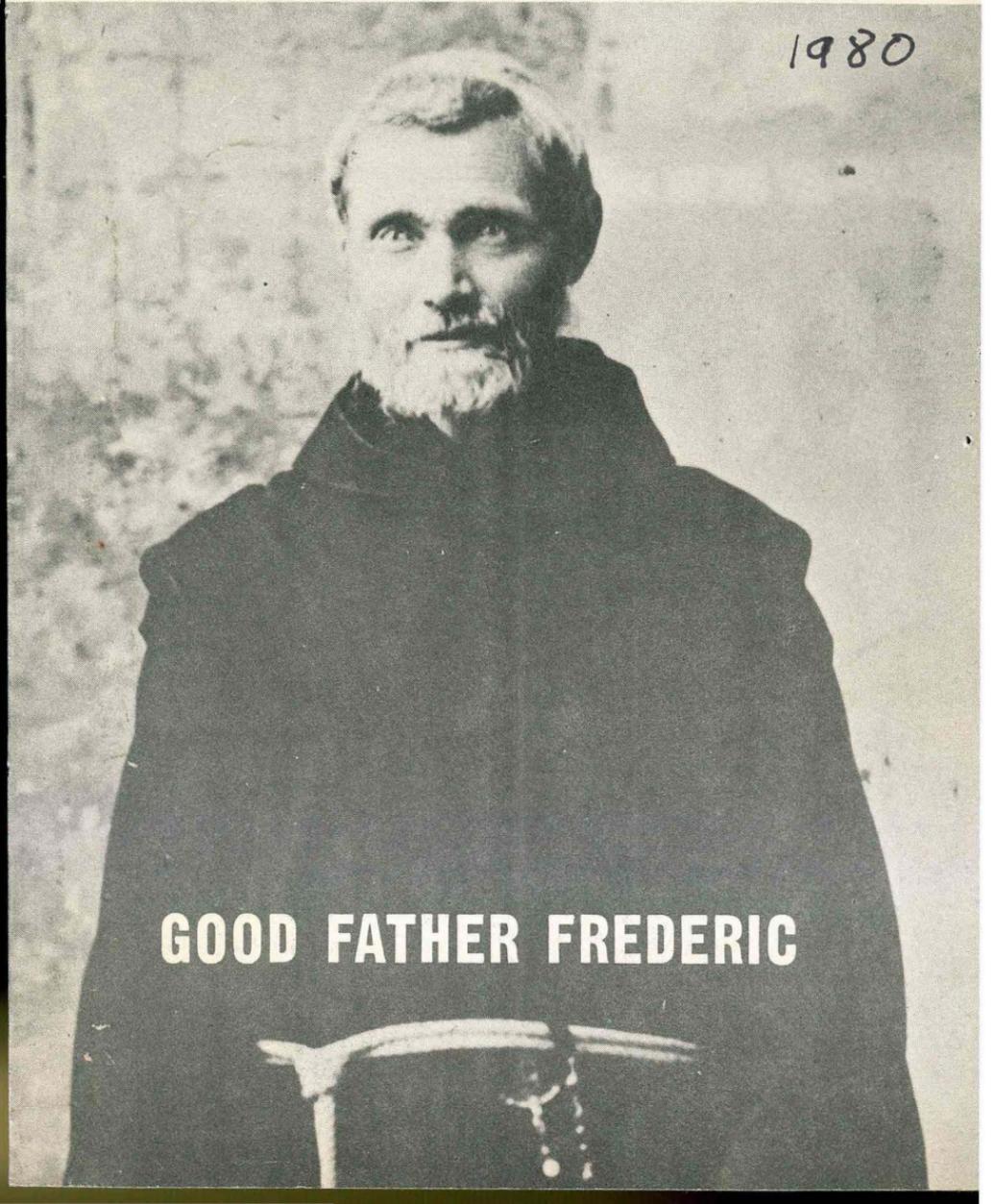


The **Anthonian**

1980

GOOD FATHER FREDERIC



Dear Member:

St. Francis of Assisi had the ability to attract great and generous people to walk in his footsteps. St. Anthony of Padua was one of these. He is not only the saint of miracles as we know him, but in his lifetime Anthony was an effective preacher who brought many men and women to Christ. His profound holiness has made him a powerful intercessor, as we are all so well aware.

In this issue we tell the story of a Franciscan apostle of modern times. He follows in the great tradition of Sts. Francis and Anthony. He lived part of his life in the Holy Land where he walked daily in the footsteps of Christ. His later years were spent as a preacher of the Good News in French Canada.

His family name was Janssoone. He was known throughout French Canada as "Good Father Frederic."

Father Frederic is partly responsible for the foundation and fame of the shrine at Three Rivers, Quebec, known as Cap de la Madeleine.

Sincerely,



Fr. Salvator Fink, O. F. M.

Director of St. Anthony's Guild

Cover: Father Frederic Janssoone, O. F. M., in 1888.

Fr. Salvator Fink, O. F. M., *Editor, Pictures and Layout*; Fr. John J. Manning, O. F. M., *Research*.

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GOOD FATHER FREDERIC

By BONIFACE HANLEY, O. F. M.

AT TWENTY-THREE years of age Freddy Janssoone, a French linen salesman, knew the world was his oyster. The young man possessed a keen business sense, a talent for the "soft-sell" and, after only a few years in sales, had earned a reputation amongst his customers, hard headed Flemish farmers, for honesty and integrity. Freddy had no guile and his stolid clientele respected him for the lack. Of medium height and light frame, Freddy possessed a kindly and handsome face. Reddish brown eyebrows accentuated his clear blue eyes that often danced with gentle humor. In the style of the 1860's French dandy, Janssoone affected a neatly trimmed beard, carried a cane and wore a top hat.

Beginning at seventeen as an errand boy, Freddy, within five years, had become the LeDieu company's top salesman. The firm valued his talents and more than once Mr. Albert LeDieu, the president, advised Freddy that the young salesman could look forward to a rewarding future in the linen business. The president occasionally hinted, however guardedly, that his daughter's hand was available for Janssoone.

As a skillful salesman, Freddy could communicate his ideas, his enthusiasm and his product to prospective customers. One thing alone he could not and dared not share with others. That was his unhappiness. Freddy Janssoone lived on the edge

of lonely disappointment. He did not want to be a successful businessman; he wanted to be a priest.

If his life had followed a normal pattern he probably would be close to ordination to the priesthood at twenty-three. There was no possibility in that summer of 1860, however, that Freddy would be ordained a priest at the usual age.

THE LAST CHILD

Freddy's mother, Marie Bollengier, a widow with five children from her first marriage, wedded Pierre Janssoone, himself a widower, in 1828. In this second marriage, Marie and Pierre brought eight children into the world. Freddy, born November 19, 1838, was Marie's thirteenth and last child. The Janssoones lived in Ghyselde, a small village in French Flanders, close to the Belgian border. The flat Flanders plain stretches for miles along the North Sea coast. Flemish farmers had spent more than two centuries draining the vast salt marshes of the coast, eventually turning them into some of the world's richest farmlands.

The Janssoone family possessed all the vision, energy, patience and perseverance that characterize Flemish farmers. They owned their own farm; each Janssoone had his own chores and all shared in the happiness of a sound family life. In later years, Freddy would look back on his

childhood days with tenderness, recalling wistfully the evenings when Pierre would gather his large brood about the fireplace and lead the family rosary. Following the prayers, the proud father would regale the little children with stories of Flemish history. With great gusto Pierre narrated tales of Flemish resistance to the French Revolution whose evil memories were still fresh in Flemish minds. Ghyvelde's hard nosed farmers rejected the Revolutionary atheism and suffered bitterly during the terror because of their Catholic faith.

SCHOOL

Pierre sent each of his children to Ghyvelde's village school. Freddy, the baby, cheered his parents when at the conclusion of his first year he marched home proudly with several first academic prizes — a performance he repeated consistently throughout his scholastic career.

The year 1848 saw an end to Freddy's idyllic childhood. Pierre, victim of stomach cancer, died at fifty-one years of age. That same year, the French mounted yet another bloody Revolution. To compound the horror, famine struck the land.

"Our land," Freddy recalled in later years, "had already been deeply convulsed by Revolution when a severe famine fell upon us. Groups of starving men numbering several hundred came from a neighboring country (Belgium) which had suffered even more than us and invaded our northern French Provinces. Other needy men, who wore masks and were

called 'The Ashamed Poor,' attacked the homes of our peace loving farmers after nightfall and demanded with threats what they needed to live on. The regular army was no longer able to maintain or to guarantee national security in the large towns. The heads of families were called to serve in the National Guard. A sinister sense of fear and uncertainty hovered over all France."

BROKEN DREAMS

After Pierre's death Marie continued to manage the farm but, without her husband's guiding hand, production and hence income declined. Marie eventually sold the large property and invested the money from the sale in various business enterprises. She provided for her family from funds realized through the investments.

Freddy at thirteen enrolled in the Hazebrouck High School, an excellent secondary school. Two years later he switched to Notre Dame School. In both institutions he continued his outstanding scholastic record. During these years he decided to enter the seminary as his older brother Pierre had already done. He planned to commence studies for the priesthood after graduating from Notre Dame.

Some months before graduation, Freddy's hopes to enter the seminary were dashed. Marie's business enterprises collapsed and the Janssoone family was suddenly poor. Freddy, seventeen, left school and found a job. To add to Marie's troubles, her



In Father Frederic's youth, Ghyvelde's citizens valued their faith and families above all. A disciplined and energetic people, they prospered by skillfully farming Flanders' fields. At Ghyvelde's grammar school (below) teachers laid firm foundations for Father Frederic's later education. Ghyvelde was destroyed in World War I, rebuilt and destroyed again in World War II.



son, Pierre, depressed and anxious, quit the seminary and returned home. He and Freddy both found employment in Estaires, a small Flanders town. Freddy began as an errand boy and then later joined the LeDieu Company where, as the New Year of 1861 arrived, he was enjoying great business success. The young salesman lived, however, with an inner sadness because circumstances prohibited him from entering the seminary. His dilemma would soon be resolved.

THE NOVICE

In May 1861, Marie Janssoone died suddenly at age sixty-four. Freed now of his filial obligations, Freddy planned to enter the seminary. His spiritual director suggested the young salesman make a retreat at a nearby Trappist monastery. After spending some days with the austere and silent monks, Freddy decided to enter the Trappists. The Trappist abbot noted Freddy's topper and cane and concluded the dandy young gentleman would wither and die in the rigorous Trappist life. The priest, gently but firmly, advised Freddy to seek another religious order. "What to do?" poor Freddy asked himself. His frustration increased when his brother Pierre, who had never relinquished his hopes of becoming a priest, reentered the seminary and joined the French Foreign Mission Society. At age thirty-six Pierre became a priest. He would spend the remaining forty-four years of his life as a missionary in Bangalore, India.

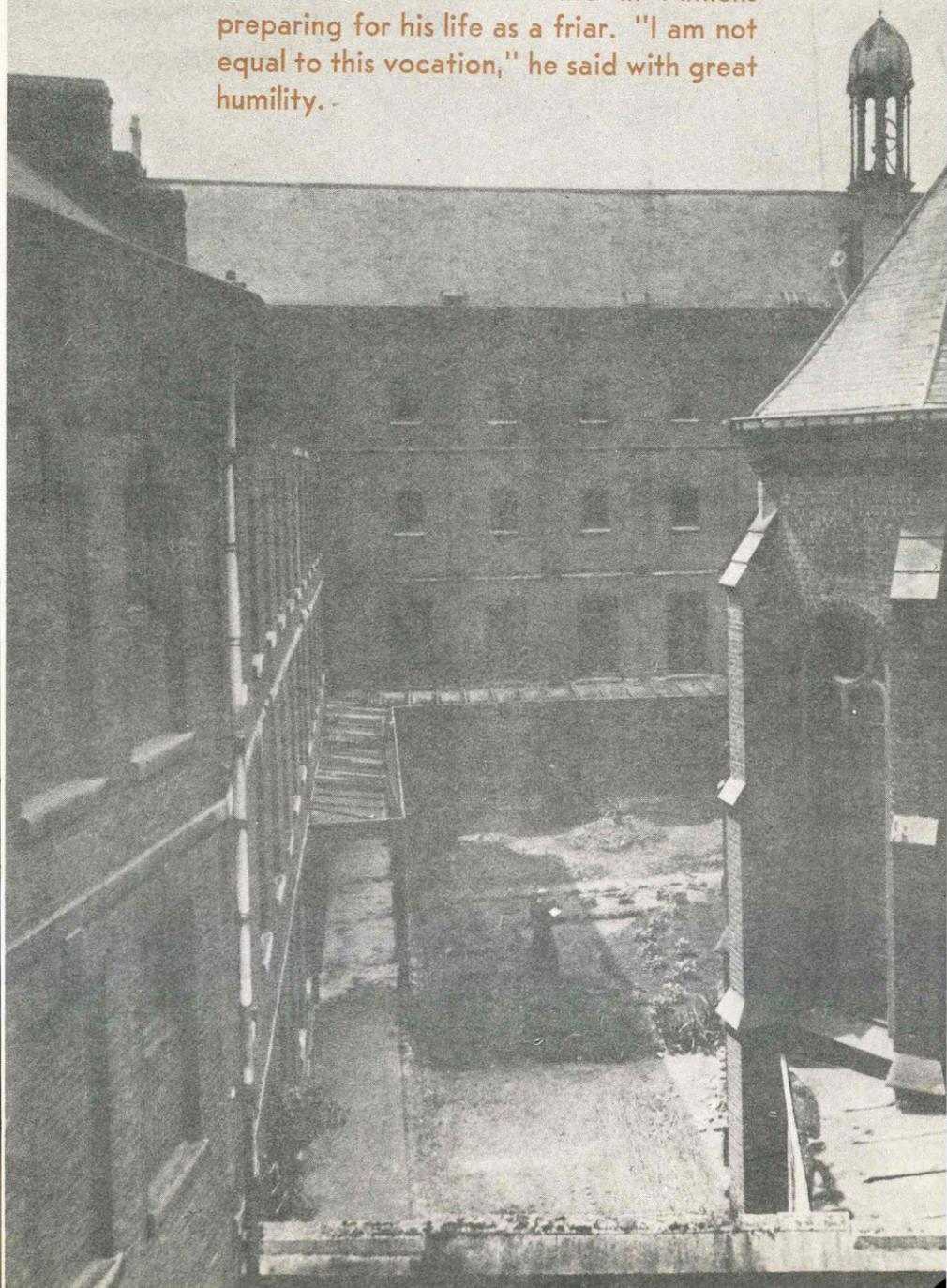
The headmaster of the Hazebrouck school, an acquaintance of Pierre and Freddy, and a member of the lay Franciscan Third Order, knew of Freddy's predicament. The Professor gave the young man a copy of "The Little Flowers of St. Francis." The book, a medieval classic, is a compilation of stories, legends and episodes in the life of St. Francis of Assisi and his first friars. After reading the book, Freddy decided to apply to the Franciscan Order, which had only recently reestablished itself in France after the 1790 Revolution. The Franciscans accepted his application and permitted Freddy to enter their novitiate in Amiens in June 1864.

At the time of the foundation of the friary at Amiens, the Franciscan Minister General charged Fr. Joseph Areso, the Spanish friar supervising the Order's restoration, "to conduct the rebirth of the Franciscans in France in such a manner that it will be restored in its primitive purity — otherwise, let it not be done at all. Such is our will and such indeed is the will of God. Such is the need of the people today. Such finally is the goal of your mission."

Freddy was soon to discover how thoroughly Father Areso discharged his mission.

Before Freddy left home, the Janssoone family gathered at a banquet to bid farewell to their beloved brother. A fifteen-year-old niece, Leonie, present that afternoon, recalled, "My Uncle Frederic was joyful and recollected, like someone who had just received a great favor from Heaven. As he walked away to take the train

Father Frederic spent a year and a day at the Franciscan novitiate in Amiens preparing for his life as a friar. "I am not equal to this vocation," he said with great humility.



to Dunkirk, I went with him to the turn in the road. There under the tall poplar trees, he said to me with emotion in his voice, 'I am giving up the world. We will see each other again in heaven. . .' He walked along the road and then turned and gently waved his handkerchief to me as a last farewell. It was to be forever. We were not destined to meet again in this world."

THE FRIAR

Freddy left his topper and cane at the front door of the Franciscan novitiate at Amiens. Everything else he owned he had already given away. He assigned his inheritance to his half-sister, Sophie Dumont, who lived with Freddy's elder half-sister Victoire. Sophie, a tiny woman, only three feet, eight inches tall, had retained the simplicity of a child. Frederic always held the little one in deepest affection. During all his later years whenever he wrote home, he would request Victoire, "Give little Sophie a good kiss for me and tell her I have not forgotten her at all, but that I often pray for her."

The Franciscan Novice Master, Father Leon de Clary, led the newly arrived Freddy to his novice's cell on the Amiens friary's top floor. Since the roof of the friary sloped, Freddy's cell was seven feet high at the door and four feet high at the far end. A skylight provided interior illumination. Into this oversized closet, the friars had jammed one narrow bed and a work table. A crucifix and picture of the Blessed Virgin adorned the

walls. As Freddy soon discovered, the novice master, fearing his charges would grow possessive of spacious and well furnished rooms, insisted the novices change their cells at frequent intervals. Father Leon required his young charges to learn what Francis meant when the Saint counseled the friars to be "pilgrims in this world." The novice master, as austere and forbidding as the grim fortress that glowered down from a hilltop above his native Carcassonne, drilled into his novices the significance of Franciscan poverty. Friars' meals were frugal — often only a potato or a few vegetables. Rarely did they eat before noon. They never used seasoning, fasted practically every day and coffee was a luxury novices experienced only when they were ill.

The Amiens friary's slate roof, under which Freddy's cell was located, turned novices' cells into bake ovens in the summer and refrigerators in the winter. "I never suffered so much from the cold as at Amiens," Freddy recalled one freezing Canadian winter. During winter months, novices commonly punched through the ice in their little wash basins before beginning their morning toilet.

Freddy, physically strong, survived the rigors of the novitiate. He often wondered however, whether he had chosen his religious order wisely. "I am not equal to this vocation. . ." he judged. Fr. Leon thought otherwise. "Frederic," the master advised him, "the Franciscan life is for you. Have patience, you will be glad you did."

In July 1865, his novitiate year ended. Father de Clary and the Fran-

ciscan superiors approved him for the profession of the three vows of poverty, chastity and obedience.

"After endless struggles and hesitations," he wrote home, "I have come to the eve of bidding farewell to the world, to its wealth, to its pleasures, and to its honors, by contracting sacred and indissoluble bonds. In brief, by taking simple and perpetual vows, I am going to become a child, the humble child of St. Francis of Assisi. . ."

Following profession of his vows, July 1865, Freddy joined the Franciscan Community at Limoges and continued his studies for the priesthood. At the same time, Father Leon, Freddy's former novice master, received a new appointment. Provincial authorities assigned him superior of the same Limoges friary. There he continued to direct Freddy's spiritual and intellectual growth. A no-nonsense believer in system, Fr. Leon urged Freddy to use every moment of his day for his studies, his prayer and his intellectual and spiritual development. "There is a time for everything," Fr. Leon proclaimed. "You must, Frederic, put strict order in each day. Each day you plan is better than a guaranteed income."

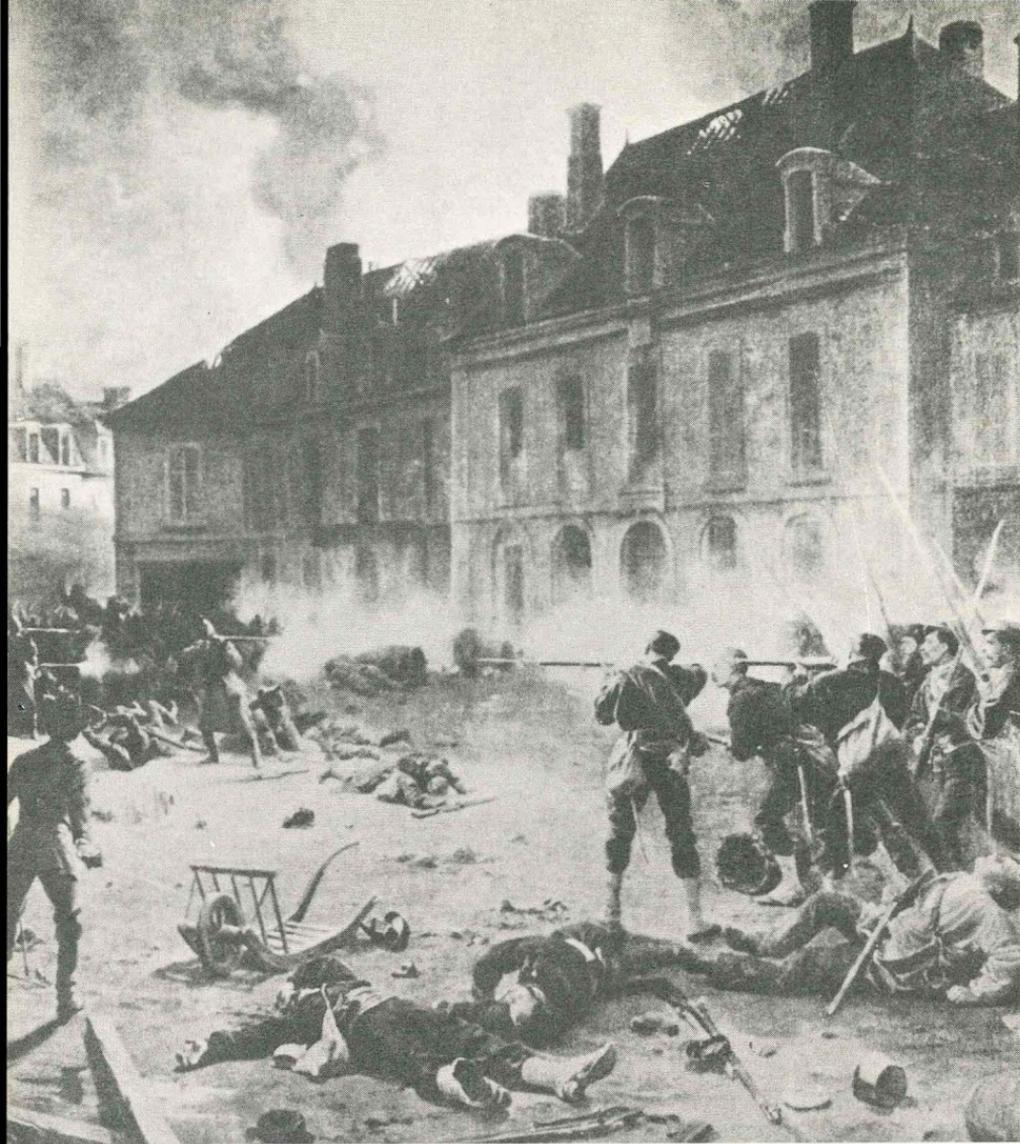
Under Fr. Leon's tutelage Freddy did indeed find time for everything. He enjoyed his seminary courses and, moved by an intense thirst for learning, investigated and researched a vast range of extracurricular studies. As Fr. Leon suggested, Freddy compiled notes on every field he pursued. His scope was encyclopedic. Eventually he filled fourteen notebooks with

observations on science, mysticism, botany, geography, archeology, etc. . . These notes provided an immense reservoir from which he drew illustrations, examples and anecdotes throughout a preaching and writing career that would last more than forty years.

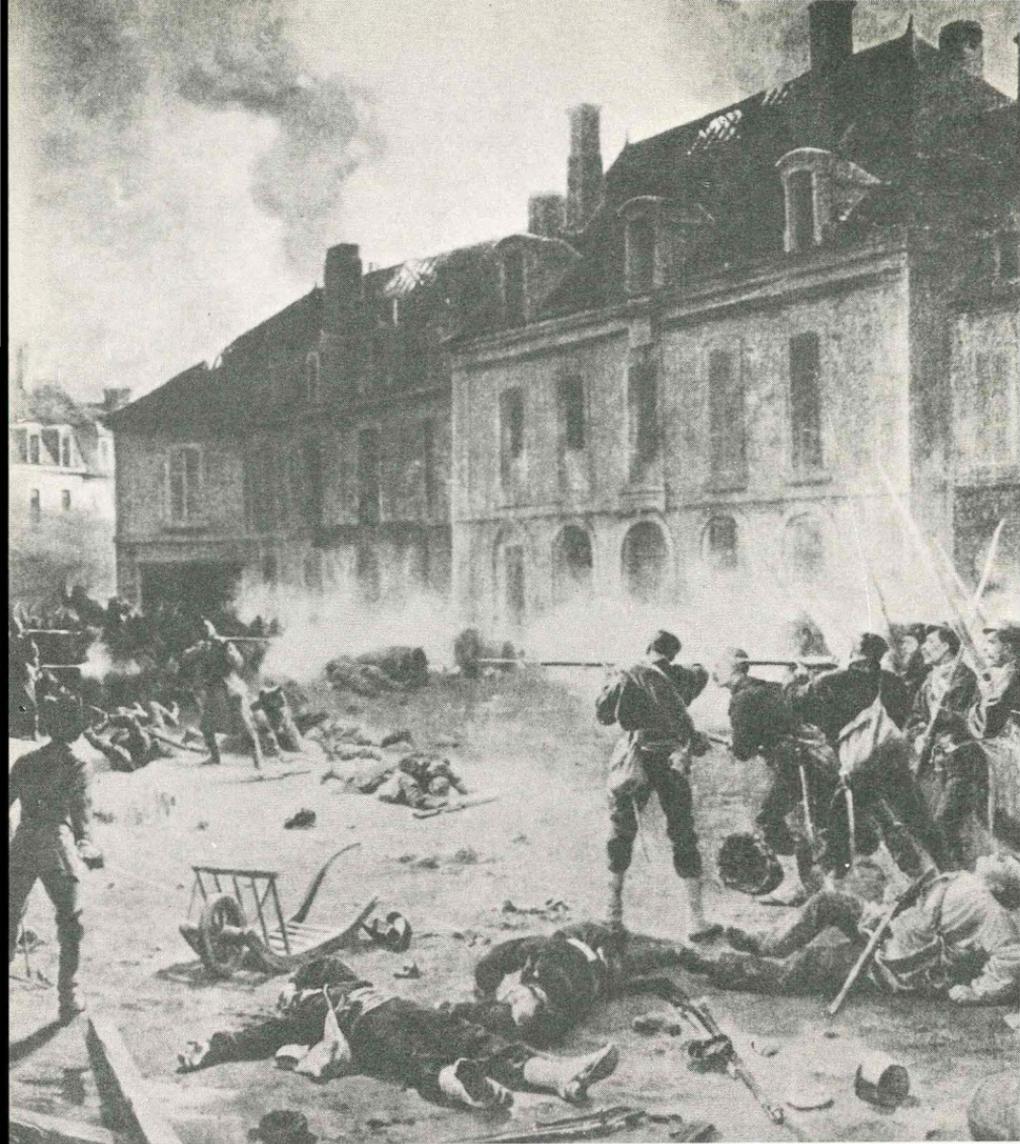
PRIEST AT LAST

In July 1870, France declared war on Prussia. Two hundred thousand well trained and equipped French soldiers set out to destroy Prussia's military forces. Armed with newly developed and deadly machine guns, rifles and artillery, combatants of both armies were able to kill and mutilate each other with greater efficiency. Battlefield medicine, which had not kept pace with the technological advances in weaponry, did little to alleviate the sufferings of the wounded and dying. Casualties mounted and the wounded, full of infection, fear and terror, crowded understaffed hospitals. The French government pleaded for medical personnel and chaplains. Because of this need, Fr. Frederic's superiors ordained him a year earlier than scheduled and assigned him to the Chaplain's post at the military hospital at Bourges. Patients and staff called him, "Our good little chaplain," and deeply appreciated the tenderness of his priestly ministry to the wounded and dying soldiers. He moved through the jammed wards in his Franciscan habit, gently and quietly calming the bewildered and frightened men.

Most of the soldiers, far from



"We are ready, absolutely ready," boasted France's Minister of War to Emperor Napoleon III just before the outbreak of the Franco-Prussian War in July 1870. Within a short time after hostilities commenced, Prussian forces sent the well equipped French armies reeling backwards into confusion. The French General Staff issued a stream of contradictory communiques that foot soldiers described as "order — counter order — disorder." Father Frederic ministered to the casualties of these battles.



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their homes, had no one to visit them. Fr. Frederic felt deep pity especially for the young boys who were dying alone. The new priest spent all the time possible with these casualties, and after their deaths, accompanied them to their graves.

Extreme cold and heavy snows marked the French winter of 1870-71. Hospital staff members recalled in later years how Frederic, in his habit and sandals, would walk along Bourges' snow-filled roads behind a fallen soldier's casket. It was a two-mile journey from the hospital to the cemetery. Usually when the young priest arrived at the grave his habit was frozen and his feet were bleeding. None of that discomfort could keep the tender-hearted Frederic from the grave site where he recited the last prayers for the deceased on behalf of the absent soldier's family.

By January 1871 the Prussians had crushed France's proud armies and the French sought an armistice. Fr. Frederic, mustered out of service, joined the Franciscan Community at Brandy, a town close to Bordeaux in southwestern France. Superiors appointed him Assistant Novice Master.

SHRINE WORK

Shortly after his arrival at Brandy, the French Franciscan Province assumed responsibility for staffing a spiritual center in Bordeaux. Superiors sent Fr. Frederic there with four other friars to pioneer the project.

Previous to the 1790 French Revolution, Franciscans had served in Bordeaux for five centuries and, be-

cause Bordeaux's citizens kept the memories of the Order green, they welcomed the friars enthusiastically. The new Franciscan church rapidly became an active center of religious fervor. Fr. Frederic's preaching soon made him a great favorite. Frederic had an intuitive grasp of peoples' religious needs and an almost uncanny ability to help the faithful express their devotion through prayers, hymns, liturgical decorations and processions. No feast of Christ, Mary or a popular saint passed without Fr. Frederic arranging some appropriate ceremony. Bordeaux's Catholics flocked to the humble friary church in great numbers. On the feast of Our Lady of Angels, August 2, 1873, more than twenty-five thousand people in twenty-seven separate pilgrimages came "like the waves of a rising tide" to participate in the ceremonies and to fulfill the conditions for gaining the Portiuncula Indulgence.

Besides his preaching, the young friar spent hours in the confessional and still more at his desk preparing copy to contribute to various magazines. He continued to deepen his relationship with God through a life of intense prayer and severe penance. Freddy was now what he always dreamed to be, a priest, doing what he did best.

He was at peace with himself and his world. The honeymoon lasted three glorious years and then the Lord complicated his life. Provincial authorities appointed him Superior of the Bordeaux monastery. It was a colossal mistake.

THE SUPERIOR

Over-conscientious, Fr. Frederic had an exaggerated image of the perfect Franciscan superior to which he could never conform. Failing to live up to his own high expectations, he was full of guilt. "He is," one friar reported to Rome, "torturing his conscience over matters for which he is not to be blamed." He pleaded over and over again to be relieved of his post. Finally superiors removed him. "He cannot adjust to being a superior," his Provincial advised Rome. "His over-scrupulous conscience makes him suffer a great deal. It is also embarrassing to the friars of his Community and makes the situation difficult for everyone. He has gone so far as to tell me that, if I did not accept his resignation, he would leave the Order and enter a Trappist monastery."

THE HOLY LAND

Freed of the intolerable burden, Fr. Frederic now focused his considerable energies on his preaching and writing. He joined his preaching efforts with those of Fr. Bernard d'Orleans, a celebrated popular missionary who had recently returned from a lengthy tour of duty at the Shrines of the Holy Land, Palestine. The two friars went from parish to parish preaching missions, novenas and retreats. On their journeys the veteran Fr. Bernard would review Freddy's preaching efforts and offer criticism and advice. He would also describe to his companion the various holy places in Palestine. Since he

was a child Frederic had hoped some day to make a pilgrimage to the places made holy by the presence of Christ. Fr. Bernard encouraged him to fulfill his dreams. It would be relatively easy for Frederic to join the Holy Land Mission. Ever since the thirteenth century the Holy See had entrusted the Franciscan Order with the custody of Palestine's sacred shrines and holy places. The organization within the Franciscan Order that fulfills the sacred duty is known as "The Custody of the Holy Land." Friar volunteers from all over the world staff the Custody whose responsibility embraces both the protection and service of the sacred shrines and general missionary work throughout the Middle East.

In April 1876, Frederic sought permission from the General of the Order to join the three hundred and fifty Friars serving the Custody. In his letter of application he took pains to make clear that he was definitely not interested in a superior's post. "The mere thought of it," he wrote, "makes me crazy with fear."

In the first week of May, Fr. Frederic received approval from Rome to join the Holy Land Custody. Within weeks the new volunteer and Fr. Martin Andrieu, a veteran Holy Land missionary returning to his post after a vacation at home, left France.

INNOCENTS ABROAD

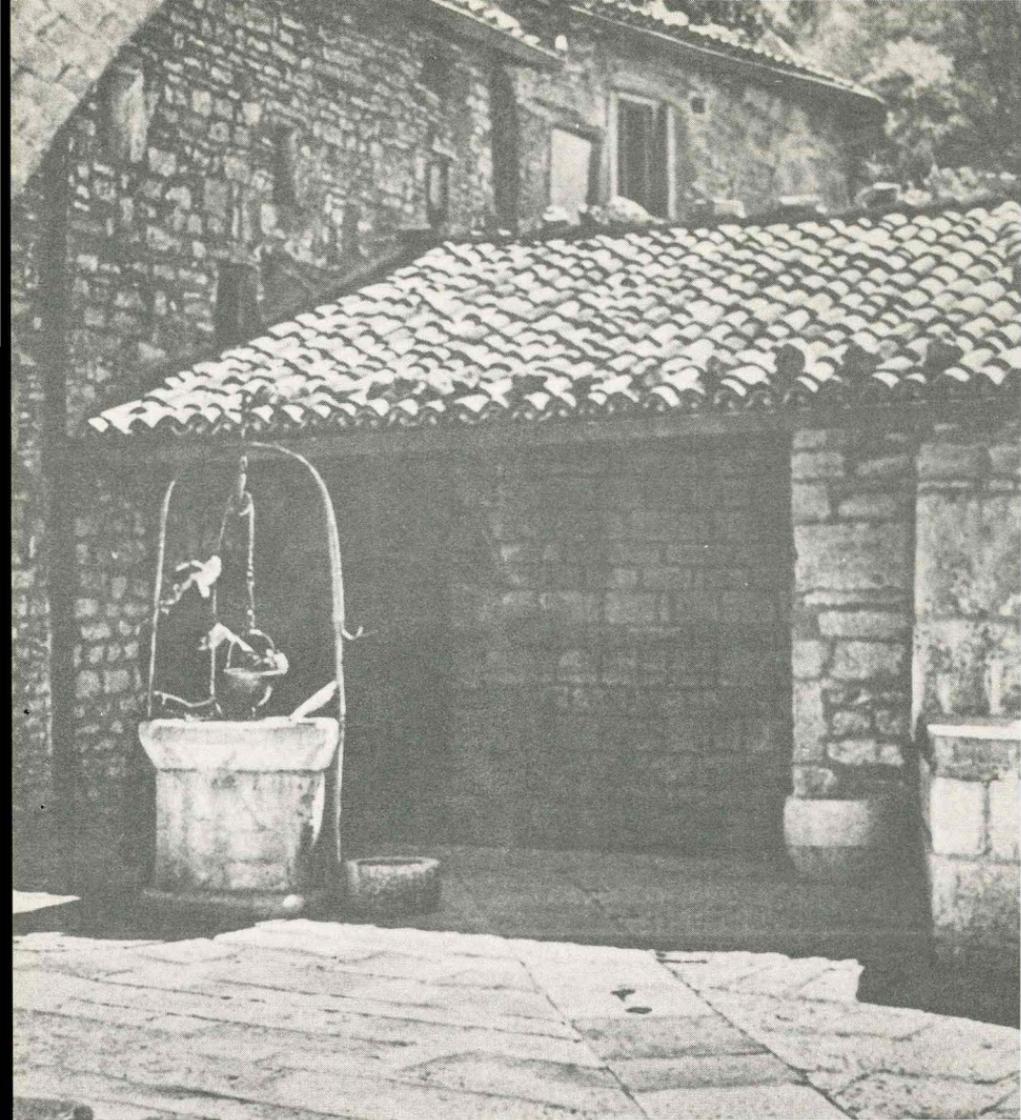
The Franciscan General gave the two friars permission to tour Italy before leaving Europe. Frederic enjoyed the tour immensely. He filled

his ever present notebook with meticulous and amusing observations concerning the shrines, tourist attractions, scenery and people. No detail missed his eye. He listed exact dimensions of each monument and tourist attraction he viewed. He noted for instance, that the Carceri, the hermitage near Assisi where St. Francis often prayed, "has one window which measures exactly eleven inches in height." At Rome he took pains to measure one of the nails that guides claimed were used in the crucifixion of St. Peter. "The nail," Frederic observed, "is regular iron; it is square shaped, measuring about two inches in thickness and ten inches in length." After visiting Mount Alvernia, the holy mountain in Umbria, where the Lord marked the hands, feet and side of St. Francis of Assisi with the wounds of the Crucified, Frederic, overcome with happiness and gratitude, wrote home, "Thirteen years ago, while a novice, I used to say to myself, 'Oh if only God lets me see that holy mountain, Alvernia, one day!' and now at this very moment I was climbing it. I could already perceive, way up there, its rocks and summit which was crowned with great trees like some enormous headdress. I ran on ahead of my companion like a madman, and I sang those words from the hymn, 'Mount Alvernia evokes the mysteries of the cross of Christ.'"

THE FUGITIVES

The reader will remember that the book entitled, "The Little Flowers of

St. Francis," originally attracted Frederic to the Franciscan Order. What happened to Frederic and his companion, Fr. Martin, in Florence, the City of Flowers, could well be a page lifted from the "Little Flowers." Frederic tells the story. "The incident revolves around a poor little snuff box which a benefactress in Paris had given to Fr. Martin for his personal use during the journey. When we faithfully showed it to the customs inspector at the frontier, he courteously left it in the hands of its user. As we were leaving the station, a policeman who was in the service of the municipal toll office put his hand in our suitcases and found the unfortunate snuff box. It was right there, unconcealed: a clear sign that we did not intend to defraud the revenue service. Nevertheless our customs agent seized it, despite the most lively protest on the part of Fr. Martin. As I did not know Italian I was forced to remain passive. The tobacco was taken to the revenue office where it was sniffed, fingered, measured and weighed. Then an endless coming and going of officials began, though we greatly desired that it would come to an end very soon. I had been up since six in the morning of the day before and had spent a very unpleasant night on the train. It was now eight-thirty a.m. We wished to say Mass and to visit, as soon as possible, a friend recommended to us by a fellow friar in Paris, who was to give us a brotherly welcome. Finally we set out — but do you know how? Escorted by our policeman, like two felons! Thus in



In his humble hermitage high above the hills of Assisi, St. Francis prepared himself for his journey to the Middle East. He hoped to bring peace between Christian Crusaders and their Moslem adversaries. Although the mission failed, the Sultan was so moved by Francis' goodness that he granted the little friar and his followers permission to visit the Holy Places. From that time on, the Holy See commissioned friars to care for the shrines of the Holy Land. Six centuries later in this same hermitage, Father Frederic prayed to St. Francis for courage to carry out his own mission there.

that manner we had to go through the 'City of Flowers.' My companion, a former officer who had fought in the Crimean campaign — felt his military blood boiling in his veins! But now he was wearing the habit of a humble friar who must be meek and mild. When we reached the main police station, we were kept waiting again for a good hour! It was now eleven o'clock and finally the police handed us an indictment. We were fined sixty to seventy francs and had to surrender the snuff besides. We wanted to lodge a complaint with the French Consul. How could two harmless travelers, two French citizens, provided with diplomatic passports, if you please, be treated in such a way by a nation that claimed to be an ally of France! This was a humiliation for which we should insist on justice in our opinion — in the opinion of everyone who heard our tale. Yes, everyone except our good father, St. Francis, who had already ruled that we should bear our humiliation without complaining like true sons of Holy Humility. For now, following the advice of a good Monsignor we met, who strongly suggested we contact the Consul, we began to tramp down endlessly long streets in the pouring rain in order to reach the French Consulate. We finally arrived only to be advised that the Consul was in his new residence on the other side of the city. Fr. Martin, who was now exhausted, gave up the idea of going that distance to see the Consul. This meant, of course, we were giving up all our rights and therefore humbly accepting our misfortune. Finally,

we went to a government ministry which was along our way to ask the opinion of an important personage whose address we had. This high official said to us in a very friendly way: 'Fathers, as the indictment has been drawn up, the trial will have to take place. You are supposed to appear before the court to plead your case. Do you really want to plead your case? Do you realize how unpleasant that can be? Take my advice and avoid all the trouble. Leave the city as soon as you can! When your names are called in court, the answer will be 'absent!' and that will be that.'

"We chose this plan which was both the humblest and the safest. Farewell, dear Florence, farewell, beautiful monuments, magnificent art galleries, containing so many masterpieces. Farewell, you marvels of the City of the Arts — you will not receive our visit . . . farewell, also to you, unlucky little snuff box, the unwitting author of all this misfortune and therefore deserving our profound condolences rather than reproaches. Poor little box, now when you leave the main police station, you run the risk of falling into the hands of some obscure profanator."

Soon after the Florence misadventure, the two priests embarked for the Holy Land, without, of course, the poor little snuff box.

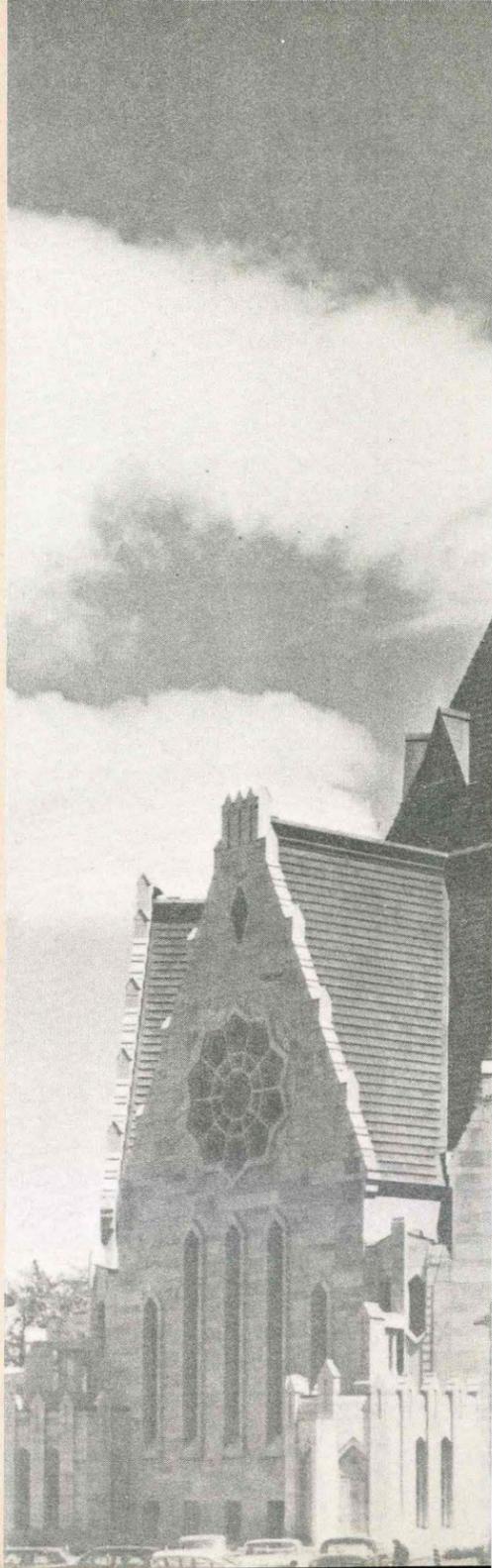
THAT LAND OF MARVELS

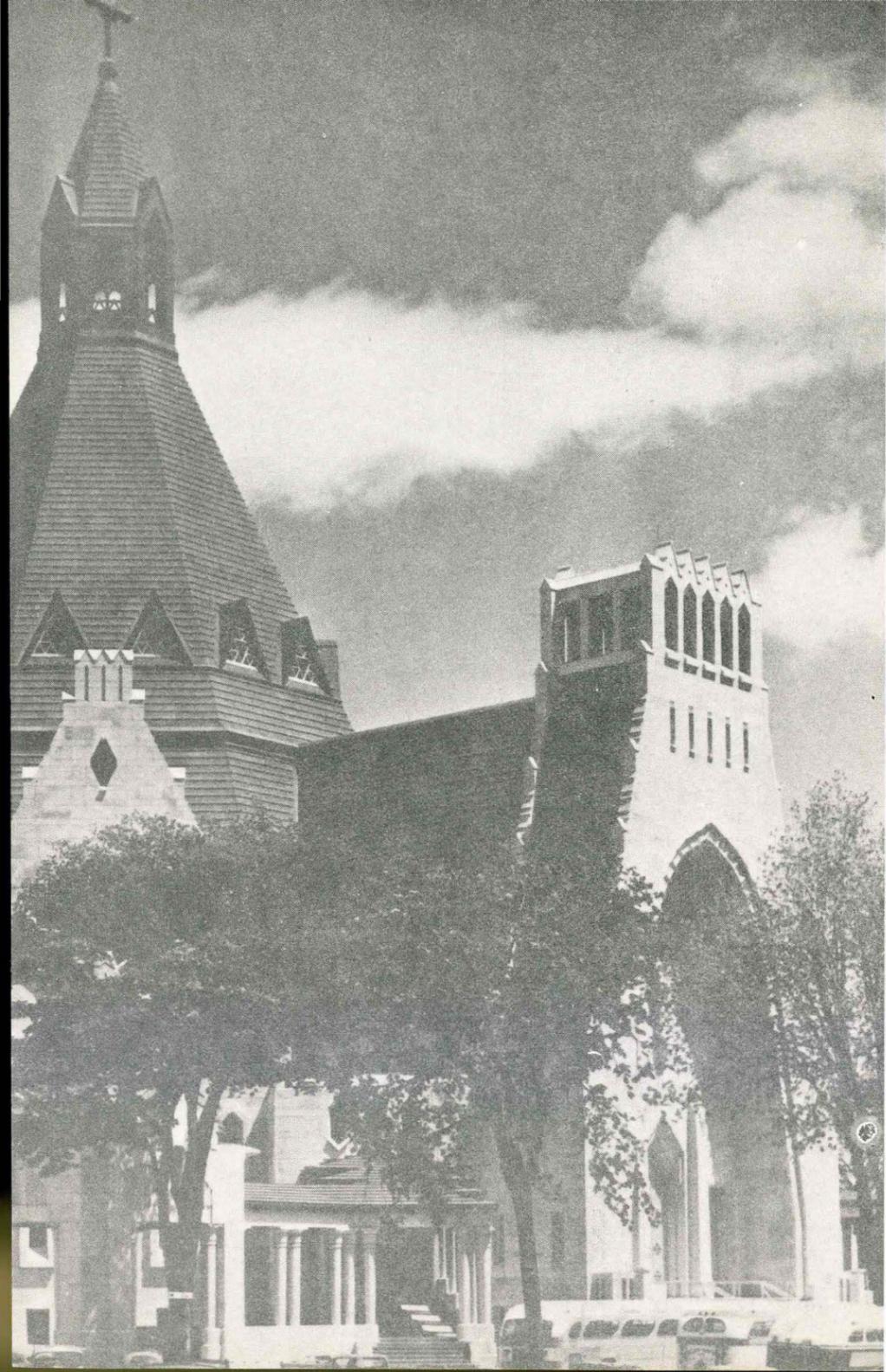
The morning of June 12, 1876, Fr. Frederic rose before dawn and stood with other passengers on the deck of



OUR LADY OF THE CAPE

Cap de la Madeleine was no place for pilgrimages in June 1888 when Father Desilets and Father Frederic dedicated a chapel of Our Lady of the Rosary and placed within it the statue above. Father Frederic labored with all the persistence of a Flemish farmer and all the fervor of a saint to make this shrine a national center of devotion to Mary. He organized pilgrimages by boat and train from the nation's great cities. Eventually roads and tramways reached out to the Cape itself. "Mary grants the pilgrims' prayers so generously here," Father Frederic often commented. "What faith these people have!" Pictured to the right is the present basilica which was dedicated in 1960.





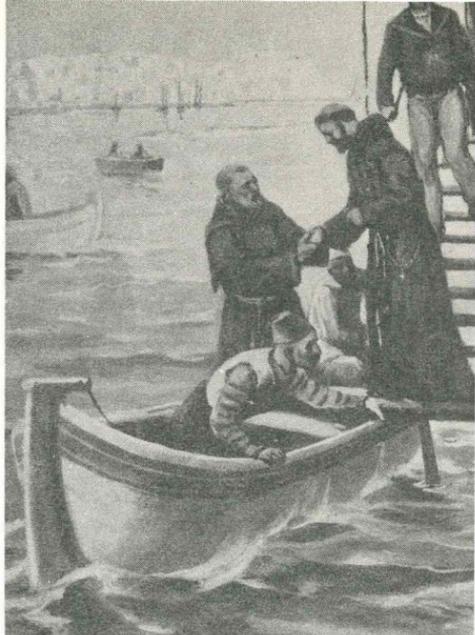
the steamship *Scamandre*, plowing steadily through the quiet Mediterranean Sea to the Palestinian port of Jaffa. Freddy's clear blue eyes peered through the morning mist searching for landfall. Suddenly he caught the first sight of the shore of Palestine. An awe-struck fellow passenger standing beside the friar whispered, "The Holy Land."

"When I heard those words," Freddy later remembered, "an inexpressible emotion seized me."

Six days after landing at Jaffa, Fr. Frederic arrived by stage wagon in Jerusalem. It was six a. m. when he caught his first sight of the Holy City. He recalled experiencing a deep sense of melancholy — a mysterious sadness. "A sadness that was wholesome because it did inspire me to recollection and prayer," he added.

THE PILGRIM

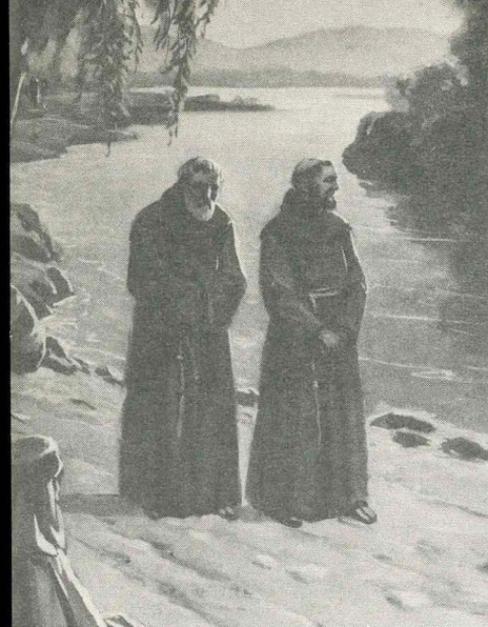
The Custody superiors granted the new missionary a month's leave to visit the shrines and then assigned him to retreat work among the various religious orders of men and women who carried on missionary work throughout the Middle East. In January 1877, Frederic undertook his four-month tour of duty at the Basilica of the Holy Sepulchre. Every new Franciscan missionary was obliged to fulfill this service. The assignment was hardly choice. Friars lived in tiny cells in a small damp friary. "My prisoners in the penitentiary live better than these friars!" sniffed Austrian Emperor Franz Josef, during an imperial visit in 1869. The friars



Father Frederic first caught sight of the Holy Land when he arrived at Jaffa in June 1876. Because of the shallowness of the harbor, Arab oarsmen rowed passengers to dockside.

worked under constant tension, generated by the unhappy relationship between the Franciscans and Eastern Orthodox groups, who had illegally, sometimes by force, occupied portions of the Holy Sepulchre Basilica. To add to the unpleasantness, two Moslem families controlled the keys to the Basilica. Each time a Christian requested the main door opened or closed, the Moslems exacted a small fee for the service.

Fr. Frederic tried to ignore these silly and scandalous annoyances. He thoroughly enjoyed meeting the thousands of visitors who flocked to the tomb of Christ and delighted in lead-



Standing in the Basilica of the Holy Sepulchre, Father Frederic welcomes pilgrims to the Holy Land. "You people now walk on holy ground," he told them. "The Holy Land is the Fatherland of our God." With a friar companion, Father Frederic (right) visits the Jordan River site of Christ's baptism.

ing French-speaking pilgrimages through the Holy Land. "I so enjoy our beautiful ceremonies," he notes enthusiastically in a letter. During his twelve-year career in the Holy Land, Frederic ever remained the pilgrim filled with awe and wonder. He kept endless notebooks filled with exquisite details and observations of the various shrines. His greatest joy came when he would direct the Pilgrims of Penance, a French lay organization that visited the Holy Land annually in a group one thousand strong. The pilgrims, mounted on horseback, would journey from one holy place to another across Palestine's mountains and deserts, forming

a holy cavalry whose single file stretched out over eight miles.

One pilgrim remembered the Pilgrims of Penance following the Way of the Cross, through the original Via Dolorosa. "It is a sight that attracts the whole city of Jerusalem..." the penitent remembered. "Fr. Frederic gives a talk at each station and no one could speak about Calvary and the Redemption with more moving emotion. His sermons are the outpouring of a soul that is passionately in love with God and that knows how to communicate the fire of his love to his listeners. To see this austere friar standing on a stone with his head bare under the

burning sun, his pale face flushed only by the effort of thought, with his frail body, which seems no longer to belong to this world, while the light of another light is already shining in his eyes, is to realize that the supernatural is Fr. Frederic's element and that Christ is his life. . . ."

In 1878 the mantle of authority fell once more on Fr. Frederic's unwilling shoulders. Franciscan authorities in Rome appointed him assistant to the superior of the entire Holy Land Mission. Frederic handled this post without the intense pain he had experienced at Bordeaux. No doubt this was because he was the number-two man, a responsibility he found tolerable. "Those who do not shine in the first rank of combat often shine in the second," he cheerfully explained to the Custody superior. The Custody superior found him hard-working, peaceful and skillful in the exhausting and complicated negotiations with church and civil authorities that constantly occupied the Franciscan Holy Land leadership. Fr. Frederic was primarily responsible for shrine and mission construction — a job which spawned one towering headache after another because Oriental Christians and Moslems guarded jealously every grain of sand, every foot of air space, every inch of street frontage to which they could lay any possible claim. During his tour of duty as assistant superior Frederic developed two codes governing the relationships between the various Eastern Orthodox jurisdictions and the Franciscans. One code dealt

with the birthplace of Christ at Bethlehem, the other with the Tomb of Christ in Jerusalem (the Holy Sepulchre.) These norms are precise, detailed and complete. The real miracle occurred when Frederic, master of the soft-sell and diplomat par excellence, persuaded the Oriental Christian groups to accept the codes. The following excerpt from Fr. Frederic's code of conduct for the Basilica at Bethlehem, will enable the reader to appreciate the difficulties under which the friars labored at the shrines.

"The Franciscans have the exclusive right to sweep and dust in the width of the wall at the opening of the Joinville door. And if, from time to time, the Armenians should attempt to do it, our sacristan must oppose them. The Latins have the exclusive right to sweep the small semi-circular landing at the bottom of the five steps. Note, from time to time the Armenians try to seize this right from the Latins; our sacristan must never make any concession in regard to this."

If the Latins were to abandon this right of sweeping at the bottom of the five steps, they would lose the right to descend through the passage leading to the place where Christ was born. Thus no pilgrim could reach the original manger without special permission from the Armenians.

AU CANADA

In 1881, Fr. Frederic journeyed to Canada to raise funds for the Holy Land Mission. On his way he visited Pope Leo XIII, who blessed him and



Every afternoon for centuries, Franciscan friars have led pilgrims of all nationalities along Jerusalem's Sorrowful Way (above), the path Christ followed as he carried his cross to Calvary. At Bethlehem (below), friars cared for the shrine built at the place of Christ's birth. During his years in the Holy Land, Father Frederic served at both Bethlehem and Jerusalem.



charged him to "light the generous fire that is ever smoldering for the Holy Land in the depth of every Christian soul."

Frederic had not originally intended to go to Canada. He left the Holy Land planning to raise funds in Paris. Unfortunately, French anti-clericalism reached new depths that year. The French government had expelled all religious from the nation and, although the authorities had made exception for the Holy Land friars, Frederic decided the atmosphere was hardly conducive to mission collections.

While in Paris Frederic met Fr. Leon Provancher, a Canadian diocesan priest. Fr. Provancher, deeply devoted to the Holy Places, suggested Fr. Frederic visit Canada. "You can, good Frederic," the Canadian priest advised, "visit the many Franciscan Third Order Fraternities which have lost contact with the Order since the English threw you people out in 1760. At the same time," the priest noted, "you can raise funds for the Holy Land."

Excited by the prospect, Fr. Frederic sought and obtained necessary permission from Rome to embark for North America. He spent all but six years of the rest of his life in Canada.

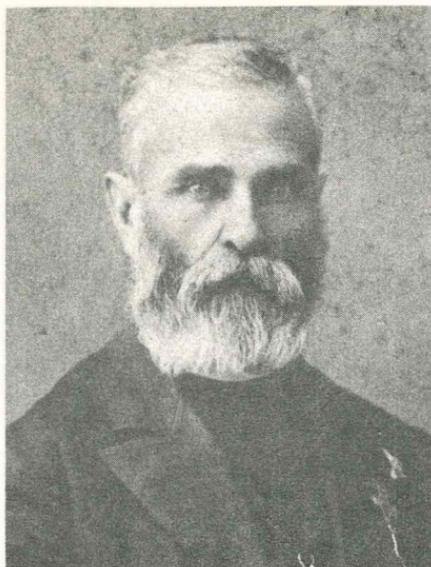
QUEBEC

French Canadians spontaneously and enthusiastically welcomed Fr. Frederic into their midst. Friars had played a significant role in the religious and cultural foundations of French Canada. The French Cana-

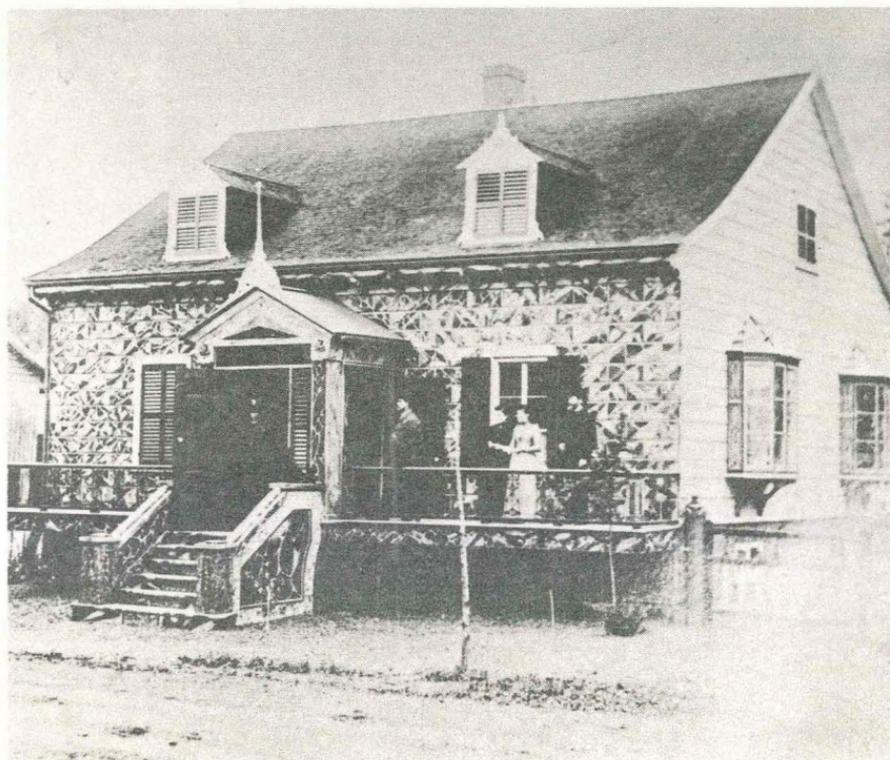
dians viewed their expulsion as cruel, vindictive and unnecessary. For more than twelve decades the people had not seen the Franciscan habit and when Frederic, devout, modest and prayerful, appeared clad in the picturesque garb, cord and sandals, the Quebec Catholics responded joyfully. His reputation as an excellent, if long-winded preacher, soon spread throughout the city. "He could speak for hours," a contemporary wrote, "and people never tired of listening to him." So enthused was Frederic by his reception that he forgot St. Francis' admonition that the preachers were to keep their words "brief and useful for the advantage and spiritual good of all." One day during his first retreat in Quebec, Frederic spoke twelve hours non-stop from the pulpit. Thousands of people sat and listened to the golden-voiced preacher. His endurance amazed the eager Canadians and did not dampen their enthusiasm one bit. Lengthy sermons were not unusual, although twelve hours had to be some kind of record.

The Archbishop of Quebec greeted Fr. Frederic graciously but, understandably, expressed some hesitation concerning fund-raising for the Holy Land. "Let me clear the matter with Rome," the prelate said. True to his word, four months later he advised Fr. Frederic that the Holy See authorized a Good Friday collection to be taken in all Canadian churches for the benefit of the Holy Places.

During those four months of waiting, Fr. Frederic busied himself writing and preaching. He was in de-



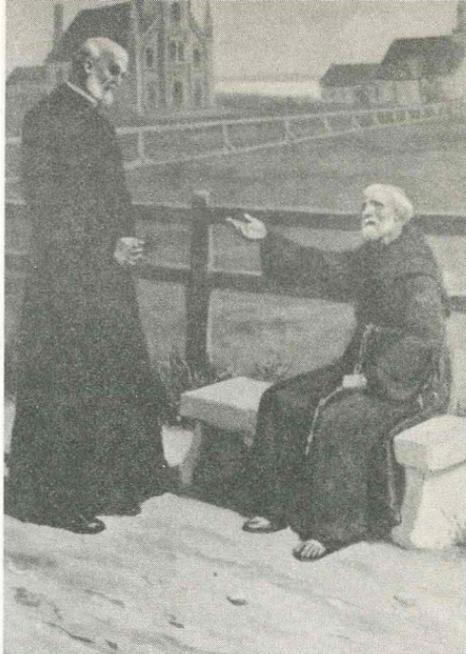
Highly reputed pastor, botanist, and entomologist, Father Leon Provancher (left) met Father Frederic in Paris in 1881 after the friar cancelled his French fund-raising mission. "Come to Canada!" urged Father Provancher. Father Frederic accepted, and Father Provancher offered his home at Cap Rouge to the itinerant friar. Father Frederic was recalled to the Holy Land in 1882 during the Anglo-Turkish War. Father Provancher visited him there and urged him to return to Canada.



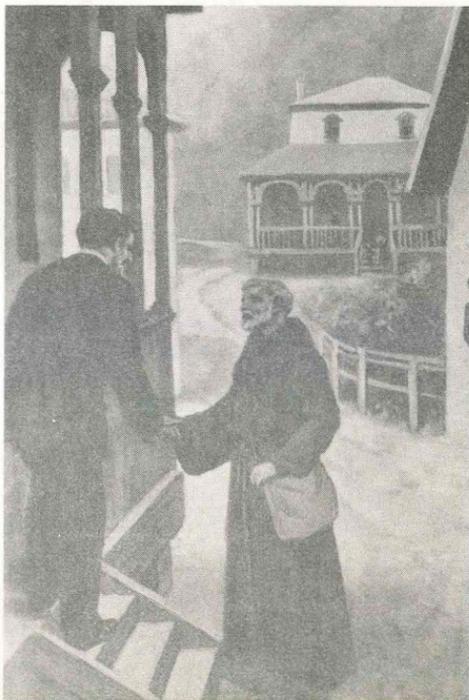
mand all through Canada. Sometimes he preached two parish missions simultaneously. Once he remained in a church, except for two short breaks, for fourteen hours. Near the end of these many weeks of unremitting activity, the friar journeyed to Cap de la Madeleine, near Three Rivers, to conduct a mission for Fr. Luc Desilets, pastor of the parish. Fr. Desilets wrote of the itinerant missionary: "He works day and night like the most wretched mercenary, with his sandaled feet and his head always bare, fasting on bread and water three fourths of the time; he eats almost nothing, sleeps little, and when he does, he makes his bed on the floor. Despite all his penance he is ever smiling and in magnificently good humor."

THE CAP

Fr. Frederic accepted Fr. Desilets' offer to establish temporary headquarters for his Holy Land work and preaching missions at the Cap rectory. Frederic, pilgrimage director par excellence, cheerfully assisted Fr. Desilets in the pastor's effort to organize a pilgrimage shrine in honor of Mary, Queen of the Rosary, at Cap de la Madeleine. In August 1888, the Three Rivers Diocese, although very poor, gave Fr. Frederic a beautiful piece of property in the town of Three Rivers. The location, only four miles from Fr. Desilets' rectory, was linked by a good road to the Cap de la Madeleine. Fr. Frederic immediately began construction of a Holy Land Center on the



Father Duguay and Father Frederic shared a filial devotion to Mary. The two promoted the shrine at Cap de la Madeleine. Father Frederic did so by door to door visits.



new property. Less than six weeks after the work began, Fr. Desilets, Frederic's priestly friend and benefactor, died from a heart attack at fifty-six.

FOUNDERS OF THE CAP

Fr. Duguay, Vicar of the Diocese, now assumed the Pastorate of the Cap and for fourteen years, he and Fr. Frederic labored side by side to establish the shrine of the Holy Rosary as a place of devotion to the Blessed Mother. Frederic, the most popular preacher in Canada, thoroughly enjoyed this work. As the century turned and Frederic entered his sixties, he accelerated his pace of activity and widened his scope of interests. He continued to preach at the Cap, directed the foundation of the Holy Land Center in Three Rivers, and erected Stations of the Cross modeled after Jerusalem's Via Dolorosa, at various Canadian shrines. He undertook numerous begging trips, journeying from house to house seeking alms by peddling books and magazine subscriptions. He raised funds in this manner for the Holy Land project and any religious order or diocese struggling to make ends meet. Many orders of religious Sisters sought his help to fulfill the demands of their apostolates amongst the Canadian people.

The Poor Clares, for instance, wished to establish a cloister of prayer in the Diocese of Valleyfield, in the year 1906. The first Abbess of the Poor Clares left a record of how



When pilgrims arrived at the Cape, Father Frederic led them in their devotions (above). Thousands flocked to the shrine to hear his sermons.



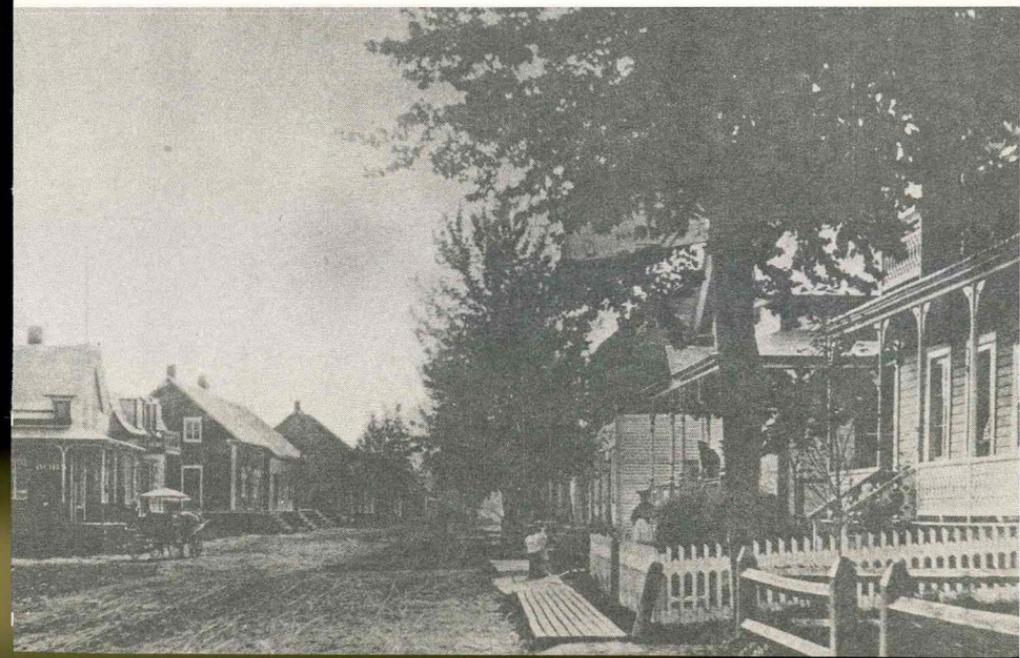


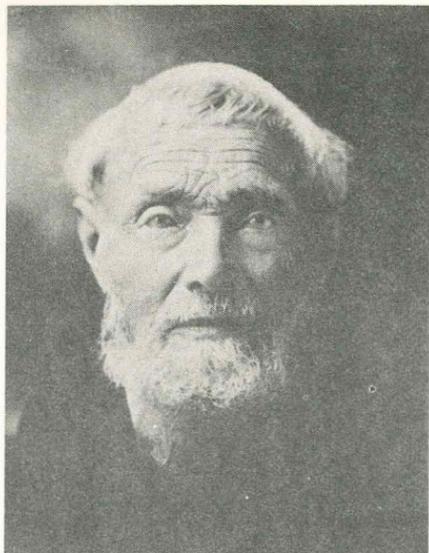
Along with his apostolate at the shrine, Father Frederic continued his fund-raising for the Holy Land. Father Frederic's good life and effective preaching led many young French Canadians to study for the Franciscan priesthood. To the end of his life, Father Frederic enjoyed picnics with the Franciscan students.





With the help of eager volunteers, Father Frederic constructed at the Cape a Way of the Cross modeled after and covering the exact distance of the Sorrowful Way in Jerusalem; above is the First Station. Canadians welcomed the poor friar in their villages and homes. In his sandaled feet he trod streets like those below in the snows of winter, slush of spring and dust of summer.





A picture taken of Father Frederic in the autumn of his life. His eyes reflect the fire of love of God in his heart.

this good and simple friar worked. She wrote: "He had one of several boxes of books sent ahead to the parishes and afterwards he would go to every house in the parish selling books for a dollar, for the benefit of our monastery. Wherever he went, he was welcomed with enthusiasm, and his passing-by was a sermon. The summer was especially warm, and the good Father traveled on foot, bare-headed under a fiery sun, as he did not wish to accept the comfort of being driven by coach from one place to another. We suffered a great deal at the thought of all the sufferings which that venerated Father took upon himself for us. One day I could not prevent myself from telling him of my sympathy and compassion.

He replied, 'My dear Mother, just think — to acquire merits for heaven, to do acts of charity for paradise!' Nevertheless the intense heat fatigued him a great deal, and his weak legs began to refuse to serve him. Then in the fall, he was obliged to return to Montreal. He came back the following spring and went through the parishes he had been unable to visit." On the book sales the Abbess mentioned, Fr. Frederic collected six thousand dollars — a wonderfully generous response to his efforts from the French Canadian people.

Freddy Janssoone, once the stylish Flemish linen salesman, now trudged through the cold Canadian winters clad only in his Franciscan habit. In the winter he wore an old cloak, yellow with age, and the only foot covering he wore as he walked through the freezing snows of winter and cold slush of the spring were his open sandals.

THE WRITER

Besides preaching, peddling, and promotion of the Holy Land missions, Fr. Frederic vigorously pursued the literary apostolate. He made an enormous contribution to the Catholic press of French Canada. The friar wrote about thirty books and booklets, and contributed steadily to French, American and Canadian magazines. He personally founded two French Canadian magazines, "The Annals of the Holy Rosary" and "The Eucharistic Review."

Two books of Frederic's, "The Life of Our Lord Jesus Christ" and

"The Life of St. Francis of Assisi," enjoyed great popularity amongst the French Canadians. Indeed his St. Francis biography, after several editions and revisions, remains popular to this day.

His prose is journalistic in style; clear and concise. He rarely had time to revise his manuscripts. He expresses himself with extreme precision and simplicity whether he writes about the life of a saint, a shrine of the Holy Land, a passage of Scripture, or a complicated doctrinal or moral question.

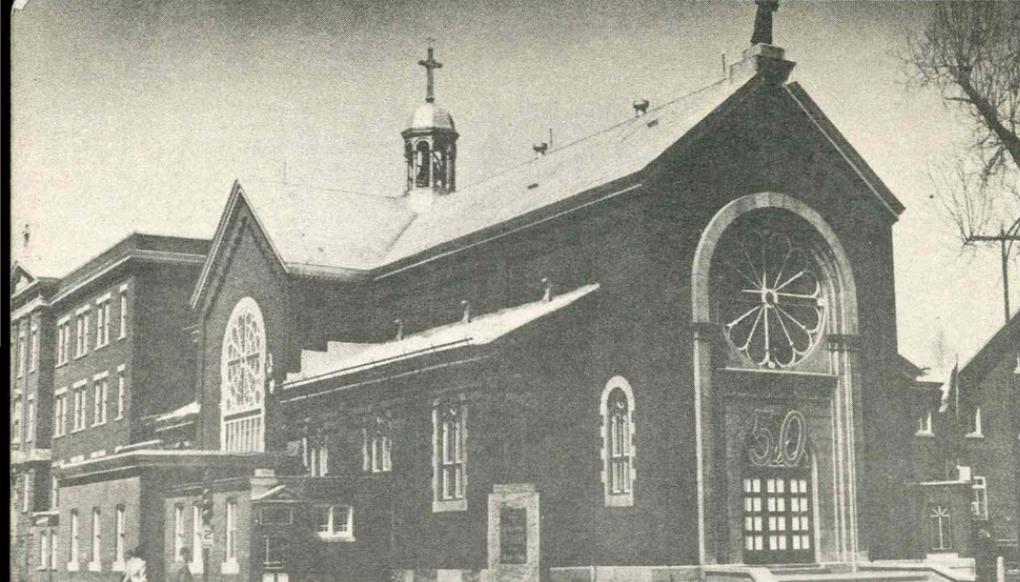
THE FRIAR

Fr. Frederic Janssoone, a true son of St. Francis, lived in a spirit of love, joy, simplicity and humility. As old age began to take its toll, Frederic seemed to grow ever more gentle, unassuming and peaceful.

A Franciscan Brother charged with cooking at the Three Rivers Friary remembered the graciousness of the old man. The Brother, hardly an expert at the stove, forgot to put salt in the food and he apologized to Father Frederic for this oversight. "Your potatoes are very good, very good," Father comforted the cook, "this is the way I like them." A month later the Brother put too much salt in the food and again he apologized for the mistake, only to receive this reply, "Your potatoes are good, very good. This is the way I like them." "With such a man," the Brother noted, "I could remain a cook for life."

Shortly after he celebrated his

Golden Jubilee, Fr. Frederic's health began to fail. In June 1916, exhausted from decades of labor, he entered the Franciscan Infirmary at St. Joseph's Friary in Montreal. During the last fifty days of his life, his brother friars and many friends, including Brother Andre, the founder of St. Joseph's Shrine in Montreal, came to visit. At four a. m., August 4, 1916, Frederic Janssoone, the holy salesman, knocked on the door of heaven. A confrere wrote of him after his death, "Kindness, an inexhaustible kindness, consisting of simplicity and humility, ever affable and smiling, was the characteristic quality of this religious and Franciscan, Fr. Frederic. The universal popularity that he aroused everywhere, the invincible attraction that he had on hearts, the deep and faithful affection that many souls had for him, cannot be otherwise explained: Fr. Frederic was kind . . . he possessed to a high degree that universal charity which attracts souls and opens hearts. It radiated from his whole personality: his blue eyes, that were sparkling profound and very expressive, his gentle voice that was fresh and somewhat lilting like his ever young heart, his simple and thoughtful manners, his exquisite courtesy in look, gesture and attitude which he never abandoned — all this gave his whole appearance an expression of kindly, likeable and receptive gentleness which inspired confidence, put one at his ease, created mutual sympathy, induced one to open one's heart and even to disclose the most painful secret."



Below the chapel of the Franciscan monastery in Three Rivers lies the crypt where Father Frederic is buried. Thousands pray at his tomb each year.



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The priest offers sacrifice and brings the healing of Christ not only to his own generation but to all who come after him.

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