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Most Reverend Central Direction of the  
Leopoldine Foundation.

#114  
I am in the fortunate situation enabling me to always communicate to this Most Rev. office such news that without doubt contributes to the temporal consolation of the members and all pious associates of the benevolent Leopoldine society, because what can be more consoling for a Christian who loves God and his fellow-man than to hear how so many hundreds of poor pagans, who, previously deprived of all spiritual help, lived in blind paganism without knowledge of God and without hope of salvation, how now so many hundreds of these deplorable people were converted to Christianity and trod on the road to salvation. I cannot thank God enough for having given me the undeserved grace to come to this country where there are still so many pagans, among whom very many have as yet never seen a priest, and who have remained in paganism so long only because they never had the opportunity to hear a preacher of the faith.

In winter I am compelled to always remain in Arbre Croche where now there are only a few pagans, but in spring and summer, and in fall, I make various mission journeys to search for real savages and pagans in their forests, which is really the business of a missionary. And on these, my missionary expeditions, I usually come to regions where, as the oldest Indians testify, no priest had ever set foot, since the Jesuits, who in the past had a mission here, kept themselves only to Arbre Croche.

I have faithfully reported these missionary expeditions of mine each time to the Most Rev. Direction for the honor of God and for the edification and encouragement of the pious associates of the Leopoldine society. But as consoling and rejoicing as these reports were for all well-disposed Christians, and especially for all the associates of the Leop. Foundation, the report which I can give at present, however, surpasses in this respect all the previous ones. I as yet never had as many conversions in such a short time as this time.

On June 5, at Old Arbre Croche, a neighboring village of Arbre Croche, I baptized 15 pagans, mostly adults, who have prepared themselves for baptism this winter. I frequently make missionary visits to this village since it is distant only 7 hours away from Arbre Croche. I already have baptized there many Indians, but never so many as this time.

On June 7 I went on a somewhat longer missionary journey on which I spent 23 days. It had a result that I did not expect. Through this successful result, and through the nice prospects which appear there for the conversion of many pagans, my Very Rev. Ordinary was moved to issue me the order to establish a new

mission at the place that I visited this time. This region is distant 300 American miles from Arbre Croche, and 160 from St. Joseph where a missionary resides, and is called "La Grande Riviere", Grand River, south from Arbre Croche. It has been estimated that there are over 900 here, including women and children, who live by their little agriculture and by the chase, and are real savages and pagans. They are descendants of the Ottawa from Arbre Croche and speak the very same language as the Ottawa here.

Two years ago when I came to Arbre Croche with the late Bishop Fenwick, this apostolic, zealous man very expressly recommended to me to search for all Ottawa Indians, and, if possible, convert them to Christianity. And when he heard that at Grand River there are so many Indians of this tribe, he recommended to me expressly to visit them sometime. But I could not do this until now. As is clear from my previous reports, I had so much to do with the villages of the Indians located nearer that as yet I could not undertake a journey so distant, and, besides, until last winter no preparations were effected for the conversion of the Indians at Grand River.

But to a pious and well instructed Indian of Arbre Croche, who intended to spend the winter at Grand River, I gave the assignment that he should frequently visit the Indians of that region in their scattered villages and speak to them about the Christian religion, and about the priest who lives with their brethren in Arbre Croche, and who will certainly visit them the coming summer. This good Indian discharged his assignment to my very great consolation. He visited very many of those Indians and talked to them about the Christian religion as much as he knew, and so prepared the way to them for me, like once upon a time St. John the Baptist did for Christ, the Lord. Many promised him to accept the teaching of which he spoke, if they only could have the good fortune to see and hear the servant of the Great Spirit of whom he spoke. This spring I expected the return of this John of mine with longing. Finally he came, and extending his hand to me, cried out smilingly: Happy news, my Father, happy news! Then he related to me what splendid prospects there are for religion at Grand River, if only a missionary were there after whom the local Indians yearn very much. The order of my late Bishop Fenwick, and the hopeful prospects induced me to undertake this distant journey.

I therefore departed from Arbre Croche on June 7, as I mentioned above, and on the 15th, after overcoming many hardships and difficulties, arrived at Grand River. It is not easy to describe the joy which the poor Indians had because of the arrival of a priest in their region on which no priest as yet had trod upon.

This so-called Grand River divides the reserve land of the Indians of the Ottawa tribe from the land belonging to the United States in Michigan territory. From the northern bank of this river to Arbre Croche is the free land of the Indians, the southern bank and all the remaining territory towards the south be-

longs to the United States.

The largest village of the Indians on this river is a day's journey distant from its mouth in Lake Michigan. This village was the goal of my journey. It lies on the northern bank in the free reserve land of the Indians, in a very beautiful region; and, opposite, on the southern bank, a French Catholic family from Detroit has bought a piece of land from the United States government and is settled here, and is very wealthy. The Catholic family, which is very numerous, was extremely happy at the arrival of a priest. I had to stay in their house and enjoyed all possible comforts and services which they could extend to me. They accommodated me with another nearby house which not long ago they have had made, where, with a grateful feeling, I said holy mass daily, and every morning and evening preached to the Indians. Every morning and evening the good Indians came here in groups from the other bank to listen to the priest's instructions, for which they already had a yearning for a long time.

I remained there a rather long time, as long as I could, and on the day of my departure, after I had prepared and tested these Indians, I performed, to their greatest consolation, the holy baptism with great solemnity. I baptized there 46 pagans at one time, the first fruits of this blooming mission, in which, with God's holy grace, as I hope, many souls will be saved from eternal perdition and led to eternal salvation. O, what inexpressibly consoling prospects for me, who has come to this wild land only to seek lost souls, and with God's help, save them from eternal perdition. I baptized these 46 Indians in the principal village which will be the central point of the new mission to be founded, because it is also the central point of the habitations of the Indians there.

But I also had the consolation of seeing many Indians accepting our Christian Catholic religion in other places which will belong to this mission district, all of whom have great faith and the firm resolution to observe faithfully the doctrines of our holy religion. Outside of the principal village, I baptized in 3 more places, 6 in the first, 21 in the second and in the third 13 Indians, therefore, 86 in all that region, and so these baptized Indians are the first fruits of the new mission to be founded at Grand River, which, with the help and grace of God, and with proper support, will perhaps in time become important.

Now I explain here to the Most Rev. Direction the reasons which induced the Rt. Rev. Ordinariate of Cincinnati to establish a new mission at Grand River. The first and strongest reason is the large number of pagans there, of whom, seemingly, very many are already now well-disposed towards the Christian Catholic religion, so that there is well founded hope that a large part of the 900 Indians of Grand River will be converted to the Christian religion if a permanent mission is established at the place where I baptized the 46. The Indians in general, and the Ottawa Indians in particular, are very much inclined to accept our holy Catholic religion.

With all their great pecuniary means, the Protestants can make no considerable progress among the Indians.

The very place where I baptized 46 Indians gives us a striking example of this. There a Protestant preacher has endeavored to win these poor Indians for his false doctrines. He is already there 8 years and is very richly supported. Besides the 400 dollars which he draws annually from his fellow-believers, much provisions and many pieces of clothing are sent to him. But with all these means he has won for his false teaching in his 8 years a total of only 10 Indians. While, on the other hand, a Catholic priest, very poor and deprived of all temporal goods, as I actually was at the time, provided only with precious treasures of truth and salvation, came to their region and in a short time 46 were won, and many others firmly promised me to surely accept the Catholic religion as soon as I come again.

Even the few, whom for the want of a Catholic priest the Protestant had misled, nearly all give hope for conversion to the Catholic religion, if a Catholic mission should be established there. What a glorious triumph of truth over falsehood, and, besides, the Protestant has not won a single one in any other village of that region, while, on the other hand, as I reported above, many from the neighboring places have already turned to the Catholic religion, and many have given me their definite word to accept it as soon as I come again. What an invitation! What a consolation! Thanks be a thousand times for that to the Good Shepherd, Who so lovingly has mercy on His lost sheep.

The conversion of the pagans there is therefore the first motive for the establishment of a mission on Grand River. The second motive is the considerable number of Canadian Catholics who live among and barter with the Indians, deprived of all spiritual help, some of whom, as I have been convinced, have already grown very wild, but who, it is hoped, will again come on the right road if a priest will reside among them, as it has happened in several regions of our diocese. And their children, who grow up without instruction, will then also have an opportunity to attend school. Finally, the third motive is the considerable number of the Ottawa Indians of Arbre Croche who spend every winter at Grand River and its vicinity, and therefore see no priest the entire winter. But if a mission is established there now, then they will have an opportunity to hear holy mass also in winter from time to time, to receive spiritual instruction and to receive the holy sacraments. These are the motives that have induced the Rt. Rev. Ordinariate of Cincinnati to entrust me with the assignment, and to give me some means in hand to establish this new mission.

There is also another region towards the north where a new mission is contemplated, but this is not yet the time for that, and the difficulties it has are still too great.

Although the founding of a mission at Grand River will also present many difficulties, nevertheless, it seems that with God's help and with patience and perseverance they already seem surmountable.

I hope that the pious and zealous associates and promoters of the Leop. Foundation will be pleased with the news that the American missionaries, who are supported and maintained by their prayers and charitable contributions, always make new progress in the conversion of the pagans. Great will once be the reward of these, our benefactors, because without their help, we missionaries, and especially the missionaries to the Indians, could accomplish nothing since the Indians are not yet in position to maintain a missionary and build churches, except from tree bark, but which is not sufficient in all locations. But they rather expect the missionary to give all kinds of trifles to them and to their children whom they send to school.

Arbre Croche, which is now almost all converted to Christianity, is well taken care of in a spiritual and temporal respect. The priest's house is now tolerable, and many preparations for the improvement and restoration of the church have already been made. I hope that my successor in this mission will be able to put in good condition all the buildings in use for divine service and for residence without many difficulties. However, if two priests should be appointed for Arbre Croche, as it is proposed, because of the great growth of this mission, for in the two years that I spent here I baptized 454 Indians, without counting the 86 on Grand River, then the residential buildings will naturally be too small.

Finally, I report at the same time the receipt, on July 10, of the long anxiously awaited box, filled with very useful mission gifts which my relatives and other benefactors sent me from my fatherland, as well as the receipt of the 100 florins, conv. coin, from the Ljubljana diocese, which, according to the letter from my relatives, I may apply to the good of the mission according to my own intention, and which I shall now apply, by virtue of the expressed order of my Rt. Rev. Ordinariate to the founding of the new mission on Grand River.

Though these diverse and useful gifts would be welcome to me at any time, however, never so as just now when I am about to establish a mission for the saving of many lost souls, which now, provided with all those rich gifts, I shall be able to establish much easier. This seems to me to be a clear hint of Providence, that the establishment of this new mission will be a work pleasing to God. It is impossible for me to express to my pious benefactors my thanks which I owe to them for these, their gifts. I want to thank each one individually for that, but since I cannot do this, I therefore thank all together from my whole heart, and pray to God that He may reward all a thousandfold for that, according to His infinite mercy, and that He may accept and repay for all that they have done for a poor missionary as if they had done it for Himself. Besides the daily memento which I make at the holy mass for all my mission benefactors, I shall constantly continue to say masses from time to time for all my benefactors, those living and those already deceased.

Frederic Baraga,  
Missionary.

Arbre Croche, July 26, 1833.