

Immaculate Conception Parish West Arichat, Isle Madame

Parish History

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IMMACULATE CONCEPTION PARISH West Arichat, Nova Scotia

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Arichat is situated at the south of Isle Madame. The name is a corruption of the Micmac word “Ligsag” or “Niligsag”, meaning Split Rock. Nearly four miles westward is West Arichat, whose Micmac name, “Ligsagatjitjg”, means Little Split Rock. In English, West Arichat was known as Little Arichat until 1866, when the name was changed by an Act of Parliament to Acadiaville. Both names seem to have been used thereafter until the eighteen-eighties, when the name West Arichat began to appear. This second change was probably made because of confusion with the village of Acadiaville in Kent County, New Brunswick, whose Catholic parish was established in 1887.

Bishop Plessis of Quebec, visiting Isle Madame in 1812, wrote in his official diary:

In the language of the people the eastern part is called Grand Narichaque, and the western part Little Narichaque. It is inhabited by Acadians, and its settlement goes back only forty years.

If the bishop’s statement is correct the date of settlement of Isle Madame would be about 1772.

The first priest who lived at West Arichat was Father Jean Baptiste Allain, a French émigré who had had to flee from St. Pierre and Miquelon to the Magdalene Islands in 1792. Afflicted with asthma, he came to live with his fellow émigré, Father Lejamtel, at Arichat in September 1798 and went to live in a “country house” at West Arichat, where he ministered spiritually to those who were able to come to him and also taught the children in as far as his health would permit him to do so. He returned to the Magdalene Islands in the summer of 1808. West Arichat remained an integral part of the parish of Arichat until 1863.

A civil census of “Little Arichat” taken in 1811 gives the number of heads of households as fifty. Twenty family names are listed and it is to be noted that the spelling given by the enumerator is not always that in use today. In the list, Boudrot is the name of 9 heads of households and LeBlanc of 7. Forgeron and Richard are listed 4 times, and Munier and Terrieau 3 times. The following six names are listed twice each: Boutin, Dugat, Forêt, Giroir, Landry, and Stapleton; and the remaining eight names appear each only once: Fougère, Jauffrêt, Le Jeune, Poirier, Roy, Sacalot, Samson and Vigniot.

“Old Timer”, who has published interesting and informative articles; on Isle Madame in the “Richmond County Record”, states in one of them that:

The parish of West Arichat is composed of the settlements of West Arichat, Port Royal, Martinique, and Janvrin’s Harbour, the latter being settled mostly by people of English descent.

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Bishop Colin Francis MacKinnon, in his first pastoral letter, issued on 27 February 1852, the day of his consecration as second Bishop of Arichat wrote:

A diocesan seminary, even on a small scale, is among the first cares of a bishop consequently it will receive our earliest and most serious attention. According as our means will allow us, other institutions shall be founded for the education of the rising generation, to correspond with the requirements and progress of the age in which we live.

Six weeks later the bishop wrote to the Cardinal Prefect of the Propaganda in Rome and said:

In our whole Diocese there is not a single Catholic Grammar School outside the one established at St. Andrew's. [MacKinnon had established it himself in 1838, the year after he became pastor of that parish]. In addition to having to build churches and establish missions, it will be necessary to begin a seminary at once at Arichat. Then, to promote the education of the numerous youth of our parts, we shall have to found two establishments—one for the Christian Brothers and the other for the order of the Sisters of Charity. If these establishments are well conducted they will do much good. But we lack the means necessary for the realization of plans of such importance. We hope that God will move in our favour the hearts of those upon whom He has imposed the duty of distributing to the most needy the favours of his Divine Providence.

At the time Hubert Girroir, destined to attempt great things for the benefit of the Acadian people, was a seminarian in minor orders.

Bishop MacKinnon took up his residence at Arichat in May 1853. He there established the seminary two months later and the convent of the Congregation nuns in 1856, but he did not at once realize his project of bringing Christian Brothers to Arichat.

GIRROIR: The first native Acadian priest of the present Diocese of Antigonish became the first resident pastor of West Arichat. He was Father Hubert Girroir, who was born at Tracadie, N.S., in 1825 (just before the founding there of the Trappist Monastery of Petit Clairvaux). He was a student from 22 November 1841 to 22 November 1842 at St. Mary's College, Halifax, which had first opened its doors on 1 January 1840, and then for one year at Tracadie under its pastor, Father Louis Modeste Anssart (who was drowned while on a sick-call to Pomquet on 13 February 1844). Young Hubert went to Quebec in 1844 (when John Cameron went to Rome) and he spent nine years there, the first six in the Minor Seminary and the rest in the Major Seminary of Quebec. He was ordained in Quebec on 19 February 1853 and he served as assistant for six months at Levis, P.Q., and six months at the Cathedral of Arichat. He became rector of the Cathedral, under Bishop MacKinnon, in January 1854, when he was twenty-eight years and six months old.

Father Girroir was a zealous apostle for the spread of education among the Acadians of eastern Nova Scotia and he gladly seconded the educational endeavours of his bishop. Throughout his life he worked resolutely for the betterment of his fellow Acadians, trying to overcome great obstacles, which included not only a lack of facilities for the French instruction of boys but also a lamentable and discouraging apathy on the part of the people themselves in the matter of acquiring an education. He saw—and he told them—that without education they could never compete economically, socially or politically with their neighbours of other national descents, and that without education they could not hope to produce from their own ranks a sufficient

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supply of French-speaking priests or give to the Church within a reasonable time an Acadian bishop.

At Arichat Father Girroir was a father and friend to the Sisters of the Congregation of Notre Dame and it was mainly through his efforts that Les Frères des Écoles Chrétiennes came from Montreal to the parish to teach its boys. An Arichat news item dated June 14, 1857, said, "It is expected that very soon a Society of Christian Brothers will be established in this town." In July 1858 Bishop MacKinnon left Arichat and took up his residence in St. Francis Xavier College, Antigonish, of which institution he also acted as rector, succeeding Dr. John Cameron who, however, continued as pastor of the parish of Antigonish. At Arichat the bishop, in his reply to a farewell address, said that his sole motive for going to Antigonish then was his desire to promote more efficaciously the general good of religion. He said that a bishop's mitre, though studded with gems, was a crown of pains and labours, and he announced that, upon the cessation of the circumstances which were now calling him away, he was firmly resolved to return to Arichat, where he had spent a tranquil and happy sojourn of five years. He ended by alluding to Father Hubert as a pastor "who most deservedly had acquired your confidence and esteem."

The Brothers from Montreal began teaching the boys of Arichat Academy in 1860, and the provincial report of the Academy for that calendar year names Rev. H. Girroir as principal and four Brothers as professors. The bishop referred to the Brothers officially in a report he sent to Rome on 9 December 1861. In it he listed their school and the girls' school taught by the nuns, and he said:

These two institutions have fully attained the end we hoped for, namely, the Christian and civil education of the numerous youth, both boys and girls, of our episcopal see {Arichat}. The civil government contributes an annual grant towards the maintenance of this dual institution. These schools are under the direction of the bishop and the pastor of the town.

If this is a true statement of the bishop's opinion of the efforts of the Brothers and of Father Girroir at that time, he seems to have changed his opinion within the following year and a half; for, in a letter to the Prefect of the Propaganda dated 7 June 1863, the Bishop referred to "the abnormal condition of the Church in the town of Arichat" and he said also:

...we need only commit the principal charge of that parish to another prudent priest as pastor. With this simple remedy, we have every reason to hope that the peace and progress of religion in the town of Arichat will be adequately provided for.

There is no documentation to show what justification the bishop had for his derogatory statement about the Arichat parish, nor is there any written indication that he had begun so early to succumb (as he finally did) to the heavy burdens of his episcopal task. An article in the weekly newspaper, THE CASKET, of July 30, 1863, describes the excellent showing made by the girls and the boys of the two Arichat schools under the direction respectively of the Congregation nuns and the Brothers of the Christian Schools; and it goes on to say:

Already there is a branch establishment, another new convent, lately completed at Little Arichat, where schools for the female youth of the place are now open and in full operation, conducted by some of the ladies from the nunnery of Big Arichat. A large church is also, I believe, to be immediately commenced there, together with schools to be conducted by the Christian Brothers, as at Big Arichat, and the carrying out of all these contemplated and most needed works is, I

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understand, to be entrusted by His Lordship the Bishop to the management of the good Father Gerroir (aic) who, judging from his past wonderful efforts in forwarding similar works before at Big Arichat, will, with God's help, bring them to a successful termination.

Little Arichat was one of the many places in which Bishop MacKinnon wanted to get a school established. In March 1854 he assembled the leading men to that village, pointed out to them the disadvantages under which they were labouring through the lack of adequate education, and urged them to set up a school. They immediately appointed a committee who soon obtained a subscription of 110 12s 6d, with some of the seafaring men subscribing from ten to twelve pounds each. The committee planned the erection of a schoolhouse which was to be 30 feet long by 25 wide and 14 feet post, and they hoped to have the establishment ready to receive teacher and pupils by the first of September of that year. There is no reason to doubt the completion of the project, but we have no record yet at hand to prove the fact.

In 1862, evidently under the direction of Father Girroir of Arichat, the people of Little Arichat built a school building which was to be used as a convent. The next year (1863) the Congregation nuns came to teach in the new building, the first teachers being Sister Sainte-Mélanie and Sister Saint-Romuald. The convent annals say:

The convent land belonged to the Bishop. Since the house was a public school, it belonged to the school section, but the nuns were to have its use as long as they worked in the parish. All the furniture belonged to the nuns, and the two persons who worked hardest to procure it for them were Madame Desire Leblanc and Madame Forest.

The first experience of the two Sisters in Little Arichat was the discovery that their house was haunted. Each night the residence became alive with the clanking of chains and the sound of deep groans. One winter midnight the noise reached a climax. Suddenly, one of the Sisters saw a ghostly figure bending over her companion's bed. Terrified, they dashed out of the house barefoot and in night attire, and made their way to their nearest neighbour, Madame Leblanc. The following day the Sisters' habits were fetched in a basket by Madame's servant-girl. The house was abandoned and eventually torn down, for no one would either rent it or buy it.

“Old Timer”, from one of whose articles in the “Richmond County Record” we have already quoted, says:

It is presumed that the first church was located on the site of the present Knights of Columbus Hall, as it is known that this building was used first as a church and later as a combined convent and private school. Similarly the location of the first presbytery...is presumed to have been on the site of the present one...

In 1911 Miss Sabine Rose Le Blanc, teacher (later Mrs. J.H. Poirier), wrote:

In 1862, ...the Convent which is today the public school, was built by the parishioners and the upper story was dedicated for their religious services until the required means could be procured to erect a suitable building; the lower story was occupied as an educational institution by those Reverend Mother...the Brothers of the Christian Schools came, but remained only three years, teaching, at first, where Captain W.E. Le Blanc now lives and then below the hill at Mr. Mouchet's. (now my home)

In the summer of 1863 Dr. John Cameron was transferred from Antigonish to Arichat and Father Girroir became the first resident pastor of Little Arichat. The change took effect on 3 August,

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which is therefore the anniversary date of the present parish of West Arichat. The titular saint of the new parish was St. Hubert, eighth century founder and bishop of the city of Liège, Belgium. The choosing, or granting, of the name by Bishop MacKinnon was probably a gesture of goodwill, or palliation, towards the new pastor. But Father Hubert derived little comfort from the intended compliment, and his keen disappointment seems to be reflected in the statement which his close friend, Senator Pascal Poirier, wrote in later years: "He was violently banished to Acadiaville, a little parish not yet organized." The official records of Les Frères des Ecoles Chrétiennes, in Montreal, contain the following paragraph:

Arichat (*1860-66). The Arichat community, made up of three members, was the first to be opened in the Maritime Provinces. It lasted only six years, and its superiors were Brothers Austin and Leo. Because the Brother's would not agree to undergo the official examinations, the school passed into the charge of secular masters in 1866.

The Roman documents on the case show that the Brothers' dissatisfaction came to a head with the passing of Tupper's "Free Schools" act in 1864, which stipulated among other things that the headmaster of a school must be a teacher duly qualified, through written and oral examinations, to teach in Nova Scotia. Because none of the Brothers was so qualified, they had to teach from 1864 onward under a lay headmaster (who received a provincial salary of \$600). In the autumn of 1865 they notified the Arichat rector, Doctor Cameron, that they could not continue to teach under a master who was not a member of their religious institute. Bishop MacKinnon then wrote on behalf of the school to the superior general of the Brothers, in Montreal; but the answer he received was that the rule of the institute prohibited the Brothers from teaching Latin and Greek, and that the bishop must either forgo the government grant of money or lose the services of all the Brothers. The Protestants of Isle Madame, in a petition to the government, stated that they were ready to meet the statutory requirements and to take over the Academy. The bishop was unwilling to deprive his Catholic children of the advantages the school was depriving them, and he regretfully allowed the Brothers to depart.

The details of the case are stated in a similar way in letters of Father Girroir filed in the Public Archives of Nova Scotia. The priest's ardent zeal for the progress of his people commands the admiration of all dispassionate readers and evokes a regret that his efforts were rendered ineffectual by an absence of the spirit of full co-operation which one naturally expects to see existing between a bishop and his priests. Father Girroir, in his letters to the Nova-Scotian Premier, Charles Tupper, states that the Brothers were qualified under Quebec laws and he asked that they be given an equivalent recognition in Nova Scotia with the necessity of undergoing public oral examinations (which had to be answered in the English language.) His letter of March 12, 1866, to the Premier ends with the pathetic paragraph:

It seems to me that there is a fatality attached to the Acadian race; for since thirteen years that I have been in public life, I have worked like a man at my post, beggared myself for the education of the country, and, the moment that matters were assuming a fair state of existence, here comes a death blow that blasts all my anticipations.

It seems that, whenever an Acadian community is on the point of taking a position among others, there must be something to thwart the efforts of many years. God help us! Nevertheless, my confidence in you, Hon. Sir, will come to our rescue by granting us what we justly expect.

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As mentioned above, 1866 was the year in which the place-name Little Arichat was changed by law to Acadiaville. With the bishop's consent, three of the Brothers from Arichat remained at Acadiaville, under the protection of Father Girroir, who wanted to force his parishioners to send their sons to the Brothers' school. Unfortunately, not all of the parents were willing to do so. Those who lived in the district called Big Brook formed a section according to the civil law and established a school distinct from that of the Brothers. They soon were at open war with their pastor and the Brothers of Acadiaville.

Bishop MacKinnon visited the parish of Acadiaville in the summer of 1866 and was at once approached by delegates of the contending factions. He found that the pastor, after three years, had no other church than the garret of the Sisters' convent. He also found that the parish was burdened with a debt of 500 sterling. Lastly he found the parish to be divided into two groups, one of which was determined to build a large house to serve as a school for the Brothers. The pastor was at the head of this group. The other group wanted first to begin the building of a parish church. The bishop and Dr. John Cameron (who had been appointed vicar general in 1865 but was still rector of Arichat) decided the question in favour of the second group, and the bishop instructed the pastor to make preparations for the erection of the new church for the parish, and to be satisfied for the present with the schoolhouse which the Brothers already had. The Bishop also selected the site where the new church was to be built, and bought with his own money a piece of land in the vicinity of the church to be used as a cemetery. Finally he donated to the parish the sum of 24 15s 5d, which was the amount contributed by the Acadiaville parishioners to the Society for the Propagation of the Faith during the winter of 1865-66. The pastor promised to carry out the bishop's instructions.

The Brothers believed they were being persecuted and in this idea they were seconded by the pastor and the group of parishioners who supported him. The people of Big Brook remained loyal to the bishop. Disputes and quarrels grew between the opposing groups and the matter was bitterly discussed, both outside and inside the temporary parish church. Despite the bishop's veto a large house arose, destined to be the Brothers' school.

Seeking to establish peace and harmony, the bishop offered Father Girroir a choice of two other parishes, notifying him at the same time that on Sunday, 2 June 1867, he was to be replaced as pastor of Acadiaville by a priest who was also of French descent. Father Girroir was so disappointed and incensed by the bishop's notification that he appealed to the judgment of the Most Reverend Thomas L. Connolly, Archbishop of Halifax. On Ascension Day (30 May that year) he preached against the bishop and the bishop's supporters, and he presided over a meeting at which the people present resolved not to accept any priest but him as their pastor and to keep the garret-church and the parish house closed until a favourable decision of the case should be received by them from Rome. The new pastor (whose name is not mentioned in the documents) arrived on the appointed day but found the parish buildings closed against him. At the same time, Father Girroir, together with the Brothers, set out for Halifax whether he had been invited by Archbishop Connolly.

The foregoing statement of the case is taken from the official reports sent in to the Prefect of the Propaganda, Rome, by Bishop MacKinnon and by his vicar general, Doctor Cameron. It does not agree in all details with the versions given by those who have written, after many years, in

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support of Father Giroir and his zealous efforts on behalf of the preservation of the French language in Nova Scotia. One such author—who renamed the pastor “Giroir (Girouard)”—told of the setting up of the Brothers’ school at Arichat and continued:

The English (-speaking people) of eastern Nova Scotia were alarmed at this dangerous threat and appealed to Monsignor MacKinnon, Bishop of Arichat; in 1863, they obtained the closing of the school and the removal of Father Giroir, who went to take charge of a mission “in the backwoods”, the future parish of Acadiaville (West Arichat). With the pastor of Arichat gone, his proteges, the Brothers of the Christian Schools, left also, and the Canso district saw itself freed from the threat of French education.

The historical sketch of West Arichat written by Miss Sabine Rose LeBlanc in 1911 and already quoted above contains the following further details:

A few young men left with them to consecrate themselves as Brothers of that Mission founded by the glorious St. John Baptist de la Salle. The Christian Brothers having left, the boys had to continue their work with Mr. Boyle, not being allowed to attend the Convent school. Before long, the public school-house was burnt, and in order to continue the boys’ classes a building was bought by the section and placed on a lot of land a few yards east of the church.

By way of parenthesis it may here be recorded that the Brothers, at the invitation of Archbishop Connolly, taught in Halifax, in various public schools, until 29 April 1876, when their superior general recalled them to Montreal; and that Father Giroir, after a short period of dissatisfaction, renewed his generous loyalty to his bishop and gave valuable service to the diocese, as pastor first of Cheticamp and later of Havre Boucher. The nobility and true Catholic spirit of the priest can be judged from the following excerpt of a letter written in 1865 to the Cardinal Prefect of the Propaganda in which Father Giroir generously recommended for the mitre the priest, Doctor Cameron, who had supplanted him, only two years before, as rector of Arichat:

In all that concerns the Catholic religion, I always want to see a bishop or a priest who is a Roman Catholic before being an Irishman, or Scot, or Frenchman. We are not Irish Catholics, or Scottish Catholics, or French Catholics, but Roman Catholics, and we look upon Pius IX as our common father. That is what I understand by being a real Catholic. Away with gallicism and other isms, except real Catholicism established today on the rock represented by the immortal Pius IX.

Father Anselme Chiasson, Capuchin, in his “Chéticamp, Histoire et Traditions Acadiennes”, pp. 141-142, has given a fine appreciation of Father Giroir.

For a few months after Father Giroir’s departure the Acadiaville church (which was still the upper story of the convent) remained locked, but Father Magloire Turcotte ministered to the people, at least in emergencies, from about the first of August until the middle of October 1867, when he went to River Bourgeois. He was born in the Province of Quebec and was not an Acadian. He had served in many dioceses before coming to Cape Breton.

2. **FOURNIER:** The second resident pastor of St. Hubert’s Parish, Acadiaville, was Father Louis Romuald Fournier. Born at Vaudreuil, P.Q., in 1828, he was ordained in 1852 and served eleven years and a half in his native province. He became pastor of Margaree 4 December 1863 and of Cheticamp in June 1866, where he remained until 15 October 1867. He then became pastor of Acadiaville. In 1911 Miss Sabine Rose wrote of him:

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A story goes today among the old parishioners of West Arichat that one day this good curate climbed up the pulpit and impressively declared to his attentive listeners that, if the sacrifice of his own life could remove the trouble between the people and the authorities of the church, we would be perfectly satisfied to die in a month's time. A few days later he took sick and, exactly thirty days after he had preached to the people, he expired, and miraculously, a settlement followed which has been maintained ever since. Reverend John Cameron, then coadjutor to Bishop MacKinnon, publicly declared this event as a miracle, and expressed his opinion of the saintliness of the late Reverend Fournier whose remains were brought to Arichat and laid to rest under the Cathedral.

3. RACINE: Father Fournier died at Acadiaville on 10 April 1870, which in that year was Palm Sunday, and was buried at Arichat. He was succeeded at Acadiaville by another priest from the Province of Quebec, Father Joseph Samuel Racine, who was ordained on 16 June 1867 and was a professor on the staff of St. Thérèse College before coming to Arichat as assistant in September 1869. He was pastor of St. Hubert's Parish, Acadiaville, for only eight months, but under his guidance lumber was bought and the site prepared for the erection of the first parish church. In the winter he contracted a severe malady which caused his death and he was buried on the site where the church was to be built. A mural tablet in Immaculate Conception Church bears the following inscription:

Rev. Joseph Samuëll Racine, aged 27 years, 6 months, 3 days
Ordained 16 June 1867 Died 23 January 1871

4. ETHIER: The fourth resident pastor of St. Hubert's Parish, Acadiaville, was another priest from the Province of Quebec, Father Joseph Etienne Ethier. He was ordained in Montreal on 4 August 1867 and was a fellow professor with Father Fournier on the staff of St. Thérèse College before coming to Cape Breton. He became pastor of Acadiaville in April 1871 and remained in charge of the parish for seven years and seven months, the longest pastorate in the parish in the nineteenth century. It was during his pastorate that the present church was built. It was also during his pastorate that the first native of the parish was raised to the priest. The new priest was Father Pierre Forgeron, son of Constant Forgeron and Victoria LeBlanc. He was born 9 December 1846, studied at St. Francis Xavier University, Antigonish, and the Seminary of Quebec, and was ordained on 26 July 1874. He was the seventh native Acadian to be ordained for the diocese. Father Ethier's last record in the registers of Acadiaville parish is dated 19 November 1878, after which he was pastor of L'Ardoise until the end of October 1883. (There for four years, as we shall see, he taught and guided the young Amable Monbourquette). He returned to the diocese of Montreal on 19 November 1883 after having given thirteen and a half of faithful service to the diocese of Arichat. We shall have occasion later to mention his death.

Three diocesan events of importance occurred about this time. Bishop Cameron succeeded Bishop MacKinnon in charge of the diocese in 1877, moved from Arichat to Antigonish in 1880 and had the name of the diocese changed by Rome to the Diocese of Antigonish in 1886.

5. TALBOT: Father Guillaume (or William) Talbot succeeded Father Ethier as pastor of Acadiaville. He too was a native of Quebec province and had there practiced law for many years. He was tonsured by Bishop Langevin at Rimouski on 12 June 1877 and was ordained priest on some date within the next seventeen months. He became the fifth resident pastor of

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Acadiaville on 27 November 1878 and was then in the fifty-sixth year of his age. In the oldest extant register of the parish he wrote (in French):

The church was solemnly blessed by His Lordship Monsignor John Cameron, Bishop of the Diocese, under the title of the Immaculate Conception of the Most Blessed Virgin Mary, on Quinquagesima Sunday of 1880, in the presence of the Reverend James M. Quinan, the Reverend Dr. Joseph S. Quinan and me, the present pastor. The register of this parish of Acadiaville (West Arichat) was burned...in a fire which destroyed the presbytery and its contents on the first of January 1881.

Quinquagesima in 1880, the day the church was blessed, fell on 8 February. Father Talbot's last entry in the parish registrar is dated 6 May 1882. On 15 June of that year he joined the Trappists in Petit Clairvaux Monastery at Monastery, N.S., and was given the religious name Father Joseph.

6. NADEAU: Immaculate Conception Parish was served for five months from Arichat by Father James M. Quinan, until the arrival of the sixth resident pastor, Father Louis Ernest Nadeau. He was born at Riviere du Loup, P.Q., on 21 December 1850, was educated at Quebec and was ordained there on 25 March 1876 by Archbishop Taschereau (who later became the first Canadian Cardinal). Father Nadeau was assistant in St. Roch Parish, Quebec, for six years, and became pastor of Immaculate Conception Parish, Acadiaville, on 1 October 1882. During the four years of his pastorate he built the globe house (or presbytery) and repaired the church. In the year 1884 he and his parishioners mourned the deaths of three of the former pastors. Father Hubert Girroir, the first pastor, died at Havre Boucher on 25 January 1884 and was buried in that parish. Father Ethier and his immediate successor, Father Talbot, died on the same day, 6 August 1884. Father Ethier was accidentally drowned at Valleyfield, P.Q., and Father Talbot, who had become Father Joseph, O.C.R., died in Petit Clairvaux Monastery. (Another singular coincidence is the fact the Father Nadeau himself and another later pastor of West Arichat died just fifty years later—in 1934). The annals of the Acadiaville convent contain the following paragraph:

In 1886 the house was greatly in need of repairs, but where was the necessary money to be found. With no resources of their own, and not wishing to make an appeal to the people who were already poor, our Sisters were on the point of leaving. But the pastor, Father L.F.E. Nadeau, who understood the real value of the education that was being given to his children, appealed to his parishioners and the sum of \$1300 was granted to pay for the most urgent repairs.

Father Nadeau himself Acadiaville on 20 September 1886 and returned to the city of Quebec, where he spent the rest of his long life as an outstanding educationalist, in the Minor and Major Seminaries and in the University of Laval. (The present writer knew him there, from 1920 to 1924, as an aging gentleman of distinguished bearing who was kind to all students, particularly to the younger ones).

7. BOURGEOIS: Within the next four months Immaculate Conception Parish had two successive pastors, both of whom were Acadians. The former was Father Phileas Frederic Bourgeois, M.A., who was born at Memramcook, New Brunswick, 17 November 1885, took his vows as a member of the Congregation of the Holy Cross in 1877 and was ordained at Moncton 25 September 1879. He was a college professor for three years and during that time, in 1881, he

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also obtained a Master's degree in Arts from Laval University, Quebec. From 1882 to 1890 he did parish work in Nova Scotia, and then returned to his religious congregation, in which he wrote and published many pedagogical and historical works in French. He died at Memramcook 3 April 1913. Father Bourgeois had charge of Mainadieu for three years before coming to Acadiaville, where he was resident pastor for scarcely two months, his records in the register extending only from 8 October to 21 November 1886. From Acadiaville he went to Havre Boucher.

8. FORGERON: The first native of Isle Madame to become pastor of Immaculate Conception Parish was Father Pierre Forgeron, who, as we have seen, was also a native of the parish. After his ordination in 1874 he gave pastoral service at Margaree, Ingonish, and Havre Boucher, being succeeded in the last-named parish by Father Bourgeois. Father Forgeron's records in the Acadiaville register begin on 1 December 1886 and end on 31 December 1887. His last assignment was at Bridgeport, where he died on 21 December 1892. He was buried in the old cemetery at Dominion, which was then part of the Bridgeport parish. He was well versed in church music and trained several choirs.

After the departure of Father Forgeron there was an interregnum of four or five months during which time Father James M. Quinan of Arichat and his assistant, Father Cleomene Lafont, ministered to the spiritual wants of the people, and the Acadiaville nuns went every Friday afternoon to Arichat for their weekly confession, Sunday Mass and other exercises of piety. On Monday mornings they returned to Acadiaville. During that period Father Quinan and the pastor of Descousse, Dr. Angus Chishol, instructed thirty-two Acadiaville children and admitted them to their First Holy Communion.

We have already noticed the gradual introduction of the place-name West Arichat, so we shall, for the sake of consistency use that name from this point on in our narration.

9. BEATON: The ninth resident pastor of Immaculate Conception Parish, West Arichat, was Father Alexander Beaton, a Cape Breton priest of Scottish descent who spoke the three principal languages then used in the diocese of Antigonish. There seems to have been a mutual respect and love between him and the West Arichat People if one can draw such a conclusion from the fact that he was pastor there twice. He was born at South West Mabou 8 December 1856, and made his college course at St. Francis Xavier University, Antigonish, but taught school before graduating in 1884. He studied theology at the Sulpician Grand Seminary of Montreal and was ordained in Petit Clairvaux Monastery, Monastery, N.S., by Bishop John Cameron 29 June 1887. He was pastor of Immaculate Conception Parish, West Arichat, the first time from 1 August 1887 to 15 October 1889. When he had been there only six months he became an involuntary participant in an event recalling the medieval right of sanctuary. We shall give here a newspaper account, quoting it verbatim but with fictitious names instead of the real ones. The news item was sent in from Arichat on 16 January 1888 and it reads:

Police Constable Robert Peel went to West Arichat yesterday to arrest under a warrant Jean Valjean for assaulting and beating a constable. He found his man in the church and at the close of divine worship proceeded to arrest him. Valjean resisted and a number of the congregation came to his rescue and beat the constable off, chasing him from the church and belabouring him with sticks. The constable found refuge in the Glebe House, while the crowd remained outside,

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threatening and demanding of the priest that he be given up to them. The priest refused to surrender him and after a while the constable effected a safe retreat. This morning a warrant was issued for the arrest of twelve of the culprits, and three have thus far been secured and lodged in jail. The affair created a great deal of excitement here and at West Arichat.

It will be noticed that the account twice refers to the village as West Arichat. In October 1889 Father Beaton went as pastor to Havre Boucher, where he succeeded Father Bourgeois. It is interesting to note that, between 1875 and 1895, the four priests who were pastors of Havre Boucher – Fathers Girroir, Forgeron, Bourgeois and Beaton – served, before or after, as pastors of West Arichat.

10. MONBOURQUETTE: The tenth resident pastor, Father Amable Evariste Monbourquette, was the fourth Acadian priest to have charge of the parish. He was born at Lower L'Ardoise in 1863, and got his early high school and college training from Father Ethier in the L'Ardoise glebe house, from 1879 to 1883. He earned an M.A. degree at St. Joseph's College, Memramcook, N.B., in 1885, and did his philosophy and theology in the Sulpician seminaries in Montreal, gaining the degree of Bachelor of Theology in 1889. He was ordained in St. Ninian's Cathedral, Antigonish (together with the late Father William F. Kiely) by Bishop John Cameron on 20 October 1889, and took charge as pastor of Immaculate Conception Parish, West Arichat, exactly two weeks later—on Sunday, 3 November. Exactly a year and a day later, his neighbour, Dr. Angus Chisholm, pastor of D'Escousse, wrote in his diary:

We drove down to see Father Monbourquette of West Arichat. Our visit was not a very joyous one. Father M. has received word from the Bishop to pack up his trunks and be down by next Sunday at Port Felix...It is natural that he should not like the idea of moving so soon— he has been only a year at W. Arichat— and that he should find it hard to leave so cosy and convenient a parish.

Father Monbourquette's last record at West Arichat is dated 6 November 1890. Always dependable, he served in five successive parishes during the first eighteen years of his priesthood, became pastor of Arichat on 1 November 1907 and governed that parish for a few days more than thirty-eight years. In 1939 his parishioners and his brother priests celebrated at Arichat the Golden Jubilee of his priesthood. He resigned his parish in 1945 and died at Arichat 23 July 1949. He had been a pastor for fifty-six years and a priest for nearly sixty. He was buried at Arichat. The Acadian people owe him a great deal.

In May 1885 Bishop Cameron had been sent by Pope Leo XIII as an Apostolic Commissioner to execute the Roman decree for the division of the diocese of Trois-Rivières, P.Q., as a result of which the diocese of Nicolet was established on 10 July following, with Monsignor Elphege Gravel as first bishop. This commission of Bishop Cameron was alluded to by Doctor Chisholm of D'Escousse in his diary, where he wrote: "Father Monbourquette is to be succeeded at W. Arichat by a Monsieur Béliveau from Nicolet Diocese. Bishop Gravel who is under obligation to Bp. Cameron lends the latter a priest for a time." The diary entry for 7 November 1890 contains the statement: "First Friday of the month...Received a note from Father Quinan which informs me that Father Béliveau arrived at West Arichat this morning. Instead of being a young curate as he had expected, Father Q. found him to be a man of middle age—over fifty—who has seen Service both in Canada and the United States."

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11. BÉLIVEAU: The full name of the eleventh resident pastor of West Arichat was Gédéon Béliveau. Born at St. Grégoire, near Nicolet, P.Q., 9 April 1836, he was a French Canadian but his great-grandfather was one of the Acadians expelled in 1755. Gédéon studied at Nicolet College from 1853 to 1858, and was ordained at Nicolet 22 September 1861. He was fifty-four years of age when he came to West Arichat and his records there extend from 8 November 1890 to 21 May 1891. He returned then to the Diocese of Nicolet and died either in 1896 or on 11 September 1910. At West Arichat there followed another interregnum of nearly five months, during which the First Communion class was prepared by Dr. Chisholm of Descousse and Father James M. Quinan of Arichat, and emergency ministrations were given by Father Quinan until the end of July, and thereafter by his assistant, the newly ordained Father Moses Coady (uncle of Monsignor Moses M. Coady, D.D. founding director of the St. F.X. Extension Department).

12. MCNEIL: The twelfth resident pastor of Immaculate Conception Parish was a priest who later became known throughout all of Canada. He was Dr. Neil McNeil and his life story has been told by George Boyle in his book entitled "Pioneer in Purple". Born at Hillsboro, in Mabou parish, in 1851, he studied at St. Francis Xavier University, Antigonish, and at the Urban College, Rome, earning at the latter institution the degrees of Ph.D. and D.D. He was ordained in the basilica of St. John Lareran, Rome, on 12 April 1879, and he spent the next scholastic year doing postgraduate work at the University of Marseilles, France. In the summer of 1880 he came home and was assigned to the staff of St. F.X., first as a professor and later (in 1884) as rector. He was not only an outstanding educationalist and institutional administrator but also an eminent journalist. He founded "The Aurora" at Antigonish and edited it for the four and a half years of its run (1881-85), and he edited "The Casket" from 1890 to 1892 and was later a frequent contributor to its pages. His pastorate at West Arichat lasted only a year and a half—his records extending from 11 October 1891 to 25 April 1893—and he was transferred then to D'Escousse where typhoid had caused the death of the pastor, Father John N. MacLeod, six months before. Consecrated at Antigonish on 20 October 1895, he served as a bishop in Newfoundland and was an archbishop in Vancouver and Toronto. George Boyle's book contains the following quotation from a letter which the then Bishop McNeil wrote in 1900:

...I have had the advantage of some years' experience in French parishes which had been organized by French priests, and I do not think— I know there are many things of great spiritual benefit which are wanting in parishes organized by Irish and Scotch priests.

This difference I attribute to the effects of persecution, which are indeed disappearing, but which still exist...

Dr. McNeil's fluency in French was a result of his practice of that language at the Urban College in Rome and at the University of Marseilles, France.

13. MACPHERSON: Father Hugh Peter MacPherson was the thirteenth resident pastor of West Arichat. Born at Cloverville in the parish of Antigonish in 1867, he studied at St. Francis Xavier University, obtained his baccalaureate in Quebec. He was rated as one of the most brilliant students of that pioneer seminary's long history, and when he left its walls he was thoroughly conversant with the French language. He was ordained in the old chapel of St. F.X., Antigonish, by Bishop Cameron on the feast of the Assumption, 1892, and the next day became assistant at

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Arichat. Three months later he became assistant to his elder brother, Father Lauchlin, at L'Ardoise, and in March and April 1893 he looked after the parish of River Bourgeois, whose pastor, Father Donald J. Cameron, was dying of typhoid fever. Father H.P. MacPherson was pastor of West Arichat from 25 May 1893 to 13 October 1895, when he went as pastor to L'Ardoise, succeeding Father Lauchlin, who went to D'Escousse. His later career is well known. In 1906 he was awarded his D.D. degree by Laval University and became president of St. F.X. University, a position he occupied until 1936. He became vicar general to Bishop James Morrison in 1928 and was made a Protonota Apostolic in 1932, the first priest of the diocese to be given that high honour. He died at Antigonish 27 December 1949 and was buried at Antigonish.

A history of the Congregation nuns says they withdrew from West Arichat In 1894 and it contains the following paragraph:

The region of West Arichat was somewhat poor, and the Sisters suffered a good deal of hardship, but the people were generous and loyal. In 1892 the school had an enrollment of one hundred. By 1894 the registration had dropped to sixty-five. The gradual decrease in population made it feasible for the one convent at Arichat to teach the children of both regions, and after thirty-one years of service the {West Arichat} mission closed. ... When the {Arichat} convent closed in 1901 {on 25 August} because of the decreasing population and increasing financial difficulties, a chapter of pioneer history was at an end.

Sabine Rose Le Blanc gave a different date for the closing of the West Arichat convent and added another detail of the building's history. She wrote:

In the fall of 1895, the Congregation of Notre Dame Nuns returned to their Mother House at Montreal from where they never came back, to the general sorrow of the community. Subsequently the building was hired by the school-section and turned into a graded school with two departments.

The disappointment of the people (and of the nuns) was keen, but when the Arichat convent had been closed only sixteen months Divine Providence directed Les Filles de Jésus to Arichat and they occupied the convent on 24 December 1902. Since that time the beneficent influence of their work has spread to all the Acadian settlements of Cape Breton.

14. BEATON: The elevation of Dr. Neil McNeil to the episcopate in 1895 necessitated other changes among the clergy of Antigonish Diocese. Father Lauchlin MacPherson succeeded Dr. McNeil as D'Escousse and, as stated above, his younger brother, Father Hugh P. succeeded him at L'Ardoise. At West Arichat Father Hugh P. was succeeded by Father Alexander Beaton, who returned thence on 16 October 1895 from Havre Boucher. In this second pastorate Father Beaton remained until 27 May 1900, when failing health forced him to resign and go the warmer climate of Colorado. He died at Glenora Falls, Inverness County, N.S., September 1907 and was buried at Mabou.

In the first thirty-seven years of its existence, i.e., up to 1900, the parish of West Arichat had fourteen pastors (counting Father Beaton twice). In the remaining sixty-three years of its first hundred it has had but four pastors and one administrator. The parochial happenings of the twentieth century should still be fresh in the memories of most of the parishioners, so we shall not here recount them in detail.

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15. ROBITAILLE: The fifteenth resident pastor of Immaculate Conception Parish was Father Joseph Édouard Robitaille (elder brother of Father Pierre). Father Édouard was born at Ancienne-Lorette, P.Q., 29 April 1872, studied at the Seminary of Quebec, St. Laurent's College, Montreal, and St. Joseph's College, Memramcook, and was ordained at Antigonish by Bishop John Cameron 21 November 1899. On the same day he was appointed assistant at Arichat, and on 29 May 1900 became pastor of West Arichat, where he was destined to serve many years.

The sacrament of Confirmation was conferred by Bishop Cameron at regular intervals over the long period of thirty-three years. He died 6 April 1910, and for the next two years and four months the diocese was ruled as administrator by Dr. Hugh P. MacPherson, rector of St. F.X. University and former pastor of West Arichat. Then came Bishop James Morrison, who was consecrated on 4 September 1912 and ruled the diocese for thirty-seven years and four months.

The fiftieth anniversary of the founding of West Arichat parish fell on Sunday, 3 August 1913, but there seems to be no record of any celebration of the event. (The present custom of observing various milestones in the history of parishes and institutions was as yet unknown in the diocese).

In 1918 the pastor and his parishioners joined in the offering of the first Mass of Father Charles Joseph Forest who, thought born at Tracadie, N.S., was brought up and received his early education at West Arichat. He entered St. Anne's College at Church Point in 1909 and there obtained his B.A. in 1914; and he was ordained in Holy Heart Seminary, Halifax, on 29 June 1918. He served as pastor at Larry's River for thirty-five years and at Petit De Grat for seven. In 1953 he was awarded an honorary L.D. by St. F.X. University for his outstanding work in the co-operative movement. He died at Petit De Grat 22 August 1960 and was buried there, his being the first priest's funeral presided over by Bishop William Power, (who had taken charge of the diocese only a fortnight before).

On 28 September 1924 Father Robitaille, while retaining the pastorate of Immaculate Conception Parish, became manager of Mount Cameron Farm in Antigonish, then owned and operated by St. F.X. University, and in June 1925 he was given the degree of Doctor in the Science of Agriculture by Laval University, Quebec. In November 1927 he went as a missionary to Louisiana, where he worked for nearly a year before returning to Nova Scotia.

MAILLET Administrator: Father Theophilus Paul Maillet had charge of the parish as administrator while Father Robitaille was on leave of absence. Father Maillet was born at Chéticamp of Acadian parents on 5 February 1898 and made his studies at Cheticamp and Church Point and in Holy Heart Seminary, Halifax, being ordained there on 19 February 1922. He served as assistant two years at Cheticamp and six months at St. Joseph du Moine before coming to West Arichat as administrator on 28 September 1924. He was there until 1 October 1928, when he became pastor of Louisdale. He died suddenly at Antigonish on 20 November 1941 and was buried at Cheticamp.

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Father Robitaille returned from Louisiana and on 4 October 1928 resumed charge of West Arichat for nearly four more months, until 29 January 1929, when he again went to Louisiana. Later he went to the archdiocese of Edmonton. He died at Therien, Alberta, on 15 December 1955, and was buried at Ancian Lauritte.

16. BRIAND: The sixteenth pastor and the seventeenth priest to have charge of West Arichat parish was Father Amable Briand, who is now the senior priest in age in the diocese. Born at L'Ardoise 20 November 1881 (five days before the late Pope John XXIII), he studied at St. Anne's College, Church Point, and at Holy Heart Seminary, Halifax, and was ordained in Halifax 29 June 1911. He served as assistant at Whitney Pier, Glace Bay, Mulgrave, Port Hood, and Little Bras d'Or, and became pastor of Main-a-Dieu on 20 May 1920.

Father Briand took charge as pastor of West Arichat on 14 February 1929 (eight months before the stock market crash), and he guided his people through the dire days of the depression of the 'thirties'. In 1934 the parishioners received news of the deaths of two of their former pastors: Archbishop Neil McNeil, who died in Toronto on 25 May 1934, and Father Ernest Nadeau, who died in Quebec on 3 September 1934. In 1935, during Father Briand's pastorate, Conrad P. Girroir, native of West Arichat and graduate of Acadiaville School there, began at St. Francis Xavier University, Antigonish, the advanced studies of his education for the priesthood.

The economic conditions of West Arichat were mentioned by "Old Timer" in the "Richmond County Record" in the following paragraph:

During the boom days of the last half of the 1800's when ship building and trade were at their peaks in Isle Madame, West Arichat was a thriving community. Its economy declined with that of the rest of the Island in the 1900's and hit its low in the early 1930's. Attempting to better the economic condition of the people, a Credit Union was organized in 1936 and a Co-Operative store opened in 1937. During the Second World War conditions improved as they did in all other sections.

In 1939, Dr. M. M. Coady, Director of the St. F.X. Extension Department, wrote in his book, "Masters of Their Own Destiny", about the experiment made at West Arichat and Louisdale for the co-operative marketing and scientific cutting of pulpwood, and said that it could "change the whole status of the many people who own small woodlots in eastern Canada."

On 1 September 1943 Father Briand was transferred from West Arichat to Pomquet. He retired in 1961 after fifty years of active duty and is now residing in St. Martha's Hospital, Antigonish.

17. DOUCET: The present pastor, Father Albert Doucet, is a native of Grand Étang, in the parish of St. Joseph du Moine, Inverness County, N.S. He was educated at Ruisseau du Lac School, Sr. Anne's College, Church Point (where he took his B.A. degree in 1926), and Holy Heart Seminary, Halifax. He was ordained at Chéticamp (together with Father Ernest F. Chiasson) on 24 June 1931. He served as assistant at L'Ardoise for two years and at Mount Carmel Parish, New Waterford, for ten years, and he was administrator of Mount Carmel for ten weeks in the autumn of 1938. He has been pastor of Immaculate Conception Parish, West Arichat, since 1 September 1943, Diocesan Director of the Propagation of the Faith since 1950, and one of The Diocesan Consulters since 28 December 1960. He has also served as a member

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of the board of governors of St. Francis Xavier University. Two outstanding events in the life of the parish that may here be recorded were the ordination of Father Conrad P. Girroir in Halifax on 22 December 1945, and the coming of Les Filles de Jesus to teach in the parish and occupy Immaculate Conception Convent. The Sisters are thus observing, in the centenary year of the parish, their own tenth anniversary.

This article can best be concluded by a final quotation from the article on West Arichat which "Old Timer" published in the "Richmond County Record" of February 18, 1961. In it he wrote:

Each of the settlements has its own school. The one at West Arichat, built in 1957, has four departments, the one at Port Royal two departments and the ones at Martinique and Janvrin's Harbor one department each. Since 1953 Les Filles de Jesus have been teaching at West Arichat. The other schools employ lay teachers...

At present there are no major industries. A few shore fishermen, all with small boats, are engaged in the fishing industry. There is a certain amount of lumbering and farming, but on a rather small scale. Most of the economy of the place depends on the large fish processing plants at Petit de Grat and Mulgrave, where a number of the inhabitants are employed.

Although not a rich community by modern standards, West Arichat is nevertheless one of peace-loving people, living in well kept comfortable homes, as yet unspoiled by the hustle and bustle of our modern industrial society.

At the present time {February 1961} the parish serves the spiritual needs of 210 families, 185 of which are French, with an approximate population of 900.

Official diocesan statistics show that the population of West Arichat parish is gaining slowly but steadily. At the end of the year 1962 it had 212 families and 910 souls, which meant an increase of nine families and thirty souls since the end of the year 1954. At the end of 1962 the parish had 249 school children; and on an earlier page of this article we saw that in 1894 the number of girls attending the convent school had decreased in two years from 100 to 65. Since there would probably not have been as many boys as girls attending school in the parish, the total number of school children in 1894 would not have exceeded 130.

A.A. Johnston
July 5, 1963.

Doucet continued: In 1966 the sisters Les Filles de Jésus found it more practical to commute from Arichat than to maintain two convents and therefore closed the convent at West Arichat but continued to teach at Acadiaville School. Two sisters remained on staff at the school along with three lay full time teachers and three circuit until the school closed in June of 1984. The parish rented the convent building until 1979 and in 1981 due to its deteriorating condition along with the need for parking space at the church, the old convent was demolished.

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On the night of October 11-12, 1976 the original Immaculate Conception Church was destroyed by fire. The loss came as a terrific shock to the pastor (Fr. Doucet) and his parishioners. Fund raising drives were started immediately to replace the church and on August 8, 1977 construction started on the new church. Plans and drawings were done by an eighteen year old parishioner who had natural architectural abilities.

Construction and supervision were by local people. On August 26, 1978 the first mass was celebrated in the new church although it was not completely finished. This was the wedding mass of Blair Hill and Pearl Frank celebrated by Rev. Daniel Doucet of Petit de Grat. Fr. Albert Doucet was in hospital at the time.

On October 15, 1978, Bishop William E. Power officiated at the blessing of the new church. Fr. Albert Doucet was seriously ill in St. Martha's Hospital in Antigonish at the time and to his great sorrow was unable to attend. He did, however, write a message that was read at the opening by Fr. John Baptist DeCoste. A copy is attached. Fr. Doucet passed away on December 21, 1978 although he had seen the new church finished, he was not well enough to ever celebrate mass in his new church. Cost of Construction was \$276,000.00. Paid cash on completion.

18. DeCOSTE: Fr. John Baptist DeCoste, a White Father native of Arichat who had been a missionary in Africa and was home on leave at the time. He agreed to remain as administrator of the parish until a new priest was assigned. He remained until June 25, 1980 when he was replaced by Fr. William Burke.

19. BURKE: William (Bill) Burke was born in Main-A-Dieu, N.S., August 23, 1948. He studied at St. Augustine Monastery, and St. F.X. University. He taught in Africa for two years and did social work in Toronto. He then entered St. Paul's Seminary in Ottawa and was ordained July 3, 1977. He was then named assistant in St. Anthony in Glace Bay and June 25, 1980 was named administrator of Immaculate Conception Parish in West Arichat. On December 17, 1983 he was named Pastor of Immaculate Conception and administrator of St. Hyacinth in D'Escousse. On June 27, 1984, he was named Pastor of St. Joseph's Parish in Petit de Grat. He was replaced by Fr. Allan MacMillan.

20. MacMILLAN: Fr. Allan MacMillan was born in New York City, July 25, 1939. Studied at MacDonald High School at Dominion, Cape Breton, Xavier Junior College, Sydney, St. F.X. University, Graduated from St. F.X. in 1961. He then attended the Grand Seminary of Montreal and was ordained in the priesthood in Sydney on June 13, 1965.

Appointed Assistant of Holy Redeemer Parish; 1966 appointed to Faculty of St F.X. In 1970, he was appointed administrator of St. Columba in Lakevale and Holy Rosary in Ballantyne's Cove. In 1973 he was appointed Parish Priest of above and administrator of St. George's, Georgeville and Maryvale. In 1974, he was appointed Parish Priest of St. Peter's, Ingonish. In 1977, he was appointed Parish Priest of St. Mary's, Port Morien and St. Gregory's in Donkin.

In July of 1984, he was appointed Parish Priest of Immaculate Conception in West Arichat and administrator of St. Hyacinth's in D'Escousse.

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21. CÔTÉ: Joseph Côté served in West Arichat for a few years. He worked in Antigonish at the Diocese office for many years. He retired due to illness and died shortly thereafter. The research on his term will be completed shortly.

22. GIRROIR: Conrad Polycarpe Girroir was born in West Arichat on 21 November 1917. He studied at St. Francis Xavier University from 1935 to 1939 and taught school for one year at L'Ardoise and one year in West Arichat. He attended the Seminary at Holy Heart Seminary in Halifax from 1941 to 1945 and was ordained to the priesthood in Halifax on 22 December 1945. He served in St. Louis Parish, Louisdale from March 9, 1946 until 4 February 1972. He served in St. Joseph's Parish, Petit de Grat from 4 February 1972 to 1978 when he retired due to illness. He came out of retirement in 1995 and was appointed Parish Priest at Immaculate Conception Parish, West Arichat by Bishop Collin Campbell. He remained until 1998 when he retired for the second time. He was named Prelate of Honour of His Holiness on 5 April 2004 by Pope John Paul II.

23. LES FILS DE MARIE: Fr. Bruno Ruel, has been responsible for Immaculate Conception Parish, West Arichat since *Les Fils de Marie* assumed responsibility for the Isle Madame Pastoral Unit in June 1998. Fr. Bruno was born in Sherbrooke, Quebec on October 15, 1961. He attended Seminary at St. Thomas University in Rome and was ordained in the priesthood on May 30, 1987 in L'Aquila, Italy. He served the parishioners until June 2006.

24. DEVEREAUX: Duaine Francis Devereaux assumed responsibility for Immaculate Conception Parish, West Arichat on June 28, 2006. He, along with Fr. Gary MacPherson, took charge of the newly formed *Stella Maris Pastoral Unit* which included the four parishes of Isle Madame and St. Louis Parish, Louisdale. Fr. Angus MacDougall replaced Fr. Gary MacPherson in June of 2007. Fr. Duaine was born December 9, 1963 in Sydney Mines, NS. He was ordained May 21, 1993 and served as associate Pastor at St. Ninian's Cathedral. In 1996 he was Pastor in the Larry's River/Port Felix area serving three parishes. In 2004 he moved to New Glasgow to St. John's the Baptist which, one year later, became part of the New Glasgow Pastoral Grouping. Fr. Duaine also served as Vice-Rector of St. Augustine's Seminary from 1997 – 2004.

25: GILLIES: Andrew Gillies assumed responsibility for Immaculate Conception Parish June 25, 2012 along with Fr. Angus MacDougall (Vicar General) as part of the Stella Maris Pastoral Unit including the four parishes of Isle Madame (Our Lady of Assumption, Arichat; St. Joseph's, Petit de Grat, St. Hyacinth's, D'Escousse and Immaculate Conception) along with St. Louis, Louisdale. Fr. Gillies was pastor of Star of the Sea Parish, Canso prior to this appointment. In June of 2013 there was another division; Fr. Angus MacDougall took sole responsibility of St. Louis, Louisdale and Fr. Gillies became sole pastor of the four parish of Isle Madame under the Stella Maris Pastoral Unit.

26: ABAZIE: Callistus Abaze assumed responsibility for Immaculate Conception Parish as part of the Stella Maris Pastoral Unit including the four parishes of Isle Madame (Our Lady of Assumption, Arichat; St. Joseph's, Petit de Grat, St. Hyacinth's, D'Escousse and Immaculate Conception) from June 25 to September 3, 2014. Rev. Abaze was assigned for the summer as it was a transition period for the Richmond Deanery. After leaving Isle Madame, Rev. Abaze moved to Lower River to take over the parishes in that section of the Deanery.

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The last parish mass held at Immaculate Conception, West Arichat was Saturday, August 30 at 6:30 pm. St. Hyacinth's Church in D'Escousse was secularized by Bishop Dunn around the same time and the IML Funeral Home currently operates from the former D'Escousse church. In December 2015/January 2016 Immaculate Conception Church was renovated to become the Pastoral Unit's parish office, The Mury Meeting Room named after Joe & Jeanette Mury, the Isle Madame Food Bank moved into the vestry and a chapel was sectioned off using the existing altar, sized roughly 25% of the original church. The Chapel/Office/Food Bank was officially opened by Bishop Brian Dunn on April 19, 2016. The work to the building was completed by volunteers and paid for by donations.

27: MacDONALD: Douglas MacDonald assumed responsibility for the Stella Maris Pastoral Unit (Our Lady of Assumption, Arichat; St. Joseph's, Petit de Grat) September 13, 2014. Fr. MacDonald's previous parish was: St Michael's in East Margaree, St Joseph's, Southwest Margaree and St Patrick's, East Margaree for three years before assuming the role of Pastor in Isle Madame. Fr. MacDonald oversaw the renovation of the Immaculate Conception Church to the parish office/Chapel/meeting room. Technically, Fr. Abazie was the last pastor for Immaculate Conception Parish and presided over the last mass.

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(the following letter was written by Fr. Albert Doucet and read at the opening of the newly built church in West Arichat in 1978)

October 15, 1978

My dear people:

I regret very much I cannot be present with you on this joyful day. I am nonetheless very much with you in spirit and I share your happiness and gratitude to God for having given us the courage and the help to build this splendid and beautifully simple new House of God.

I am very grateful to His Excellency Bishop Power for his support throughout the planning and construction and especially for his co-operation in helping us organize today's consecration of our Church and for his being in West Arichat with you on this important occasion for us all.

Churches are built through inspiration from God; the plan of God was, and is, obviously also at work here in West Arichat. God, in His wisdom did not have us seek high powered experts to make possible this sacred building; instead, He made us seek men and women who loved God and who believed in the importance of this Church to help us to come closer to God.

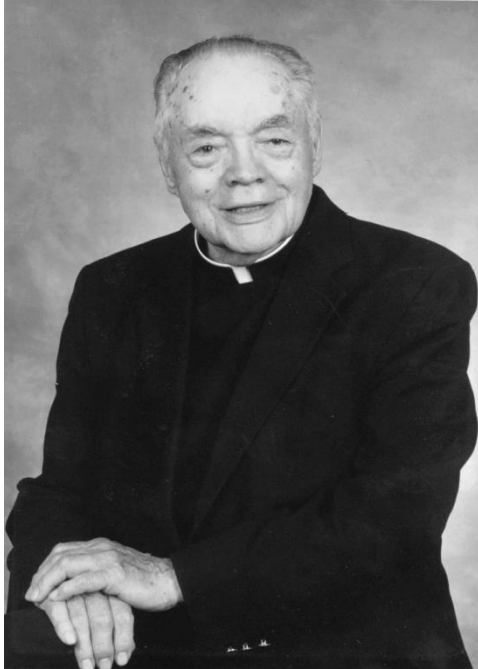
You, the people, built this Church. It is in every way your Church. You contributed money according to your means. All the work was done locally-the architecture, the designing and the building.

Two years and a few days ago today, our former Church was destroyed by fire. It was a sad occasion. Together, since then, we have rebuilt it. As I dictate this message to be read to you in my absence, my heart is heavy in the realization I cannot be with you as I have been for the past 35 years. My thoughts continue to be with you. God and you are my life. You have made it a fulfilling life. May you continue to keep God close to you in what you do everyday and may this Church-your Church-help you to do so.

God bless you.

Rev. Albert Doucet, pp

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GIRROIR, Msgr. Conrad Polycarp, 92 - Arichat, formerly of West Arichat, a priest of the Diocese of Antigonish, passed away peacefully at his residence in St. Anne Community & Nursing Care Centre, on Wednesday, December 2, 2009. He was the son of Jean Baptiste and Mabel Elizabeth (Girroir) Girroir. He was raised and born in West Arichat where he attended Immaculate Conception and Acadiaville School. After high school graduation, Msgr. Girroir attended St. Francis Xavier University from which he graduated in 1939 with a Bachelor of Arts Degree. He did his theological studies and received his priestly training at Holy Heart Seminary in Halifax where he was ordained December 22, 1945 by Most Reverend John T. McNally. Msgr. Girroir was appointed Administrator of St. Louis Parish, Louisdale, Nova Scotia in March of 1946; during which time he taught school. In 1951, with the death of the parish priest, he was named Pastor of the Parish by appointment from the Holy See.

Msgr. Girroir served in Louisdale for over twenty-five years. In 1972, he was transferred to St. Joseph Parish, Petit De Grat where he ministered for 6 years before ill health forced him into temporary retirement. He returned to the active ministry as Administrator of Immaculate Conception Parish, West Arichat, always striving to bring God's Word to his beloved Acadian people. Indeed his priestly life was spent almost entirely in Acadian parishes, but this did not lessen his great love for and appreciation of the ethnic people in the diocese. Msgr. Girroir's first concern was for the people of his parishes. However, he was a true priest of the diocese who served as Dean of Richmond Deanery and on the Diocesan Liturgical Commission.

His wonderful sense of history, geology, geography, genealogy, astronomy, gardening and his good humour endeared him to the people and priests of the diocese. There was a lesson taught in every encounter. In 1998, Msgr. Girroir finally retired, but chose to remain among the people he loved so much and to where he really belonged in West Arichat. In 2004, he was named Monseigneur.

He is survived by sisters, Sr. Nancy Girroir (Filles de Jésus), Moncton, Sophie Samson, Arichat; special niece Rosie Forgeron (Adolph), Halifax, brother-in-law Harry Helin Jr., California. He was predeceased by brothers, Edmund, Euclide, Raymond, Thomas and sisters, Pétronille, Eva Mae, Genieve and four siblings in infancy, Sophie, Eva Mae, Thomas, Desire; brother-in-laws Adolph Babin and John F. Samson. Visitation will take place on Saturday evening from 7 - 9 pm and on Sunday from 2 - 4 pm both in the C.H. Boudreau Funeral Home, Arichat, from where his body will be transferred to the Immaculate Conception Church in West Arichat from where a Vigil Service will be held at 7 pm with visitation until 9 pm. Mass Christian Burial of Msgr. Girroir's life will be held Monday morning at 11 am in St. Joseph's Church, Petit De Grat. Interment followed in the Immaculate Conception Parish Cemetery, West Arichat.

Mon Oncle Conrad will be sadly missed by many nieces and nephews.

Monseigneur Conrad Girroir – Homily

By: Rev. John J. MacDonald, a close friend of Conrad's, during his funeral on Dec. 7, 2009

My Dear People: It may seem different, if not peculiar, that I have chosen a biblical resurrection theme familiar to all of us relating the experience of the disciples of Emmaus on Easter Sunday morning which is germane to our saying “good bye” to our dear and much beloved friend, Monseigneur Conrad Girroir.

He has travelled with us in our journey to God the Father these past 92 years. We are enveloped in sorrow at his parting but simultaneously rejoice in his longed-for experience to be with his God and our God in eternal life.

We are offered the opportunity to reflect on his journey with Jesus as his priest and perhaps to ponder how his life could have been helpful to the disciples of Emmaus suffering the loss of their hero as they return home. They were crushed because their liberator from the Roman repression was crucified and gone from their midst.

On occasion we are not unlike the two disciples as we experience the dark times in our journey, but we must be mindful that for nearly a century we have walked with Fr. Conrad whose life has been a bulwark of support for all of us. His faith and his faithfulness have been there for us. His sense of humour, his social conscience, his geological prowess, and yes, his notable interest in geology have all played roles to support our need to be open to the revelation of God's presence in our lives.

We are forever grateful for your teaching, Conrad.

As it happens, coincidentally, the current gospel reflects upon some event that has recently occurred in our lives. One example of that was the gospel of last Friday (Matt IX 27-31) wherein two blind men pleaded with Jesus begging his mercy and asked him to cure their blindness – “Do you believe that I am able to do this?” he queried – their response was “Yes, Lord”. Their faith was generously rewarded – he touched their eyes and they were opened.

Mes chers amis: Vous trouvez peut-être étrange que j'ai choisi un thème biblique qui parle de résurrection, le récit des disciples d'Emmaüs au matin à notre cher et bien-aimé ami, Monseigneur Conrad Girroir.

Pendant quatre-vingt-douze ans, il a cheminé parmi nous sur la route vers Dieu le Père. Nous sommes remplis de tristesse à son départ de ce monde, mais en même temps, nous nous réjouissons du fait qu'il jouit pleinement de l'union avec son Dieu, le Dieu de la vie éternelle.

Nous avons l'opportunité aujourd'hui de réfléchir ensemble sur son cheminement comme prêtre à la suite de Jésus. Les disciples d'Emmaüs auraient sans doute trouvé réconfort dans l'exemple de la vie de cet homme, eux qui souffraient de la perte de leur héros bien-aimé, crucifié par l'oppression romaine.

Nous sommes un peu comme les deux disciples, car, comme eux, nous faisons l'expérience d'un temps sombre sur notre route. Mais, n'oublions pas que nous avons cheminé avec le Père Conrad depuis presque un siècle et que sa vie a été pour chacun de nous un rempart de support. Sa foi et sa fidélité ont été une lumière toujours présente; son sens d'humour, sa conscience sociale, ses prouesses en généalogie et même son intérêt remarquable en géologie – tout cela nous a incités à être ouverts à la présence de Dieu dans tous les aspects de nos vies.

Oui, Conrad, nous sommes éternellement reconnaissants pour votre enseignement!

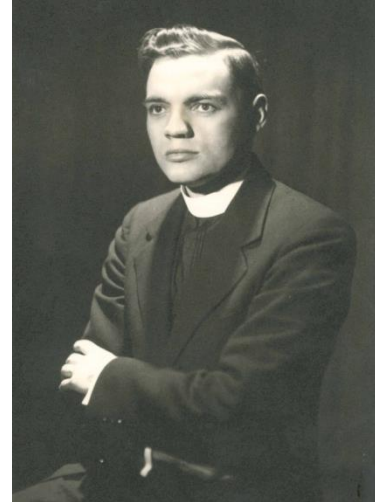
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Jesus cautioned them, “See that no one knows of this!” This response could be considered counter-cultural today, since we can so easily be conditioned to depend on the extra-ordinary rather than building our faith and practice on ordinary events that give substance and growth in goodness.

Fr. Conrad was ordinary in so many ways yet he builds a fountain of good will that overflowed to no end and touched many people. He learned this from Jesus in his gospel journey.

The disciples of Emmaus in the journey that Easter Sunday yearned to learn more and invited this stranger to dine with them and at the breaking of the bread saw again their hero and returned to Jerusalem to continue his work in the Kingdom.

In your new experience of kingdom, Fr. Conrad, draw us all of us closer to Jesus as we break bread together!



Monsignor Conrad Polycarp Girroir – Eulogy

By: Brian Samson, nephew to Msgr. Conrad's, at his funeral on the 7th of December 2009

Bonjour tout le monde. J'aimerais étendre un chaleureux accueil à la famille, aux amis et aux personnes distinguées à l'occasion de la célébration de vie de Mon Oncle « Msgr Conrad Polycarpe Girroir ». C'est un grand honneur pour moi de vous adresser à cette occasion.

Hello, everyone. I want to take this opportunity to extend a warm welcome to family, friends and distinguished guests during this celebration of life for My Uncle `Monseigneur Conrad Polycarp Girroir`. It is a great honour for me to speak to you today.

There is a sense of beauty in seeing the community gathered in such large numbers to celebrate Uncle Conrad's life, to show respect and share precious moments; testimony to the spiritual strength and compassion of our community. We thank you for your support. There is also beauty in this historic building, built over a century ago by our ancestors, maintained by our faithful and used as a place of worship; witness to baptisms, first communions, confirmations, reconciliations, marriages and life celebrations; it is a sacred place. We thank you for this place of worship as well.

Mon Oncle Conrad, né le 21 Novembre 1917, a passé une longue vie bien agréable, amusante et colorée. Il était un homme de foi avec une grande appréciation pour l'histoire, la famille, les gens, la communauté et l'éducation. Un homme simple et charitable, toujours prêt à rendre service. Un homme d'imagination et d'humeur naturel. Un enseignant qui livrait ses leçons en raconter des histoires amusantes. Il avait aussi un don pour jouer des trucs.

My Uncle Conrad was born November 21, 1917 and spent a long life pleasant, fun and colourful. He was a man of faith with great appreciation for history, family, people, community and education. He was a simple and loving man, always ready to help. He was a man of imagination and natural good humour. He was a teacher who taught others by telling funny stories. He also had a knack for playing tricks.

Immaculate Conception Parish, West Arichat

As a man of faith, he did not judge nor did he focus on one's weakness. He accepted people for who they were. He was easy to approach and one felt comfortable around him. One always felt welcomed in his presence. He always had an interest in individuals. He was a priest of the people and for the people. He practised his Christian values by living example. He valued life as a precious gift from God. Everyone possessed a special talent. He encouraged us to discover and share this talent, no matter how small, so that we could make the world a better place to live; one person at a time. Everyone had a calling; a gift to share with the people around them. "A glass of water must first be emptied in order to be refilled; likewise, one must learn to give to others in order to receive from God."

We all have a choice...Uncle Conrad chose to believe in a loving and forgiving God, he believed in the body, mind and soul. He believed that the soul did not die. He believed in heaven; a place of peace, joy and eternal life, where one is united with God, all the Saints, family and friends.

A lifetime is to eternity what a single grain of sand is to all the beaches of the universe. A lifetime is but a blink of an eye and so Uncle Conrad would not want us to be sad. Our separation will be short. It will not be long before we are reunited again.

Mon Oncle Conrad aimait raconter les histoires du passé. L'histoire de son père, le Capitaine Jean Baptiste qui faisait le commerce entre l'île du Prince Édouard, Terre Neuve et le Cap Breton en voilier. Comme la fois qu'il avait été voyagé avec son père en apportant un jouet magnétique qu'il avait caché dans la boîte du compas. Son père n'était pas content. Conrad avait perdu ses jouets favoris.

My Uncle Conrad liked to tell stories. One example was a story about his father, Captain Jean Baptiste, who traded between Prince Edward Island, Newfoundland and Cape Breton in a sailboat. One trip he made with his father, he hit a magnetic toy in the compass box. His father was not happy. Conrad had lost his favourite toys.

There was also the story of a famous sea captain from West Arichat who had the world record for crossing the treacherous waters of Cape Horn on the southern tip of South America more times than any other captain...he was fishing in that area and constantly crossing from the Pacific to the Atlantic Ocean.

Il y avait aussi l'histoire des 'autochtones' qui arrivaient chaque année par canot et qui campaient sur l'île Creighton. Ils vendaient leurs paniers en passant les maisons d'Arichat Ouest.

There was also the story of Mik'Maq arriving each year by boat and camping on Creighton's Island. They sold their baskets to the residents of West Arichat.

There were the stories of cold winters with heavy snow falls where everyone had to shovel the snow to open the roadways. There was also the story of his gardens. One passerby had asked "Why are you planting two of everything?" Conrad answered "One garden is for me and the other is for the thieves."

Il y avait l'histoire des fantômes de Mary Ellen de Guysborough qui nous envoyait, comme enfants, courir dans toutes directions nous cacher de peur pendant qu'il poussait des cries profonds. Il trouvait ça très amusant.

There was the ghost story of Mary Ellen from Guysborough; he had us kids running in all directions in terror as he told the story. He found it very amusing.

There was the geology lesson about the infamous Canso to Parrsboro fault line and the fascination of how the very soil below our feet, north of this fault line, was once attached to Africa.

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Il avait aussi les leçons de généalogie sur la famille Girroir, les recherches des volumes de Bill Girroir; les relations des Girroirs aux autochtones et notre voyage à Morgan City, Louisiane pour une rencontre de famille Girroir.

He also gave genealogy lessons on the Girroir family, researched the history of Bill Girroir; relations of the Girroir to the Mik'Maq and his trip to Morgan City, Louisiana for a Girroir Reunion.

There was also our lesson on astrology; about the importance of the North Star during the age of sail in guiding sailors safely to their home ports. There were the stories of how the earth was a spaceship travelling at speeds of thousands of miles per second while we all stood still!

Il avait aussi l'histoire du seul marathon qu'il avait couru à l'âge de 8 ans. Son frère Euclide, qui était très athlétique n'était pas impressionné par son petit frère gâté. Euclide avait réussi à provoquer Conrad à courir de la maison jusqu'au bout de l'île Creighton et de retour. Pauvre Conrad a couru la distance mais c'était plutôt parce qu'il était rempli de peur d'être abandonné sur l'île tout seule que d'avoir développé des aires athlétiques; Mabel n'était pas impressionnée par les actions d'Euclide.

He also told the story of his one and only marathon at age 8. His brother Euclid, who was very athletic, was not impressed by his spoiled little brother. To teach him a lesson, Euclid convinced Conrad to run to the house at the end of Creighton's Island and back. Poor Conrad did it, but it was more because he was terrified of being abandoned on the island than to get in shape. His mom, Mabel, was not impressed by Euclid's actions.



On a more serious note; Uncle Conrad had a keen interest in the economic well being and standard of living of his parishioners. He was active in community development projects as well as the cooperative movement that swept the region in the early 40's and 50's, establishing credit unions, fisherman's cooperative and grocery stores in the area. These initiatives helped increase the standard of living of area residents. Uncle Conrad promoted a good education as an effective tool to break the cycle of poverty and to provide parishioners greater economic independence.

Pendant les années passées, les gouvernements ne s'occupaient pas au niveau de santé, éducation et développement économique. C'était plutôt des programmes administrés par les organisations religieuses. Les vocations religieuses incluaient non seulement le niveau spirituel mais aussi les hôpitaux, les écoles et au milieu des activités de développement communautaires.

Over the years, governments were not involved in health, education and economic development. Most was administered by religious organizations. Religious vocations included not only the spiritual needs but also hospitals, schools and among the community development activities.

In closing, Uncle Conrad chose to stay close to his family, community and Acadian roots. He watched over his flock and tended to their spiritual needs for over 64 years. He touched many lives during his lifetime; his influence helped mould us into the people we are today. How do we honour this remarkable individual who has contributed so much?

Remember him as loving you.

Salut Mon Oncle Conrad et à bientôt.