

Monsignor de Laval



Number 28 • Spring-Summer 2014

Centre d'animation François-de Laval Newsletter

EVENT



Equivalent canonization of François de Laval

By Rev. Jacques Lemieux, Séminaire de Québec


 NOTRE-DAME
DE QUÉBEC
350^e
1664-2014

Pope Francis's April 3 proclamation of canonization was a magnificent response to the wishes and hopes of all those who saw François de Laval as worthy of sainthood. We should convey our deepest gratitude to him.

While canonizations usually require a lengthy, meticulous and clear-cut process, an alternative form can also be used to proclaim sainthood after beatification: equivalent canonization, used on an exceptional basis, which leads to the same result as the better-known process (Can. 2000 of 1917).

Although it dates back several centuries, equivalent canonization (also known as "equipollent" canonization) has rarely been used by the Church. This practice demonstrates the authority - vested solely in the Pope - to declare the canonization of a Blessed and extend to the universal Church the liturgical worship to him or her through recitation of Divine Office and Eucharistic celebration.

The usual canonization process is therefore waived in this case. However, certain conditions must prevail, which were established by Pope Benedict XIV, whose papacy extended from 1740 to 1758. The three conditions are: existence of an ancient cultus; a general, ongoing attestation,



by trustworthy historians, of the virtues of God's servant; and uninterrupted recognition of favours received. If the Holy Father affirms that these conditions have been met, he can go on to proclaim the sainthood of a Blessed "without the need for any further definitive official pronouncement, judicial hearing or official ceremonies¹." Before proceeding with an equivalent canonization, the Pope receives a special dossier - one for each case - which he then presents to the cardinals. This dossier describes the status of the Cause for the Blessed in question, lists the petitions for this canonization that were submitted to the Supreme Pontiff and highlights the potential pastoral benefits of the canonization. The process then culminates in the issuance of a papal decree.

In the 18th century, Benedict XIV cited twelve examples of Saints who had been canonized by this process. These include St. Romuald (1595), St. Norbert (1621), St. Bruno (1623), St. John of Matha and St. Felix of Valois (1694).

More recent equivalent canonizations are St. Pierre Damian (1828), Saints Cyril and Methodius (1880), St. Augustine of Canterbury (1882), St. John of Damascus (1890), Venerable Bede (1899), Albert the Great (1931), Margaret of Hungary (1943) and John of Ávila (1970).

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¹ Osservatore Romano, Issue #44, October 31, 2013

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Equivalent canonization of François de Laval

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On May 10, 2012, Pope Benedict XVI granted equivalent canonization to Hildegard of Bingen, a German mystic who lived from 1098 to 1179. On October 9, 2013, Pope Francis also signed the Decree of Equivalent Canonization for Angela of Foligno, an Italian nun who lived from 1248 to 1309.

The most recent equivalent canonization was that of Peter Faber (1506-1546), a Jesuit priest from Savoy and companion of St. Ignatius of Loyola, on December 17, 2013, by Pope Francis.

A number of similarities can be seen in the last three canonizations described above. Each one is a very old Cause, and entire populations have preserved the memory of these Saints and dedicated an ongoing cultus to them that has been maintained for hundreds of years.

The underlying reasons for Pope Francis' recent decision to grant sainthood to François de Laval, Marie de l'Incarnation and José de Anchieta are undoubtedly similar.

Of course, this list could eventually contain other names.

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New parish under the aegis of François de Laval

By Rev. Léo-Paul Baril, who works at "the pastoral mission for the new parish"

Much effort has been put into reorganizing the parishes in the diocese of Nicolet since 2005. This also presented an opportunity to help create what's known as the *New Parish*, intended to meet current and future

needs related to the Church's mission. This undertaking seeks to promote the transition from a so-called Christian Church to a more missionary-focused Church that can create disciples for Christ.

A woman in our parish recently said to me, "I am pleased with the choice of our new patron Saint, Msgr de Laval. I didn't know anything about him, but was able to discover him by reading the leaflet distributed by the parish."

This type of statement could not have been anticipated three years ago when we embarked on the process of consolidating into one a trio of parishes - Saint-Eusèbe de Princeville, Saint-Norbert d'Arthabaska and Sainte-Hélène-de-Chester. The Initiation Committee for the New Parish (CINP) took exploratory steps toward a unique pastoral exercise in a climate of openness. Fear gave way to hope and everyone rallied behind the idea of the *New Parish*.

A choice to be made

When it came time to choose a name for the new parish entity, the CINP adopted the following criteria: a person with an inspiring pastoral vision, a person linked to Québec's religious history and a person with strong connections to the region.

The first two names suggested - one of Canada's lay martyrs and Marie de l'Incarnation - were turned down. However, Father Réjean Couture, who had been appointed by the CINP to perform this search, was impressed with François de Laval's missionary work, as well as his personality and spirituality. His instinct was confirmed by a visit to the Centre d'animation François-de Laval in Québec City, where he was given information and documentation that he shared with the pastoral team and the CINP. The selection of François de Laval as the parish patron Saint was then approved and confirmed by parishioners when they were consulted on April 6 and 7, 2013.



To make him known

So now we had a name. But who was François de Laval? Elderly members of the parish could recall being taught that he was the first bishop of New France and founder of the Séminaire de Québec, and that he had fought the sale of alcohol to the Natives. But who was he really? As a next step, we needed to make known his role as a spiritual leader and an inspiring man who surmounted the challenges required by our common mission. This is why we distributed the wealth of documentation provided to us by the Center. For several months, the faithful learned about him through the excerpts of writings and the summaries of his life in our parish leaflet.

Last summer, Rev. Gilles Bédard became our new parish priest. He enthusiastically set about his work and became personally invested in his new mission. Seeking to immerse themselves in their patron Saint and his work, the pastoral team and he spent half a day at the Centre d'animation François-de Laval in Québec City. They returned delighted, and convinced that they had truly found an inspiring patron.

A celebration

On January 1, 2014, our bishop, Msgr André Gazaille, named our parish "Bienheureux-François-de-Laval" (Blessed-François-de-Laval). He presided its official inauguration on February 9, when he said a Solemn Mass that was attended by members of all three regrouped parishes. Also welcomed at this celebration were members of a fourth community - Saint-Louis-de-Blandford - which will soon become part of the new parish. The mass united the communities, with people of all ages, from all four parishes, singing in the choir and delivering the readings. During the liturgical celebration, a number of meaningful items, representing the history, the various resources and the arts and crafts of each community, were placed at the altar.

In his homily, Msgr André Gazaille talked about unity as the foundation of the *New parish* and about openness to the New Evangelization - both of which were dear to François de Laval's heart. He pointed out the relevance of our choice of patron Saint, and reminded us that François de Laval faced challenges that were similar to our own. Influenced by the Council of Trent, he focused primarily on training priests and the faithful and was close to all in his diocese and, in particular, the poor and the sick. Msgr Gazaille recalled the words of François de Laval: "Place God at the centre of your life [...] Always

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return to Jesus Christ and follow His example. [...] Defend human dignity by making the poorest and those without a voice a priority."

During the celebration, each community was given a reproduction of an icon of Msgr de Laval, written by Gilberte Massicotte-Éthier. These reproductions will be solemnly placed in their respective churches during the masses held on May 4. One was also presented to our bishop, who accepted it with great pleasure.

At the end of the mass, the priest thanked the organizers and attendees, and expressed his wish that we succeed in building our missionary undertaking together in a spirit of unity, drawing inspiration from our protector, François de Laval.

In conclusion, preparations are underway for two other activities, both of which are meant to give parishioners an opportunity to get to know François de Laval better.

A group of parishioners will travel to Québec City in May to visit the bishop's tomb and the Holy Door. In the fall, a group of walkers will do a pilgrimage on foot to the same locations.



INTERVIEW



Interview with Sister Doris Lamontagne, L.F.M.

Still today, Msgr de Laval inspires us. In every edition, someone shares their bond with François de Laval.

Sr. Doris Lamontagne, L.F.M., ran the Centre d'animation François-de Laval for 12 years, from 1993 to 2005. She is still sought out today by event organizers, to speak about our first bishop. In reply to a question on the Centre's history, she remembered having inaugu-

rated the activity room in its current form 20 years ago, on May 6, 1994. We asked her a few questions that would help her describe her encounter with François de Laval and what she has retained from the experience.



(Photo: Daniel Abel)

What is your history with François de Laval?

Prior to August 1993, my knowledge of our first bishop was somewhat sparse. I should first point out that I was born in Chibougamau and moved to Jonquière with my family in 1973. I remember seeing some images on television of François de Laval's beatification during the ceremonies held on June 22, 1980, when I was 18 years

old. My first real contact with François de Laval occurred in July 1982, when I spent a weekend in Québec City with some friends from Jonquière. One of them knew the cathedral well, since he used to go there to pray as a student. He accompanied us as we visited the church, and we went to pray at the tomb of François de Laval, which was then located in the outside chapel of the

Séminaire de Québec. I asked François de Laval to help me identify my vocation. A few months later, I joined my order - the Little Franciscans of Mary - so I could follow Christ as another François had done before me. Little did I know that, a decade or so later, life and circumstances would lead me to take charge of and set up the Centre d'animation François-de Laval.

How did you to get to the Centre d'animation François-de Laval?

The answer to this question is important: It reiterates how putting our trust in Providence, as the life of our first pastor attests, remains a common framework for many who have been baptized - and yet, each individual follows a highly personal path. In 1992, I was leaving Charlevoix to study theology at Université Laval, without knowing too much about where this would take me. During the 1993 summer session, my professor, Lisette Montmigny-Brodeur, told me that they were looking for someone to assume responsibility for a centre that would be located near the new tomb of François de Laval, which was being moved to the Notre-Dame de

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Québec Cathedral. I gave her my contact information. Just a few days before my 31st birthday in July, I had a telephone call that changed the course of my life. After I met with Mario Dufour and Michelle St-Cyr in the cathedral rectory, my application was accepted. My knowledge of the topic at hand was limited, but I had some experience running youth activities, was interested in history and knew a little English. That marked the start, in August 1993, of my story of love and friendship with François de Laval, one of the greatest men in our history.



Sr. Doris stands before Msgr de Laval's tomb during a retreat she organized for the bishops of Québec last January.

How has he influenced your life?

First, I find that Providence was generous in leading me to serve the Church in this way for 12 years. I feel privileged at having had this opportunity to enrich the spirituality of our founders by treading daily on the soil of what Pope John Paul II called this "sacred ground in North America" during his visit to Québec City in 1984. I began to learn about François de Laval by reviewing his writings and thoughts, by developing various ways of getting people of all generations, from diverse cultures, to know him better. I was surprised to hear people's reflections, continually recalling his quarrels with the governors of this territory, his battle against the sale of alcohol and the disparity between his views and those of Marie de l'Incarnation. The more I perused François de Laval's writings, the more I discovered an entirely different man. I found that the austere image he had been locked into was quite different from that conveyed in his contemporaries' writings about him. Mr. de La Colombière asked, *Can he really be dead - this man we were so happy to see live?*

A closer reflection of what his contemporaries relate is found in two small stained glass windows discreetly placed above a door in the Séminaire : one depicts François de Laval kneeling before the tabernacle and the other,

ministering to the sick. The ongoing and humble search of this Christian who submitted to God's will, who felt strongly about consistency between words and deeds, and his attachment to Christ as a servant resisting the weather and other forms of adversity, continues to nourish my Christian faith. His writings inspire me to advance down a path of continued conversion that *is much more the work of God than the doings of men*. I have kept up the habit of praying privately at his tomb, where I often ask him to help me better understand his inner life. I continue to present to him my prayer intentions, while thinking of those put forth by others who ask him to intercede for them. The 12 years I have spent regularly speaking about him, visiting him and writing about him have brought François de Laval close to me - a familiar figure, a friend.

What makes him a role model for today's Christians?

In light of Pope Francis' invitations to be a missionary disciple, I see François de Laval as a source of inspiration today. The cultural, social and ecclesiastic referents of our first pastor are all missionary-related. He was shaped by the surge of missionary activity in the 17th century. In his apostolic exhortation *The Joy of the Gospel*, Pope Francis writes that "each of us should find ways to communicate Jesus wherever we are." (EG 121) That's what motivated the deeds, prayers, decisions and day-to-day reality of this Catholic who served as the first bishop of Québec City - nothing more, nothing less. To close off this article, I will let François de Laval have the last word as a topic of meditation that can serve as a source of inspiration to all.

Everything done by God serves us admirably, although we do not see the effects right away. For many years now, Providence has led this Church - and, therefore, us - down paths that have been extremely trying and have crucified us both spiritually and temporally. No matter - as long as His sacred will is done. I believe that my peace, my happiness here on Earth, lies in not [wanting] any other type of paradise. The kingdom within our souls is our centre and the essence of our being. Pray faithfully to Him, His Holy Mother, her sacred spouse, all the holy angels and blessed spirits, for his grace, so we want nothing more than fulfillment of this divine and benevolent will per infamiam bonam famam. I strongly recommend our Church's spiritual and temporal needs to you, so everything is for the glory of Our Lord. I am entirely with you in His love and that of his Holy Mother. (ANP, p. 207)





Marie de l'Incarnation on the Bishop of Petrea

The written historical record of the beginnings of New France could not have been developed without the accounts contained in the wealth of correspondence by Marie de l'Incarnation,

an Ursuline nun. We have reproduced, below, an excerpt of Letter 185, dated September 17, 1660, in which she conveys her impressions of Msgr de Laval to her son, Dom Claude.

Our prelate, the Monsignor, is just as I have informed you in my previous [letters]: filled with zeal and resolute in his convictions - the former, by ensuring observance of whatever he believes should increase the glory of God and the latter, in his refusal to give ground to anything opposing this. I have yet to encounter anyone else who holds as tenaciously as he does to these two principles. His charity and humility define him as another Saint Thomas de Villeneuve¹, since he would sacrifice himself for these beliefs. Only the worst available is held back for his own needs. He is indefatigable at his work; he is, indeed, the most austere man on Earth, and the most detached from worldly goods. He gives away everything he has, choosing to live in poverty, and one could truthfully say that his is a spirit of poverty. He is not the type who makes friends for personal gain and to add to his own income - this means absolutely nothing to him. [...] His house, his way of life, his furnishings and his servants all reflect the poverty he practices - in the latter case, he has only one gardener, whom he lends to the poor when they need them. [...] (ANP, p. 54-55)

1 St. Thomas de Villeneuve, 1488-1556, beatified in 1618 and canonized in 1658 by Pope Alexander VII, who announced his feast day as September 18 on the Roman calendar. Marie de l'Incarnation would therefore have written this letter on the eve of this solemn feast.



Saint Marie de l'Incarnation

To know him better

François de Laval et son époque [François de Laval and His Era]

By Gilles Bureau, 2011, 264 p.
(in French only)

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Écrits spirituels de François de Laval [Spiritual Writing of François de Laval]

By Msgr Hermann Giguère, P.H., 2014, 212 p.
(in French only)

François de Laval is primarily known as a steadfast bishop and a great builder. While his legacy today comprises mostly official writings related to his duties, certain passages reveal him to be a warm and cordial man, highly solicitous of his flock, who believed that prayer should precede action. This is revealed by Msgr Hermann Giguère, P.H., professor emeritus of spiritual theology and history of spirituality at the Faculty of theology and religious studies of Université Laval (Québec). He is affiliated with the Séminaire de Québec, where he served as superior general from 2002 to 2012.



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If you mention Msgr de Laval in one of your activities, please let us know.
We will be happy to announce it.



1- François de Laval immortalized in wax

Did you know that François de Laval's likeness has also been reproduced in wax at the Grévin Montreal Museum, in its Unives de la Nouvelle-France exhibit [The World of New France]? He is one of some 120 historic or otherwise prominent figures.

2- François de Laval in court

For several years now, the Commission de la capitale nationale du Québec (CCNQ) has been running a series of lecture-performances titled *Le Tribunal de l'histoire* [The courtroom of history]. The subject of the mock trial held on December 16 last year was François de Laval and the Séminaire de Québec. Historian Jean-Marie Lebel was invited to testify as an expert witness, and Rev. Gilles Routhier, dean of the Faculty of theology and religious studies at Université Laval, gave a presentation on the spiritual life of Québec's first bishop. Following the performance, the audience was invited to vote (either on-site or on-line) on the following question: "Was Msgr François de Laval the right man for the situation?" The result: 96% of respondents said yes!

3- Following his path

The Corporation du patrimoine et du tourisme religieux de Québec (CPTRQ) invites school or parish groups of all sizes to immerse themselves in the various sites of Old Québec where François de Laval once frequented. Through a two-hour circuit, participants have an opportunity to see and understand the day-to-day life of the founder of our Church, the many challenges he faced and his various accomplishments.

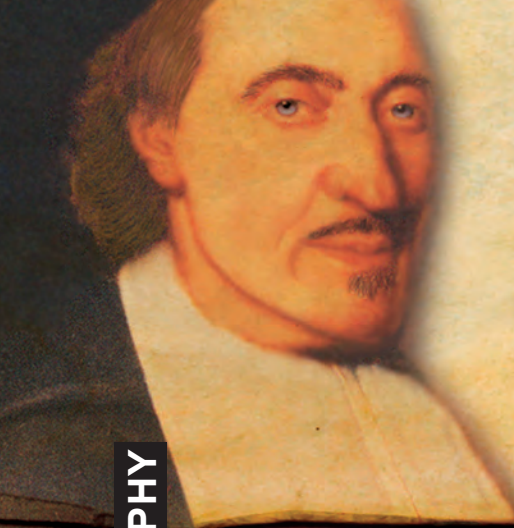


4- Msgr de Laval as part of the Day for Consecrated Life

On Sunday, February 2, 2014, members of the clergy, along with nuns and the consecrated, gathered at the Saints-Martyrs-Canadiens Church of Québec to mark the World Day for Consecrated Life. The theme of the event was "Because of us... religious life at the heart of 350 years of history". To the joy and surprise of those present, the event began with a welcome to various figures who had played prominent roles in founding the Québec Church: Msgr François de Laval, Marie de l'Incarnation, Mary Catherine of St. Augustine, a Récollet and a Jesuit.

5- Retreat for permanent deacons in the Québec City diocese

On November 12 last year, the permanent deacons in the Québec City diocese received a full day of training on the topic François de Laval through his own story - history of the first Catholic diocese in America. Three speakers were invited: Gilles Bureau, Sr. Doris Lamontagne and Canon Jacques Lemieux (photographed above, delivering his talk).



François

evêque de Québec



ICONOGRAPHY

An icon written on François de Laval

In 1992, Gilberte Massicotte-Éthier wrote an icon on François de Laval, which she donated to the Petit Séminaire de Québec Foundation. The icon depicts the bishop at prayer; his head, surrounded by a halo, represents the Church's recognition of his virtues, with the Byzantine tradition reflected in the use of gilding and inclusion of his name. Jesus, Mary and Joseph are depicted on the frame, thus highlighting his devotion to the Holy Family. The oak leaves represent François de Laval's strength and determination.

(Source: *François de Laval et son époque [François de Laval and his era]*, 2011, p. 225)



(Photo: Daniel Abeil)



In the words of Monsignor de Laval

Sowing the seed of God's Word will bear fruit - but it takes patience. A lack of patience can be dangerous: Those who exhaust all their energy at the start will ultimately become discouraged and give up.



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December 2014