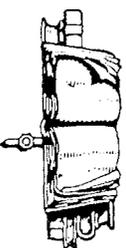


The Diary of
BISHOP FREDERIC BARAGA

First Bishop of Marquette, Michigan



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Bishop Frederic Baraga at the time of his Episcopal consecration, 1854.

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in Rome and Hamlin returned to Arbre Croche. He and Baraga often worked together on various ventures.

In May 1831, Bishop Fenwick accompanied Baraga from Cincinnati to Arbre Croche in northern lower Michigan. In Detroit he met Fr. Gabriel Richard for the first time. The two priests became good friends. When Richard died in 1832, one of the two priests in attendance was Baraga. Baraga also delivered a eulogy at Richard's burial. Other missionary giants of the age whom Baraga met as he and Bishop Fenwick journeyed north were Fathers Florimond Bonduel and Samuel Mazzuchelli.

At Arbre Croche Baraga continued his study of the language, writing the first of his many Indian-language books in 1832. That the Ottawa and Chippewa Indians of Michigan have a preserved, written language is the direct result of Baraga's prayerbooks, Grammar, and Dictionary.

The hallmark of Baraga's mission life was his great love for the Indians. Unlike many of the Protestant missionaries, his first goal was to learn the Indians' language and to make teaching and prayer aids available to the Indians. He used the Indian language for every service he could, especially for vespers. Later, as bishop, he insisted that his missionaries do the same. He recognized that Indian education had to begin in the native tongue, and, because of Baraga, many Indians achieved literacy first in Ottawa or Chippewa. The Indians thus taught had a great advantage, then, when it came to learning English, which the government insisted should be taught.

As we look back on the history of the education of Indian children, we see a dilemma that all the missionaries faced. In order to reap the "benefits" of the white man's "generosity" the Indians wanted to be "civilized." Civilization required that the Indians speak English, and the Indians themselves asked for English-speaking teachers. The government refused to pay school expenses if the Indian language was used. Missionaries like Baraga could not continue to use and teach the Indian languages in the schools. Today many white persons and most Indians look back with regret over a lost culture.

From Arbre Croche Baraga also traveled to nearby Beaver Island and to the southern shore of the Upper Peninsula of Michigan, to Indian Lake, two miles northwest from Manistiquie. Baraga remained at Arbre Croche for twenty-eight months. Although it was his intention to eventually go to the Chippewas on Lake Superior, he first went to the area of Grand River where many of the Ottawas wintered and where a significant settlement existed. During his sojourn at Grand

River he experienced a midnight attack on his hut by a group of drunken Indians. Although he had long abstained from alcoholic beverages, he then made a vow to abstain perpetually, a pledge that he observed for the rest of his life. He became an even more intense advocate of temperance among the Indians, a stance that made him a persona non grata to the white traders, especially to Joseph Campau, who trafficked in the liquor trade to the Indians. Baraga would not leave the area, however, until he was able to arrange for a replacement. Bishop Résé had asked Fr. Andrew Voszsky to leave Cottrellville (Marine City) for Lake Superior. Fr. Voszsky did not wish to go north and Baraga suggested that Bishop Résé should send him to Lake Superior and send Fr. Voszsky to Grand River (now Grand Rapids) in his place, a plan to which the bishop agreed.

After two months at Cottrellville, Baraga began his voyage to La Pointe where he arrived on July 27, 1835, with a mere three dollars and only his summer clothes and supplies. After much hardship during the severe winters of 1835-1836 and 1836-1837, he left La Pointe for a brief journey to Europe to solicit funds and material goods for his destitute mission. Among the religious articles he brought to America were several paintings by Matthew Langus. The famous picture, now at St. Ignatius Church in St. Ignace, Michigan, of St. Ignatius of Loyola dedicating himself to God, dates from this journey. However, all of the pictures that adorned the first St. Joseph Church at La Pointe perished in the fire that destroyed the church.

Using La Pointe, and later L'Anse, as headquarters, Baraga often visited the Indian settlements of Fond du Lac (Duluth), Grand Portage, and Fort William on the western shore of Lake Superior. Baraga, like the other Catholic missionaries, recruited the assistance of many lay people to help accomplish his gigantic task. However, one outstanding missionary began to instruct the Indians long before he knew Baraga or that Baraga intended to come to Lake Superior. That man was Pierre Cotté. Cotté had obtained a copy of Baraga's first Indian prayer book and had used it to teach the Indians at Fond du Lac. Great was Baraga's surprise when he reached that location and found a band of Indians who already knew the prayers, hymns, and most of the teachings of the Catholic Church! The names of Pierre Cotté and his wife, Margaret, appear with great frequency in the La Pointe Baptismal Registry as well as in the L'Anse Registry until their deaths in 1845.

In 1841, when Baraga was forty-four years old, an age when many men undergo a "mid-life crisis," he experienced the desolation of knowing that a solitary life would always be his. He wanted to remain