

Codex historicus of the St-Bernard Mission
1945-1957
Grouard, Alberta

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[This volume contains the years 1945 to 1957. The pages are not numbered. Also, note that most of the notes concern the ministry and the moving from one place to another of Oblate fathers].

January 2, 1945

This evening, presentation of a film on the Life of Our Lord. The impression was not very good: we had hoped for better.

January 31, 1945

This Wednesday evening, arrived Father Dréau, Albert, O.M.I., Pro-Vicar of the Vicariate of Whitehorse, bringing three little girls from his mission in Teslin to our school.

February 1, 1945

It should be noted that the father of the three little girls brought by Fr. Dréau had come himself to accompany his daughters and that he was on the two trips mentioned above. He left with the desire to return. He is one of the good Christians of Teslin.

March - Holy Week 1945

During the long ceremony of Holy Saturday, we must mention the baptism conferred to Kenneth Mah, a 13 year old Chinese child, a pagan by consequence, admitted to our St. Bernard school last September.

From the very first days, this boy had astonished us by his remarkable intelligence, his love of our holy religion and his immense desire to become a Christian. It was with great regret that he had seen the feast of Christmas pass without being able to be regenerated by the life-giving waters of baptism, and yet he had already obtained from his father, also a pagan, to be baptized. However, he still had hopes of becoming a child of the Catholic Church during 1945, and he was preparing for this with all his heart. I don't think there is a child in our school who knows his catechism as well as this little Chinese boy, so how happy he was to learn that he would be baptized on Holy Saturday and that during the mass, Jesus in the Host would descend for the first time into his heart free of all defilement.

May 30, 1945

In the evening, in the boys' recreation room, the children, under the direction of Fr. Bruckert, in charge of the C.Y.O., in the presence of the whole community, give a concert followed by an address of welcome to the new director and principal of the school [Fr. Gérard Tessier].

October 27, 1945

His Exc. Bishop Routhier arrived after dinner with Mr. Stelhin, inspector of schools, to discuss with His Exc. Bishop Langlois the question of a school for the day students at Grouard. As the number of students was very large this year, it was necessary to establish a 5th class and to put Nora Cardinal, a former girl from the housekeeping school, as teacher. A group of people, more

or less unhappy with this situation, complained to the Department of Education and asked for a school in the village. Since most of the children are on this side of the mission, if the project is carried out, it will be built on the hill, not down in the village. This is the suggestion made by Mr. Stelhin.

November 1, 1945

As for the feast of Christ the King, His Excellency Bishop Langlois pontificated with the same sacred ministers. Fr. Habay gave the sermon in Cree and the population filled the church. In the afternoon, after the exercises of the Rosary, His Excellency gave the blessing of the Blessed Sacrament. Then the Fathers, Brothers and Sisters went in procession with the children and some other people to the two cemeteries where they sang "Le Libera" and recited the "De Profundis".

March 2, 1946

Father Tessier returned from his trip with three boys for school. Two of them were destined for the Protestant school at Whitefish Lake, but the good net passed just in time to take them.

March 19, 1946

The feast of St. Joseph has just been marked by events worthy of note in the annals of this mission. The day before was prepared by the baptism of 4 Protestant children of our school, baptism done by Fr. Bruckert, spiritual director of the children of the Mission.

August 27, 1946

Father Bruckert left with two cars to pick up the children at Prairie Lake.

September 4, 1946

Father Bruckert arrives from Whitefish Lake with 16 children and also Father Floch who will spend a few days with us.

December 23, 1946

Christmas concert well done by our children: full house.

December 20, 1946

Father Floch returns to Whitefish with the Mission truck and the treaty children of Whitefish who have obtained for the first time, from the Indian Department, permission to spend Christmas with their families. Father Floch returns with the great joy of knowing that in 1948 a day school, under the direction of the Sisters, will be built at Poisson Blanc.

February 19, 1951

Fathers Tessier, A. Bruckert and Brother A. Dumas, leave by car for the Wabasca Mission where they will record programs in Cree for the radio. They returned on the 22nd after an excellent trip.

September 26, 1952

The Mobile X-Ray Unit came to Grouard. All the children & people of Grouard show up.

October 18, 1952

Mr. Charles B. Hill, Superintendent of the Child Welfare Branch, came to visit us. There are 83 neglected children in Grouard who belong to this department.

Mr. Hill saw them individually. On the last evening of his three-day visit, there was a gathering of all the children & staff in his honor in the boys' room. Generous treat of fruit & candy for everyone. There is a lot of fun & singing in the group.

November 15, 1952

Since this month, the Provincial Telephone has been installed up to Grouard mission. Great progress.

23 November 1952

Fr. Guimont drives Bishop Coudert back to Fort St. John. In [illegible word] to see Mr. Galibois, Indian Agent, for the purpose of recruiting Indians for the Grouard School.

March 21, 1953

Quite a large crowd was present last night at the recreational evening given by the children on the occasion of the patronal feast of our good Father Superior, Rev. Father Benoît Guimont, O.M.I.

April 14, 1953

Mr. Gerald Berry, Inspector, comes to visit the classes.

May 19, 1953

Two nuns of the Grey Nuns of Montreal, Sister Estelle Mitchell and Sister Germaine Dupuis, came to give lively talks on the religious vocation to the people and children. All enjoyed this favor.

June 3, 1953

Mr. Rodrigue Lemay of the Ottawa department came to visit Grouard to see about the new class that was to be opened in September.

July 1, 1953

Father Benoît Guimont left this morning for Edmonton to drive three of the older boys who will continue their studies at Ste Marie School.

August 18, 1953

With the permission of the Government, part of the old bishopric of Grouard will be transformed into a classroom and dormitories for the older girls of the Mission and for the girls of the various Indian missions who will take grade nine. The Reverend Brother Aimé Allie will be in charge with some workers.

November 14, 1953

Mr. Lester Waller, Inspector of Indian Schools, comes to visit the school teachers.

January 3, 1954

Due to the large number of students, Father Benoît Guimont, O.M.I., hired a secular teacher to teach Grade 1. Miss Véronique Bessette agreed to come and teach at Grouard.

February 14, 1954

The Reverend Father Joseph Forget, director of Catholic Action, gave a small conference to the students on Catholic Action. We started this movement after the vacations.

May 27, 1954

Twenty-two girls and twenty-six boys made their First Communion this morning. The Reverend Father Benoît Guimont gives a short sermon to explain the great grace they receive at this moment.

May 28, 1954

We make this day a day of prayer to Mary. Each group of children goes in turn to pray the rosary in the church where the Blessed Sacrament is exposed on this occasion.

July 1, 1954

Father Benoît Guimont, O.M.I., drove four older girls to Lower Post to visit their country and parents.

July 6, 1954

Mr. George Spence of Edmonton, assistant to Mr. Charles B. Hill in charge of Child Welfare, comes to visit the children in their care.

August 20, 1954

Our congratulations to the Grade 9 students who passed their exams with flying colours. It is certainly a well-deserved reward for their constant application.

September 2, 1954

All our students have returned to school with great joy. It is hoped that the enthusiasm of the beginning will be maintained during the school year.

October 6-7, 1954

Grouard District Health Officer, Mrs. Mary Whitford, came to examine the children of the Mission.

October 12, 1954

Mr. Joseph Thomas Pon Ying of Edmonton, one of our former students at the Mission, on leave, takes advantage of a few days of his vacation to return to visit his Alma Mater. He said he was happy to spend a few days there and to meet the religious personnel he had known and appreciated. In May 1944, wishing to become a Catholic, he was baptized by Father Joseph Habay, O. M. I. Mr. Joseph Thomas Pon Ying was very grateful.

October 26, 1954

Father Benoît Guimont, superior, drove five of our girls to Edmonton, one of them being too young to attend school and still living with the babies. They are threatened with tuberculosis. Let's hope that their stay in the hospital will not be long so as not to interrupt their studies too long.

29 October 1954

Father Benoît Guimont, O.M.I., Superior, returns from Edmonton with four new children to replace those who left with him at the beginning of the week.

November 1, 1954

On this beautiful feast of All Saints, at three o'clock in the afternoon, Father Benoît Guimont, O.M.I., Superior, gathered the staff for the second meeting of the Eucharistic Crusade. The movement underway is very encouraging and our children seem to be enjoying it and are well disposed to reap the fruits that this seed will germinate and grow in their souls.

24th November 1954

Departure of Father Benoît Guimont, O.M.I., for Edmonton. Two of our students who are infirm and 16 years old (William Boucher, Roy Strong), make the trip with him. It is not yet known what the provincial government under which they are dependent will decide about them. Perhaps they will learn a trade commensurate with their abilities.

November 26, 1954

Mr. G. S. Lapp, Indian Agent, came to see the teachers and sign the registers. It is presumed that Mr. J. Sanders who accompanied him was the new clerk of the Indian Agency at High Prairie.

December 8, 1954

On the morning of the Immaculate Conception, the closing of the Marian year, a three-day retreat for our students was concluded by Father A. Gould, pastor of High Prairie. For two full days, our children were captivated by the practical and explanatory instructions presented in an imaginative way by the preacher. There is no doubt that these meditations bore fruit and that the Immaculate Virgin will help our children to remain excellent Christians. To Father A. Gould for his kindness and generosity in lending himself to this very important apostolate, we again express our thanks.

January 20, 1955

The Director of Studies, Sister Béatrice de la Croix, comes to visit the teachers at Grouard.

January 28, 1955

The Reverend Father Edward Rhéaume, omi, from the Charles Camsell Hospital in Edmonton, comes to record the voices of our children in "Cree" which are not numerous, since the majority speak only English. The singing is enriched by the gentle sound of the organ installed in the rood screen of the parish church.

February 20, 1955

Today, Sunday, great excitement among our youth. A game of "hockey" with the High Prairie amateurs. More than 200 spectators came to see the result. To the joy of our players, it was Grouard who brought home the win, 4 to 2. There was no shortage of shouting. Our poor neighbors, after a small snack, went home hoping that next time they would be the winners.

March 25, 1955

At three o'clock p.m., we attended the reception of the Crusaders. The newly elected entered accompanied by those who preceded them in the Eucharistic Crusade, singing. The Reverend Father Benoît Guimont, omi, principal, presided over the ceremony. He spoke to the aspirants about the honor and grace that Jesus was bestowing on them on this great day and explained the four laws of the Crusade. The blessing of the Blessed Sacrament concluded this touching ceremony.

April 13, 1955

One of our daughters (Elizabeth Cunningham) who was raised at the mission of Sturgeon Lake and wanted very much to visit it, the good Father Benoît Guimont granted her this pleasure by driving her today. The modern car is spacious and had enough room for four other Sisters.

April 15, 1955

Mr. Charles B. Hill, President of Child's Welfare, came from Edmonton with his assistant to spend a few hours with the children in his care. As always, he appreciates the help of the Reverend Fathers and Sisters who are involved in the education of these mostly abandoned children. He is very satisfied with the care we give them.

May 8, 1955

About thirty little boys and girls have the joy of receiving Jesus-Hostie in their hearts for the first time. Their collected manner as they approached the holy table suggests that they are aware of the importance of this great action. The Reverend Father Benoît Guimont, superior, took advantage of this occasion to speak to the large audience and gave the parents practical suggestions on the vocation and future of their children.

May 10, 1955

Mr. Gerald Berry, school inspector, visited the six classes and expressed his appreciation for the progress of the students and the dedication of the teachers.

June 24, 1955

The end of the school year brings much excitement. Several students have already left to meet their parents who always welcome them with joy. We wish everyone: Happy Holidays.

August 31, 1955

About twenty children from Jousard - wards of the Welfare Department - are transferred to Grouard in order to centralize these Metis. In return, Grouard's Indian treaty children - about 40 of them - were sent to Jousard.

December 31, 1955

Mr. Chs. B. Hill, Superintendent of the Welfare Department for the Province, came to Grouard to spend New Year's Day with his wards, numbering 140 (one hundred and forty). It was a celebration for everyone on the first day of the new year.

Mr. Hill rejoices with all of us, for it is a real & healthy distraction for him to be away from his busy Edmonton office. He returns to Edmonton on January 2nd after having gone to McLennan to greet Bishop Routhier in the company of Fr. Guimont, omi, Principal at Grouard.

April 28, 1955

Bishop J. L. Coudert, omi, from the Yukon, comes to visit us and at the same time to see the 16 children of his Vicariate who are in school.

May 20, 1955

Solemn Communion of the students of grade VI. This is the first ceremony of its kind. It will be held every year from now on at the request of Bishop H. Routhier, OMI.

September 4, 1955

Start of the classes. Three lay teachers this year and three Sisters. The classes are full and two more classes are needed to free up more time to meet the demands.

September 11, 1955

Father Guimont, superior, leaves for Edmonton with four boys from the Welfare Department. The latter went to continue their course at St. Anthony's College in Edmonton. He returns on the 13th with six children for the school.

September 3, 1956

Classes open. We have seven classes in September. Four lay teachers & three Sisters.

September 15, 1956

Brother Vincent de Paul Paquet comes to take charge of the older boys.

November 15, 1956

Opening of an eighth class due to the large number of students. Mr. Roland Lapointe from Donnelly will teach a group of grade IV.

- ♦ Translated by Eloi DeGrâce with www.DeepL.com/Translator (free version)
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