

Father O'Shea's Diocesan Reflections

Spotlight Priest

Dan MacDonald: Dan was born at St. Andrew's in 1822, in one of the oldest Catholic centres of PEI. That parish has given 17 priests to the Church with three of these becoming bishops: Bernard and Charles MacDonald for Charlottetown and James Morrison for Antigonish.

Dan studied in the local schoolhouse and then at St. Andrew's College just up the road. This modest but important seat of learning operated in the former 30 by 38 foot, two-storey house of Bishop Angus MacEachern from 1831 to 1844 and a goodly number of future priests studied there awhile.

From St. Andrew's College Dan was sent to Rome where he studied for seven years, leading to his ordination to the priesthood there in 1851, having also merited his doctorate in theology.

Back on the Island, Father Dan spent one year at Rustico and then was named pastor at East Point with attached missions of Souris and St. Margaret's, remaining eight years.

In 1860 Father Dan was appointed rector of St. Dunstan's Cathedral and at the same time was named Vicar General of our diocese. After 17 years at the cathedral he joined the teaching staff at nearby St. Dunstan's College for a three-year term. In 1880 he was named assistant at Georgetown which included Cardigan and four years later he became pastor there.

Father Dan died in the Georgetown rectory on January 3, 1886 with burial in the parish cemetery there. Bishop MacIntyre celebrated the funeral Mass with the sermon delivered by Father Pat Doyle, pastor at Summerside. Among the many priests present in the crowded church were three of his MacDonald nephews: Fathers James Aeneas, John A and Charles. The last mentioned within five years would become the fourth Bishop of Chalottetown.

Doctor Dan MacDonald was genial and witty, with a bright intellect. He was a great student of Church and Scottish history, much in demand as a speaker. He was particularly at home in the Gaelic language which was the mother tongue of most of his eastern parishioners. His death was a great loss to the diocese of that day.

"Dear to God and people, his memory was held in benediction." (Sirach 45,1)

addendum

A snapshot of our diocese in 1886, the year of Father Dan's death:

total priests	37	college priests	02
pastors	26	curates	02
retired	03	in Magdalen Islands	04

Our seminarians in 1886 were seven in number: three in Rome, three in Quebec and one in Montreal.

Island-born priests serving outside our diocese in 1886 numbered six: 3 Jesuits and one each in the dioceses of Baltimore, Hartford and St. Paul, Minnesota.

St. Dunstan's Cathedral rose window:

The architect chosen for the new cathedral, our present one, was young John Hunter from Scotland who lived the rest of his years in Canada. One of his plans was for a majestic rose window in the west end over the high altar.

In 1914 Bishop Henry O'Leary and his committee ordered the rose window with a company in Munich, Germany. This company quoted a price of \$2,340 for this special window plus four smaller nearby ones up high. But then came World War I and nothing was heard from Munich except the worst of war news.

As the cathedral's interior was being completed in 1918 and 1919 the bishop, having given up on the Munich Company, began negotiating with several Montreal firms about supplying these windows. Then, out of the blue in November of 1919 came word from the Munich company that the rose window and the four smaller ones, ordered in 1914, were all completed. However, delivery would be slow. Finding a competent person to install them would also be a problem. The windows landed in Charlottetown only in the spring of 1921 and were installed that April by special workers from New York. The big rose window fitted into its welcoming space snug as a bug in a rug.

Two of our Island pastors who boasted about having the **best parish** in the diocese: Fathers Reggie MacDonald in Seven Mile Bay and Parnell Wood in Vernon River.

Parish housekeepers:

The longest serving was Clara Gallant and the only one electrocuted at work was Mrs. Amelia (Campbell) McGrath. Clara began keeping house in Tignish in the days of Father Gregory MacLellan during the 1920s. When he was transferred to Summerside Clara came as well. There she was housekeeper for a number of pastors until retirement after at least 60 years in this dedicated field of service in those two parishes.

Amelia McGrath was a widow and sister of Father Terence Campbell, pastor at Alberton from 1915 to 1937. One night after a card game with some visitors she went to make lunch. In the small room off the kitchen was the hand pump over the sink and a nearby pull-chain electric light fixture. Her wet hand on the chain seemingly brought her to an instant death. The date was June 22, 1934. Her funeral Mass in Corran Ban was very largely attended with an immense choir from all around.

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