in the south of France. Les Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer is the place where the ship is held to have struck land; a fortified church holds the relics of the two other Marias with their companion Sarah and is the site of great annual pilgrimages by Gypsies. The skull of Mary Magdalene is still kept at St-Maximin-la-Sainte-Baume in the crypt of a Gothic church erected at the time of the discovery of the relics.

#### **4. Beloved Sinner and Chaste Prostitute**

Beginning in the 11th century, there was an increased stress on Mary Magdalene the sinner. A story was concocted in which Mary was the bride at Cana where she married St. John the Evangelist. When John left her "in maidenhood" to follow Jesus, she was very vexed and began living a profligate life during which the seven devils entered her. She eventually repented her ways and entered the house of Simon the Pharisee to ask for forgiveness and become a follower of Jesus.

It is obvious in the story that Mary's sin is sexual (*porneia*). Fornication is the prototypical female crime and sin, because women naturally burn with the "*ignis libidinis*", the fire of passion. Males are lured by female beauty: "*A beautiful woman is a temple built over a sewer*" as Bromyard, a Medieval preacher, puts it. Female beauty is the instrument of the devil to tempt the unsuspecting male. The men in the Church constantly forget that Jesus, when dealing with the question of lust, transferred the sin from the woman (the object) to the lecherous man (the subject), who "*commits adultery in his heart*" (Mt 5:28).

Mary with her loose flaming golden red hair and her red cloak thus becomes the model of everywoman, the sinful sexuate female redeemed by being rendered sexless. Her eyes that used to lure men now weep; her hair which enticed so many men to sin now serve to dry Christ's feet; her mouth that delighted them now kisses His feet; her prostrate body which laid under so many men now lies at Christ's feet. Her journey from sin to redemption mirrors that of every Christian. Even the greatest sinner can reach heaven. Out of a prostitute, Christ made an apostle. Magdalene even becomes an honorary virgin, and her traditional service is largely borrowed from the Common of Virgins.

Mary thus became the patron of confraternities of penitents and of redeemed prostitutes; obviously, Christ and Our Lady could never be proper models for such penance. Orders were founded to receive and redeem fallen women, for instance the Penitents of St. Mary Magdalene at Worms in 1227 who operated a sort of halfway house. Prostitutes were omnipresent in Medieval towns and would openly proposition passers-by on the street, calling any man who refused their services a "sodomite". Since St. Augustine, prostitution was seen by the Church as a necessary evil - it was a trade which could sometimes be considered marginally moral if it was conducted only for money to live by and if no pleasure was taken in the operation. St. Mary Magdalene is also invoked by men who battle the temptations of fornication or adultery; she is known to protect them by rendering them impotent for the duration of the encounter.

## 5. Mary the Contemplative

By the late Medieval period, Mary Magdalene was often assimilated to the Mary of Bethany who sat at Jesus' feet listening to him and she thus became the particular patron of female mystics. Contemplation by women became an important urban phenomenon associated with the development of beguine-houses; this was in a way a rebellion by women against the slavery of their lives as wives and mothers. It also emphasised the current belief that sanctity was incompatible with married life. This was the period of the great female mystics, such as St. Theresa of Avila... Some of these appear to us unbelievably excessive and sick; Saint Margaret of Cortona (+1297), who earlier lived with a nobleman and had a child by him, converted on seeing her dead lover's body. Her life was spent in wild visions and horrific bodily punishments. She even abandoned the child of her sin in her saintly madness. "Une maudite folle", used to say my late mother-in-law, not otherwise prone to crude language.

Part of the piety of the female mystics was to associate themselves with the sufferings of Christ, for which they thought themselves personally responsible. Again Mary Magdalene grieving at the foot of the Cross represented an ideal for them. Indeed, Mary Magdalene was the first female mourner after the Virgin (who could not really weep for theological reasons, privy as she was to the coming Resurrection).

## 6. Mary the Penitent

The logical sequence leads from mourning for Christ to an actual association with his sufferings. And again Mary Magdalene came to the forefront, assimilated this time with St. Mary of Egypt - this was the Egyptian whore who converted during a trip to Jerusalem and atoned for the wickedness of her former life by spending 30 years in the desert - whose garb or rather lack of garb she assumed. So arose a new image of the Magdalene, depicted in her grotto with loose hair, bare breasts, and with a book, a skull and a crucifix at her side. This nakedness represented a return to the primal state of nature, to innocence redeemed. Earlier representations (13th c.) are more modest and show the "hirsute penitent", which was reminiscent of the so-called "Wild woman" of Medieval lore, her entire body covered with hair except her hands, feet and breasts. However, by the 15th century, she is shown completely naked with ample curves and by the next century she is more suggestive than penitent in a kind of religious "legitimised voyeurism". She borrows much from the Venus pudica figure of classical Antiquity, becoming the new Christian Venus of divine love, who chastely covers herself, while still revealing all her charms. She is depicted in radiant health and in the fullness of her body, and only rarely as the emaciated wraith one would expect in someone who has spent years fasting in the desert. Titian explained the paradox in that she is painted as she was "on her first day in the desert". According to the taste of the day, she has golden red hair, the famous Venetian blond colour, the secret recipe of which could be found in the "arte biondeggiante".

During the Council of Trent, new rules were established for the making of religious images and Cardinal Borromeo in his "De pictura sacra" (1642) decreed that no nudity should be allowed except when absolutely necessary. But to no avail, the trend

continued, particularly in paintings destined for private use. By the 17-18th c., posing for a Magdalene picture was the proper way for a woman of the world to expose her charms for all to admire; it was a scheme used by Kings to show off their mistresses; and we thus have intimate pictures of many of these famous beauties in "saintly portraits": Barbara Villiers, Nell Gwynn, Louise de K roualle, Hortense Mancini, Louise de la Valli re, B atrice de Cusance, Isabelle de Lude, Mme de Fontanges, Mme de Montespan....

## 7. Magdalene and the Magdalens

The 19th c. saw the creation of Magdalen-Houses, the first of which opened in London c. 1758 for repentant prostitutes and was financially supported by London merchants. They aimed at providing the girls with moral education (middle-class Christian values) and feminine employment as domestics and seamstresses. The results were not very satisfactory because the redeemed girls were not readily accepted back into society. And indeed, many prostitutes were already seduced and abandoned servants from family estates.

The 19th c. fallen woman was called a "magdalen" and prostitution, the "great social evil", was referred to as "magdalenism". In the Victorian mind, women fell into two categories, the Madonna and the Magdalene, the prostitute and the virtuous wife. By mid-century there were c. 40 000 prostitutes and 4 000 cat-houses in England; most of the women were driven by want of honest work and low wages.

The rescue-work of fallen women became for many Victorians an important act of love and charity. Still, Victorian men had a strange fascination for fallen women. It became a favourite subject for Pre-Raphaelite painters, viz. Gabriel Dante Rosetti's "*Found*" showing a country drover finding in the gutter the woman he had earlier seduced and abandoned; Ford Madox Ford's "*Take your son, Sir!*" on the plight of single mothers; and William Holman Hunt's "*The Awakening Conscience*" on the conversion (?) of a kept woman. Magdalene also appears under innumerable guises in operas, as Maddalena, Mimi, Violetta, Norma...

The 19th century was also the heyday of the great courtesan, forming the "demimonde", that class of women whose social standing is only half-acknowledged because of their uncertain reputation. They were the "kept women" of the aristocracy and the very rich; the French referred to them as the "grandes horizontales". As many of them were in the habit of showing off in late afternoon by riding in Hyde Park, they were called the "beautiful horse-breakers". None was so famous in the 1860s as the lovely "Skittles". Even the staid and proper Mister Gladstone, the Prime Minister, was her close friend and he never forgot her birthday. A devout Christian, Gladstone had a grave manner which proved to be irresistible to women, and he relished in their company, particularly if they were good-looking. Since his undergraduate days, Gladstone devoted one tenth of his income to the reclamation of prostitutes. A few evenings a week for years, he would walk alone on the streets looking for fallen women willing to accept his offer of help and shelter. This allowed him to "*combine his*

*missionary meddling with a keen appreciation of a pretty face*" and he is not known to have shown any interest in any ugly girl.

While in Paris this summer, I was fascinated by a small painting in the Musée d'Orsay by Jean Béraud called "*La Madeleine chez le Pharisien*" (1891). The scene is the familiar Gospel scene of the sinful woman lying at Christ's feet while he is at meat with Simon the Pharisee. What is remarkable is that all the actors are in 19th c. dress except for Christ. As well, all the personages are based on actual people: Ernest Renan is the Pharisee, Alexandre Dumas a guest, the Duc de Quercy Christ... and the well-known courtesan Liane de Pougy is the Magdalene. This Liane de Pougy would eventually later become a true "magdalen" herself, by joining the Third Order and leading a saintly life. A bit of religion at the end was a common occurrence, and one of the first tombs one sees upon entering Le Père Lachaise shows a beautiful Madonna and Child by Gustave Doré which adorns the grave of Alice Ozy whose spectacular body charmed and delighted the Tout-Paris; we can still dream of her while admiring Chasseriau's delicious paintings of her.

## 8. A Truly Modern Mary

The 19th c. proponents of so-called "higher criticism" of the Bible, such as David Friedrich Strauss and Ernest Renan, re-evaluated the role of Magdalene. She is represented as "*a highly excitable woman*" who spread the rumour of the Resurrection, and hence founded Christianity: "*le christianisme repose sur le délire imaginatif de la Madeleine*" (Renan).

The theme of the Magdalene also persists in modern literature: she is the Magdalene-Venus-Eros of Lawrence's "Man Who Died" which draws a parallel between the Christ- Magdalene story and Isis-Osiris myth. She also figures prominently in Kazantakis' "Last Temptation of Christ", the film version of which in 1988, by Martin Scorsese showing Christ struggling to assume his identity as Messiah, caused immense scandal. And there is also Denys Arcand's 1989 "Jesus of Montreal", in which Magdalene (Mireille), as a model, sells her body for publicity.

In 1969, the new Roman calendar reduced Mary Magdalene to her initial role of follower of Jesus and witness to the resurrection. She is no longer the penitent the Church celebrated for so long. And she appears to be taking on a new life in this guise. Many contemporary woman writers see in her the complete (read not asexual) woman who was the companion and disciple of Christ and make her the model for the modern woman. There is even a Gruppe Maria von Magdala founded in 1986 in Germany which fights for women's rights in the Church, including that of ordination.

**Duperray, Ève.** *Marie-Madeleine dans la mystique, les arts et les lettres.* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1989) - **Haskins, Susan.** *Mary Magdalen. Myth and Metaphor.* (New York: Riverhead Books, 1993) - **Saxer, Victor.** *Le culte de Marie-Madeleine en Occident; des origines à la fin du Moyen-âge.* (Auxerre: Librairie Clavreuil, 1959)

# The Baptist's Day

## "Love God, and go your way!"

(Smoke Signals #17, July 1996)

In the last *Evangelist*, Father Vincent showed how this pagan feast became Christian before being transformed into a patriotic and even a political one. I will explore a quite different aspect.

I am spending time "*ad aquas*" (at the cottage, in ecclesiastical jargon) in the Laurentians, now that the bug season is coming to a standstill. As I study a map of the nearby Réserve faunique Papineau-Labelle, looking for new lakes to explore by canoe, a detail which never really struck me before comes to my attention: in the northern section of the park, the names of the lakes in Montigny Township appear surprisingly un-Québécois, nonetheless not unfamiliar: de Bonis, d'Albiouse, Lamollière, Montigny, Pimodan, Testard, Charette, ... What they have in common is highlighted by neighbouring lakes, Pie IX, Léon XIII, des Zouaves. All these names are connected with the Pontifical Zouaves, those Romantic knights that flew to the defence of the Papacy in the 1860s.

The connection with the 24th of June is the now defunct tradition that on that day, the Carillon Flag (used by the Quebec Militia at the Battle of Carillon against the invading English) was taken out of its case in the Musée du Séminaire de Québec and paraded out, accompanied by a company of Zouaves in full uniform; a tradition which began in the 1870s and was maintained for about a century. The flag, the story goes, had been received by Louis-de-Gonzague Baillargé from the last surviving Recollet Father. The flag itself is most interesting, since it is the ancestor of our present Québec flag, at least in a way. The four corners are marked with oblique "*fleurs de lys*", with the royal arms of France on one side and on the other Our Lady on a moon crescent as the "*refuge of sinners*" under which is the crest of the Marquis de Beauharnois.

Our flag is actually based on a design by Father Elphège Filiatrault in 1902, which he presented as the **Carillon Flag** (which it obviously was not), which differed from our own in that the fleurs de lys were oblique and pointing towards the centre. In 1903, a Sacred Heart with two branches of maple leaves was added, and the flag was used as the flag of French Canadians under the name **Carillon-Sacré-Coeur**. Why the Sacred Heart? Well, that is a long story... and we need to get back to the Zouaves.

In the early 1860s, the kingdom of Piedmont was encroaching on the Papal States, and in 1861 in Milan, Vittorio Emmanuele was proclaimed King of Italy. The Pope's Estates were the last impediment to Italian Unity. It was clear that without the presence of French troops in Rome, the Holy City would soon fall. But Napoleon III's determination was failing, despite the entreaties of his pious and very Catholic wife Eugénie de Montijo, as he listened more and more to the patriotic yearnings which the beautiful Virginia de Castiglione (his current Italian mistress) whispered on his pillow and as he remembered the Carbonaro days of his youth. The Pope's Minister of Armies (sic!), Monsignor de Mérode, a Belgian ex-soldier, had appealed to general Christophe

de la Moricière, a hero of the North African wars of colonisation, to establish an independent and international army to defend the Pope, once the French had left, which was just a question of time. Pius IX felt it was his duty to resist any spoliation of "St. Peter's Estate", which the papacy held since the times of Pepin the Short (8th. c.) - "*Non devo, non posso, non voglio!*" - "*I must not, I cannot, I wish not!*". This first army corps was named "*Les tirailleurs franco-belges*" and was composed of a strange mixture of aristocratic and royalist Frenchmen and Belgian Flemish peasants. De la Moricière eventually renamed his troops the "**Zouaves**", in remembrance of a Kabyle corps which he had commanded in Algeria and which was originally made up of Zwawa tribesmen and he gave them a North African uniform. For ten years, this army group would go from glorious defeat to half-victory (Castelfidardo, Mentana, Citta Castellana, Civita Vecchia...), and when in August 1870, the French Empire fell at Sedan, the Piemontese entered Rome, with the Pope's army putting on only a symbolic defence of 5 hours of combat, since the Pontiff would have no blood shed.

In 1861, the young lawyer Benjamin-Antoine Testard de Montigny, who was in Paris, became the first Quebecer to join the pontifical forces. Other earlier volunteers were Hugh Murray and Alfred Larocque. It is only in 1868, under the influence of Bishop Bourget of Montréal (see the plaque at the base of his monument in front of the RC Cathedral) that some 500 Canadians, nearly all from Québec and all francophones, enlisted amid great popular enthusiasm. In February 1868, the first contingent of 137 was given a farewell Mass at Notre-Dame in which Bishop Bourget spoke for three hours. Each parish was asked to provide a volunteer and \$100 in support. The Zouave army numbered in the end about 10 000 men (3200 Dutch, 3000 Frenchmen, 1600 Belgians, 750 Italians..., one Chinaman). There was a saying at the time that "*only Frenchmen would dress a Chinaman as a Muslim warrior to go to the rescue of the Swiss Guard!*" The Canadian volunteers saw little action and the 8 who died of disease or other causes were buried in the graveyard of St. Lawrence Without. The Zouave Movement was locally opposed by the Sulpicians as well as the Irish Catholics, who felt the Pope needed money rather than soldiers.

After the war, the French troops returned home to fight the German invasion under the name of "*Volontaires de l'Ouest*". It is then that they were presented by Léon Dupont, the "*Holy Man of Tours*", with a banner made by the nuns of Paray-le-Monial representing the Sacred Heart on a white background with the words "***Coeur de Jésus, sauvez la France***" - "*Heart of Jesus, save France*". On the reverse were later added the words "*Saint Martin, patron de la France, priez pour nous*" - "*Saint Martin, patron of France, pray for us*". This was based on a revelation of Christ to St. Marguerite-Marie Alacoque in 1688 c. asking her to have his "Sacred Heart" displayed on the flags of France. This flag flew at the battle of Loigny and was stained with the blood of the dying amid the "incense" of gunsmoke. After the 1870 Franco-Prussian War, the banner reappeared at the deathbed and on the coffin of the Duke of Chambord (+1883), the Bourbon pretender who would have reigned as Henri V had he accepted the tricolour flag of Revolutionary France! Meanwhile, the Spanish Zouaves joined the Carlist forces in the

civil war raging in Spain; among them Hugh Murray (the 2nd Canadian Zouave) who died in battle of Manreza.

The Canadian Zouaves also took on the Sacred-Heart flag as their own. It replaced their earlier banner (white with the tiara and keys on one side, and on the other, their motto "**Aime Dieu et va ton chemin!** - Love God and go your way" - with a beaver and two crossed maple leaves.) - Notice that the beaver and the maple leaf were then considered emblems of French Canada... Eventually, the Sacred Heart was also added to the "new" Carillon Flag, and the flag was flown everywhere in Quebec till that fateful day, January 21 1948, when then-premier Maurice Duplessis took down the Union Jack (he would not fly the Red Ensign) from the tower of the National Assembly and hoisted our present flag.

But there is another connection between the Zouaves and the old Quebec militia: during the battle of Carillon, Our Lady appeared in the sky deflecting the English bullets - as she was seen sobbing over the devastated battlefield of Loigny after the French defeat. But France was defeated because of her sin... but that is another story leading to the erection of the Basilica of the Sacred Heart on Montmartre (in a later issue perhaps). There the parallel stops, no one has suggested to my knowledge that New France was conquered because of her sin!

The Zouaves eventually disbanded everywhere except in Québec, where they maintained their regiments under the name of the **Union Allet**. In 1900, sons and relatives, and eventually all Catholic men, were allowed to join. By the early 1960s, there were some 4000 men enrolled under the banner, who drilled every week and paraded at all patriotic and religious manifestations. And every summer, they met for field manoeuvres and military training... in case the call of religion and of the papacy should be heard once more. They still apparently exist in some form and have an active phone number in Québec City, but, despite repeated calls, I never got an answer. Their memory survives in place names and in broken dreams: take for instance their colonisation of the West bank of Lake Megantic where a dozen families settled in the 1870s to found **Piopolis** (the City of Pius IX!) - only four remained 5 years later. There is a shrine to their memory at Mary Queen of the World Cathedral in the so-called "**Chapelle du Souvenir**". Large marble slabs list the names of the 500 or so volunteers. Exposed are various relics related to the Zouave adventure: flag, uniforms, prayer-books, medals, and a painting which once hung in their Casino (social club) in Rome. - In the same chapel one can also venerate Bishop Bourget's extensive relic collection, the major piece being bones of St. Zotique encased in a wax reclining figure. There is also a wax representation of a child, marked "Holy Innocent" (sic!)...

Many have wondered why the Zouave phenomenon had such success in Quebec, but not elsewhere. In 1980, René Hardy in his book "*Les zouaves, une stratégie du clergé québécois*" (Montréal: Boréal Express) thinks it has a lot to do with Ultramontanism. There are also nationalist connections: the zouaves have some indirect link with the old Militia which till 1864 used to reassemble every year in every Quebec parish on St. Peter's Day (traditionally in the rain). There are also links with the traditional right, both here and in France. Just an anecdote: in 1914 at the beginning of

the Great War, the future Maréchal Pétain was spending the night at the home of the late Zouave general de Sonis; during the night, he learned that he had been promoted to brigadier-general, and the daughters of General de Sonis took the stars from their father's old uniform to sew them onto Pétain's. Talking about Pétain, the other day at Hudson in a flea market I saw for sale a large portrait of the Maréchal with an inscription by his wife thanking a Mr. Blais for his support and kindness towards the old man then in jail at the Ile de Ré. I resisted buying it... Where would I hang it?... Pétain had a significant following in the Belle Province, and many remained faithful to the end.

I hear that there is someone currently writing a thesis on the Zouaves... it will be interesting to read.