

**Imported Devotions:  
Roman Catacomb Saints in Ultramontane Montreal**

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*To my daughter Sophie,*

## ABSTRACT

This thesis is about the rise and fall of the devotion to the relics of Roman catacomb saints in ultramontane Quebec. In the nineteenth century, largely under the impulse of Montreal's bishop Ignace Bourget, Quebec's Catholic Church imported from Rome dozens of these remains. As a result, new devotions developed around saints unheard of before in Canada: *Abondius, Zénon, Zotique, Asellus, Janvière, Innocent*.

This thesis is meant to be a reflection on the significance of the devotion to Roman catacomb saints in the religious experience of nineteenth century Catholics. In many ways this devotion paralleled ultramontanism, rising and culminating in the same period. Understanding the development of the devotion to catacomb saints can lead us to comprehend how ultramontane piety was lived in Quebec. This devotion was not a minor expression of popular piety but a significant element of lived religion and of the religious experience of many Catholics.

The devotion to catacomb saints spread across Quebec through religious education, processions and distributions of relics and the promise of indulgences. Ultimately, however, both the clergy and the laity adopted Roman martyrs because they sincerely believed in the intercession of these saints. Because they have now largely been removed from the public sphere, it is difficult for us today to understand the significance that these relics once possessed. This thesis seeks to bring to light elements of a devotion that has now almost completely disappeared.

## RÉSUMÉ

Ce mémoire porte sur la naissance et le déclin de la dévotion aux reliques des saints des catacombes romaines dans le Québec ultramontain. Au cours du dix-neuvième siècle, en particulier sous l'influence de l'évêque de Montréal Ignace Bourget, l'Église catholique du Québec a fait venir de Rome des dizaines de ces reliques. En conséquent, de nouvelles dévotions se sont développées envers des saints jusqu'alors inconnus au Canada : *Abondius, Zénon, Zotique, Asellus, Janvier, Innocent*.

Ce mémoire se veut une réflexion sur la signification de la dévotion aux saints catacombaires romains dans l'expérience religieuse des catholiques du dix-neuvième siècle. De plusieurs manières, cette dévotion allait de pair avec l'ultramontanisme, naissant et culminant durant la même période. Comprendre le développement de la dévotion aux saints catacombaires peut nous mener à mieux saisir comment la piété ultramontaine était vécue au Québec. Cette dévotion n'était pas une expression mineure de la piété populaire, mais un élément significatif de la religion vécue et de l'expérience religieuse de plusieurs catholiques.

La dévotion aux saints des catacombes se répandit au Québec à travers l'éducation religieuse, les processions et la distribution de reliques, et les promesses d'indulgences. Cependant, en définitive, le clergé et les laïcs adoptèrent les martyrs romains parce qu'ils croyaient sincèrement au pouvoir d'intercession de ces saints. Parce qu'ils ont été pour la plupart retirés de la sphère publique, il est difficile pour nous aujourd'hui de bien saisir la signification que ces reliques possédaient auparavant. Ce mémoire cherche à mettre en lumière les éléments d'une dévotion qui a aujourd'hui presque complètement disparu.

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## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

ACAM	Archives de la Chancellerie de l'Archevêché de Montréal
ACND	Archives de la Congrégation de Notre-Dame
ACSV	Archives des Clercs de Saint-Viateur
ASP	Archives des Soeurs de la Providence
BANQ	Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec

## INTRODUCTION

Being employed by the Archdiocese of Montreal, I once came across a relic of *saint Asellus*.<sup>1</sup> The small piece of bone was larger than most relics that I had previously seen there. In fact, the large majority of relics are barely visible to the naked eye. Surprisingly, no one that I questioned had heard of this mysterious saint. No mention of his name could be found in the many long lists and works on saints. After some research, I discovered that *Asellus*' remains had been extracted from the Roman catacombs and brought to Canada in 1892. Nothing was known of him outside his name, yet dozens of Quebec newborns were named in his honor. To my surprise, this was not an isolated case. Throughout the



Figure 1: The reliquary of *saint Asellus*.

nineteenth century, the remains of dozens of other individuals believed to have died as Christian martyrs and extracted from the catacombs surrounding the city of Rome crossed the ocean to satisfy the devotion of Catholics across Quebec. These relics were referred to in sources as *corps saints*.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Because saints were referred to alternatively by their Latin name and French name, I chose to use the most common designation. To refer to *saint Asellus*, the names *Azellus* and *Azelle* were also used in archival documents.

<sup>2</sup> Because it is systematically used in sources to refer to catacomb saints, I chose to use this expression in this thesis. *Corps saints* is the French translation of the latin expression *corpus santi*. They were referred as such because the relics of the saint constituted the remains of the whole body and were generally kept together.



This thesis is about the rise and fall in Quebec of the devotion to the relics of this particular group of saints. It is meant to be a reflection on the significance of the devotion to Roman catacomb saints in the religious experience of nineteenth century Catholics. It will argue that the cult of these saints can teach us a lot about ultramontane piety. What some might consider another minor expression of popular piety in ultramontane Quebec, was, on the contrary, a significant element of the spiritual movement, rising and culminating in the same period<sup>3</sup>. In many ways this devotion paralleled ultramontanism. Understanding the development of the devotion to catacomb saints can lead us to comprehend how ultramontane piety was lived in Quebec.

This thesis is not concerned as much with the ideology of the ultramontane movement as with the construction and development of lived religion as described by Robert Orsi.<sup>4</sup> Orsi argues we should rethink religion to examine what people do with religion. According to him, "Religious practices and understanding have meaning only in relation to their cultural forms and in relation to the life experiences and actual circumstances of the people using them."<sup>5</sup> In looking at the

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<sup>3</sup> Historian Guy Laperrière distinguishes doctrinal ultramontanism from popular ultramontanism. See Guy Laperrière, "Vingt ans de recherche sur l'ultramontanisme," *Recherches sociographiques* 27, no. 1 (1986): 92-95. While doctrinal ultramontanism can hardly be described as extending in the twentieth century, ultramontane piety continued to be observed in Quebec's Catholic Church until the middle of the twentieth century and the Second Vatican Council. It is to this popular ultramontanism that I make reference here.

<sup>4</sup> Robert Orsi describes what he considers to be lived religion in the introduction of his book: Robert A. Orsi, *The Madonna of 115th Street : Faith and Community in Italian Harlem, 1880-1950*, 2nd ed., Yale Nota Bene (New Haven London: Yale University Press, 2002).

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, xix.

devotion to catacomb saints, I attempted, as much as possible with the existing sources, not to limit this study to an analysis of the official rituals and theology of relics. Instead, I wanted to identify in archival sources elements of “popular” beliefs, practices and traditions in which social and religious elites were also heartily taking part. Behind this is my conviction that the rise of the devotion to catacomb saints cannot be explained as simply the result of social clerical control. Sources demonstrate that the cult of these saints was something that many within the clergy sincerely believed. The adoption of this cult cannot be attributed to the influence of the high clergy alone but was accepted and even promoted by members of the laity. The rise of this devotion was the direct result of the personal belief of many Catholics in the power of these foreign intercessors.

Early on, in the development of the devotion to catacomb saints, questions were raised inside and outside the Church about their authenticity. Did these bones really belong to Early Christian martyrs? In this thesis, I am not concerned with the issue of authenticity of these saints but rather with their relationship with those who considered them to be genuine martyrs. Ultimately, the study of these relics reveals some of the ways through which both the clergy and the laity experienced piety and lived their faith in every day life. These pages will demonstrate how the devotion to Roman saints became an ordinary expression of piety within Quebec’s Catholic Church. Not only did it characterize the devotional transformation that affected the Canadian Church in the nineteenth century but it continued to be part of the normal religious experience of Catholics until the eve of the Second Vatican Council.

This project has been influenced by the work of Philippe Boutry who successfully revealed the extent of the devotion to catacomb saints during the Restoration in France.<sup>6</sup> My thesis sheds light on the correspondent movement in Quebec and how, under its own particular circumstances, it evolved differently. Historians agree that the ultramontane movement developed in Quebec as a result of the influences of its European counterpart.<sup>7</sup> As I discovered new archival documents, it became clear that the importation of catacomb saints to Quebec was made possible through ultramontane networks. This dissertation will attempt to shed light on the transatlantic networks that existed between ultramontane Catholics and that permitted the circulation not only of theological ideas but also of *corps saints*.

This thesis emerged from the rich religious archives of Montreal. It is largely founded on the correspondence preserved by the Archives of the Archdiocese of Montreal particularly in the fonds of parishes, religious communities, priests and of bishops Bourget and Fabre. Because ultimately a bishop was responsible for the circulation of relics in his diocese, practically every catacomb saint imported to Montreal has left a trace in the diocesan archives. Documents found in the archives of other religious communities often helped my understanding of what I had been

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<sup>6</sup> Philippe Boutry, "Les saints des catacombes: Itinéraires français d'une piété ultramontaine (1880-1881)," *Mélanges de l'école française de Rome, Moyen-Âge, Temps Modernes* 91, no. 2 (1979); Philippe Boutry, Pierre-Antoine Fabre, and Dominique Julia, *Reliques modernes : cultes et usages chrétiens des corps saints des Réformes aux révolutions*, 2 vols., *En temps & lieux*, (Paris: Editions de l'Ecole des hautes études en sciences sociales, 2009).

<sup>7</sup> Nive Voisine, Jean Hamelin, and Philippe Sylvain, *Les Ultramontains canadiens-français*(Montréal, Qué: Boréal express, 1985), 68.

able to find at the Archdiocese. To these sources must be added official documents and publications emerging from the bishopric. Furthermore, newspapers of the period have allowed me to get a clearer sense of how catacomb saints were perceived outside clerical institutions. In addition, the reliquaries themselves, when they have been preserved, revealed a great deal about this devotion. Much could also be deduced from all these sources simply from my experience of growing up as a Catholic in Quebec.

### **CATACOMB SAINTS: A HISTORIOGRAPHICAL OVERVIEW**

A relic, from the latin *reliquae*, is described in most encyclopedias as what remains of a saint, whether bones, ashes or clothes and which is respectfully preserved to honor the saint's memory. The devotion to relics of saints is rooted in the early Christian church. As early as in the second century, there is evidence that primitive Christian communities venerated them.<sup>8</sup> Relics of saints were understood to be part of the mystical body of Christ and the Temple of the Holy Spirit.<sup>9</sup> They were attributed a sacred character and considered to be a source of spiritual power that could be transmitted by contact with the relic or the reliquary that contained it.<sup>10</sup> The devotion to relics should not be viewed as a marginal element of the Catholic faith. It has traditionally been at the heart of the liturgy. Relics were located both in and on the altars of churches around the world and are closely tied to the

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<sup>8</sup> David Lavallée, "Le culte des reliques sous l'épiscopat de Monseigneur Ignace Bourget" (Thèse (M A ), Université de Montréal, 2003), 16.

<sup>9</sup> *La Semaine religieuse de Montréal*, 17 March 1883.

<sup>10</sup> Lavallée, "Le culte des reliques sous l'épiscopat de Monseigneur Ignace Bourget," 27-28.

belief in the communion of saints.<sup>11</sup> For Christians, martyrdom was viewed as the most glorious title to which a man could aspire.<sup>12</sup> The Fathers of the Church already celebrated martyrdom in the first centuries. Clement of Alexandria, one of the Greek Church Fathers, considered martyrs the perfect witnesses of Christ because they had imitated him until death.<sup>13</sup> Christian martyrs were therefore automatically considered to be saints and their relics venerated.

Jacques Le Goff and René Rémond's *L'histoire de la France religieuse* characterizes the devotion to the bodies of Roman catacomb saints as one of the key elements of ultramontane piety.<sup>14</sup> Therefore, this religious practice cannot be studied apart from the religious philosophy prevalent in nineteenth century Quebec. The first studies of ultramontanism in Quebec were produced in the 1950's and mostly viewed these beliefs negatively.<sup>15</sup> A Marxist reading of history and the spread of secularization resulted in the marginalization of religion in history departments. Many historians were critical of previous works on church history because they judged them to be primarily works of faith. In Quebec the popular rejection of the Catholic Church in the years that followed the Quiet Revolution further contributed to this reaction. After being demonized, the importance that

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<sup>11</sup> Boutry, Fabre, and Julia, *Reliques modernes : cultes et usages chrétiens des corps saints des Réformes aux révolutions*, 158.

<sup>12</sup> Hippolyte Delehaye, *Les origines du culte des martyrs*, 2, éd., rev. ed., Subsidia hagiographica (Bruxelles: Société des bollandistes, 1933), 1.

<sup>13</sup> Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata* IV, 9.

<sup>14</sup> Jacques and Rémond René Le Goff, *Histoire de la France religieuse* (Paris: Seuil, 1988), 435.

<sup>15</sup> Laperrière, "Vingt ans de recherche sur l'ultramontanisme," 86.

Catholicism had bore was systematically attenuated.<sup>16</sup> The study of a devotion such as the one to relics was particularly avoided because it was considered archaic and bizarre. As Guy Laperrière demonstrated, if ultramontanism has been studied by many historians it was almost exclusively as a reactionary force.<sup>17</sup> For example, it was studied from a political perspective and described as a method to maintain clerical control over Quebec.<sup>18</sup> However, nineteenth century Catholicism had a far more complex impact on Quebec society that does not easily fit into a framework of social control and historians were slow to explore this complexity. This led Laperrière to write in 1986 that nothing positive had been written among historians in Quebec on ultramontanism in a very long time.<sup>19</sup>

However, since the 1980's new themes and a greater emphasis on methodology have characterized writings on Churches in English Canada.<sup>20</sup> John Moir and other historians of religion in Canada have demonstrated an openness to learn from other disciplines and to broaden their methodology and their perspectives in response to the slow development of the field.<sup>21</sup> In order to do so, historians like Brian Clarke suggested following the American example of expanding

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<sup>16</sup> Michael Gauvreau and Ollivier Hubert, *The Churches and Social Order in Nineteenth and Twentieth-Century Canada*, McGill-Queen's studies in the history of religion Series two (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2006), 7.

<sup>17</sup> Laperrière, "Vingt ans de recherche sur l'ultramontanisme," 79-80.

<sup>18</sup> René Hardy, *Contrôle social et mutation de la culture religieuse au Québec, 1830-1930*(Montréal: Boréal, 1999).

<sup>19</sup> Laperrière, "Vingt ans de recherche sur l'ultramontanisme," 83.

<sup>20</sup> Mark G. McGowan, "Life Outside the Cloister: Some reflections on the Writing of History of the Catholic Church in English Canada, 1983-1996," *CCHA Historical Studies* 63(1997): 123.

<sup>21</sup> John Moir, "Coming of Age, but Slowly: Aspects of Canadian Religious Historiography Since Confederation," *CCHA Study Sessions* 50(1983): 96.

religious history to touch upon region, class, race, ethnicity and gender.<sup>22</sup> Historians became interested in the elements of popular piety which characterized the ultramontane movement. However, this thesis follows the path of a recent historiography of Quebec Catholicism by historians such as Ollivier Hubert and Michael Gauvreau who have seriously considered the complexity of the relationship between Catholic elites and the laity. These historians have stressed that in looking at lived religion we should avoid to completely separate “popular” religion from the institutional Church. Ultimately, in Canada, Churches played a significant role in the way individuals experienced and expressed their beliefs.<sup>23</sup>

There is little question that this change is an important development. Quebec historians, however, have only rarely focused on the devotion to catacomb saints. When prominent religious historians such as Philippe Sylvain, Nive Voisine, and to a larger extent Pierre Savard, mentioned them in their studies, most of their reflections were centered on the devotion to *sainte Philomène*.<sup>24</sup> *Sainte Philomène*

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<sup>22</sup> Brian P. Clarke, "Writing the History of Canadian Christianity: Retrospect and Prospect," *CCHA Historical Studies* 63(1997): 122.

<sup>23</sup> Gauvreau and Hubert, *The Churches and Social Order in Nineteenth and Twentieth-Century Canada*, 5. This understanding of the relationship of the institutional Church with the Catholic faithful can be observed in the works of these historians. They emphasize the role of Catholic institutions in two different periods of Quebec's history and how the clergy and the laity adopted and adapted transformations. See Michael Gauvreau, *The Catholic Origins of Quebec's Quiet Revolution, 1931-1970*, McGill-Queen's studies in the history of religion (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2005); Ollivier Hubert, *Sur la terre comme au ciel : la gestion des rites par l'Église catholique du Québec : fin XVIIe-mi-XIXe siècle*, Religions, cultures et sociétés (Sainte-Foy, Québec: Presses de l'Université Laval, 2000).

<sup>24</sup> Philippe Sylvain and Nive Voisine, *Histoire du Catholicisme Québécois: Les XVIIIe et XIXe siècles*, vol. 2(Quebec: Boréal, 1991), 122-23, 362. Pierre Savard, *Aspects du*

was undoubtedly the most famous of these saints, but she was never considered in Quebec within the larger devotion to Roman martyrs. Ultimately, little has been said about the role of the Church in the importation of these martyrs and the ways in which the laity adopted these new devotions in the nineteenth and twentieth century. In recent historiography, religious processions and parades such as Saint-Jean-Baptiste, Saint-Patrick and Corpus Christi have been examined.<sup>25</sup> However, processions around the reliquaries of catacomb saints, a central element of these devotions, have largely been ignored.

In Europe, numerous studies on the cult of relics in the medieval period have been produced. Studied as a phenomenon of late Antiquity that culminated in the Middle Ages, it only recently was approached in historiography as a devotion that extended into the modern period. Trevor Johnson and Philippe Boutry have both made significant contributions to the subject.<sup>26</sup> Their work demonstrated that *corps saints* circulated throughout Europe in the modern period. They established that relics from the Roman catacombs were used to fill a liturgical need following major destructions of relics. Unfortunately, Canadian historians have never seriously considered this devotional practice. According to Philippe Boutry this silence is largely the result of the incomprehension of contemporary society towards this

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*catholicisme canadien-français au XIX siècle*, Collection Essais et recherches : Section histoire (Montréal: Fides, 1980), 173-96.

<sup>25</sup> See for example Rosalyn Trigger, "Irish Politics on Parade: The Clergy National Societies, and St. Patrick's Day Processions in Nineteenth-century Montreal and Toronto," *Social History/Histoire sociale* 37, no. 74 (2004).

<sup>26</sup> See Trevor Johnson, "Holy Fabrications: The Catacomb Saints and the Counter-Reformation in Bavaria," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 47(1996). And Boutry, "Les saints des catacombes: Itinéraires français d'une piété ultramontaine (1880-1881)."



practice.<sup>27</sup> Little has been written on the devotion to relics because by looking at them through our contemporary eyes we can easily fail to understand their significance for those who believed in their power.

Yet, the main reason that explains the silence of Canadian historians with regards to the cult of martyrs of the catacombs is their virtual complete disappearance from churches after the Second Vatican Council. Since the Second Vatican Council most catacomb saints have been removed from the General Roman Calendar because of the lack of historical evidence on their lives. As the devotion to relics lost much of its importance after 1965, their reliquaries were gradually removed from churches. These remains, once so precious, can now be found in church basements or dusty sacristy cabinets. Some vanished completely, probably destroyed. They have not been studied because most scholars were not aware of their existence. It is true that in comparison with France, Germany or Italy, fewer of these relics found their way here. This phenomenon was nevertheless of importance, especially in the large diocese of Montreal. The many archivists who have helped me throughout my research were always surprised by the number of documents referring to catacomb saints in the different fonds of their religious communities. It is significant that biographies of bishops published in the nineteenth century spent a significant amount of time describing the reception and translation of the remains of catacomb saints.<sup>28</sup> In contrast, those written in the

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<sup>27</sup> "Les saints des catacombes: Itinéraires français d'une piété ultramontaine (1880-1881)," 879.

<sup>28</sup> Translations are the removal of relics from one place to another, often in a religious procession. Another traditional expression associated with relics is

twentieth century about the same individuals have by large been completely silent with regard to these devotional practices. Indeed, it is largely because of my work at the Archdiocese of Montreal, which gave me access to many of these relics and numerous primary sources that I was able to develop this dissertation.

For the most part, this thesis covers the period from 1840 to 1930. It mostly looks at the particular situation of the diocese of Montreal, which at the time extended largely beyond the limits of today's city and included the Lanaudière, Laurentides and Montérégie regions. Helpful comparisons will be drawn with this devotion in other areas of Quebec and in the larger Catholic world. It begins with a discussion of relics and of the origins of the devotion to catacomb saints both in Europe and in New France. I will then explore the interest that the ultramontane movement and particularly the bishop of Montreal Ignace Bourget had for these saints. In this section I will seek to highlight the significance of ultramontane networks through which catacomb saints were acquired and imported to Canada. Subsequently, I will discuss the meanings that were given to these unknown saints by Catholics and their place in processions and both official and popular rituals. I will also explore the diffusion of this form of devotion, exploring the questions of how these foreign saints were adopted by Quebec Catholics and why this devotion lasted much longer here than in Europe. Finally, I will discuss the reasons behind its eventual decline in the twentieth century.

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Fabrication. The fabrication of relics refers to the breaking apart in smaller pieces of larger relics to allow their distribution.

When I became interested in catacomb saints in 2012, I was aware of the existence of only four *corps saints* in Montreal. I started my research doubting that traces of many more would have existed or been preserved. After over two years of research, I was able to gather evidence of over forty Roman catacomb martyrs imported to Quebec. Certainly, traces of more of these relics could be found. I continue to be amazed by the incredible place that these saints occupy in religious archives. This undoubtedly testifies to their significance in the eyes of the Catholic Church before the Second Vatican Council.

## **Chapter 1**

### **The Roots of a Devotion: Origin and Authenticity**

The devotion to relics before the nineteenth century was not something unheard of in Canada. Since the early days of the colonial period, the relics of several saints circulated in New France. The first relic to cross the Atlantic Ocean would almost certainly have been brought by the first priest who set foot in New France, possibly on Jacques Cartier's first expedition.<sup>29</sup> Since a relic was necessary to celebrate Mass, a priest travelling on one of the ships would have carried with him an antimensium in which a small relic was sewn.<sup>30</sup> Throughout the French colonial period, several relics were transported from France to satisfy the requirement of the Tridentine liturgy. In a church, the altar stone with the relic it contained was considered to be "le centre de l'espace rituel".<sup>31</sup> When available, reliquaries of saints would be placed on altars during the celebration of the Eucharist. As Bishop Ignace Bourget himself demonstrates in one of his letters, the liturgical prayers of the Tridentine Church emphasized the graces obtained through relics.<sup>32</sup> However, they fulfilled more than liturgical purposes. Both the clergy and the laity, often used them

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<sup>29</sup> Regarding the presence of a priest or not on Cartier's first expedition see Léon Gérin, "Jacques Cartier, sa langue et sa religion," *Rapports annuels de la Société historique du Canada* 13, no. 2 (1934): 70.

<sup>30</sup> Andrew Shipman, "Antimensium," in *The Catholic Encyclopedia* (New York: Robert Appleton Company).

<sup>31</sup> Hubert, *Sur la terre comme au ciel : la gestion des rites par l'Église catholique du Québec : fin XVIIe-mi-XIXe siècle*, 247.

<sup>32</sup> Ignace Bourget, *Neuvaine de Saint Zénon et de ses compagnons martyrs* (Montréal: J.B. Roland et Fils Libraires-Éditeurs, 1869), 23.

in the hope of being healed sometimes wearing them around their neck.<sup>33</sup> The devotion to relics was not an isolated aberration but something that Catholic men and women firmly believed, throughout the colonial period.<sup>34</sup>

The large majority of relics imported to New France during the French Regime did not come from the Roman catacombs but were primarily those of historical saints.<sup>35</sup> A small number of catacomb saints nevertheless were brought to North America during this period. In this chapter, I will attempt to identify the origins of the devotion to *corps saints* in New France. I will demonstrate that although rooted in ultramontane piety, the devotion existed long before the accession of Ignace Bourget to the episcopacy and the profound transformation that affected the Catholic Church in the nineteenth century. The arrival of the first *corps saint* under the impulse of the bishop of Montreal was not the introduction of a new devotion but coincides with the rise and popularity of the cult of catacomb saints in both France and Canada. This chapter will also demonstrate the role that Ignace Bourget played in the rise of the devotion to catacomb saints in Canada. If he did not personally introduce the devotion of every single catacomb saint, he consistently promoted and consolidated the cult of their relics. This chapter will also emphasize

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<sup>33</sup> Marie-Aimée Cliche, *Les pratiques de dévotion en Nouvelle-France : comportements populaires et encadrement ecclésial dans le gouvernement de Québec*, Ethnologie de l'Amérique française (Québec: Presses de l'Université Laval, 1988), 47.

<sup>34</sup> Dominique Deslandres, "Signes de Dieu et légitimation de la présence française au Canada: le trafic des reliques ou la construction d'une histoire," in *Les Signes de Dieu aux XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles* (Clermont-Ferrand (France): Faculté des Lettres et Sciences humaines de l'Université Blaise Pascal, 1993), 145.

<sup>35</sup> In this thesis, I use the expression historical saints to emphasize the historicity of the individuals who have been canonized. We have historical evidence of the existence of these saints who mostly lived in the medieval or modern period. There are no clear historical traces of the Catacomb saints mentioned in this thesis.

the networks through which relics would be acquired and imported to Canada. Through them Ignace Bourget and an important number of priests who shared his interest for catacomb saints obtained considerable relics.

### **THE PLACE OF RELICS IN THE COLONIAL PERIOD**

Though a few relics of martyrs were extracted from the catacombs in the early Middle Ages and placed in Roman churches, the catacombs themselves were eventually forgotten.<sup>36</sup> In 1578, workers unexpectedly rediscovered them, opening what Philippe Boutry calls the modern history of the catacombs.<sup>37</sup> In order to limit private extractions and avoid the circulation of fictitious relics, in 1667 Clement IX instituted the Sacred Congregation for indulgences and relics.<sup>38</sup> Because these relics were more than a thousand years old and difficult to identify, the congregation stated that two indubitable signs of martyrdom would be recognized: the engraving of a palm on the loculi and the presence of an ampoule, a small vial which was thought to contain the blood of the martyr. After these fragments of bones were identified as the authentic remains of a martyr by the presence of a palm or of an ampoule, they were automatically considered the remains of a saint and therefore worthy of veneration. Only then could the remains of the newly discovered saints be transported to churches and placed in altar stones or in reliquaries. Trevor Johnson, in an article on catacomb saints in Bavaria, asserts that the extractions from the

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<sup>36</sup> Johnson, "Holy Fabrications: The Catacomb Saints and the Counter-Reformation in Bavaria," 278.

<sup>37</sup> Boutry, "Les saints des catacombes: Itinéraires français d'une piété ultramontaine (1880-1881)," 875.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 876.

Catacombs reached a peak around 1700, long before the first significant relic was brought to Montreal.<sup>39</sup>

Before 1800, the large majority of catacomb saints remained in Italy, with only rare exceptions crossing to Bavaria or southern France.<sup>40</sup> A few *corps saints* nevertheless reached the young colony before the rise of ultramontanism. Marie de l'Incarnation in a letter to her son, describes a religious procession carrying the remains of *saint Flavien* and *sainte Félicité* in the streets of Quebec as early as in 1666. These relics extracted from the Roman catacombs were a gift from Pope Alexander VII to Bishop François de Laval for the Church of New France. They are the earliest instance of *corps saints* in the colony. A number of other popes such as Gregory XVI, seem to have been in the habit of offering the entire remains of catacomb saints to prominent guests.<sup>41</sup> The translation of these relics although isolated was an important event in the life of the small colony. It was met with much interest and attended by colonial officials and ecclesiastics. The procession was qualified by Marie de l'Incarnation as unlike any other ceremony ever carried in the colony.<sup>42</sup> As a result, for the first time, the name of a catacomb saint was given to a

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<sup>39</sup> Johnson, "Holy Fabrications: The Catacomb Saints and the Counter-Reformation in Bavaria," 281.

<sup>40</sup> Boutry, "Les saints des catacombes: Itinéraires français d'une piété ultramontaine (1880-1881)." And Johnson, "Holy Fabrications: The Catacomb Saints and the Counter-Reformation in Bavaria."

<sup>41</sup> Boutry, "Les saints des catacombes: Itinéraires français d'une piété ultramontaine (1880-1881)," 879.

<sup>42</sup> Lettre de la révérende mère Marie de l'Incarnation, Lettre CLXXVI, p.322-323 (Tournai: 1876)

street; Saint-Flavien in Old Quebec.<sup>43</sup> A number of years later, François de Laval's successor would also attempt to bring back two *corps saints* from Rome. However, when the British captured the boat on which he was travelling back to Quebec City in 1704, the precious relics were thrown to the sea. This reaction reflects the perception that most Protestants had of this devotion. Only portions of the two *corps saints* thrown to the sea were saved and later kept in reliquaries, one of which can still be seen at the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts.<sup>44</sup>

Under the French Regime, the vast majority of relics imported to New France came through France. In the years following the conquest of 1760, as relationships with the French Church were restrained, fewer relics could be imported into British Canada. Thirty years later, the French Revolution resulted in an almost complete rupture between clerical authorities on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean. While the relationship with the French Church would never be the same, networks were gradually restored with the end of the Napoleonic era.

#### **MODELING FAITH ON THE EUROPEAN EXAMPLE: THE ADOPTION OF A FOREIGN DEVOTION**

The end of the continental blockade and the European peace that followed made it possible for Canadian priests to travel back to Continental Europe where they encountered a new devotion. Starting in 1824, the cult of *sainte Philomène* had started to spread around Europe. The remains of this unknown martyr had been

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<sup>43</sup> Ville de Québec, "Fiche du toponyme: Saint-Flavien," <http://www.ville.quebec.qc.ca/toponymie/repertoire/fiche.aspx?idFiche=1251>. (accessed 18 August 2014).

<sup>44</sup> Claude Payer, "Un extraordinaire reliquaire polychrome de 1716," *Cap-aux-Diamants: la revue d'histoire du Québec* 110(2012): 122.



extracted in 1802 from the Catacomb of Priscilla and soon afterwards claims of miracles attributed to her relics circulated.

[...]En Italie, puis en France, l'histoire de Philomène touche, émeut, enthousiasme les fidèles. La ferveur des dévotions populaires, la réputation thaumaturgique de la jeune sainte jusqu'alors inconnue, mais dont le «crédit» semble si puissant, sur la terre comme au ciel, la multiplication des images, des châsses et des autels, emportent bientôt les réticences des doctes et des clercs.<sup>45</sup>

Less than a decade later, her cult started spreading in Quebec. Father Thomas Maguire, chaplain of the Ursulines in Quebec City, had visited her tomb in Mugnano and had been very impressed by the miracles that he witnessed there.<sup>46</sup> He returned with the first relic of the saint in 1834.<sup>47</sup> If the Catholic Church in Canada and especially the laity had not been very exposed to saints of the catacombs, this changed with the importation of the devotion to this martyr. The laity quickly embraced the new devotion to *sainte Philomène* as her name was regularly given to newborn girls, often to the great surprise of the clergy.<sup>48</sup> In 1837, Bishop Lartigue received a letter from the pastor of Saint-Laurent's parish asking him to consecrate a chapel in his newly built church to the young martyr.<sup>49</sup> In his answer he appeared unfamiliar with the catacomb saint and refused to grant Father St-Germain's request

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<sup>45</sup> Boutry, Fabre, and Julia, *Reliques modernes : cultes et usages chrétiens des corps saints des Réformes aux révolutions*, 148.

<sup>46</sup> James H. Lambert, "MAGUIRE, THOMAS," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 8, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003, [http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/maguire\\_thomas\\_8E.html](http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/maguire_thomas_8E.html) (accessed 18 August 2014).

<sup>47</sup> Savard, *Aspects du catholicisme canadien-français au XIX siècle*, 179.

<sup>48</sup> Citing a letter written in January 1837 by Jean Holmes, a priest of the seminary of Quebec, Pierre Savard mentions that according to this priest, on average, in his parish, for every ten girls baptized, nine would be named Philomène. See *ibid.*

<sup>49</sup> ACAM, Lettre de J.B. St-Germain à Mgr Lartigue, 29 May 1837, 355.105/837-002.

or even to authorize the veneration of the saint's relics until he obtained more information on this devotion from Rome.<sup>50</sup> However, by 1839, confronted to the popularity of the martyr, Bishop Lartigue would officially recognize the devotion to the young saint in his diocese by allowing a special mass to be celebrated on her feast day.<sup>51</sup>

The Oblates and the Jesuits who arrived from France in the early 1840's did much to spread her devotion and in 1842 the first Canadian church devoted to her was erected.<sup>52</sup> After one of the *religieuses des Saints-Noms de Jésus et de Marie* had been healed by the saint's intercession, the order strongly endorsed this devotion.<sup>53</sup> As in Europe, claims of miracles attributed to *sainte Philomène* seem to have played a major role in the rapid spread of her devotion across Canada. Because of the popularity of the new saint, it was easier to justify the first importations of catacomb saints from Rome. If *Philomène* had brought about miracles, why would the remains of another martyr not be able to do the same in Montreal? Philippe Boutry having carried out much research in Roman archives, notes that between 1837 and 1850, as a result of the devotion to *sainte Philomène*, importations of catacomb saints reached significant numbers in the French-speaking world.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> ACAM, Lettre de Mgr Lartigue à J.B. St-Germain, Registre de lettres de Mgr Lartigue RLL8, 19 June 1837.

<sup>51</sup> Savard, *Aspects du catholicisme canadien-français au XIX siècle*, 179.

<sup>52</sup> Sylvain and Voisine, *Histoire du Catholicisme Québécois: Les XVIIIe et XIXe siècles*, 2, 122.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>54</sup> Boutry, Fabre, and Julia, *Reliques modernes : cultes et usages chrétiens des corps saints des Réformes aux révolutions*, 146.

In Montreal, the Sulpicians did not remain indifferent to this new devotion. Even if they opposed many ultramontane initiatives the religious order adopted the devotion to relics of catacomb saints. In fact, the Sulpicians acquired their first *corps saint* in 1826, several years before Ignace Bourget was appointed bishop of Montreal. Jean-Henry-Auguste Roux, who was travelling in Europe, had encountered the devotion to catacomb saints. He returned to Montreal with the remains of *saint Maximin*. In 1833, the reliquary was placed in one of the newly completed chapels of the new Notre-Dame church.<sup>55</sup> At the time however, they had not organized a public translations in the streets of the city, as Bourget would later do.

As early as in 1837, in the early days of the diocese, Jean-Baptiste Roupe, a Sulpician, introduced the veneration of relics as one of the main devotion of the confraternity he headed. The great interest of lay people and clerics led him to acquire a large collection of relics.<sup>56</sup> Comparable initiatives did not however have the large diffusion that those of the bishop of Montreal would later have. They demonstrate however that these devotions were not primarily the initiative of Bourget. They had existed even before him. In the province of Quebec, the laity and the lower clergy propagated the devotion to catacomb saints long before it was officially endorsed by the bishops and the high clergy. *Sainte Philomène* undoubtedly paved the way to the introduction of catacomb saints in Canada. But more

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<sup>55</sup> Louis Adolphe Hugué-Latour, *Annuaire de Ville-Marie origine, utilité et progrès des institutions catholiques de Montréal : supplément à l'édition de 1864*, CIHM/ICMH Microfiche series = CIHM/ICMH collection de microfiches (Montréal: C.-O. Beauchemin & Valois, 1872), microform, 407.

<sup>56</sup> Dominique Deslandres, John Alexander Dickinson, and Ollivier Hubert, *Les Sulpiciens de Montréal : une histoire de pouvoir et de discrétion, 1657-2007* (Saint-Laurent, Québec: Fides, 2007), 275-76.

importantly, it demonstrates that many Catholics were eager to adopt relics of new saints. For them, these relics transformed their religious experience into something tangible and more concrete.

### **A DEVOTIONAL TRANSFORMATION: IGNACE BOURGET'S FUNDAMENTAL ROLE**

As in the French Catholic world, the rise of the devotion to catacomb saints in Canada can be traced back to *sainte Philomène*. However, the popular interest for these new saints cannot be explained by this alone. Bishop Ignace Bourget, who was at the head of Montreal's Catholic Church from 1840 to 1876, was an essential factor in the importation of these relics. He was very open to introduce new saints and promote ultramontane devotions in his diocese.<sup>57</sup> His endorsement of the devotion to catacomb saints was key to the development of this cult in Montreal. In its twenty-fifth session, held in 1563, the Council of Trent had reaffirmed the importance of invoking the saints and venerating their relics. However, the Council had also regulated the circulation of these objects of devotion by requiring their identification by the local bishop. The approval of the local bishop became key to any translation or fabrication of relics.<sup>58</sup> Therefore, without Ignace Bourget's personal commitment to spread the devotion to catacomb saints in his diocese, this devotional transformation would have been impossible.

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<sup>57</sup> Roberto Perin, *Ignace de Montréal : artisan d'une identité nationale*(Montréal, QC: Boréal, 2008), 100-01.

<sup>58</sup> Johnson, "Holy Fabrications: The Catacomb Saints and the Counter-Reformation in Bavaria," 276.

Ignace Bourget was a fervent advocate of ultramontane ideas. Throughout his episcopacy, he promoted the emotional, expressive, external and popular religiosity that existed in Rome.<sup>59</sup> Historian Nive Voisine considers him responsible of the popular success of these ideas.<sup>60</sup> Having sojourned in Europe more than any other Canadian bishop, he developed strong relations and friendships with other Catholics who shared his views. He used ultramontane networks to acquire an important number of *corps saints* for his diocese. He also modeled this devotion on the European example that he had witnessed. The processions of these relics were inspired in many ways by those organized by ultramontane Catholics across Europe.

It is significant that in his eulogy, during the funeral service of Bishop Bourget on 12 June 1885, Louis-Frédéric Colin, superior of the Seminary, would highlight the cleric's "inébranlables effusions de foi et de charité devant les reliques des martyrs et des saints".<sup>61</sup> Bourget was known by his contemporaries to be an admirer of relics. Throughout his long episcopacy, he had attempted to personally collect and bring to Montreal many reliquaries.<sup>62</sup> In his many travels, he would not hesitate to request relics in the sanctuaries, churches and monasteries that he would visit. "Cet évêque aimant tant les reliques qu'il aurait pu déposséder nos sanctuaires de leurs trésors, si on l'eût laissé faire" recalled the warden of an Italian Church from where Bourget had obtained considerable relics.<sup>63</sup> Bishop Bourget even kept a list of

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<sup>59</sup> Perin, *Ignace de Montréal : artisan d'une identité nationale*, 100.

<sup>60</sup> Voisine, Hamelin, and Sylvain, *Les Ultramontains canadiens-français*, 71.

<sup>61</sup> *La Semaine Religieuse de Montréal*, 20 June 1885.

<sup>62</sup> Perin, *Ignace de Montréal : artisan d'une identité nationale*, 105.

<sup>63</sup> Frédéric Langevin, *Monseigneur Ignace Bourget, deuxième évêque de Montréal : précis biographique* (Montréal: Impr. du Messenger, 1931), 165-66.

the individuals who had offered him relics and to whom he had promised to pray for.<sup>64</sup> Many letters testify of his desire to obtain new catacomb saints for Montreal.<sup>65</sup> As Roberto Perin has argued, Ignace Bourget did not orchestrate religious ceremonies such as those marking the introduction of catacomb saints to manipulate the faithful of his diocese. Rather, he did so because he sincerely believed and held these devotions as his own. Bishop Bourget personally adopted the cult of catacomb saints by importing and collecting Roman relics for himself and others.<sup>66</sup> His successor, Bishop Fabre also had a personal devotion to relics. Few would have known that the pectoral cross that he kept around his neck contained several.<sup>67</sup> The high clergy sincerely believed in these new saints and during religious ceremonies around relics, genuinely experienced the same religious emotions as many in the crowds.

However, the introduction of catacomb saints in Montreal was also motivated by very practical reasons. Having been appointed at the head of the young diocese of Montreal at the death of Bishop Lartigue in 1840, Ignace Bourget immediately launched himself in a profound reorganization of his diocese. One of the most urgent needs was the construction of new churches in a city where the population was growing rapidly. Montreal's population had almost doubled in just

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<sup>64</sup> ACAM, Bourget, Ignace. Noms des personnes qui, à Rome, ont donné des reliques et pour lesquelles il faudra prier en reconnaissance, 1846, 651.200/846-002.

<sup>65</sup> ACAM, Correspondance entre Hyacinthe Hudon et Mgr Bourget, June 1844, 901.117/844-006.

<sup>66</sup> Perin, *Ignace de Montréal : artisan d'une identité nationale*, 104-05.

<sup>67</sup> In an inventory performed as part of my work at the Archdiocese we were surprised to find nine relics in his pectoral cross including relics of his two predecessors who were never canonized.

25 years.<sup>68</sup> The first years of Bourget's episcopacy witnessed the multiplication of religious buildings of all kinds, from convents and monasteries to churches and religious schools.<sup>69</sup> The intervention of the bishop was often key to the development of many of these new institutions.<sup>70</sup> This change was so important that historian Roberto Perin does not hesitate to describe Bourget's legacy as an institutional revolution.<sup>71</sup> Each of these new institutions possessed several altars on which Masses were regularly celebrated. These altars required relics of saints in order for a valid Mass to be sung. As North America did not yet have any canonized saints, these relics necessarily had to be imported from Europe.<sup>72</sup>

The tradition of incrusting relics in altars is rooted in a verse taken from the Book of Revelation.<sup>73</sup> To this day, the ancient practice of incorporating relics of saints in the altars of churches and chapels continues to be a liturgical requirement.<sup>74</sup> With the construction of churches, the multiplication of altars and the increase in ordinations, relics undoubtedly came to be lacking in Montreal. With the erection of Montreal as a diocese in 1836 a small number of relics were in the possession of the new bishop. The large majority would have been in the hands of Montreal's four religious communities: the Sulpicians, the *Congrégation de Notre-*

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<sup>68</sup> Perin, *Ignace de Montréal : artisan d'une identité nationale*, 84.

<sup>69</sup> For an overview of the institutions and churches which were founded under the impulse of Bishop Bourget, see: *ibid.*, Chapter 2.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, 65.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 84.

<sup>72</sup> The Jesuit Canadian martyrs would become the first canonized saints in 1930.

<sup>73</sup> Revelation 6:9: "I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God and the testimony they had maintained" NIV

<sup>74</sup> Code of Canon Law, c. 1237 §2, in "Code of Canon Law: Latin-English Edition," ed. Canon Law Society of America(Washington D.C.1983).

*Dame*, the *Hospitalières de Saint-Joseph* and the Grey Nuns. These relics had been imported mostly under the French Regime. In his instructions given in April 1837 concerning his pastoral visits no mention is made of Bishop Lartigue's desire to examine the relics of the parishes he visited.<sup>75</sup> References to relics in the diocese's official documents before the 1840's are rare and this testifies to their scarcity in Montreal's parishes. On the contrary the importance of relics by the time that Edouard-Charles Fabre became archbishop, forty years later, is evident in the instructions given regarding the pastoral visits of vicars forane. In every parish visited, they were expected to pay special attention to every altar, making sure that each possessed appropriate relics. They were also expected to make sure that all relics exposed to the faithful were authentic and religiously kept.<sup>76</sup>

To fulfill this new requirement, the Canadian Church turned to the largest and inexhaustible relic-supplies: the Roman catacombs. In doing so, Montreal's diocesan authorities were taking a path already well used by Catholic authorities in other countries.<sup>77</sup> During the Counter-Reformation and as a result of the important destruction of relics that had occurred, catacomb saints had made their way to Bavaria throughout the seventeenth century.<sup>78</sup> Similarly, it was only after the major

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<sup>75</sup> ACAM, Mandement de visite pastorale, 1 April 1837.

<sup>76</sup> ACAM, Circulaire de Mgr l'évêque de Montréal au clergé de son diocèse, 9 March 1877.

<sup>77</sup> Visiting the Catacombs of San Sebastiano in 2013, I was amazed to witness the hundreds of niches that had been emptied. A very small number of tombs had been left untouched. It is only then that I understood the magnitude that this devotion once had in the Catholic world.

<sup>78</sup> Johnson, "Holy Fabrications: The Catacomb Saints and the Counter-Reformation in Bavaria."



destructions of relics during the French Revolution that catacomb saints would be imported massively to France.<sup>79</sup>

What led Bourget to turn to the Roman catacombs to obtain relics for his diocese remains unclear. It is very likely that the idea was given to Montreal's bishop by a French ecclesiastic: Charles-Auguste-Marie-Joseph, Count of Forbin-Janson and bishop of Nancy. Historian Nive Voisine asserts that Forbin-Janson ignited a religious renewal in Montreal and was key in spreading new ultramontane ideas in Canada.<sup>80</sup> Catholics in almost every region of Quebec and Acadia saw him and heard him preach in the early 1840's.<sup>81</sup> The bishop of Nancy had been profoundly influenced by the devotion to Roman martyrs and was an ardent advocate of this form of popular piety.<sup>82</sup> Although I was not able to find specific references to catacomb saints in what we know of his sermons given across Quebec, it seems that the prelate regularly evoked memories of his visits to Rome and the more general idea of martyrdom.<sup>83</sup> Furthermore, we have evidence that in 1816, he had personally obtained from Rome a *corps saint* that he brought back with him to France.<sup>84</sup> During his stay in Montreal and his discussions with its young bishop Ignace Bourget, Forbin-Janson might very well have suggested a visit to Rome.

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<sup>79</sup> Le Goff, *Histoire de la France religieuse*, 437.

<sup>80</sup> Voisine, Hamelin, and Sylvain, *Les Ultramontains canadiens-français*, 72-73.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, 134.

<sup>82</sup> Boutry, "Les saints des catacombes: Itinéraires français d'une piété ultramontaine (1880-1881)," 906.

<sup>83</sup> N-E Dionne, *Mgr de Forbin-Janson, évêque de Nancy et de Toul, primat de Lorraine; sa vie-son oeuvre en Canada*(Québec: Typ. Laflamme et Proulx, 1910), 166.

<sup>84</sup> Boutry, "Les saints des catacombes: Itinéraires français d'une piété ultramontaine (1880-1881)," 924.

## IMPORTING RELICS THROUGH ULTRAMONTANE NETWORKS

In 1841, less than a year after his accession to the episcopal see, Ignace Bourget undertook his first journey to Europe as bishop of Montreal. Before leaving, the prelate enumerated the reasons that in his opinion justified his long absence from Montreal.<sup>85</sup> Among the objectives of his transatlantic journey was the acquisition of relics for the many churches of his young diocese. He did not hesitate to share his hope to the pastor of Sainte-Geneviève's parish which stood on the shore of the Rivière des Prairies.

C'est bien mon dessein de revenir chargé de saintes reliques et comptez que vous et votre paroisse en aurez votre bonne part.<sup>86</sup>

A few months later, writing from Liverpool on his way back, he had not yet obtained "un saint martyr habillé" but had established good relationships in Rome and was confident to obtain a catacomb saint.<sup>87</sup> The bishop assigned to Jean-Baptiste Kelly, the vicar general of the diocese, the task of completing the acquisition. Two years later, Mr. Kelly returned to Montreal with the very first *corps saint* imported from Rome by the young diocese: *sainte Janvier*.<sup>88</sup>

Much like *sainte Philomène*, the remains of *sainte Janvier* had been found in the Roman catacombs with her name carved on her tomb and with the traditional signs of martyrdom. Discovered on 28 January 1843, it took several months before

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<sup>85</sup> ACAM, Mémoire de l'évêque de Montréal pour servir à son voyage en Europe en 1841, 901.054/841-003.

<sup>86</sup> ACAM, Lettre de Mgr Bourget à M. Louis Lefebvre, cure de Sainte-Geneviève, 24 April 1841, Registre de lettres de Bourget (RLB2).

<sup>87</sup> ACAM, Relation de voyage de Bourget 1841, 901.054, folio 433.

<sup>88</sup> *Les Mélanges Religieux*, 10 November 1843

the box containing her precious remains arrived in Montreal. The information that we possess regarding her reliquary demonstrates that it was conceived by the Grey nuns in accordance with traditional French custom.<sup>89</sup> The bones of the saint were placed on red cushions and mirrors surrounded the casket. Although, he had obtained a *corps saint*, Bishop Bourget wanted to display the relics according to the Italian custom, as they could be seen in Rome. In the many Italian churches he had visited, it was not the bones themselves that were exposed to the public as had been the case in the French tradition but wax representations of the saints which broke away from the tradition of medieval reliquaries.<sup>90</sup> To this day, in many Roman churches, the recumbent effigies of catacomb saints are still visible under many altars.<sup>91</sup> Because this modern innovation of the use of wax for reliquaries was unheard of in Canada, the mask representing the saint also had to be imported from Europe.

The following year, in an exchange of letters, Bourget requested that Hyacinthe Hudon (the new vicar general of the diocese) bring back a catacomb saint with him when the latter returned from Rome. Hudon, finding his demand difficult to achieve, nevertheless brought back a relic from the true cross and the body of a

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<sup>89</sup> *Les Mélanges Religieux*, 21 November 1843.

<sup>90</sup> Boutry, "Les saints des catacombes: Itinéraires français d'une piété ultramontaine (1880-1881)," 911.

<sup>91</sup> Among them, to cite only a few, are Santa Maria dei Miracoli where one can still see the recumbent of *Santa Candida* and in the Basilica Sant'Agostino in Campo Marzio the reliquary of *San Benedetto*. Visible in two very visited churches, these reliquaries would have been seen by almost any Canadian priest or faithful Catholic while visiting Rome in the second half of the nineteenth century.

proper name martyr: *saint Zotique*.<sup>92</sup> This time, the reliquary corresponded to the ones that could be seen in the churches of Rome. Father Hudon writing to Bishop Bourget in 1844 describes the wax representation that he had bought in Italy as "quelque chose de nouveau".<sup>93</sup> The French-style reliquary of *sainte Janvière* and the Italian-style reliquary of *saint Zotique* were both placed in Montreal's cathedral.



**Figure 2: *Saint Zotique's corps saint* under an altar**

If the first martyrs were imported as a result of the direct initiative of Bishop Bourget, parishes and religious communities rapidly became interested in acquiring a *corps saint* for themselves. Soon, nuns and priests from all over the diocese would request the intervention of the bishop to facilitate the acquisition of new relics. The demands were such that in 1846, Bourget left for Rome with a list of over eighty different relics requested from him by the parishes of his diocese.<sup>94</sup> Writing to

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<sup>92</sup> ACAM, Correspondance entre Hyacinthe Hudon et Mgr Bourget, June 1844, 907.117/844-006.

<sup>93</sup> ACAM, Lettre de Hyacinthe Hudon à Mgr Bourget, 21 June 1844, 901.117/844-006.

<sup>94</sup> ACAM, Bourget, Ignace. Liste des paroisses du diocèse de Montréal en faveur desquelles des reliques ont été demandées, 1846, 651.200/846-001.

Bishop Bourget, who had inquired about the needs of her community in 1860, soeur Marie Pagé, from the *Religieuses Hospitalières de Saint-Joseph*, asked if it was too late to request that the prelate return with a roman martyr for her community.<sup>95</sup> Receiving a request from Father Avila Valois while in Rome in 1865, Bourget replied that he was willing to try but could make no promises because he had already been granted several roman martyrs.

Quant à un corps saint, je vais faire une tentative; mais comme j'en ai déjà obtenu plusieurs, je ne sais pas si l'on ne finira pas par me dire que je veux cette fois emporter toutes les catacombes, comme l'on a dit autrefois que j'avais emporté Rome avec le St-Siège.<sup>96</sup>

The demands even came from outside Bourget's own diocese. In 1847, Basile Moreau of Le Mans in France, the founder of the Congregation of the Holy Cross, obtained a *corps saint* from the Roman catacombs from Bishop Bourget.<sup>97</sup> In 1869, a monastery in New York wrote to Bourget reminding him of his promise to facilitate the acquisition of relics from Rome.<sup>98</sup> More often than not, what motivated Bishop Bourget to return to Montreal with roman martyrs were the requests of religious communities, priests and institutions. Viewing the development of the devotion to catacomb saints in nineteenth century Montreal as the exclusive initiative of its bishop is therefore inaccurate. Although the prelate was directly responsible for organizing the first importations many rapidly adopted this devotion and required his help to obtain new relics.

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<sup>95</sup> ACAM, Lettre de soeur Marie Pagé à Mgr Bourget, 12 March 1860, 525.102/860-014.

<sup>96</sup> ACAM, Mgr Bourget – 5e voyage 1864-1865, 901.058, 97(173).

<sup>97</sup> ACAM, Lettre de Mgr Bourget à Mr. Moreau, 15 March 1847, 901.055.

<sup>98</sup> ACAM, Lettre de soeur Marie de l'Enfant-Jésus Bourbonnière à Mgr Bourget, 1869, 525.107/869-005.

Starting in the 1860's the number of Canadian priests visiting Rome or sojourning there for longer periods of time greatly increased. The expedition of the Canadian Zouaves in 1868-1870 and the inauguration of the Canadian pontifical College in 1888 insured a steady Canadian presence in the Eternal City. A number of Canadian priests were also sent to study in Rome. The Italian piety and its devotions which they discovered there appear to have greatly impressed many of them.<sup>99</sup> Although the bishops of Montreal remained significant importers of catacomb saints, these priests obtained relics for Canadian parishes and institutions, sometimes being able to return with up to four martyrs at a time.<sup>100</sup> Among them was Monseigneur Joseph Desautels who sojourned in Rome in 1867 and again from 1871 to 1874. Through his numerous relationships, the prelate became an intermediary for several Canadian priests interested in obtaining catacomb saints. Among others, he was granted the remains of *sainte Pacifique* and *saint Clement*.<sup>101</sup> Father Nazaire Piché also took advantage of his stay in Rome to secure a *corps saint* for his parish in Lachine.<sup>102</sup> As for Father Maréchal, the pastor of Notre-Dame-de-Grâce parish, he returned to Canada with *saint Victor*.<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>99</sup> Among them was Father Benjamin Paquet who studied in Rome from 1863 to 1866. See Savard, *Aspects du catholicisme canadien-français au XIX siècle*, 57.

<sup>100</sup> In a letter to Archbishop Fabre, Father Trépanier was planning to return with four martyrs destined for a parish, a convent and two religious institutions. See ACAM, Lettre de Trépanier à Fabre, 15 May 1879, 525.106/879-001.

<sup>101</sup> ACAM, Lettre de Isidore Gravel, prêtre, à M. Paré, 29 May 29, 1869, 901.081/869-002. and ACAM, Lettre de Mgr Desautels à Paré, 20 January 1870, 901.086/870-001.

<sup>102</sup> ACAM, Lettre de N. Piché à Paré, 11 November 1869, 355.103/869-002.

<sup>103</sup> ACAM, 75 ans de vie paroissiale 1853-1928 Notre-Dame-de-Grâce, A-3 Album de la paroisse Notre-Dame-de-Grâce.

Obtaining a *corps saint* was much more difficult to do for the laity. Though the distance and cost of travel were significant obstacles, the requirements of the Congregation of Indulgences and Sacred Relics, which oversaw the circulation of relics, were the primary factors that limited lay individuals from obtaining them. *Corps saints* were able to reach their final destination essentially through ecclesiastic and diplomatic networks.<sup>104</sup> Local parish priests and lay Canadians could hardly obtain relics from the Holy See without an influential intermediary who had connections with the Roman Curia. This explains why these remained largely clerical initiatives and why Bourget was so successful in obtaining these martyrs. No other Canadian prelate had traveled to Rome as often as Bishop Bourget and had developed the relationships that he had with members of the Curia.<sup>105</sup> When in Rome, he would personally visit the Vicegerent secretary to obtain *corps saints*.<sup>106</sup> These private visits were successful in assuring that more relics would be granted for his diocese. After one of these visits on 5 May 1865, originally to obtain three martyrs, he wrote to his secretary later that day that he was confident to obtain a fourth *corps saint*.<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>104</sup> Boutry, Fabre, and Julia, *Reliques modernes : cultes et usages chrétiens des corps saints des Réformes aux révolutions*, 12.

<sup>105</sup> Ignace Bourget travelled seven times to Europe, often spending several months abroad. During his travels he would arrange to personally meet bishops in Great Britain, France and Italy and was able to develop an impressive network of relationships. His participation at the first Vatican Council also allowed him to meet priests and bishops from around the world. Léon Pouliot estimated that over the course of his episcopacy, Bourget had spent a total of more than three years in Rome. See Léon Pouliot, *Les dernières années (1876-1885) et la survie de Mgr Bourget* (Montréal: Éditions Beauchemin, 1960), 23.

<sup>106</sup> ACAM, Mgr Bourget - Itinéraire du voyage en Europe 1864-1865, 5 May 1865, 901.058/865-001.

<sup>107</sup> ACAM, Lettre de Bourget à Paré, 6 May 1865, 901.058/865-034.

The numerous letters of priests preserved in the Archives of the Archdiocese of Montreal demonstrate that although more and more ecclesiastics were able to obtain relics after 1860, they almost always needed the support and approval of the bishopric to do so. Without it, Roman authorities would not easily grant their request and their relics could not be publicly venerated. However, despite the important diplomatic efforts and the paperwork required, the number of importations continued to increase.

#### **THE PINNACLE OF THE DEVOTION: SAINT ZÉNON AND HIS COMPANIONS**

In France, the development of Christian archaeology and the controversy surrounding the proof of martyrdom marked the abrupt decline in the 1850's of what ultimately was an ephemeral devotion.<sup>108</sup> Surprisingly, the decline of catacomb saints in Europe coincided with the rise of the devotion in Quebec. By the end of the 1860's the devotion to catacomb saints had been widely adopted in Montreal. Demands for new martyrs and for relics of all sorts were regularly made to Bishop Bourget and more and more Canadian priests travelled to Rome in the hope of returning with a *corps saint*. Because of this interest, the relics that had been imported to Montreal were not sufficient enough to satisfy to the demands of all the faithful. In 1869, while staying in Rome for the sixth time, Bishop Bourget discovered in a church an ossuary containing the remains of *saint Zénon*, a Roman soldier and his 10,203 companions.<sup>109</sup> The bishop immediately saw the potential

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<sup>108</sup> Le Goff, *Histoire de la France religieuse*, 437.

<sup>109</sup> According to an ancient tradition, *Zénon* had been martyred with 10,203 Christian soldiers of the Roman legions (his companions) who had refused to offer



that this common grave of martyrs had for his diocese. The remains were so abundant that they could satisfy the demands of all parishes, communities and individuals. The devotion to *saint Zénon* and his companions represents the pinnacle of the cult of catacomb saints in Montreal. The important distribution of these relics and their popularity resulted in further importations of *corps saints*.

Following his discovery of these forgotten relics and after obtaining the required authorizations, Bishop Bourget was able to send several boxes to Montreal containing the remains of *saint Zénon* and his companions. In them could be found ashes, skulls, teeth, ribs, jaws and numerous other relics extracted from the common grave.<sup>110</sup> Behind this was Bourget's desire that the ashes be put in small portable reliquaries which could be distributed to the faithful and wore around their necks.<sup>111</sup> The larger relics, however, were meant to be distributed to parishes and religious communities. The prelate believed that this divine present was meant to benefit all the faithful of his diocese.<sup>112</sup> Eight years later, visiting the Roman church where the relics had been kept, a Canadian priest was told: "Il n'y a plus que

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sacrifices to the gods of the Empire. The relics imported by Bourget in 1869 were therefore considered to be the combined remains of more than 10,000 men. See Bourget, *Neuvaine de Saint Zénon et de ses compagnons martyrs*. An interesting parallel could be drawn with the devotion to Saint Ursula and the 11 000 virgins of Cologne, Germany. The relics found under the Basilica of Saint Ursula were distributed across Europe in the medieval period and found their way in the altars of many churches. With *saint Zénon* and his companions, they constitute another example of group sanctity. See Scott B. Montgomery, *St. Ursula and the Eleven Thousand Virgins of Cologne : relics, reliquaries and the visual culture of group sanctity in late medieval Europe*(Oxford ; New York: Peter Lang, 2009).

<sup>110</sup> Lavallée, "Le culte des reliques sous l'épiscopat de Monseigneur Ignace Bourget," 97.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*, 96.

quelques fragments. Notre Saint-Père le Pape a donné la plus grande partie qui était considérable à un évêque du Canada.”<sup>113</sup>

The translation of *saint Zénon* and his companions has left archival documents like no other before in the history of the city.<sup>114</sup> It was the most elaborated translation of relics ever seen in the streets of Montreal. The bishopric certainly invested an important amount of money in the organization of the event. A small booklet containing the novena to *saint Zénon* and his companions was published shortly before the translation and was said to be sold in all bookstores.<sup>115</sup> It contained prayers to the saints that could be recited by all the faithful as well as the history of these saints. In this booklet, Bishop Bourget encouraged all to join the public procession in their honor and to pray for their intercession. He also ensured that this new devotion be firmly rooted so that it would not disappear. Every parish was invited to receive a parcel of these new relics. Furthermore, it was decided that the next parish to be erected would be dedicated to *saint Zénon*. July 9 was chosen as the feast day of the saints and a chapel of the future cathedral was to be dedicated to the new martyrs.<sup>116</sup>

The importation of these relics provoked unprecedented manifestations of official piety and popular devotion. Bishop Bourget himself was surprised by the popular fervor generated by the relics and by the mobilization of the Catholics of

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<sup>113</sup> Langevin, *Monseigneur Ignace Bourget, deuxième évêque de Montréal : précis biographique*, 165-66.

<sup>114</sup> Lavallée, "Le culte des reliques sous l'épiscopat de Monseigneur Ignace Bourget," 87.

<sup>115</sup> *L'Ordre*, 16 October 1869.

<sup>116</sup> Bourget, *Neuvaine de Saint Zénon et de ses compagnons martyrs*, 30-32.

Montreal.<sup>117</sup> In a pastoral letter written soon after the arrival of the relics of *saint Zénon* and his companions, Bourget acknowledged with great satisfaction the fact that demands to obtain these relics were made not only by clerics and churches, but also by many pious families.<sup>118</sup> The demand for relics was so large that the following year more relics were brought from Rome.<sup>119</sup>

### **A DEVOTION TURNED TOWARDS ROME**

The arrival of the relics of *saint Zénon* and his companions coincided with a widespread fascination with Rome. This interest for the Eternal City was something that could be easily perceived in ultramontane Quebec. Newspapers, books and works of art constantly fuelled this fascination. Archbishop Paul Bruchési himself contributed to it by publishing a small book in 1898 relating his experience of the catacombs a few years before his Episcopal appointment.<sup>120</sup> The fascination for Rome was also reflected in the religious architecture. The architects of the Très-Saint-Sacrement parish in Lachine wanted to recreate in their church the ambience of the catacombs.<sup>121</sup> Similarly, one of the Sulpicians' chapels found in the basement of the Grand Séminaire was conceived as a reproduction of the Roman catacombs.<sup>122</sup>

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<sup>117</sup> ACAM, Lettre de Bourget à Paré, 13 November 1869, 901.059/869-102.

<sup>118</sup> ACAM, Mandement de Monseigneur l'évêque de Montréal, instituant dans toutes les églises de son diocèse la fête de St Zénon et de ses compagnons martyrs, 17 March 1870.

<sup>119</sup> ACAM, Lettre de Bourget à Paré, 19 March 1870, 901.059/870-023.

<sup>120</sup> Louis Joseph Paul Napoléon Bruchési, *Les catacombes de Rome* (Lévis: Roy, 1898).

<sup>121</sup> Ville de Montréal, "Église Très-Saint-Sacrement," [http://ville.montreal.qc.ca/portal/page?\\_pageid=8117,89569582&\\_dad=portal&\\_sc\\_hema=PORTAL](http://ville.montreal.qc.ca/portal/page?_pageid=8117,89569582&_dad=portal&_sc_hema=PORTAL). (accessed 1 September 2014).

<sup>122</sup> Rolland Litalien and Grand séminaire de Montréal., *Le Grand Séminaire de Montréal de 1840 à 1990 : 150 années au service de la formation des prêtres* (Montréal: Éditions du Grand Séminaire de Montréal, 1990), 271.

The cornerstone of the Sanctuaire du Saint-Sacrement was a stone originating from the Catacomb of Callixtus and a gift of the pope himself.<sup>123</sup> The stain glass windows of a number of churches also depicted the catacombs and their martyrs. In 1915, Très-Saint-Nom-de-Jésus installed a window portraying the Catacomb of Callixtus in Rome. Pilgrimages were organized in the Eternal City. A visit to the catacombs generally constituted one of the fundamental highlights of the expedition. On a pilgrimage to Rome with a group of Canadian pilgrims in 1922, journalist Ernest Bilodeau considered the Mass celebrated in the Roman catacombs to be one of the most memorable moments of his journey.<sup>124</sup>

This interest for Rome and the Early Christian Church encouraged the importation of the relics of Roman martyrs. Through the relics, individuals who could not afford the journey to Italy were able to concretely experience something of the Holy City. Upon learning that Bishop Bourget had obtained the relics of *saint Félix* for her order, Sister Mance wrote to her bishop that this *corps saint* would bring her community “une abondance de paix, de bonheur et puis aussi *un parfum de la ville sainte*”(my italics).<sup>125</sup> This expression appears to be a reference to Veillot’s book *Le parfum de Rome* (1862) which contains many references to martyrs and the catacombs.<sup>126</sup> Louis Veillot’s ultramontane works circulated greatly in the province, nourishing the interest for the Eternal City. Roman martyrs also linked the Canadian Church to the primitive Church of the persecutions.

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<sup>123</sup> *La Semaine Religieuse de Montréal*, 21 May 1892.

<sup>124</sup> Ernest Bilodeau, *Pélerins de Rome et du XXVIe congrès eucharistique international (24-29 mai 1922)*(Québec: Le Soleil, 1922), 169.

<sup>125</sup> ACAM, Lettre de Sr Mance à Bourget, 1 March 1865, 525.102/865-003.

<sup>126</sup> Louis Veillot, *Le parfum de Rome*, 2 vols.(Paris: Gaume, 1862).

The spread of the devotion to *saint Zénon* and his companions was also closely connected with the Zouaves' expedition. Starting in 1868 many young Canadian Catholics had volunteered to travel to Rome to defend the pope against the Italian patriots during the *Risorgimento*. The Montreal arrival of the relics of *saint Zénon* and his companions coincided with the military expedition. The relics of these roman soldiers served to mobilize Montreal's Catholics and to strengthen the relation between the local and the Roman Church.<sup>127</sup> In his widely distributed *Circulaire* Bishop Bourget emphasized the military virtues of the martyrs and declared *Zénon* and his companions protectors of the Zouaves. A relic was to be distributed to each volunteer so that they may be protected from any harm.<sup>128</sup> The safe return of the Canadian volunteers was certainly perceived by many as the result of the miraculous protection of *saint Zénon* and his companions.

The success enjoyed in Montreal by the relics of *saint Zénon* and his companions led to a renewed interest in similar relics across the province. The *corps saint* of *saint Lauréat*, obtained by the superior of the Seminary of Quebec while visiting Rome in the 1870's, was extracted from the same common grave as *saint Zénon* and was presented as one of his companions.<sup>129</sup> The extraction occurred a few years after the translation of *saint Zénon* and his companions in the streets of Montreal and certainly was inspired by the successful reception that they had enjoyed in the Metropolis. Clearly, the devotion to catacomb saints extended far

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<sup>127</sup> Lavallée, "Le culte des reliques sous l'épiscopat de Monseigneur Ignace Bourget," 89-90.

<sup>128</sup> Bourget, *Neuvaine de Saint Zénon et de ses compagnons martyrs*, 32.

<sup>129</sup> *L'Abeille*, 31 January 1878.

beyond the geographical limits of the diocese of Montreal. To this day, one can observe the wax effigies of *saint Emile* in Ottawa's Notre-Dame's Cathedral and *saint Urbain* in the chapel of the Maison Mère-Maillet in Quebec City.<sup>130</sup> *Corps saints* could be found not only in the chapel of the seminary of Montreal but also in the seminary of Quebec and Saint-Hyacinthe. Indeed, an important number of the future priests of the province would encounter the devotion to catacomb saints even before their ordination, seeing these relics in the chapel where they would go and pray daily.

The few Canadian historians who have, even if briefly, discussed the devotion to catacomb saints have had a tendency to look at it as a distinctive expression of ultramontane piety. Undoubtedly, the devotion to Roman martyrs is closely related to the fascination with Rome that characterized the ultramontane movement and affected Quebec's Catholic Church in the nineteenth century. If the devotion to catacomb saints constituted one of the manifestations of ultramontane piety it came to transcend this religious movement. As in France, the devotion to these Roman martyrs, which appeared and circulated at first in ultramontane circles, was eventually embraced by gallican circles becoming the regular experience of all Catholics.<sup>131</sup> French priests who could hardly qualify as ultramontane, adopted the devotion to Roman martyrs.<sup>132</sup> Even religious communities, such as the Sulpicians,

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<sup>130</sup> Saint Emile's relics were brought back from Rome by Bishop Duhamel, Ottawa's second bishop in 1879. As for Saint Urbain's relics, they were placed in the chapel of the Sisters of Charity of Quebec in 1885, both therefore in the years that followed the successful importation of the relics of *saint Zénon* and his companions in Montreal.

<sup>131</sup> Le Goff, *Histoire de la France religieuse*, 437.

<sup>132</sup> Boutry, "Les saints des catacombes: Itinéraires français d'une piété ultramontaine (1880-1881)," 908.

reluctant to embrace elements of ultramontane piety, turned to Roman martyrs for help.

As a result, two *corps saints* found their place in Notre-Dame of Montreal, probably in the 1860's. The remains of *saint Félix* and *sainte Irène* were placed under two side altars of the church.<sup>133</sup> Starting on All Saints' Day in 1869, the curtain that hid the reliquaries was removed and the faithful were able to pray in front of the wax recumbent of the saints.<sup>134</sup> Catacomb saints had the ability to attract a notable number of faithful to church. The Sulpicians noted that the novena organized in Notre-Dame in 1869 to commemorate the feast of Saint Francis-Xavier was more attended than in previous years because of the presence of these two new reliquaries in the church during the nine days of prayer.<sup>135</sup> This led them to request and obtain two other catacomb saints for their institutions. *Saint Vital* found his way in the Seminary and *saint Clement* was placed in the chapel of the Collège de Montréal.<sup>136</sup> Although the Sulpicians seem to have avoided using the bishop of Montreal as an intermediary for obtaining *corps saints*, they nonetheless acquired at least five martyrs for their institutions.<sup>137</sup> This interest demonstrates that catacomb

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<sup>133</sup> *Notice sur l'église de Notre-Dame de Montréal : dédié aux familles canadiennes*, (Montréal: E. Senécal, 1880), 10-11.

<sup>134</sup> ACAM, Lettre de Rousselot à Bourget, 28 octobre 1875, 355.101/875-002.

<sup>135</sup> *Echo du cabinet de lecture paroissiale*, April 1869.

<sup>136</sup> *Saint Vital* was kept in the chapel of the Grand Séminaire de Montréal while *saint Clément* occupied the altar cavity of one of the side altars of the Collège de Montréal. Both wax reliquaries are still conserved by the *département des biens immobiliers de l'Univers Saint-Sulpice*.

<sup>137</sup> The Archives of the Archdiocese of Montreal have only one document concerning the importation of Catacomb saints by Saint-Sulpice. In that particular situation the Holy See demanded that a document signed by the Ordinary (bishop) be presented before the request was granted, forcing the Sulpicians to contact their bishop.

saint were not a devotion simply limited to ultramontane circles but a source of pride, blessing and spiritual power for many Catholics.

### **THE LATE DECLINE OF THE DEVOTION TO CATACOMB SAINTS**

According to Philippe Boutry, the last official extraction of catacomb saints occurred on 26 February 1864. In 1881, archaeological controversies led Leo XIII to solemnly prohibit any new extraction from the Roman catacombs.<sup>138</sup> As early as in the 1850's, archaeological questions had been raised in both the scientific and the Catholic world regarding the significance of the ampoule of blood as firm proof of martyrdom. A Jesuit, Victor de Buck and a French archeologist, Edmond Le Blant, concluded that the ampoule was not in itself a proper evidence of martyrdom.<sup>139</sup> No assurance could be given that the several hundreds catacomb saints sent to dioceses around the world were really those of Christian martyrs. These conclusions led to the end of the official excavations, which had started more than two centuries before, in the 1620's.<sup>140</sup> While the Church officially remained silent, catacomb saints were gradually met with indifference.<sup>141</sup> Across Europe, many ecclesiastics gradually abandoned the cult of Roman martyrs and when they were not removed from churches, their reliquaries were soon covered with dust and forgotten.<sup>142</sup>

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<sup>138</sup>Boutry, "Les saints des catacombes: Itinéraires français d'une piété ultramontaine (1880-1881)," 920.

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*, 921.

<sup>140</sup> Johnson, "Holy Fabrications: The Catacomb Saints and the Counter-Reformation in Bavaria," 281.

<sup>141</sup> Boutry, "Les saints des catacombes: Itinéraires français d'une piété ultramontaine (1880-1881)," 921.

<sup>142</sup> Boutry, Fabre, and Julia, *Reliques modernes : cultes et usages chrétiens des corps saints des Réformes aux révolutions*, 168.



Despite the fact that in Europe, especially among ecclesiastics, the cult of catacomb saints was in decline in the second half of the nineteenth century, it continued to be of importance in Quebec. More than thirty years after the controversy which had shaken Rome and put an end to official demonstrations of devotion to catacomb saints, the translation of *saint Asellus* occurred in Joliette. The remains of the martyr were solemnly installed in the chapel of the Collège Joliette in the presence of the archbishop of Montreal. In his sermon pronounced for the occasion on 3 November 1892, Father Corcoran disregarded the European revelations around the authenticity of catacomb saints and continued to view the presence of an ampoule of blood as an unquestionable evidence of martyrdom.<sup>143</sup>

The continued interest of the Quebec Church for catacomb saints can also be demonstrated by the presence in Montreal's Archdiocese of the body of *saint Claude*.<sup>144</sup> The inscription on the small box containing his remains asserts that this proper name martyr was taken from the Catacomb of Priscilla on Via Salaria and was found with a blood ampoule and palms. It was identified as a Christian martyr by Ferdinando Maria de Rubeis, Patriarch of Constantinople. Cardinal Ferdinando Maria de Rossi held this title from 1751 to 1759 and the extraction of *saint Claude* would certainly have taken place during these years. However, it took more than a hundred years after its extraction for the small casket to cross the Atlantic. The presence of the seal of Archbishop Fabre on the box allows us to conclude that it

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<sup>143</sup> André Corcoran, *Saint-Asellus: translation de ses reliques dans la chapelle du Collège Joliette, le 3 novembre 1892: sermon prononcé à cette occasion* (Joliette: Imprimerie de l'étudiant et du couvent, 1892), 5.

<sup>144</sup> Inventory of the Diocese of Montreal, Liturgica CS2013.

probably was not brought to Montreal before 1876. The disinterest for catacomb saints in Europe appears in fact to have made it easier for Canadians to acquire relics no longer valued by many. *Corps saints*, which had been so difficult to acquire in the 1840's by Canadian clerics, were now imported *en masse*.<sup>145</sup> *Saint Emile, sainte Gaudence* and *sainte Arcade* are all examples of *corps saints* imported to Quebec more than a century after their discovery and extraction from the catacombs.

The main difficulty that Quebeckers faced in obtaining *corps saints* in the second half of the nineteenth century was obtaining the required religious authorizations. In 1879, while negotiating in Paris to obtain the remains of four martyrs, Father Trépanier, was required to present an authorization indicating the final destination of the *corps saints* signed by his bishop.<sup>146</sup> In his letter, the priest noted that the document was indispensable to guarantee the acquisition. Even the Sulpicians were required to present a letter from the bishop of Montreal authorizing one of their members to request relics from the Cardinal Vicar of Rome.<sup>147</sup> Most of these restrictions on the transfer of catacomb saints seem to have originated directly from Rome rather than from the diocesan authorities themselves. In a *circulaire* to his priests, Archbishop Fabre communicated the instructions he had received from Rome.

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<sup>145</sup> In 1847 while in Rome, Bourget attempted to obtain for Father Moreau, the founder of the Congrégation Sainte-Croix, a martyr. Because of the high demands of *corps saint* Bourget was dependent on the chances of the excavations in the Catacombs. See ACAM, Lettre de Mgr Bourget à Mr Moreau, Second voyage en Europe, 15 March 1847, 901.055.

<sup>146</sup> ACAM, Lettre de Trépanier à Bourget, 15 May 1879, 525.106/879-1.

<sup>147</sup> ACAM, Lettre de P. Deguise à Harel, 30 September 1886, 465.101/886-005.

*Ceux qui feront à l'avenir demander des corps de saints ou des reliques à Rome, devront exiger absolument de leurs commissionnaires qu'ils obtiennent le visa du Cardinal-Vicaire ou de celui qu'il a chargé de ce soin, sur les authentiques de ces reliques quand même ces authentiques auraient été données par quelqu'autre Évêque ou Cardinal. Par une instruction du 17 janvier 1881, les Évêques ont défense de laisser exposer et vénérer dans leurs diocèses les reliques venant désormais de Rome sans cette autorisation du Cardinal-Vicaire ou de son substitut. Faute de cette précaution, on s'exposerait donc à ne pouvoir reconnaître ici des reliques qu'on aurait eu grande peine à se procurer.<sup>148</sup>*

The Montreal Church clearly decided to abide by these new regulations. However, if they continued to officially promote the importation of catacomb saints, Montreal diocesan authorities did not blindly recognize all relics. Writing to Rome in 1881 on behalf of the Sisters of Providence who ran the Saint-Jean-de-Dieu hospital, Archbishop Fabre requested, as customary, an authorization of the Holy See to solemnly celebrate the feast of the translation of *saint Arcade* with special prayers every year. The archbishop of Montreal had personally presided over the translation of the saint's relics on 17 May 1880. The answer that came from Cardinal Simeone in Rome was firm and clear. The research that was carried out concluded that the relics of *saint Arcade* obtained by the Sisters of Providence were undeniably false ones.

Comme donc on ne peut accorder aucune estime à ces mêmes reliques, il était enjoint à Votre Grandeur de les soustraire à la vénération publique et de les détruire entièrement avec la prudence nécessaire pour éviter le scandale.<sup>149</sup>

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<sup>148</sup> ACAM, Circulaire de Mgr l'évêque de Montréal au clergé de son diocèse, 29 May 1881.

<sup>149</sup> ACAM, Lettre du cardinal Simeone à Fabre, 28 February 1885, 778.867/885-001.

Upon reception of the letter, Archbishop Fabre personally informed the hospital's chaplain that the reliquary was to be immediately removed from the chapel where it had been placed. It appears however that the wax reliquary was not destroyed at once. A Canadian priest who was in Rome was able to obtain a new and authentic relic of *saint Arcade* the following year.<sup>150</sup> The new relic would replace the forged ones in the wax reliquary in order to avoid any scandal. Whether the new relic belonged to a martyr effectively named *Arcade* or to an unidentified catacomb saint remains uncertain.

The confusion around the authenticity of *saint Arcade* undoubtedly led to a tightening of the regulations surrounding the importation and official recognition of catacomb saints in Montreal. Writing to the *Assistante générale du Monastère du Précieux-Sang de Notre-Dame-de-Grâce* in 1898, the vice-chancellor of the diocese, firmly forbade that any public cult be offered to the relics of *sainte Valérie*.<sup>151</sup> In spite of the fact that these relics were offered by a Catholic priest to the religious congregation, the Archdiocese judged that there were too many doubts regarding their authenticity. Therefore, the casket containing a wax representation of the young martyr could not be kept in the chapel of the monastery and no public veneration could take place around it. The questions raised in Europe regarding the devotion to catacomb saints did not put an end to the official devotion in Quebec, however, it seems to have at least led clerical authorities in Montreal to oversee the importation of relics more closely. Yet, they did not abandon the devotion in part

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<sup>150</sup> ACAM, Lettre de FX Leclerc à Fabre, 8 June 1886, 778.867/886-010.

<sup>151</sup> ACAM, Lettre d'Emile Roy à Soeur Marie-Immaculée, 28 December 1898, 525.112/898-2.

because a condemnation of the devotion to catacomb saints was ultimately a condemnation of the bishops of the past, and particularly of Ignace Bourget, who had publicly encouraged this form of piety.

Religious persecutions affecting the church in Europe also led to further importations. A French priest, Monseigneur Albert Battandier, who was living in Rome, arranged for the remains of *sainte Gaudence* to be transferred to Canada. The relics of the saint had been in a monastery from which the nuns had been driven out and all their belongings sold in auction. In 1906, the remains were for sale for between 500 and 700 francs. In the end, the Sisters of Providence of Montreal paid 800 francs to acquire the precious box containing the remains.<sup>152</sup>

The best indicator of the continued popularity of relics in the province at the turn of the century undoubtedly was the establishment near Nicolet of *La Tour des Martyrs de Saint-Célestin* in 1898. *La Tour des Martyrs* was founded by Calixte Marquis, a priest who had sojourned in Europe and collected hundreds of relics<sup>153</sup>. The sanctuary rapidly became one of the most important places of pilgrimage in the province.<sup>154</sup> A book, published in 1931 at the height of its popularity, cited among the 4980 relics of the sanctuary, those of several catacomb saints such as *sainte*

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<sup>152</sup> ASP, Lettre de Mgr Battandier à soeur Vincent de la Providence, 26 February 1907.

<sup>153</sup> According to the account of soeur Saint-Antoine, a nun who had personally known Calixte Marquis, the priest had been granted access to the Catacomb of Callixtus and personally collected many relics directly from the loculi. See Jean Roy, "L'invention du pèlerinage de la tour des Martyrs de Saint-Célestin (1898-1930)," *Revue d'histoire de l'Amérique française* 43, no. 4 (1990): 495.

<sup>154</sup> Guy Laperrière, "Les lieux de pèlerinage au Québec: une vue d'ensemble," in *Les pèlerinages au Québec* (Québec: Les presses de l'Université Laval, 1981), 44.

*Prisque, saint Séverin, sainte Claire* and the entire body of *saint Félix*.<sup>155</sup> *Saint Félix's* remains, although extracted from the catacombs of *Callixtus* in 1825, had only been brought to Canada in 1890.

These relics of catacomb saints were particularly impressive because of their size and seem to have marked the memory of the pilgrims.<sup>156</sup> In an exhibition on the history of the sanctuary in 2000, the reliquary of *saint Felix* was judged to be one of the most famous artifact on display.<sup>157</sup> As the automobile became a widespread mode of transportation in the first half of the century, pilgrims came from all across North America to visit the shrine.<sup>158</sup> Their numbers were so large that *une nouvelle Tour des Martyrs* was built in 1930. Thousands came every year and some had hopes that this place of pilgrimage might be compared to Sainte-Anne-de-Beaupré or Saint-Joseph's Oratory.<sup>159</sup> The sanctuary was eventually designated as the National Sanctuary of relics by the bishops of Quebec.<sup>160</sup> In bestowing this title to the sanctuary they publicly sent the message that they approved the devotion to relics. After a rapid decline in the 1960's the sanctuary definitively closed its doors around 1970 and the shrine was destroyed in 1975.<sup>161</sup> Nevertheless, the existence of *la Tour des Martyrs* until the 1970's testifies to the survival of the devotion to catacomb saints (and more generally relics) in Quebec well into the twentieth century.

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<sup>155</sup> Arthur Girard, *La tour des martyrs de Saint-Célestin*(Saint-Célestin1931), 24-25.

<sup>156</sup> *Ibid.*, 37.

<sup>157</sup> Aubry, Marcel. *La tour des martyrs revit. Le Nouvelliste*, 22 June 2000.

<sup>158</sup> Girard, *La tour des martyrs de Saint-Célestin*, 37-38.

<sup>159</sup> *Ibid.*, 88.

<sup>160</sup> Aubry, Marcel. *La tour des martyrs revit. Le Nouvelliste*, 22 June 2000.

<sup>161</sup> Laperrière, "Les lieux de pèlerinage au Québec: une vue d'ensemble," 44.

Until the eve of the Second Vatican Council, the devotion to Roman catacomb saints was widely encouraged by the bishops of the province. Throughout the 1930's and 1940's, the bishops of Nicolet regularly reminded the faithful of their diocese of the importance of *La Tour des Martyrs* and of the devotion to relics.<sup>162</sup> As late as in 1951, Cardinal Léger granted the right to the Sisters of Providence to display publicly and spread the devotion to *sainte Gaudence* whose relics they had obtained forty years earlier.<sup>163</sup> Only after the changes to the Roman calendar (1961) was there a sudden decline of the devotion in Quebec.



**Figure 3: A small relic and Cardinal Léger's wax seal can still be seen on *sainte Gaudence's* arm.**

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<sup>162</sup> ACAM, Mandements des évêques de Nicolet, Circulaire au Clergé régulier, aux Communautés religieuses et aux Fidèles de notre Diocèse, sur le Jubilé et les Reliques de la Passion, 19 July 1934., ACAM, Mandements des évêques de Nicolet, Lettre pastorale de Monseigneur l'évêque de Nicolet, au sujet de 'La Tour des Martyrs' de Saint-Célestin, 8 June 1930., ACAM, Mandements des évêques de Nicolet, Circulaire au clegé (Nicolet), 7 March 1949.

<sup>163</sup> ASP, Lettre de Mgr Paul-Emile Léger, archevêque à Mère Bérénice, supérieure générale, 29 October 1951.

## **Chapter 2**

### **The Diffusion of the Devotion: Public Processions, Religious Instruction and Distribution of Relics**

In the decades after Bishop Bourget imported *sainte Janvière* and *saint Zotique* a significant number of *corps saints* found their way to Canada. Several factors ensured the diffusion of the devotion to catacomb saints in Catholic circles across Quebec. In a short period of time, the cult of these antique relics spread becoming a common expression of piety. This chapter will shed light on the different elements that ensured the expansion and popularity of the devotion to Roman martyrs. With the reintroduction of the devotion in the 1840's under the impetus of Bourget, catacomb saints became closely associated with religious instruction. Teaching religious communities rapidly endorsed this form of piety and became a fundamental element of diffusion. Not only did their students take part in the elaborate translations of relics but they also were taught about these saints and were exposed to their cult at a young age.

Public translations of relics in the streets of cities constituted one of the ways through which the Church claimed its place in the public sphere. Historian Michael Gauvreau argues that the ultramontane movement in nineteenth-century Quebec implemented a devotional revolution.<sup>164</sup> One of the novelties of this revolution was the proliferation of religious processions of all sorts in the streets of Montreal. For the first time since the Conquest and despite the growth of Montreal's British

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<sup>164</sup> Gauvreau, *The Catholic Origins of Quebec's Quiet Revolution, 1931-1970*, 8.



character, Catholics no longer hid their convictions in the private sphere. This desire to be present in public spaces transformed the Catholic faith into a demonstrative and exuberant religion.<sup>165</sup> Processions of catacomb saints became an attempt to make known and spread the devotion to relics among Catholics and to claim space from Protestants. Clearly, much energy was invested in the diffusion of these devotions with relics being sent to all corners of the diocese.

### **TRANSLATIONS OF RELICS: AN ULTRAMONTANE DEVOTION IN MONTREAL'S PUBLIC SPACE**

Mainly out of fear of irritating the Protestant government and losing its favorable position, the pre-1840 local Church had been largely absent from public spaces.<sup>166</sup> The retreats preached by Bishop Forbin-Janson helped to carry the Catholic faith into the public sphere. If the French Canadian clergy in general and the Sulpicians in particular were cautious about organizing public processions in the years following the Rebellions, Bishop Forbin-Janson did not hesitate to reintroduce this practice.<sup>167</sup> During his time in Quebec he replicated the retreats he had preached across France. His retreats generally ended with outdoor processions organized around crosses. In October 1840, in Terrebonne, a large procession with banners and hymns was prepared and concluded with an address by Forbin-Janson.<sup>168</sup> After the passage of the French prelate across Quebec in 1841-1842, Ignace Bourget continued to encourage these public demonstrations of faith. Large

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<sup>165</sup> Voisine, Hamelin, and Sylvain, *Les Ultramontains canadiens-français*, 74.

<sup>166</sup> Perin, *Ignace de Montréal : artisan d'une identité nationale*, 102.

<sup>167</sup> Claude Galarneau, "Monseigneur de Forbin-Janson," in *Les Ultramontains Canadiens-Français*(Montréal: Boréal Express, 1985), 138.

<sup>168</sup> *Ibid.*, 136.

crowds gathered at his invitation whether to celebrate Corpus Christi or to welcome new catacomb saints.<sup>169</sup>

Bishop Bourget was a methodical man who considered the Roman liturgy to be the living expression of the Catholic Church. According to Léon Pouliot, who wrote the most complete work on the man, Bourget extended his third visit in Rome to carefully examine the different liturgical celebrations that occurred in the city. Pouliot writes:

Quand il a décidé d'accepter une invitation, l'évêque de Montréal commence par lire les pages consacrées par Catalaunus à la cérémonie. Au moment où elle commence, il sait déjà comment elle va se dérouler; il est tout yeux et tout oreilles afin de constater jusqu'à quel point le texte écrit a été observé. Après l'évènement, il demande, s'il y a lieu un supplément d'information. Et rentré chez lui, il jette sur le papier le résultat de ses observations et ses impressions.<sup>170</sup>

The translations organized by the young diocese of Montreal were inspired by the processions taking place in both France and Italy. The diocese of Lyon in France was particularly known for staging large processions of catacomb saints. The first major translation of a catacomb saint in France appears to have been that of *saint Artémon* in August 1839. On that occasion, all the clergy and the people of the diocese were invited to take part in the solemnity of the translation. The procession was inspired by the traditional feast of *saint Exupère* and was constituted of members of congregations, students, seminarians, priests and bishops walking in an

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<sup>169</sup> Perin, *Ignace de Montréal : artisan d'une identité nationale*, 44.

<sup>170</sup> Léon Pouliot, *Monseigneur Bourget et son temps*, vol. 3 (Montréal: Éditions Bellarmin, 1972), 122.

orderly fashion and singing hymns.<sup>171</sup> With 25 bodies of catacomb saints, the diocese played a pioneer role in spreading this new devotion.<sup>172</sup> Lyon resident Pauline Jaricot was key to introducing the devotion to *sainte Philomene* in France, the first major catacomb saint in the French world.<sup>173</sup> A large number of the priests recruited by Bourget originated from the diocese of Lyon and had undoubtedly witnessed such processions. Among them were the *Clercs de Saint-Viateur* who arrived in Canada in 1847. Several years later a member of this order brought the remains of *saint Asellus* to Canada for the newly founded chapel of the Collège Joliette.<sup>174</sup>

Ignace Bourget sojourned in Rome in the summer of 1841. On 23 May 1841, a few days before his arrival, the impressive translation of *saint Sabiniano* had taken place.<sup>175</sup> The large procession that accompanied the reliquary included several ecclesiastical figures. Even though Bourget did not witness this procession he undoubtedly heard about it once in Rome. He certainly witnessed similar processions of catacomb saints over the course of his travels in Europe and was familiar with this tradition. In a *circulaire* addressed to the clergy of Montreal on 30 May 1843, he shared his hope that solemn translations of relics be organized, a

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<sup>171</sup> Boutry, "Les saints des catacombes: Itinéraires français d'une piété ultramontaine (1880-1881)," 896-97.

<sup>172</sup> *Ibid.*, 892.

<sup>173</sup> *Ibid.*, 896.

<sup>174</sup> Father Corcoran, C.S.V., professor of philosophy at the Collège Joliette obtained the remains of *saint Asellus* while sojourning in Rome. The translation to the College's chapel occurred on November 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1892. See Corcoran, *Saint-Asellus: translation de ses reliques dans la chapelle du Collège Joliette, le 3 novembre 1892: sermon prononcé à cette occasion.*

<sup>175</sup> Boutry, "Les saints des catacombes: Itinéraires français d'une piété ultramontaine (1880-1881)," 890.

practice that he judged of great interest for the people.<sup>176</sup> We have evidence that in 1855, he took part in the translation of *saint Donatien* in Lyon.<sup>177</sup>

This idea of organizing a procession of relics seems to have gained interest and a few months later, in November, the remains of *sainte Janvière* were carried through the streets of the city. The translation of *sainte Janvière* appears to have been the first procession of the relics of a catacomb saint since the British conquest and possibly even since the translation of *saints Flavien* and *Félicité* in Quebec City in 1666. The choice of the month of November was not insignificant as All Saints Day and All Soul's Day were commemorated in all Catholic parishes. Furthermore in many dioceses, the feast of relics was celebrated on 5 November and reliquaries were exposed on this day on altars to the public veneration.<sup>178</sup> As a result, a number of the translations were purposely organized in late October or early November.

The translations in the streets of Montreal were well prepared and every detail was carefully coordinated. In a document published in 1869, Alexis-Frédéric Truteau, administrator of the diocese in the absence of Bishop Bourget, gave precise instructions regarding the translation of the relics of *saint Zénon* and his companions. A number of hymns had to be sung throughout the procession in order that there might always be chants or music at any section of the convoy.<sup>179</sup> Similarly, the translation of the remains of *sainte Justine* was accompanied by hymns. Different

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<sup>176</sup> ACAM, Circulaire au clergé du diocèse de Montréal, 30 May 1843.

<sup>177</sup> ACAM, Itinéraire du voyage de l'évêque de Montréal à Rome (1854-1856), 901.056/866-001.

<sup>178</sup> Girard, *La tour des martyrs de Saint-Célestin*, 52.

<sup>179</sup> ACAM, A.F. Truteau: *Direction pour le chant pendant la procession de la Translation des Reliques de St. Zénon et de ses Compagnons Martyrs*, 1869.

religious associations carrying large banners took part in the procession.<sup>180</sup> Several bishops dressed in their most beautiful vestments were also present. The ordo of the procession of the body of *sainte Janvière* specifies that, as much as possible, men were expected to walk in front of the clergy and women behind.<sup>181</sup> Nonetheless, an important place was left for women in the processions especially when dealing with female catacomb saints.

According to Ollivier Hubert, liturgies and processions were organized in order to allow the expression of religious emotions. In Montreal's Tridentine Church, religious emotions were understood as leading to God.<sup>182</sup> Liturgical music developed in Quebec as a result.<sup>183</sup> The choreographies and scenographies, the music, hymns and vestments did not mean anything on their own but were rather conditions allowing an encounter with the divine.<sup>184</sup> They were key to constructing the religious experience and leading the faithful to the sacred.<sup>185</sup> The emotion created in such religious events was understood as a means of conversion.<sup>186</sup> For Hubert, the ritual actions that could be seen throughout these processions were

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<sup>180</sup> ACAM, Ignace Bourget, *Lettre pastorale de Mgr l'évêque de Montréal aux soeurs des SS. Noms de Jésus et Marie, touchant la cérémonie de la translation du corps de Ste Justine, vierge et martyre*, 9 November 1856.

<sup>181</sup> ASP, Dossier Centre Emilie-Gamelin #461.

<sup>182</sup> Hubert, *Sur la terre comme au ciel : la gestion des rites par l'Église catholique du Québec : fin XVIIe-mi-XIXe siècle*, 296.

<sup>183</sup> *Ibid.*, 294.

<sup>184</sup> *Ibid.*, 298.

<sup>185</sup> Perin, *Ignace de Montréal : artisan d'une identité nationale*, 105.

<sup>186</sup> Lavallée, "Le culte des reliques sous l'épiscopat de Monseigneur Ignace Bourget," 136.

means of power.<sup>187</sup> Historian Marta Danylewycz, discussing the translation of *sainte Janvière*, asserted that few institutions in mid-nineteenth century Quebec were able to stage such public demonstrations.<sup>188</sup> Because such events were both uncommon and spectacular they had the potential to attract large crowds. Even if some had not initially attended because they had a personal devotion to catacomb saints, by being present they would have heard and been told about these new saints and their 'effectiveness'.

Translations were in themselves great spectacles. The ceremonies were orchestrated around banners, gigantic arches, flowers, candles and censers. In 1856, the reliquary of *sainte Justine* was carried across the Saint Lawrence from Montreal to Longueuil on a greatly decorated boat.<sup>189</sup> A large crowd welcomed the reliquary once it arrived on the south shore. The laity were not only spectators but were expected to play their part in the manifestation. Often simple verses would be sung which everyone could easily repeat throughout the march. During the translation of *sainte Janvière* the crowd repeated in latin: *Sancta Januaria, ora pro nobis*.<sup>190</sup> In honor of saint *Zénon* and his companions, palms were distributed to everyone in

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<sup>187</sup> Hubert, *Sur la terre comme au ciel : la gestion des rites par l'Église catholique du Québec : fin XVIIe-mi-XIXe siècle*, 304.

<sup>188</sup> Marta Danylewycz et al., *Taking the Veil : An Alternative to Marriage, Motherhood, and Spinsterhood in Quebec, 1840-1920*, Canadian social history series (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1987), 35-36.

<sup>189</sup> ACAM, Lettre pastorale de Mgr l'évêque de Montréal aux soeurs des SS. Noms de Jésus et Marie, touchant la cérémonie de la translation du corps de Ste Justine, vierge et martyre, 9 November 1856.

<sup>190</sup> *Les Mélanges Religieux*, 21 November 1843.

order that they may walk with them in the procession.<sup>191</sup> Palms constituted a traditional symbol of martyrdom but were also a reminder of Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem.

Undoubtedly, a number in the crowds came out of curiosity. Newspapers such as *La Minerve*, *L'Ordre* and *Les Mélanges Religieux* greatly advertised these events.<sup>192</sup> In 1855, the arrival of the remains of *saint Innocent* was announced ahead of time through a *mandement* read during the sermon in all the churches of the diocese.<sup>193</sup> Similarly, during Sunday sermons all Catholics were invited to come with banners to take part in the translation of *sainte Justine*.<sup>194</sup> Any Catholic who would have gone to church on that particular Sunday would have heard of the upcoming translation. Consequently, such religious events were not restricted to French Catholics but a significant space was given to Irish Catholics who took part in the translations. Young boys and girls from Montreal's Irish schools and adults from the city's Irish Fraternities walked amidst the processions.<sup>195</sup>

### **PRAYERS AND NOVENAS**

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<sup>191</sup> Sisters of Charity of Providence., *Notes historiques sur l'Institut des Soeurs de Charité de la Providence, Montréal*, CIHM/ICMH Microfiche series = CIHM/ICMH collection de microfiches (Montréal?: s.n., 1893), microform, 84.

<sup>192</sup> For examples of these announcements see *Les Mélanges Religieux*, 17 June 1845, *La Minerve*, 19 June 1845. *L'Ordre*, 16 October 1869. *La Minerve*, 24 June 1878.

<sup>193</sup> ACAM, Mandement de Mgr l'évêque de Montréal, publiant les décrets du second concile provincial de Québec, et communiquant certaines faveurs obtenues du Saint-Siège, 27 August 1855.

<sup>194</sup> ACAM, Indication pour la translation de Sainte Justine Vierge martyre de Montréal à Longueuil, 9 November 1856, 525.105/856-006.

<sup>195</sup> Lavallée, "Le culte des reliques sous l'épiscopat de Monseigneur Ignace Bourget," 121.

The devotional practices introduced during public translations were not limited to one single day. They often were preceded by nine days of prayers (novenas) and followed by eight days of prayers (octaves). In the case of *saint Zénon*, a booklet containing the prayers of the novena was even published and sold during the days that preceded the translation in order for all to participate. Advertising for this publication could be found in *La Minerve*.<sup>196</sup> The two-week celebration of the translation was not an end in itself. The translation of *saint Zotique* in Montreal's cathedral in 1845 was in some way the introduction of his public devotion to the faithful of the city. On that day, his remains were placed under one of the altars of the church. The life-size recumbent effigy became a place of prayer. Behind this was the hope that the new place of rest of these saints would become sites of pilgrimage where Catholics could regularly come and pray. The day of the procession of a martyr would become a feast day remembered annually and the event would be commemorated in a special way. In a letter to the *Soeurs du Saint Nom de Jésus et Marie* to whom he was offering the remains of *sainte Justine*, Bishop Bourget instructed that this same letter be read every year on the feast day of the translation of her body to the congregation's chapel.<sup>197</sup> Decisions such as this one encouraged the development of annual traditions around relics.

#### **RELICS OF SAINTS IN MONTREAL'S PROTESTANTS NEIGHBORHOODS**

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<sup>196</sup> *La Minerve*, 16 October 1869.

<sup>197</sup> ACAM, Ignace Bourget, *Lettre pastorale de Mgr l'évêque de Montréal aux soeurs des SS. Noms de Jésus et Marie, touchant la cérémonie de la translation du corps de Ste Justine, vierge et martyre*, 9 November 1856, 525-105/856-006.



During his episcopacy, Bishop Bourget did much to reinstate the pilgrimage to Notre-Dame de Bon-Secours and the small chapel became the starting point of an important number of translations of catacomb saints.<sup>198</sup> It was there that the novenas, special prayers recited during the nine days preceding the translations, were intoned around the reliquary. Although the itinerary of the first processions varied, a pattern soon developed. By the 1860's, after a procession left the chapel it would generally head towards Notre-Dame, the largest church of the diocese, where a service would take place. On the day of the translation of the relics of *saint Zénon* and his companions, addresses were given in French and English on the parvis of the church. The procession continued thereafter towards the cathedral. Before 1852, as the cathedral was located on Saint-Denis, these religious processions would be constrained to the largely French-Canadian neighborhoods of the city. However, after 1855 with the establishment of a temporary cathedral in the middle of an English neighborhood, these processions would go through streets where Catholics households were fewer. Joseph-Octave Paré writing to Bishop Bourget mentions that a number of Catholics judged that organizing a procession of relics in the middle of a Protestant neighborhood was a very bold thing to do.<sup>199</sup>

From that perspective, these public processions were exercises of power.<sup>200</sup> By holding these events in that area of the city, there was hope to bring Catholic Truth to Protestants. Public addresses in both French and English would ensure that

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<sup>198</sup> Laperrière, "Les lieux de pèlerinage au Québec: une vue d'ensemble," 39.

<sup>199</sup> ACAM, Lettre de Paré à Bourget, 22 October 1869, 651.200/869-006.

<sup>200</sup> Trigger, "Irish Politics on Parade: The Clergy National Societies, and St. Patrick's Day Processions in Nineteenth-century Montreal and Toronto," 163.

all would hear what was taking place and learn about the devotion. In Europe, Catholic literature reported that a number of Protestants had converted to Catholicism after seeing religious processions go through their neighborhood.<sup>201</sup> Bourget undoubtedly knew these stories and believed that processions of relics could play a similar role in Montreal. In the preface of a work he published on liturgy, Bourget recalls how after great and solemn ceremonies he had seen individuals return to the sacraments of the Church.<sup>202</sup>

At a time when the Catholic Church, under the leadership of Bishop Bourget, sought to differentiate itself from the growing Protestant Churches of the city, the cult of relics represented a specifically Catholic marker of identity. By highlighting something exclusive to their Church they were able to stress the uniqueness of the Catholic faith.<sup>203</sup> In many ways, processions of relics served to mark the city as a Catholic space. Their devotion to catacomb saints was strongly condemned by the Protestant churches. In the days following a procession, the *Montreal Evening Star* denounced the cult of relics and expressed skepticism about their authenticity.<sup>204</sup> The *Montreal Witness* was particularly severe towards these demonstrations of papism. These condemnations led Montreal's Catholics to frequently justify the devotion publicly. *Les Mélanges Religieux*, the official newspaper of the diocese, was

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<sup>201</sup> Cliche, *Les pratiques de dévotion en Nouvelle-France : comportements populaires et encadrement ecclésial dans le gouvernement de Québec*, 49.

<sup>202</sup> Pouliot, *Monseigneur Bourget et son temps*, 3, 123.

<sup>203</sup> Historian Louis Rousseau considers this dichotomization to be a fundamental element in the religious construction of the nation. See Louis Rousseau, "La construction religieuse de la nation," *Recherches sociographiques* 43, no. 3 (2005): 443.

<sup>204</sup> *Montreal Evening Star*, 20 October 1869.

conscious of these critics and did not hesitate to address them while discussing the translation of *sainte Janvière*:

Nos frères séparés, sans doute, vont encore crier à l'idolâtrie. Cela n'est pas étonnant... Pourtant il nous semble que s'ils voulaient penser un peu, il leur serait facile de se désabuser. Car s'il est permis de rendre les honneurs du triomphe le plus pompeux à un prince qui, quelquefois peut n'être qu'un monstre et un tyran, uniquement parce qu'il est reconnu dépositaire de l'autorité, pourquoi serait-il défendu d'honorer ceux que le Seigneur a comblé lui-même de ses grâces et de ses faveurs sur la terre?<sup>205</sup>

In 1869 the translation of the relics of *saint Zénon* and his companions provoked a similar debate amongst Montreal newspapers. While French liberal newspapers largely ignored the translation, on 18 October 1869 *La Minerve* dedicated several columns to the event. The procession gathered "une multitude plus dense que jamais" and "une foule encombrant toutes les avenues". According to the newspaper, the police had difficulties containing the crowd and the journalist mentions a woman seen suffocating. All the same the procession was said to be attended with great devotion:

Cependant à l'approche des Saintes Reliques la foule s'écartait respectueusement...La chasse fut déposée au centre à l'admiration des fidèles qui s'agenouillèrent en partie.<sup>206</sup>

The Montreal *Witness*, writing on the same event noted the exact opposite. According to an article published in the Protestant newspaper, Catholics themselves were laughing at the procession:

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<sup>205</sup> *Les Mélanges Religieux*, 21 November 1843.

<sup>206</sup> *La Minerve*, 18 October 1869.

With all the diligence of the powers of the Church, which made this almost a national ceremonial, what a miserable turn-out of volunteer attendants. Children and ecclesiastics without end, but the civilian societies represented by little more than their banners; and even the College students seemed ashamed to hold up the green paper palm leaves, which were meant to give a triumphant aspect to the pageant. The crowds in the streets did not cast themselves on their knees as the relics passed.<sup>207</sup>

*L'Ordre* criticized what they called the diatribes of the *Witness* adding, however, that many Protestants saw the procession but kept perfect conduct.<sup>208</sup>

Le *Witness* qui se permet à tous moment de rire des pratiques religieuses des catholiques et qui vient de pousser la mauvaise foi jusqu'à travestir le sens de la démonstration de dimanche dernier, voudra bien nous permettre de lui rendre le change en passant.<sup>209</sup>

Even French sources disagreed on the scale of the event. *Le Nouveau Monde*, wrote of at least 25 000 participants while the official number advanced by the diocese was more than 100 000 faithful.<sup>210</sup> Considering that the 1871 population of the city of Montreal and its immediate suburbs was estimated to be just over 126 000, the numbers advanced by the diocese appear to be an exaggeration.<sup>211</sup> Independently of the exact number of individuals who took part in the translation, it is evident that the crowd was substantial. *Le Nouveau Monde* reports that the reliquary could not be carried through the main door of the cathedral because of the

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<sup>207</sup> *The Montreal Witness*, 20 October 1869.

<sup>208</sup> *L'Ordre*, 19 October 1869.

<sup>209</sup> *L'Ordre*, 21 October 1869.

<sup>210</sup> ACAM, Lettre de Truteau à Bourget, 21 October 1869, Registre de lettres de Mgr Bourget (RLB18).

<sup>211</sup> Paul André Linteau, *Histoire de Montréal depuis la Confédération* (Montréal: Boréal, 1992), 40.

number of faithful standing there and that the organizers found no other choice than to use one of the side doors of the church.<sup>212</sup>

Few catholic voices rose to publicly criticize the devotion to relics. For a short period of time, one dissenting came from *La Lanterne*, published by Arthur Buies (1840-1901). Buies, a member of the Institut canadien founded his newspaper to oppose clericalism. On 12 November 1868, he published a satire on the glove of Joseph Arimathea covered with the blood of Jesus that miraculously found its way to Fécamp in Normandy.

[...] pour le soustraire aux Romains qui le recherchaient avec rage, il l'enferma dans une boîte de plomb. Ensuite il alla placer cette boîte dans le tronc d'un figuier. Puis il abattit l'arbre et le poussa à la mer. Les vents et le courant portèrent jusque sur la côte de Fécamp cette souche bénie et le gant fut ainsi sauvé et rendu à la dévotion des chrétiens.<sup>213</sup>

Behind this absurd story was a strong critique of the general fascination for relics which characterized the Catholic Church in the second half of the nineteenth century. The short article concludes with an exhortation to decree compulsory elementary education. Buies clearly perceived the devotion to relics as the result of both clericalism and the ignorance of the people. After 27 weeks, because of various pressures on its distributors, *La Lanterne* stopped appearing.<sup>214</sup>

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<sup>212</sup> *Le Nouveau Monde*, 18 October 1869.

<sup>213</sup> *La Lanterne*, 12 November 1868.

<sup>214</sup> Francis Parmentier, "BUIES, ARTHUR," in EN:UNDEF:public\_citation\_publication, vol. 13, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003, [http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/buies\\_arthur\\_13E.html](http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/buies_arthur_13E.html). (accessed 26 October 2014).

## CATACOMB SAINTS AND RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION

One of the main criticisms that detractors of these devotions raised was that their adherents were mostly children. Indeed, in the large majority of translations, whole classes would walk amid the processions. During the translation of *sainte Janvière*, several Catholic schools were represented by students walking two by two and waving hundreds of flags.<sup>215</sup> *L'Ordre* wrote that students from all the schools of Montreal walked amidst the procession of the relics of *saint Zénon* and his companions.<sup>216</sup> The involvement of schools in the devotion to catacomb saints ensured that younger generations would become familiar with the new intercessors. They were also exciting moments that gave a sense of belonging and legitimated the devotion in the eyes of many students.

The French religious communities that established themselves in Montreal at Bishop Bourget's request and specialized in teaching encouraged the devotion to catacomb saints. These communities and priests brought with them the religious practices and ideas characteristic of the Catholic Restoration in France.<sup>217</sup> Most of these communities had a particular devotion to saints of the catacomb. Both Father Colin and Brother Basile Moreau who founded respectively the *Maristes* Fathers and the *Congregation de Sainte-Croix* greatly valued this devotion.<sup>218</sup> The *soeurs du Bon-Pasteur d'Angers* were so attached to these new saints that they sought to have one

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<sup>215</sup> *Les Mélanges Religieux*, 21 November 1843.

<sup>216</sup> *L'Ordre*, 19 October 1869.

<sup>217</sup> Voisine, Hamelin, and Sylvain, *Les Ultramontains canadiens-français*, 76.

<sup>218</sup> Boutry, "Les saints des catacombes: Itinéraires français d'une piété ultramontaine (1880-1881)," 906.

martyr in each of their homes.<sup>219</sup> Their devotion was such that after the great fire of 1852 (which destroyed the cathedral) they volunteered to temporarily host the remains of *saint Zotique* and *sainte Janvière* in their convent.<sup>220</sup>

Many of these European religious communities would be called to help improve Canada East's weak education system. Their personal approaches to piety would therefore be conveyed to a new generation of French-Canadians.<sup>221</sup> When one of these teaching communities would obtain the body of a saint, they would organize a number of activities for the students of their schools. Apart from the official translation ceremony and public prayers, plays would sometimes be written and performed. They would narrate the fictitious lives of these unknown saints and would praise the Christian virtues of martyrdom, courage and virginity. In December 1865, the students of the *Congrégation Notre-Dame* would present a play entitled: *le Martyr de Sainte Fortunata* in front of the bishop of Montreal.<sup>222</sup> Bishop Bourget had returned from Rome a few days earlier with the remains of this saint and had offered them to the religious community. *La Minerve* tells us that the elite of the Saint-Jacques neighborhood had gathered for the occasion at the *Académie Saint-Denis*.<sup>223</sup> A young student, Elisa Chaubeau, also composed a poem describing the martyrdom of the young virgin. In it *sainte Fortunata* was characterized as

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<sup>219</sup> *Ibid.*, 907.

<sup>220</sup> Henri Giroux, *Histoire de la communauté de Notre-Dame de Charité du Bon-Pasteur de Montréal*(Montréal: Compagnie d'impression et de publication Lovell, 1879), 30.

<sup>221</sup> Voisine, Hamelin, and Sylvain, *Les Ultramontains canadiens-français*, 85.

<sup>222</sup> *Journal de l'instruction publique*, January 1866.

<sup>223</sup> *La Minerve*, 28 December 1865.

being gentle, timid and chaste.<sup>224</sup> Furthermore, in a number of schools, student societies were constituted to perpetuate the memory of the martyrs.<sup>225</sup> Clearly, the hope was that students exposed to this devotion at a young age would more rapidly adopt these new saints and would often continue to pray to them as adults.

The great devotion of the founders of the Sainte-Justine Hospital to *sainte Justine* constitutes one of these examples. In his instruction concerning the translation of *sainte Justine* in the chapel of the motherhouse of the *Soeurs des Saints Noms de Jésus et Marie*, Ignace Bourget suggested that the students of the institution be invited to honor the saint during the octave following the translation by all the means that piety would suggest to them.<sup>226</sup> Bishop Bourget also mentions in his instructions that the nuns and their students should carry the reliquary during the translation of the reliquary.<sup>227</sup> During the following decades the young saint would be venerated in the chapel of the school.

The wax representation of these martyrs, which were found in the chapels of several schools, undoubtedly created an indelible impression on young students. The saints were portrayed recumbent, often tied up, with open wounds. In our

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<sup>224</sup> Elisa Chaubeau, *A la Très-Révèrante Soeur Sainte-Ursule, supérieure générale de la Congrégation Notre-Dame amour, respect, reconnaissance - ma mère : hommage et salut - sainte Fortunata*(S.l.: s.n., 1865).

<sup>225</sup> A *Société Sainte Fortunata* existed at the *Académie Saint-Denis*. The young students of this society wrote to Bishop Bourget in 1866. See ACAM, *Lettre des élèves de l'Académie Saint-Denis à Mgr Bourget*, 1866, 525.101/866-013.

<sup>226</sup> ACAM, *Indications pour la translation de Sainte Justine Vierge Martyre de Montréal à Longueuil*, 9 November 1856, 525.105/856-007.

<sup>227</sup> ACAM, Ignace Bourget, *Lettre pastorale de Mgr l'évêque de Montréal aux soeurs des SS. Noms de Jésus et Marie, touchant la cérémonie de la translation du corps de Ste Justine, vierge et martyre*, 9 November 1856, 525.105/856-006.



contemporary world frightened by the idea of death, we easily reach the conclusion that such a sight was a terrifying one for young children. Although, it probably was to some of them, it is interesting to observe that in a letter written to Bishop Bourget, young girls studying at the *Académie St-Denis* seem to be in profound admiration of *sainte Fortunata's* wax representation. Calling her *notre chère sainte Fortunata*, they emphasize her beauty:

“Vous ne nous refuserez pas s’il vous plait d’entrer nous voir, afin de nous bénir auprès de notre chère patronne. Oh qu’elle est belle Monseigneur et que vous êtes bon de nous l’avoir emporté de Rome.”<sup>228</sup>

*Sainte Fortunata*, much like the wax representations of female martyrs which have survived to this day would have had authentic long blond hair and be wearing sparkling jewels which would have made her look beautiful in the eyes of children. The nuns themselves were impressed by the devotion that their young students had for the saint.<sup>229</sup> However, they also firmly believed in the intercession of the young martyr. On the occasion of a community retreat in 1866, Soeur Saint-Paul requested that the casket containing the wax reliquary be exposed “pour satisfaire à la dévotion de nos soeurs missionnaires qui ne l’ont pas encore vénéré et aussi afin d’obtenir pour notre communauté et le diocèse l’exemption de la maladie dont on est menacé”.<sup>230</sup>

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<sup>228</sup> ACAM, Lettre des élèves de l’Académie Saint-Denis à Mgr Bourget, 1866, 525.101/866-013.

<sup>229</sup> ACAM, Lettre de soeur Saint-Gabriel à Mgr Bourget, 3 February 1866, 525.101/866-002.

<sup>230</sup> ACAM, Lettre de soeur Saint-Paul à Mgr Bourget, 6 May 1866, 525.101/866-015.

Because it developed at the end of the nineteenth century, the devotion to *saint Asellus* constitutes an excellent example of the typical pattern that the devotion to catacomb saints adopted in schools. When the translation took place on 3 November 1892, Father Corcoran, a *Clerc de Saint-Viateur* and professor of philosophy at the Collège Joliette, had just completed a doctorate in Philosophy and Theology at the Canadian seminary in Rome. During his stay there, he had acquired the *corps saint* extracted from the Roman catacombs for his community. Having returned with it to Joliette, it was decided that the relics would be installed in the recently built chapel of the College Joliette that belonged to his religious community. A wax representation of the saint was ordered and a place for it prepared under one of the altars<sup>231</sup>.

The translation and the installation of the saint in the chapel was largely inspired by the instructions that Bishop Bourget had given concerning previous translations that had occurred in Montreal. The wax reliquary was exposed in the parish and bells would invite the faithful to join the procession. Walking in the procession were the students of the College, followed by a choir and the clergy. Hymns composed especially in honor of the saint were sung and the college band played. The wax reliquary carried by four priests was surrounded by incense. The Pontifical Mass was celebrated by the archbishop of Montreal, Edouard-Charles Fabre, who had travelled to Joliette for the occasion and, by his presence, gave his full endorsement to the new devotion. The sermon pronounced on the occasion

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<sup>231</sup> Corcoran, *Saint-Asellus: translation de ses reliques dans la chapelle du Collège Joliette, le 3 novembre 1892: sermon prononcé à cette occasion.*

emphasized the apparent virtues of the unknown martyr<sup>232</sup>. A few hundred copies of the sermon were printed and sold to students for five cents each.<sup>233</sup> Students were invited to ask the saint's intercession and to regularly pray to him in the school chapel. Perhaps, as we will see in the next chapter, if it had not been connected with the prestigious college, the devotion to *saint Asellus* would not have spread and affected the Lanaudière region to the same extent.

### **THE CIRCULATION OF RELICS: HOLY FABRICATIONS**

In the weeks that followed the translation of *saint Asellus*, the *Clercs de Saint-Viateur* ensured that the devotion would not disappear. Small parcels of the *corps saint* were put in reliquaries and distributed across the province to the many locations where the *Clercs* were located (Montreal, Rigaud, l'Assomption ...).<sup>234</sup> The following year, after all of the smaller relics had been distributed, the *Clercs de Saint-Viateur* wrote back to the bishopric to request that new certificates of authenticity be issued to respond to the demands for relics of *saint Asellus*.<sup>235</sup>

Similarly, the relics acquired by the Archdiocese and the various religious communities of Montreal were largely distributed across the diocese. Sainte-Brigide's parish, founded in 1867, counted among its reliquaries, relics of several catacomb saints including *Zénon*, *Fortunate*, *Claude*, *Janvière*, *Julienne* and

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<sup>232</sup> Ibid.

<sup>233</sup> ACSV, Lettre circulaire No 33 du père C. Beaudry, c.s.v., 8 November 1892.

<sup>234</sup> ACSV, Lettre circulaire No33 du père C. Beaudry, c.s.v. 8 November 1892.

<sup>235</sup> ACAM, Lettre du Rev. Charles Marshall au chancelier J. Archambault, 21 April 1893, 465.105/893-001.

*Innocent*.<sup>236</sup> The wax seal of Bishop Bourget is still visible on a number of these reliquaries and demonstrates that small relics of catacomb saints were distributed to parishes shortly after their arrival in Canada. The many reliquaries possessed by the parish would have been exposed on All Saint's Day, on November 5th to celebrate the feast of relics and on the feast days of the particular saints. There is also evidence that parcels of relics were also sent to the many religious communities of the diocese. The *Soeurs Notre-Dame-du-Bon-Conseil*, for example, had relics of *saint Victor*, *saint Zénon* and his companions, *saint Felix* and *saint Placide*.<sup>237</sup>

The presence of the remains of several catacomb saints in a reliquary belonging to Théophile Éthier, a pharmacist from Ottawa, demonstrates that the laity was not only interested in these saints, but that some individuals had been able to acquire relics for their personal devotions.<sup>238</sup> Occasionally, Bishop Bourget offered reliquaries containing small relics of catacomb saints to acquaintances and friends. In 1871, as a sign of gratitude he gave a relic of *saint Victor* to Victor Hudon, an important Montreal businessman.<sup>239</sup>

While officially recognized relics circulated through official channels such as

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<sup>236</sup> In 2013, after the sale of the church, the Archdiocese obtained the reliquaries of this parish founded in 1867. The large majority of the relics belonged to various catacomb saints including some not covered by this research such as *sainte Simplicie*, *sainte Restitute*, *sainte Florentine*, *saint Symplicien* and *saint Colomban*. The relics of these catacomb saints were almost always much larger than the few relics belonging to more famous (historical) saints. The inventory of these relics has not been completed.

<sup>237</sup> The reliquary was given to the Archdiocese, C.S.2013.025.1.

<sup>238</sup> BANQ (Gatineau), Fonds Théophile Éthier (P113, S4, P1).

<sup>239</sup> ACAM, Lettre de Mgr Bourget à Victor Hudon, 7 February 1871, Registre de lettres de Mgr Bourget (RLB19).

religious communities and parishes, unconventional relics were also piously kept by the laity. One of the facets of popular piety was the belief that anything that touched a relic would itself become a relic. Canon Truteau, describing to Bishop Bourget who was in Europe the events surrounding the translation of *saint Zénon* and his companions mentions the revealing comments of an eyewitness.

Pendant le Triduum qui s'est fait à Bonsecours, l'église n'a pas désempli. Ma soeur Desanges me contait que pendant qu'elle était à prier dans cette église, pendant l'un de ces trois jours, tout à coup elle s'est prise à rire sans pouvoir s'arrêter. Elle était touchée de la foi simple du peuple, mais ce qui la fit rire c'est qu'elle se mit à faire attention qu'il se faisait continuellement une procession de paniers remplis d'objets de piété que l'on transportait, malgré la foule, à travers l'église, pourqu'on leur fit toucher la châsse. Elle pense que tous les objets de piété que l'on trouve dans les maisons du faubourg de Québec ont été appliqués sur la châsse de St-Zénon et de ses compagnons.<sup>240</sup>

This expression of popular piety was not an isolated event but occurred again a few days later as mentioned in the same letter. When the laity could not easily obtain relics they created their own third-class relics. Even if clerical authorities did not officially recognize these relics, they nevertheless were religiously kept as genuine relics and considered a source of spiritual blessing and protection. This practice constitutes a good example of the inoffensive ritual of popular piety and of the superstitious culture discussed by Ollivier Hubert.<sup>241</sup> The fabrication of unofficial relics by the laity remains an element of popular devotion that is difficult to justly assess because of the lack of sources. The practice was

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<sup>240</sup> ACAM, Lettre de Truteau à Bourget, 21 October 1869, Registre de lettres de Bourget (RLB 18-367).

<sup>241</sup> Ollivier Hubert, "La religion populaire est-elle une légende du XIXe siècle?," *Social History/Histoire sociale* 36, no. 71 (2003): 90, 96.

nevertheless more common than we might believe.<sup>242</sup> If clerical authorities did not publicly encourage these private devotions it appears that they nevertheless believed this transfer of spiritual power to be true. After all, Bishop Bourget requested that his secretary burn a wooden box that had contained relics once it had arrived in Montreal.<sup>243</sup> He therefore considered that the wood had been conferred a sacred character because it had touched saintly relics. Burning it would ensure that the crate would not be used in a degrading manner.

The mechanisms of diffusion of the devotion to catacomb saints ensured that individuals were introduced and exposed to this cult. However, they do not suffice to explain why both parishioners and priests desired to obtain relics of catacomb saints for themselves and their churches. The specific meaning that these Roman martyrs bore to Catholics is a key factor behind the dozens of requests that reach the bishopric. In the eyes of the faithful, these relics were more than simple liturgical objects. More requests were made to obtain them because they were judged valuable and worth the investment. By the late 1840's *corps saints* had become prestigious additions to churches.

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<sup>242</sup> Recalling his stay time in Rome while serving with the Canadian Papal Zouaves, Gustave Drolet mentioned this practice. "Le lendemain, nous fîmes un pèlerinage dans les églises les plus célèbres de la chrétienté, pour ajouter des mérites aux objets de piété déjà bénis par le Pape, on les faisait toucher aux saintes reliques que possède la ville de Rome." See Gustave A. Drolet and René Boileau, *Zouaviana : étape de trente ans, 1868-1898. Lettres de Rome, souvenirs de voyages, études, etc*, 2. éd. -- ed.(Montréal: E. Senécal, 1898), 92.

<sup>243</sup> Lavallée, "Le culte des reliques sous l'épiscopat de Monseigneur Ignace Bourget," 96.

### Chapter 3

## Adopting the Devotion: Meaning and Significance

The importation of a Roman martyr constituted an expansive project. If the relics themselves were not purchased, money was necessary to fund the excavations of the Congregation of relics, to thank intermediaries, to ensure transportation and to secure passage across customs. Many Catholics in Montreal were nevertheless ready to give significant amounts of money in order to obtain a *corps saint*. If they were ready to do so, it was because these relics bore meaning and significance in their eyes.

The meaning and significance that these bones had for both priests and the laity led them to imagine these new saints and how they had lived their lives, to carve their statues and to ask for their intercession in the hope of being healed. Because little was known about these saints, the anonymous remains imported to the diocese of Montreal were attributed meaning by those who venerated them. The martyrs became vectors of virtues and values promoted by the Church.

Many Catholics accepted the meaning attributed to catacomb saints and ultimately adopted this devotion. However, when they did, it was primarily because they were convinced that they could benefit from the intercession of these Roman martyrs. This chapter will emphasize the reasons that led individuals to request more relics from Rome despite their cost. It will highlight the meaning that was given to these unknown martyrs and the significance that they had for nineteenth century Catholics. It will also address the reasons that led lay individuals to turn

towards these saints for help. These reasons will demonstrate the mechanisms of adoption of this new devotion. Certainly, the significance and meaning that these saints occupied differed from one person to another. However, they were significant enough to prompt individuals to name streets, cities and even their own children after these obscure foreign saints.

### **THE FINANCIAL COST OF A *CORPS SAINT***

Transporting a wood crate containing the remains of a catacomb saint from Rome to Montreal was particularly expensive. A parish or religious community who sought to obtain a catacomb saint in the second half of the nineteenth century had to be ready to spend several hundred dollars. The price paid by Catholic Canadians covered more than the acquisition itself. The boxes containing the precious relics had to be sealed and the assurance that custom officers would not break the seal was needed. A broken seal meant that the content of the box could have been changed and raised questions regarding the authenticity of the relics it contained. This small detail made importations more costly.

In 1869, Father Piché, seeking to obtain a *corps saint* for his parish and its neighboring convent went through multiple difficulties to acquire these relics. In a letter to Bishop Bourget he mentioned that he was willing to spend a considerable amount of money to obtain such relics.<sup>244</sup> Several months later, having paid a

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<sup>244</sup> ACAM, Lettre de N. Piché à Mgr Bourget, 7 February 1869, 355.103/869-001.



deposit of \$100 he was ready to pay a balance of \$200 to obtain both the relics and the wax effigy of the saint, which had arrived from Europe.<sup>245</sup>

Despite the cost, religious communities considered the acquisition of catacomb saints worth the expenditure. The *Religieuses Hospitalières de Saint-Joseph* expected that the possession of this treasure would bring to their convent an abundance of peace and happiness and a taste of the Holy City.<sup>246</sup> The discovery and subsequent acquisition of a *corps saint* was considered to be the sign of God's blessing.<sup>247</sup> Therefore, when Bishop Bourget obtained the remains of *saint Felix* from Rome, fulfilling the wishes of the religious community, the news of the acquisition of the saint was received with joyful exclamations by all the nuns. Immediately, the sum of 900 pounds was sent to the bishopric to cover for the cost of the importation.<sup>248</sup> Similarly, the acquisition of *saint Pacifique* on 29 December 1865, was said to have caused much joy among the Sisters of Providence.<sup>249</sup>

Bishop Bourget, confronted with the growing interest of relics in Montreal was also mindful of the financial burden that could constitute these importations on the delicate situation of the diocese. When in Rome, he made sure that the money covering for the cost of the importation be received at the bishopric before sending

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<sup>245</sup> ACAM, Lettre de N. Piché à Paré, 11 November 1869, 355.103/869-002.

<sup>246</sup> ACAM, Lettre de soeur Mance à Mgr Bourget, 1 March 1865, 525.102/865-003.

<sup>247</sup> *Écho du Cabinet de Lecture paroissiale de Montréal*, February 1873.

<sup>248</sup> ACAM, Lettre de soeur Mance à Mgr Bourget, 1 March 1865, 525.102/865-003.

<sup>249</sup> Sisters of Charity of Providence., *Notes historiques sur l'Institut des Soeurs de Charité de la Providence, Montréal*, 76.

the precious relics to Canada.<sup>250</sup> By using this method, the bishop made sure that a priest or religious community requesting his assistance to obtain a *corps saint* could not refuse to pay if the relics did not please them.

As has been observed with many other clerical initiatives of the period, the diocese and the religious communities would not have been able to carry such expenses without the financial support of members of the laity.<sup>251</sup> Writing to Bourget about his upcoming journey to Rome, Father Piché mentioned that his parishioners had been very generous to him and provided a large sum of money for his travel.<sup>252</sup> A group of lay individuals also played an important role in the acquisition of *sainte Aurélie*.<sup>253</sup> Many faithful contributed financially or by their talents to decorate the reliquaries or help organize the processions.<sup>254</sup>

#### **PROPER NAME AND BAPTIZED MARTYRS**

Two types of martyrs were removed from the Roman catacombs. Proper name martyrs were found with an inscription indicating their name. If no name was found on the loculi of the saint, the remains would be attributed a name, often a variation of an adjective. Roman authorities rather than Canadian ecclesiastics granted a name to the martyr who would then be referred to as a baptized saint. This was not an attempt to fool the faithful, who were conscious of the difference, but simply a

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<sup>250</sup> ACAM, Lettre de Bourget à Paré, 14 August 1869, 901.059/869-070.

<sup>251</sup> Sylvain and Voisine, *Histoire du Catholicisme Québécois: Les XVIIIe et XIXe siècles*, 2, 51-52.

<sup>252</sup> ACAM, Lettre de Piché à Mgr Bourget, 20 September 1869, 355.103/868-003.

<sup>253</sup> *La Minerve*, 24 June 1878.

<sup>254</sup> *Les Mélanges Religieux*, 21 November 1843.

practical need to identify the relics.<sup>255</sup> However, relics of proper name saints were judged to be of greater value. Upon the reception of the remains of *sainte Janvière*, *Les Mélanges Religieux* boasted in the fact that the saint could be invoked with her real name.<sup>256</sup> The individuals who would turn to Ignace Bourget in order to obtain a *corps saint* would often specify in their letters that they would prefer a *nomine proprio* rather than an unknown martyr.<sup>257</sup> Nevertheless, the *Soeurs des Saints Noms de Jésus et Marie* were proud to say that their catacomb saint had been named *Justine* by the pope himself.<sup>258</sup>

When proper name martyrs were obtained from the Congregation of relics, Bishop Bourget or the Canadian priest who had been given the remains turned to the Bollandists, a society devoted to the study of the cult of saints and to the Roman Martyrology, the official list of saints recognized by the Church, for information about the saint's life.<sup>259</sup> Although, historical sources did not constitute a requirement for the recognition of a catacomb saint - the palm and the ampoule were judged sufficient - these two sources would inspire the stories about the lives of these martyrs. The Bollandists were renowned for the historical rigor in their study of the cult of saints. However, individuals who had obtained catacomb saints were rarely as thorough. In their desire for legitimacy, they were quick to identify

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<sup>255</sup> Boutry, "Les saints des catacombes: Itinéraires français d'une piété ultramontaine (1880-1881)," 881.

<sup>256</sup> *Les Mélanges Religieux*, 10 November, 1843.

<sup>257</sup> ACAM, Lettre du Père Basile Moreau à Mgr Bourget, 20 November 1846, 465.104/846-004.

<sup>258</sup> Germaine Bernier, "Les cinquante années de Sainte-Justine," *Le Devoir*, 25 May 1957.

<sup>259</sup> Bourget, *Neuvaine de Saint Zénon et de ses compagnons martyrs*, 10.

newly found martyrs with the saints listed in the *Acta Sanctorum*. When several saints would bear the name of the newly discovered *corps saint*, the narrative of one of them would, often arbitrarily, become associated with the relics.<sup>260</sup>

As for baptized saints whose names were unknown, short, mostly fictitious hagiographies that highlighted the Christian virtues of the newly discovered saints were written founded largely on suppositions. In the words of Philippe Boutry:

Le corps saint est une page blanche ou s'inscrit librement la piété des fidèles, un itinéraire hagiographique potentiel, celui du martyr, que l'imagination n'a cessé d'avoir retracé.<sup>261</sup>

The wax representations made by nuns or pious women in the late nineteenth century were the product of religious conventions but also of pious imagination. To some extent, the reliquaries containing wax representations and the statues carved in the honor of the saints were also an attempt to bestow on them an identity. The incumbent effigies allowed the faithful to quickly distinguish the often fictitious identity markers of the catacomb martyr. By looking at the reliquary, one could determine the gender, approximate age, profession, social status and the ways by which they were martyred.

*Saint Zotique's* representation as a Roman soldier constitutes a good example of this phenomenon. To this day, the reliquary kept by the Archdiocese of Montreal

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<sup>260</sup> Mgr Paul Guérin's *Les petits Bollandistes* recorded sixteen *saint Zotique* (three martyred in Rome) and thirty three *saint Zénon* (three martyred in Rome and one in an unknown location). See Paul Guérin and François Giry, *Les petits Bollandistes*, 7e éd. revue, corrigée et considérablement augmentée. ed., 17 vols.(Paris: Bloud et Baral, 1876).

<sup>261</sup> Boutry, "Les saints des catacombes: Itinéraires français d'une piété ultramontaine (1880-1881)," 882.

portrays a young man in a soldier's uniform with an open wound around his throat.<sup>262</sup> *Saint Innocent's* recumbent effigy portrays a young boy aged around three years old. As for *saintes Gaudence* and *Bibiane* they are represented as young women wearing many precious jewels.<sup>263</sup> At the feet of *sainte Bibiane*, a whip indicates to the faithful that she had been tortured to death.



Figure 4: *Sainte Gaudence*

Parishes named after catacomb saints would often ask a local artist to carve a statue representing the new patron saint. On 12 July 1914, a statue of *saint Zénon* was blessed by the pastor and placed in the small church of Saint-Zénon-de-Piopolis.<sup>264</sup> Much like *saint Zotique*, *saint Zénon* was represented wearing a Roman uniform. Saint-Vital's parish in Montreal portrayed their patron wearing a toga and holding the palms of martyrdom.<sup>265</sup> The statues and wax representations of these

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<sup>262</sup> Archdiocese of Montreal, Inventory of the *Service de Construction et d'Art Sacré*, C.S.2012.264.1.

<sup>263</sup> All four reliquaries are kept by the Archdiocese of Montreal.

<sup>264</sup> Yvette Jacques Grenier, *Vie en église de Saint-Zénon-de-Piopolis, 1871-2009*(Sherbrooke), 102-03. The statue is still visible today in this small parish founded by a group of Papal Zouaves.

<sup>265</sup> Archdiocese of Montreal, Inventory of the *Service de Construction et d'Art Sacré*, Paroisse Saint-Vital.

unknown martyrs corresponded to the ideal of masculinity and femininity promoted in Catholic culture throughout the nineteenth century.

These anonymous saints were attributed qualities particularly valued by religious orders. *Saintes Fortunata* and *Gaudence* were considered to be great examples of virginity by the nuns who honored them in their chapel.<sup>266</sup> Quickly these new saints became regarded as protectors of churches, religious orders, congregations, schools and other institutions that developed in ultramontane Quebec. The popularity of *saint Innocent* and *saint Zotique* was closely linked to their association with groups or movements. While *saint Innocent*, a child martyr, was made the patron saint of children,<sup>267</sup> *saint Zotique* became associated with the Temperance movement, which gained importance after 1850.<sup>268</sup> *Asellus*, the patron saint of the Collège Joliette, was cited as an example of courage, spiritual strength, determination and love to the students of this institution.<sup>269</sup>

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<sup>266</sup> ACAM, Lettre de Sœur Saint-Paul à Mgr Bourget, 6 May 1866, 525.101/866-015. and ASP, *Arrivée des reliques de Sainte Gaudencia*, 31 August 1953, M34 Chroniques de l'Hôpital Saint-Joseph, Trois-Rivières 1952-1982, 30-31.

<sup>267</sup> ACAM, Mandement de Mgr l'évêque de Montréal publiant les décrets du second concile provincial de Québec et communiquant certaines faveurs obtenues du Saint-Siège, 27 August 1855.

<sup>268</sup> ACAM, Mandement de Mgr l'évêque de Montréal pour l'institution de la fête et de l'office de St Zotique, martyr, dans son église cathédrale de St Jacques, 18 April 1846.

<sup>269</sup> Corcoran, *Saint-Asellus: translation de ses reliques dans la chapelle du Collège Joliette, le 3 novembre 1892: sermon prononcé à cette occasion*, 7-8.



Figure 5: *Saint Innocent, the child martyr*

*Sainte Justine* was chosen as patron saint of sick children because, much like them, she had been an innocent victim who had greatly suffered.<sup>270</sup> It is significant that the remains of *sainte Justine* were described as belonging to a seven years old girl.<sup>271</sup> If the scientific knowledge of the nineteenth century would not have been able to make such a precise claim, the number seven was not only significant for being a perfect number in the Judeo-Christian tradition but also corresponded to the average age of the students of the school that kept her in their chapel.

Even if nothing was known of the lives of the individuals whose remains were extracted from the Roman catacombs, their relics were considered to be of great spiritual value. In 1852, when a fire destroyed the newly built Montreal cathedral as well as a significant portion of the city, two large reliquaries were saved from the flames.<sup>272</sup> It is significant that those present in the cathedral at the time chose to save the relics of *sainte Janvière* and *saint Zotique* rather than other objects contained in the church. The mere fact that these relics were removed from the

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<sup>270</sup> Bernier, "Les cinquante années de Sainte-Justine."

<sup>271</sup> *Le Devoir*, Les cinquantes années de Sainte-Justine, 25 May 1957.

<sup>272</sup> Giroux, *Histoire de la communauté de Notre-Dame de Charité du Bon-Pasteur de Montréal*, 30.

burning cathedral testifies to the importance that they bore in the eyes of many.<sup>273</sup> Similarly, when their motherhouse was destroyed by fire on 8 June 1893, the nuns of the Congrégation Notre-Dame were able to save the casket containing the relics of *sainte Fortunata* which had been in the chapel of their convent since 1880.<sup>274</sup>

### **AN ENDURING DEVOTION: RELIQUARIES AND MIRACLES**

Two main reasons can explain why individuals would continue to gather in front of the reliquary of a saint to pray in the weeks and years following a translation. A significant factor in bringing together large crowds was that everyone who would come and pray in front of the relics during or after the procession obtained indulgences. Historian René Hardy agrees with Philippe Boutry in qualifying indulgences as being the engine of the devotional life.<sup>275</sup> Because of them, many would be encouraged to take part in religious events. The indulgences given to those attending a translation of relics would often be extended after the octave celebrations.<sup>276</sup> The promise of indulgences was granted to anyone who would come and pray for the intentions of the pope in front of specific reliquaries of martyrs. When obtained, an indulgence would give the assurance that one would not have to suffer in purgatory for sins which he had already confessed. This certainly encouraged many to turn to these new intercessors in a society in which the fear of

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<sup>273</sup> The relics were removed from the Cathedral by the *Soeurs de la Providence* in the morning of 8 July 1852. At noon they were forced to leave the church because the fire was spreading to the church. See ASP, *L'Institut de la Providence*, tome 2, 404.

<sup>274</sup> ACND, Fiches reliques, 200.100/56 p57-58.

<sup>275</sup> Hardy, *Contrôle social et mutation de la culture religieuse au Québec, 1830-1930*, 77.

<sup>276</sup> ACAM, Ignace Bourget, Mandement de Mgr. l'évêque de Montréal publiant les décrets du second concile provincial de Québec et communiquant certaines faveurs obtenues du Saint-Siège, 27 August 1855.



suffering in the afterlife was widespread. Importers of *corps saints* would make every effort to ensure that their relics were attributed an indulgence by the Holy See. This formality, granted at the request of the local bishop, would make the holy remains much more valuable in the eyes of the faithful. Obtaining an indulgence in North America was less common than in Europe where more opportunities were given, especially in Rome where almost every church was granted this privilege. They were therefore sought-after by Catholics in Quebec.

However, the fundamental factor behind the spread and endurance of the devotion to catacomb saints is the belief in the healing power of these new intercessors. Many Catholics trusted that they could bring about miracles. Confronted with a possible risk of cholera, the sisters of the Congregation Notre-Dame turned to *sainte Fortunata* for protection.<sup>277</sup> Father Avila Valois wrote to Bishop Bourget in 1865, soon after the translation of Saint Justine. He claimed that everyday the intercession of the saint could be felt.

“Une des petites pensionnaires affligée d’un mal de yeux tout à fait incurable ... a été guérie en allant faire un pieux pèlerinage au tombeau de la sainte.”

Impressed by the power of the saint, he asked Ignace Bourget if it would be possible for him to return with another *corps saint* for the Très-Saint-Nom-de-Marie church.<sup>278</sup> It seems that his wish was not granted before 1878 when, in the presence

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<sup>277</sup> ACAM, Lettre de Mgr Bourget à Sr St-Paul, 6 May 1866, Registre de lettres de Mgr Bourget (RLB15).

<sup>278</sup> ACAM, Lettre de Avila Valois à Bourget, 1865, 525.105/865-002.

of 29 priests, Archbishop Fabre would preside over the translation of *sainte Aurélie*, a proper name virgin in the church of the *Couvent Hochelaga*.<sup>279</sup>

In a long letter to Father Paré, canon of the cathedral, two days after the solemn translation of *saint Zénon* and his companions, Father Gaudet explained at length how the day before the translation, a young nun was miraculously healed. She had decided to ask the new catacomb saints for their intercession while on her deathbed and recovered completely from her illness in a few hours. Because her wishes had been granted and she had recovered her health, she became determined to travel from Vaudreuil to Montreal to light a candle in front of the reliquary of the saints. She also wanted to obtain a small relic of the martyrs that she had resolved to wear around her neck for the rest of her life.<sup>280</sup>

Similarly, in 1871, when Ignace Bourget was severely ill, Father Paré wrote to all the religious communities of the diocese requesting that they pray to *saint Zénon* and his companions for the prelate to recover his health. The decision to entrust the bishop's health to catacomb saints instead of more famous saints demonstrates that the high clergy believed them to be intercessors as powerful and valuable as more conventional saints. The different communities responded positively to this demand and novenas were organized across the diocese, often in

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<sup>279</sup> ACAM, Procès-Verbal de la translation solennelle des reliques de Sainte Aurélie présidée par Mgr Fabre, 25 June 1878, 525.105/878-003.

<sup>280</sup> ACAM, Lettre de l'abbé Gaudet à Mr Paré, 19 October 1869, 525.110/869-005.

the presence of reliquaries of the saint and his companions, which had been distributed to them in the weeks following the official translation.<sup>281</sup>

Sometimes, lay individuals had more faith in the power of these saints than members of the clergy. The laity was sometimes convinced of the power of these intercessors to such an extent that they encouraged their priests to turn to them for help. In 1925, Notre-Dame-de-Grâce Parish had great plans to build a Bell tower but not enough money to fund its construction. An individual encouraged his pastor to turn to *saint Victor* for help.

En effet, relevant le défi d'une personne très dévouée au culte du saint martyr, le Père Curé fit la promesse de lui consacrer la chapelle qu'il avait l'intention de construire, attendant au campanile, si ce jeune saint venait à son secours. Une semaine après, jour pour jour, l'approbation de l'Archevêque et du Père Provincial était donnée au mode d'emprunt sur billets, et par un geste de générosité (...) M.S.D. Vallières offrait à la Fabrique un prêt très avantageux de \$30,000.<sup>282</sup>

This event demonstrates that in some cases, lay Catholics played an important role in promoting the devotion to catacomb saints. Several documents demonstrate that the clergy was often surprised by the great faith that the laity had in the new martyrs. In 1927, as a result of this financial miracle, a chapel built to house the remains of the Roman martyr was inaugurated by Notre-Dame-de-Grâce Parish. Similarly, in Trois-Rivières, a rich young woman, Élisabeth Normand, was able to raise enough money to fund the acquisition of the remains of *sainte Bibiane*

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<sup>281</sup> Among them were the Soeurs de Sainte-Anne ACAM, 10 February 1871, 525.110/871-003. and the Soeurs de Sainte-Croix ACAM, 1871, 525.108/871-001.

<sup>282</sup> ACAM, 75 ans de vie paroissiale 1853-1928, Notre-Dame-de-Grâce, A-3, Album de la paroisse Notre-Dame-de-Grâce.

which Bishop Bourget had recently obtained. In December 1870, the precious relics were inserted in a wax effigy and placed in the chapel of the Saint-Joseph Hospital. For over fifteen years, a triduum was celebrated yearly in the chapel and a number of miracles were recorded.<sup>283</sup>



Figure 6: *Sainte Bibiane's* reliquary

The hope of miracles encouraged the recitation of prayers to the saints. These prayers were printed and widely circulated. Prayers to both *saint Zotique* and *sainte Janvière* were included in the second edition of the *Manuel de prières, à l'usage des Soeurs de Charité* which appears to have been used by both the nuns and the laity.<sup>284</sup> The small book was approved by Ignace Bourget in 1848 and the prayers to both catacomb saints granted forty days of indulgence.

Although it remains difficult to know precisely what percentage of the Catholic population would regularly stop by the reliquaries to pray, adopting the devotion to catacomb saint as an element of their personal piety, a number of

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<sup>283</sup> ASP, Chroniques M34 Hôpital Saint-Joseph, Trois-Rivières, 1864-1890.

<sup>284</sup> Soeurs de charité., *Manuel de prières à l'usage des Soeurs de charité avec augmentation à l'usage des personnes pieuses*, CIHM/ICMH Microfiche series = CIHM/ICMH collection de microfiches no 49971 (Montréal?: s.n. , 1848), microforme, 2 microfiches (79 images).

documents in the Archives of the diocese of Montreal allege that many came to venerate the martyrs of Montreal. Bishop Bourget frequently expressed his satisfaction at seeing many faithful of his diocese and elsewhere praying at the reliquaries of these saints. Writing after the translation of *saint Zotique* in the cathedral he enthused:

Depuis ce jour heureux, Nous avons eu le bonheur de voir souvent accourir au tombeau de ce nouveau patron, de pieux fidèles de toutes les parties de notre diocèse et même des diocèses voisins, réclamant, avec une foi vive, et souvent fondant en larmes, sa puissante médiation auprès de Dieu; et les grâces particulières obtenues par son intercession entretiennent la juste confiance que l'on a dans son puissant crédit au ciel.<sup>285</sup>

Similarly, sister Philomène wrote in 1864 to Bishop Bourget that many came to visit and pray in front of the *corps saint* belonging to the Sisters of Providence.<sup>286</sup> Elements such as the toponymy and anthroponymy of the province appear to support these clerical sources in proving that lay individuals adopted this devotion.

#### **ADOPTING THE SAINTS : TOPONYMY AND ANTHROPONYMY**

We possess few first-hand testimonies from the laity regarding their perception of relics. However, the best indicator of the popularity of these new Roman relics among them is probably the rapid spread of Roman names across the province. With the importation to Montreal of the remains of catacomb saints, people started turning to them and asking for their intercession. As had been the case with *sainte Philomène*, the laity quickly adopted these new saints as powerful

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<sup>285</sup> ACAM, Mandement de Mgr l'évêque de Montréal pour l'institution de la fête et de l'office de St. Zotique, martyr, dans son église cathédrale de St. Jacques, 18 April 1846.

<sup>286</sup> ACAM, Lettre de Sr Philomène à Bourget, 5 February 1864, 525.106/864-009.

intercessors. One example of lay individuals turning to a catacomb saint for help comes from the influential lawyer and politician Alexandre Lacoste and his family. The Lacostes had close ties to the *Soeurs des saints noms de Jésus et Marie*. Alexandre Lacoste's sister was a nun at the *Couvent Hochelaga* which belonged to the religious community and he and his wife Marie-Louise Globensky would place their daughters at the convent boarding school.<sup>287</sup> In November 1856, the religious order had been given the body of *sainte Justine* by Bishop Bourget. Writing on the subject the prelate would emphasize the intercessory qualities of the young saint.

Et parce que c'est un corps saint, il en sort maintenant une vertu invisible, mais puissante, qui guérit les infirmités, soulage les peines et sanctifie les âmes [...] Ce corps saint qui ici, comme à Rome est l'instrument des divines miséricordes.<sup>288</sup>

The reliquary containing the remains of the saint was kept in the chapel of the nuns' motherhouse. In the 1870's when the eldest daughter of the Lacoste family, who herself was studying in one of their convents, became severely ill, the family turned to *sainte Justine* for help. When the young Marie Lacoste was miraculously healed in 1877, her parents, grateful, named their newborn daughter after the catacomb saint.<sup>289</sup> Along with many former students of the convent, Justine Lacoste-Beaubien founded Sainte-Justine Hospital in 1907, named in honor of the catacomb saint so dear to the religious community in charge of their school. *Sainte Justine*, the

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<sup>287</sup> Denise Girard, *Thaïs : la voix de la lutte des femmes, 1886-1963*(Québec, Qué.: Septentrion, 2012), 14.

<sup>288</sup> ACAM, Lettre pastorale de Mgr. l'évêque de Montréal aux soeurs des SS. Noms de Jésus et de Marie, touchant la cérémonie de la translation du corps de Ste. Justine, vierge et martyre. 9 November 1856.

<sup>289</sup> Nicolle Forget, Francine Harel-Giasson, and Francine Séguin, *Justine Lacoste-Beaubien et l'Hôpital Sainte-Justine*, Les grands gestionnaires et leurs oeuvres (Montréal: Presses de l'Université du Québec, 1995), 14.

young martyr of their childhood, was chosen as patron saint of the institution.<sup>290</sup> She was also chosen as the protector of sick children.<sup>291</sup>

Like Alexandre and Marie-Louise Lacoste, many families in nineteenth-century Quebec would name their newborn children after catacomb saints. Based on the data available in the 1871 census, one of the most popular Roman martyr's given name across the province was that of *saint Zotique*. The first national census recorded 447 individuals under the name Zotique.<sup>292</sup> If we assume that the ages indicated in this census are accurate, there would have been only three individuals with this name in the Province of Canada prior to the arrival of the saint's relics in 1844: Zotique Boucher from Kamouraska, Zotique Charland from Mégantic and Zotique Losseau from Chambly.<sup>293</sup> The decades following the triumphal arrival of *saint Zotique's* reliquary clearly coincide with the rise of popularity of the given name Zotique.

Those who named their children after these new saints often lived in the region in which a church or chapel contained the *corps saint* of the martyr. Canadian

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<sup>290</sup> *Ibid.*, 54.

<sup>291</sup> Denyse Baillargeon, *Naître, vivre, grandir : Sainte-Justine, 1907-2007*(Montréal: Boréal, 2007), 22.

<sup>292</sup> This statistic excludes anyone who would have been given the name Zotique after the arrival of the reliquary in 1844 but who would have already been deceased when the census was carried in 1871.

<sup>293</sup> Library and Archives Canada, "About the 1871 Census," <http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/databases/census-1871>.(accessed 18 June 2014).

and Quebec politicians Azellus Lavallée (1894-1976)<sup>294</sup> and Azellus Denis (1907-1991)<sup>295</sup> were both born in Lanaudière, a few kilometers from Joliette where the remains of *saint Asellus* had been brought in 1892. Several members of their families had attended the Collège Joliette, the most prestigious institution in the area.<sup>296</sup> Families who adopted the name Azellus for their children almost always had a connection with this institution and had roots in the Lanaudière Region. Such was the case of priests Azellus Brunelle and Azellus Poirier, both born in the Joliette area in the decade following the translation of the martyr.<sup>297</sup> Similarly, the name Abondius was given to many children baptized in Saint-Vincent-de-Paul parish where *saint Abondius* was exposed. A simple visit of the parish cemetery in Laval allows us to see this name on several tombstones. Among them are those of Abondius Bastien and Abondius Lortie, both born in 1861, the year of the translation of *saint Abondius'* relics.



Figure 7: The headstones of Abondius Bastien and Abondius Lortie in Saint-Vincent-de-Paul cemetery.

<sup>294</sup> Assemblée Nationale du Québec, "Azellus Lavallée (1894-1976)," Fiches biographiques des députés, <http://www.assnat.qc.ca/fr/deputes/lavallee-azellus-4035/biographie.html>.(accessed 25 July 2014).

<sup>295</sup> Parlement du Canada, "Denis, L'hon. Azellus," Fiche de parlementaire, <http://www.parl.gc.ca/parlinfo/Files/Parliamentarian.aspx?Item=1647B84C-1764-48B8-A6AF-5E29CBDED7D7&Language=F&Section=ALL>.(accessed 25 July 2014).

<sup>296</sup> ACSV, Répertoire des élèves du *Collège Joliette*, 1896-1920.

<sup>297</sup> J. B. A. Allaire, *Dictionnaire biographique du clergé canadien-français*, 2 vols.(s. l.: s. n., 1908), 31; 454.



The name of *Zénon* was given to many newborns soon after the arrival of his relics. Two priests, Zénon Therien and Zénon Decary were both born soon after the translation of *saint Zénon* and his companions. Father Zénon Therien was born in L'Assomption on 6 August 1870 exactly nine months after the arrival of his patron's relics in Montreal.<sup>298</sup> Why did his parents choose to name him after the saint? Although it is difficult to know, it could be that his mother had wanted a child for a long time and that her pregnancy was understood to be an answer to her prayers to the new saint.

Individuals also chose the name Zénon when they entered religious orders. Laurent Meunier who had been a Papal Zouave in Rome adopted the name *Zénon* when he joined the Brothers of Charity in 1875.<sup>299</sup> *Saint Zénon* bore a special significance for the Zouaves. In 1869, each one of the 500 volunteers had been given a relic of the saint to be kept around their neck for protection.<sup>300</sup> It was considered a miraculous intervention that none of the Canadian volunteers died in the expedition. Similarly, making her vows in 1890, a young novice, Eugénie Lemire, took the name of Soeur Victor, a few months after the arrival of the saint's reliquary in the church of the motherhouse of the Sisters of Providence.<sup>301</sup>

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<sup>298</sup> *Ibid.*, 552.

<sup>299</sup> *Bulletin de l'Union-Allet*, 25 March 1875.

<sup>300</sup> ACAM, Circulaire de Mgr. l'évêque de Montréal au clergé séculier et régulier, aux communautés religieuses, et à tous les fidèles de son diocèse, leur annonçant qu'il leur envoie des reliques considérables de martyrs, 9 July 1869.

<sup>301</sup> Sisters of Charity of Providence., *Notes historiques sur l'Institut des Soeurs de Charité de la Providence, Montréal*, 166.

The names of catacomb saints were also attributed to parishes. The parishes of Saint-Zotique (1849)<sup>302</sup>, Sainte-Justine-de-Newton (1855)<sup>303</sup> and Saint-Zénon (1870)<sup>304</sup> were all founded in the months following the arrival of the relics to Canada. These foundations were not the initiative of the clergy alone but were supported by many among the laity<sup>305</sup>. Villages, streets and neighborhoods would later adopt the names of these parishes.

Similarly, the famous Saint-Zotique street, running from east to west across the island of Montreal is believed to have been named to honor Zotique Racicot, who would become auxiliary bishop of Montreal in 1905.<sup>306</sup> The prelate was born in Sault-au-Récollet on 13 October 1845, only four months after the triumphal translation of the relics of the saint to *Saint-Jacques'* Cathedral. Bishop François-Théophile Zotique Racicot seems to have preferred the name Zotique and soon abandoned François and Théophile. Archbishop Bruchesi's pastoral letter

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<sup>302</sup> Commission de toponymie du Québec, "Saint-Zotique," [http://www.toponymie.gouv.qc.ca/ct/ToposWeb/fiche.aspx?no\\_seq=402430](http://www.toponymie.gouv.qc.ca/ct/ToposWeb/fiche.aspx?no_seq=402430).(accessed 12 March 2014).

<sup>303</sup> "Sainte-Justine-de-Newton," [http://www.toponymie.gouv.qc.ca/ct/ToposWeb/fiche.aspx?no\\_seq=402079](http://www.toponymie.gouv.qc.ca/ct/ToposWeb/fiche.aspx?no_seq=402079).(accessed 20 March 2014).

<sup>304</sup> "Saint-Zénon," [http://www.toponymie.gouv.qc.ca/ct/ToposWeb/fiche.aspx?no\\_seq=349159](http://www.toponymie.gouv.qc.ca/ct/ToposWeb/fiche.aspx?no_seq=349159).(accessed 20 March 2014).

<sup>305</sup> A new parish would usually be founded at the request of a group of Catholics who would petition their bishop to obtain this privilege. If they wanted they could also suggest a name for the new church.

<sup>306</sup> After looking through the minutes of the municipal council of Saint-Louis-du-Mile-End in 1898, I was not able to find any indication of the reasons behind the adoption of the name Saint-Zotique for the former Père-Labelle street. It remains unclear if the decision was taken to directly honor the roman martyr or the new vicar general of the Archdiocese, canon Zotique Racicot, himself named in honor of the martyr. Ultimately however, the saint to which the street refers was *saint Zotique* whose remains could be venerated in Montreal's Cathedral.

announcing the appointment of Racicot as auxiliary bishop in 1905 was itself announced on the feast day of *saint Zotique*, which was celebrated on 20 April.<sup>307</sup> To commemorate that feast, the reliquary of the saint would be exposed every year in the Cathedral and the office would be announced in *La Semaine Religieuse*, the diocesan official newspaper.<sup>308</sup>

The adoption of the names of Roman catacomb saints constitutes the best indication that the laity sincerely embraced the new devotion. Catholic priests could stress the importance of being named after a recognized catholic saint but they did not have the authority to impose a particular given name on a newborn child. The recurrence of the names of catacomb saints was therefore something entirely left to parents. This phenomenon demonstrates that the collective devotions introduced with the translations of relics profoundly shaped individual piety. The development of these forms of private piety and the infatuation of the laity for catacomb saints should not therefore be considered the unilateral enterprise of the clergy. They demonstrate in parallel to collective devotions, the existence of personal devotions to these obscure saints, something that Historian Nive Voisine had qualified as a *terra incognita* in nineteenth century Canadian historiography.<sup>309</sup> Ultimately, they are expressions of lived religion.

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<sup>307</sup> ACAM, Lettre pastorale de Mgr l'évêque de Montréal, 19 April 1905.

<sup>308</sup> *La Semaine Religieuse*, 14 April 1883.

<sup>309</sup> Sylvain and Voisine, *Histoire du Catholicisme Québécois: Les XVIIIe et XIXe siècles*, 2, 364.

## CONCLUSION

In 2002, Sainte-Bibiane's parish published a small book to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of its foundation. Surprisingly, no one could tell why the name Sainte-Bibiane was chosen for their church.<sup>310</sup> This testifies to the fact that the devotion to catacomb saints has not only been abandoned but forgotten even within Catholic circles. In just over fifty years it has completely disappeared from Catholic public memory.<sup>311</sup> Of course, the names of these saints continues to be heard in the streets of Montreal. However, throughout Quebec, these names represent the only visible signs of a lost devotion. When walking on Saint-Zotique street, visiting Sainte-Justine's children hospital or stopping by Sainte-Bibiane's elementary school, we are, without knowing it, faced with a devotion that has largely disappeared from our collective memory. Their names exist but are no longer associated with the tradition that once gave them meaning. As for the reliquaries of these saints, they have disappeared from Montreal's churches.

The almost complete disappearance of the devotion to catacomb saints in the post-Vatican II period has led to significant confusion around the identity of Montreal's Roman martyrs. Because, as it is often the case, several saints happened to bear the same names, Montreal's catacomb saints were erroneously identified with more notorious saints. While *saint Zotique* has been confused with saint

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<sup>310</sup> ACAM, Paroisse Sainte-Bibiane, Album souvenir du 50e anniversaire de fondation de la paroisse Sainte-Bibiane 1952-2002, Montreal, 2002, 8.

<sup>311</sup> For a definition of public memory see Alan Gordon, *Making public pasts : the contested terrain of Montréal's public memories, 1891-1930*(Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2001).

Zoticus of Comana, *saint Zénon* was often thought to be saint Zeno of Verona. Behind this confusion is a lack of information available on Montreal's catacomb saints and their devotion, outside of religious archives.

It is difficult to determine precisely the causes behind this gradual decline. Considering this change as the sole result of the Quiet Revolution and of the popular rejection of the Church in Quebec is certainly inaccurate. In his *Histoire du Catholicisme Québécois*, Jean Hamelin quotes the testimony of Claire Guillemette published in *Le Devoir* in 1968.<sup>312</sup> This family mother expressed her disillusionment with the Church. How can we, in the twentieth century, continue to believe in miracles, she declares. Perhaps, it is precisely in this loss of faith in miracles that the explanation for the end of this devotion should be sought. When individuals ceased to believe that relics of saints could heal and help them, they stopped praying to them. They were even more prompt to do so when they became conscious that the historicity and authenticity of these saints was uncertain.

Certainly, the year 1961 altered forever the devotion to catacomb saints in Quebec. In April, in a desire for historical accuracy, the Vatican announced that the feast of *sainte Philomène* should be removed from the liturgical calendar.<sup>313</sup> The news shocked many Canadian Catholics and was discussed in newspapers. As *sainte Philomène* had marked the rise of the devotion to catacomb saints in Quebec she also announced its end. To the question of what should be done with her relics, a

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<sup>312</sup> Nive Voisine et al., *Histoire du catholicisme québécois*, 3 t. en 4 vols.(Montréal: Boréal express, 1984), 332.

<sup>313</sup> James O'Neill, "Piety, Confusion, Research: What Really Happened to Philomena," *The Catholic Observer*, 28 April 1961.

representative of the *Commission de liturgie du diocèse de Montréal* answered that the law of the Church requires that unauthentic relics be removed from the cult of the faithful.<sup>314</sup> As a result, many relics of catacomb saints were gradually withdrawn from churches. In Montreal, *saint Victor's* relics were removed from the chapel that had been built especially for them. The chapel itself was renamed Saint-Dominique's chapel by the Dominicans who were responsible for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce parish.<sup>315</sup>

Surprisingly, the abandonment of this form of piety came primarily from within the Catholic Church. The decision to remove the wax reliquaries of catacomb saints from churches appears to have been the result of clerical initiatives rather than motivated by requests from the faithful. One of the consequences of the Second Vatican Council was a shift away from popular devotions. In many ways the diocesan priests adopted the conciliar documents, sometimes taking them a lot further than what the conciliar fathers had imagined.<sup>316</sup> In the years after the Council, if the devotion to relics was not completely abandoned it was considerably neglected in favor of other elements. Consequently, relics lost their importance in the eyes of many, including for catholic priests. The last visible *corps saint* of Montreal, *saint Innocent*, was removed from the cathedral in 2005 when the chapel of relics was abolished in order to make room for a new funerary chapel for

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<sup>314</sup> Marcel Adam, "L'Eglise n'a pas "décanonisé" la prétendue "sainte" Philomène," *La Presse*, 29 April 1961.

<sup>315</sup> ACAM, Notre-Dame-de-Grâce, Album de la paroisse Notre-Dame-de-Grâce.

<sup>316</sup> Historian Michael Gauvreau describes the effort of Catholic elites and members of the upper clergy to modernize the Church by reforming what they considered to be traditional Catholicism. The consequence, according to Gauvreau, was a schism that led the Church to lose a significant number of followers. See Gauvreau, *The Catholic Origins of Quebec's Quiet Revolution, 1931-1970*, 310-11.

auxiliary bishops.<sup>317</sup> While reliquaries of catacomb saints can still be viewed in Ottawa's cathedral and Quebec City's Mallet's chapel, they can no longer be seen in the diocese of Montreal. These decisions can lead us to believe, perhaps, that Montreal's clergy adopted more liberal views than their counterparts in other dioceses, though this assertion would have to be tested with more research.

Despite the decline in the devotion to catacomb saints, their relics, particularly those of *saint Zénon*, *sainte Janvière* and *sainte Aurélie*, continued to be used for liturgical purposes, essentially to be placed in the altars of different sanctuaries in Montreal. Almost every church built between 1940 and 1960 had a relic of one of these saints in their altars.<sup>318</sup> After the removal of reliquaries from churches, the Archdiocese was in possession of countless relics of catacomb saints. As had been the case in the nineteenth century, these relics were inserted in altar stones because they were more easily available than those of more conventional saints. On 8 November 1990, on the occasion of the dedication of the altar of the chapel of Montreal's Grand Séminaire, Archbishop Jean-Claude Turcotte inserted the relics of several contemporary Canadian saints in the altar. To them, however, were added relics of *saint Zénon* and his companions. In doing so, the Sulpicians wanted to stress the relationship between the Canadian Church and the Primitive Church.<sup>319</sup>

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<sup>317</sup> ACAM, *Basilique-Cathédrale Marie-Reine-du-Monde et Saint-Jacques-le-Majeur* (dépliant), 2012, Album de la Cathédrale Marie-Reine-du-Monde.

<sup>318</sup> The diocesan reserve of the *Service de Construction et d'Art Sacré* has kept the altar stones of an important number of churches and religious institutions which have closed in the last three decades.

<sup>319</sup> Jean-Paul Labelle. "Chapelle et crypte du Grand Séminaire de Montréal," La Fondation du Grand Séminaire de Montréal, Montréal 2001.

I have argued in this thesis that the devotion to catacomb saints occupied an important place in the religious experience of Montreal's Catholics during the second half of the nineteenth century and the early twentieth century. The consideration of the rise and fall of this devotion can allow us to distinguish the genuine experience of piety encountered by both the clergy and laity during the ultramontane period. Certainly, the publications, prayers and translations organized by the Catholic Church in Montreal played a considerable role in spreading these new devotions across the province. If the importation of these saints and the organization of processions was largely the work of the diocesan authorities, a significant number of the faithful responded positively to these initiatives. By being present and participating in translations and their subsequent commemorations, by reciting novenas to these saints, asking for favors and by naming individuals, buildings and streets after them, the population of the diocese of Montreal adopted these foreign devotions as an element of their own personal piety. By looking at the adoption of these new devotions, we can perceive the contours of lived religion in ultramontane Montreal. Ultimately, the cult of these saints can lead us to better comprehend how practically this form of piety was experienced in Quebec. In many ways, the rise and fall of this devotion parallels the development of ultramontane piety in Quebec.

From the 1840's until the eve of the Quiet Revolution, Quebec Catholics, whether layperson, priests or bishops, adopted these Roman martyrs and domesticated their cult. Ultimately, what is specific to Quebec's Catholic Church is the survival of the devotion long after it had been abandoned in Europe. The prompt



rejection of catacomb saints as a result of the euphoria and liturgical reorganization that affected Montreal's Catholic Church in the years that followed the Second Vatican Council appears to be another important difference with its European counterpart.

It remains difficult today to know precisely how many catacomb saints were imported by the diocese of Montreal. A thorough examination of the archives of the different religious communities and parishes of the city would certainly demonstrate that this number was significantly higher than those uncovered in my research. However, the reticence of some religious communities to give access to archival documents surrounding the devotion to catacomb saints is yet another sign of this continued disinterest that characterizes the post-Vatican II Church.

Through this thesis, I attempted to understand the ways by which Catholics in the diocese of Montreal adopted these saints, how they were introduced and exposed to them. Further research on the subject will need to demonstrate more clearly how Protestants and Liberal Catholics opposed the devotion and how it was perceived elsewhere in Canada, outside the limits of the diocese of Montreal. Furthermore, it remains difficult to measure how those who turned to catacomb saints adapted these devotions. What exactly occurred when the public devotional practices entered into the private homes? Did the devotion to these saints differ from that of other standard saints? Historians have yet to seriously study this facet of ultramontane piety. Although elements of private piety can sometimes be difficult to demonstrate, I am convinced that such research can nevertheless produce

interesting conclusions. Historians have yet to seriously consider the devotion to catacomb saints as a fundamental aspect of ultramontane piety. The study of these imported martyrs certainly deepens our understanding of nineteenth century lived religion.

## APPENDIX 1: LIST OF IMPORTED CATACOMB SAINTS

MARTYR'S NAME	DESTINATION	DATE OF TRANSLATION
Saint Abondius	Saint-Vincent-de-Paul Convent in Laval	24 July 1861
*Saint Arcade, n.p. (Arcadia)	Hospice Saint-Jean-de-Dieu (Sisters of providence)	17 May 1880
Saint Asellus, n.p. (Azelle)	Collège Joliette (Clercs de Saint-Viateur)	3 November 1892
Sainte Aurélie, n.p.	Couvent Hochelaga (Soeurs des Saints Noms de Jésus et Marie)	25 June 1878
Sainte Bibiane	Saint Joseph Hospital in Trois-Rivières (Sisters of Providence)	2 December 1870
Saint Boniface	Sisters of Charity Motherhouse in Quebec city	Unknown
Sainte Cécile	Saints-Anges Parish in Lachine	12 September 1880
Saint Claude, n.p (Claudii)	Montreal's Cathedral	Unknown
Saint Clément	Collège de Montréal Chapel (Sulpicians)	c. 1887
Saint Concorde	Saint-Jean Parish on île d'Orléans	1881
Saint Émile, n.p.	Notre-Dame Cathedral in Ottawa	28 October 1879
Sainte Émilie	Sisters of Providence	Unknown
Sainte Félicité	Divided among the parishes and religious communities of Quebec City	1666
Saint Félix	Hôtel-Dieu chapel (Hospitales de Saint-Joseph)	c. 1865
Saint Félix	Tour des Martyrs in Saint-Célestin	Unknown
Saint Félix	Notre-Dame Parish	c. 1869
Saint Flavien	Divided among the parishes and religious communities of Quebec City	1666
Sainte Fortunata (Fortunate)	Motherhouse of the Congrégation Notre-Dame	15 March 1866
Sainte Gaudence (Gaudentia)	Saint-Joseph Hospital in Trois-Rivières (Sisters of Providence)	1953
Saint Généreux	Sainte-Famille Parish in Boucherville	6 August 1870
Sainte Emilie	Motherhouse (Sisters of Providence)	1953?
Saint Innocent	Montreal's Cathedral	1855
Sainte Iréne	Notre-Dame Parish	c. 1869
Sainte Janvière, n.p. (Januaria)	Montreal's Cathedral	19 November 1843
Sainte Julienne	Sainte-Anne Convent (Soeurs de Sainte-Anne)	18 August 1881
Sainte Justine	Motherhouse (Soeurs des Saints Noms de Jésus et Marie)	9 November 1856
Saint Lauréat (Companion of Saint Zénon)	Séminaire de Québec	c. 1878
Saint Marcel	Saint-Jacques Parish	16 September 1880

Saint Maximin	Notre-Dame Parish	6 September 1833
Saint Pacifique	Asile de la Providence (Sisters of Providence)	5 February 1866
Sainte Pacifique	Unknown	c.1869
Saint Placide	Motherhouse (Grey nuns of Montreal)	Unknown
Saint Placide	Montreal's temporary cathedral	7 April 1859
Sainte Placide	Unknown parish in Montérégie	13 September 1881
Saint Prosper	Séminaire de Saint-Hyacinthe	18 May 1854
*Sainte Valérie	Monastère du Précieux-Sang de Notre-Dame-de-Grâce	Unknown
Saint Victor	Sisters of Providence	7 March 1889
Saint Victor	Saint-Victor Chapel in Notre-Dame-de-Grâce Parish	c. 1925
Saint Urbain	Motherhouse in Quebec City (Sisters of Charity)	14 October 1885
Saint Valère	Saint-Valère Parish near Victoriaville	1875
Saint Vital	Grand Séminaire de Montréal (Sulpicians)	c. 1870
Saint Zénon and his companions	Distributed across the diocese	17 October 1869
Saint Zotique	Montreal's Cathedral	22 June 1845

\* The local bishop often upon recommendation of the Holy See, forbade the public veneration of these saints because they were too many doubts regarding their origin.

N.p. (nomine proprio) indicates when known that it is a proper name martyr. The name of the martyr was found on his loculi.

This list of catacomb saints is certainly incomplete. These are the names of the *corps saints* that I have encounter during my research. More catacomb saints certainly found their way to Quebec during the second half of the nineteenth century.

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465.105 Clercs de Saint-Viateur  
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525.102 Religieuses Hospitalières de Saint-Joseph  
525.105 Soeurs des Saints Noms de Jésus et de Marie  
525.106 Soeurs de la Providence  
525.107 Religieuses du Bon-Pasteur  
525.108 Soeurs de Sainte-Croix  
525.110 Soeurs de Sainte-Anne  
525.112 Adoratrices du Précieux-Sang  
651.200 Reliques  
778.867 Hôpital Saint-Jean-de-Dieu  
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901.056 Mgr Bourget - 3<sup>e</sup> voyage en Europe (1854-1856)  
901.058 Mgr Bourget - 5<sup>e</sup> voyage en Europe (1864-1865)  
901.059 Mgr Bourget - 6<sup>e</sup> voyage en Europe (1869-1870)  
901.081 Isidore Gravel, prêtre  
901.086 Mgr Joseph Désautels  
901.117 Chanoine Hyacinthe Hudon  
Album de la Cathédrale Marie-Reine-du-Monde  
Album de la paroisse Notre-Dame-de-Grâce  
Album de la paroisse Sainte-Bibiane  
RLL Registre de lettres de Mgr Lartigue  
RLB Registre de lettres de Mgr Bourget  
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