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**Benedict Labre House: 1952-1966  
The History of an Unofficial Lay Apostolate**

**Patricia A. E. Nolan**

**A Thesis  
in  
The Department  
of  
Theological Studies**

**Presented in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements  
for the Degree of Master of Arts at  
Concordia University  
Montreal, Quebec, Canada**

**May 2001**

**Patricia A. E. Nolan, 2001**



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## **ABSTRACT**

### **Benedict Labre House: 1952-1966 The History of an Unofficial Lay Apostolate**

**Patricia A. E. Nolan**

**In 1952 Benedict Labre House opened as a house of hospitality for the poor and as a center for the lay apostolate. Situated at 418 La Gauchetière Street in St. Patrick's parish, Benedict Labre House served Montreal's marginalized residents. In 1954, a parallel mission, Patricia House, was established in Griffintown to assist marginalized women and their children. In 1955, Benedict Labre House moved into Griffintown, a small community in St. Ann's Ward, which was once the historical home of the city's Irish Catholic community.**

**Benedict Labre House evolved out of a confluence of the theology and praxis of several American and Canadian lay movements. One of many lay organizations operating within Quebec during this period, this Catholic lay organization was not mandated by the church hierarchy. Despite its unofficial status, Benedict Labre House became known as a vital Catholic lay organization. Through an informal approach to formation, this lay apostolate provided theological, spiritual and practical education to Montreal English lay Catholics from 1952-1966.**

**Key to Benedict Labre House in this period was the founding group, including Tony Walsh, and other lay people from Montreal's English Catholic community. This thesis seeks to demythologize Tony Walsh and Benedict Labre House through a critical analysis of the sources.**

Using many primary documents, such as newspapers, correspondence and interviews, this historical account seeks to examine the evolution of Benedict Labre House's lay theology, its theory and praxis during its founding, 1952-1955, its development, 1955-1959, and its peak and decline in the Vatican II years, 1960-1966.

**To my late parents, John Malcolm and  
Patricia Mary Nolan, the first lay Catholics in my life**

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

To Benedict Labre House, to those of its past and its present, a special thank you. First to Cheryl Debanne, Director at Benedict Labre House, and to the Board for their support of this thesis and for access to the UNITY paper and other archival items. To John Buell, Stephen Hagarty, Gerry Pascal, Richard Gariepy, William Lawlor, and George Cook, who were excellent guides to the sources and to the theological, spiritual and emotional landscape of Benedict Labre House in times past. I am also indebted to George Cook for the use of his private collection of Tony Walsh personal papers, correspondence and tapes. I must thank Dan Berrigan, because though he was unable to do an interview, he stood by his article, "Modesty in Immodest Times."

A special thanks to bibliographer, Kevin O'Donnell, for sources on the Montreal English Catholic community and to archivist, Phillip M. Runkel of the Dorothy Day-Catholic Worker Collection at Marquette University. Also, special thanks to Anne Golubowski, Religion and Theology Librarian, Concordia University, and to librarian Bernice Baronowski, at the Canadian Centre for Ecumenism. To all others whom I have interviewed and spoken with over the years, for the TRES paper and for this thesis: Jim Martin, Joe O'Connor, Margaret Power, Alice Amyot, Father Joseph Cameron, Robert O'Callaghan and Joanabbey Sacks, I extend my deepest gratitude.

To my family and friends who supported me through this journey, I am greatly indebted. To Betty and Diane Sharon Williams, and to Fred and Emily Jones, your support and patience during the critical times made this project happen. A special thanks to Dorothy Williams, a Montreal historian, who shared with me her understanding of Montreal history and its demographics with a particular focus on St. Ann's ward. She also provided advice about critical



sources particular to southwest Montreal. I would also like to thank Linda Cormier, a teacher, always ready with her thoughtful insights about the history of Quebec and the francophone Catholic milieu. She directed me to sources on the history of the Church and Quebec. To Lynn Gold, whose sharp wit and red pencil made this a better thesis.

Finally, I am grateful for my thesis advisor, Doctor Pamela Bright. Without her inspiration and encouragement, I would not have had the courage to start nor to sustain this project. Doctor Bright has shared her extensive knowledge of Church history and strongly supported the writing of this community-based history. Her greatest ability was to draw out the historical narrative, and she encouraged me to develop an holistic understanding of the historical and theological context of Benedict Labre House.

## **CONTENTS**

<b>CONTENTS</b>	<b>viii</b>
<b>ABBREVIATIONS</b>	<b>x</b>
<b>LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS</b>	<b>xi</b>
<b>CHAPTER 1 -INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>1</b>
Mythology	
Methodology	
Sources	
 <b>CHAPTER 2 -PATH OF THE QUESTION</b>	 <b>19</b>
 <b>CHAPTER 3 -THEOLOGICAL CONTEXT</b>	 <b>24</b>
Theology of the Lay Apostolate	
American Unofficial Lay Movements	
The Theological Position of Benedict Labre House	
Impact of Vatican II	
 <b>CHAPTER 4 -HISTORICAL CONTEXT</b>	 <b>39</b>
Introduction	
Lay Movements and the Church	
 <b>CHAPTER 5 -EARLY DEVELOPMENT (1898 -1952)</b>	 <b>70</b>
Tony Walsh-Birth to Performance	
Early Years in Montreal (1949 -1951)	
Pre-Founding Year (1951-1952)	
 <b>CHAPTER 6 -FOUNDING YEARS (1952-1955)</b>	 <b>84</b>
Establishing a Lay Apostolate	
Early Forms of Public Relations	
Response of the Montreal Laity	
Formation	
 <b>CHAPTER 7 -DEVELOPING YEARS (1955-1959)</b>	 <b>99</b>
Predominance of the Laity	
Heightened Profile	

<b>CHAPTER 8 -THE VATICAN II YEARS (1960-1966)</b>	<b>114</b>
Introduction	
Pre-Vatican II (1960-1962)	
Mid-Vatican II (1962-1965)	
Post-Vatican II (1965-1970)	
<b>CHAPTER 9 -CONCLUSION</b>	<b>128</b>
<b>SOURCES CONSULTED</b>	<b>131</b>
<b>APPENDICES</b>	<b>141</b>
<b>GLOSSARY</b>	<b>144</b>

## **ABBREVIATIONS**

<b>BLH</b>	<b>Benedict Labre House</b>
<b>CBC</b>	<b>Canadian Broadcasting Corporation</b>
<b>DD-CW</b>	<b>Dorothy Day-Catholic Worker</b>
<b>J.E.C.</b>	<b>Jeunesse Étudiante de Catholique</b>
<b>J.O.C.</b>	<b>Jeunesse Ouvrière Chrétienne</b>
<b>L.O.C.</b>	<b>Ligue Ouvrière catholique/Catholic Workers' League</b>
<b>MUA</b>	<b>Marquette University Archives</b>
<b>SGW</b>	<b>Sir George Williams University</b>
<b>TGC</b>	<b>Transcript in the hand of George Cook, Private Collection of George Cook, Ottawa, Ontario</b>
<b>TRES</b>	<b>Theological and Religious and Ethical Studies</b>
<b>Y.C.W.</b>	<b>Young Christian Workers</b>

## **LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS**

- Figure 1:     Griffintown Population Decline 1941-1971**
- Figure 2:     Census Data-Griffintown**
- Figure 3:     Map of Griffintown**

## **CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION**

Benedict Labre House, in southwest Montreal, Quebec, was established as a Catholic house of hospitality for the poor, and as a center for the lay apostolate in 1952. This is a history of Benedict Labre House's founding, its development, its objectives, its network and impact, and its theory and praxis.

Now situated at 308 Young Street, Benedict Labre House continues to thrive, serving and caring for the poor and marginalized of Montreal daily. Benedict Labre House, like the world around it, has evolved over its fifty years of service to Montreal's Catholic community. However, this thesis will critically examine the evolution of Benedict Labre House's lay theology, its theory and praxis, only during its first fifteen years, from 1952 to 1966.

At this writing, Montreal's English Catholic community is bereft of a comprehensive history, particularly for the 20th century, and even less research has been done on Benedict Labre House itself. Despite these shortcomings, this research will be the first attempt to combine chronological analysis with an analysis of the theology of the lay apostolate in the early lay initiatives of Benedict Labre House. To assist the post-Vatican II reader, there is a small glossary of terms related to the lay apostolate. Though this thesis is not intended to be exhaustive, I hope to stimulate further research into the study of Montreal's English Catholic institutions, and to add to our understanding of anglophone lay movements in Quebec.

# **Mythology**

## **Definition and Use**

History and myth are intertwined. In fact, history often begins in myth.<sup>1</sup> What is myth? Webster defines myth as “a popular belief or tradition that has grown up around something or someone; especially one embodying the ideals and institutions of a society or a segment of a society.” This definition is closely linked to the purpose of myth, which is a “traditional story, of ostensibly historical events that serves to unfold part of the world view of a people or explain...a belief.”<sup>2</sup>

At first glance, the dictionary definition clearly explains myth. However, when writing history, there are other dynamic processes at play. The historian must be aware of false belief and his own active agency. Arthur Lower believed that “the myth establishes its own version of history, partly by the colouring of fact, partly by deliberate suppression of unwelcome facts.” This is the misuse of half-truths to project a false image. Though historians do create myths, any “perversion of the evidence” simply to create a myth “is an unpardonable sin for the historian” and clearly must be avoided.”<sup>3</sup>

Despite his injunction, Lower rhapsodizes about the exigency and interconnectedness of myth and history. “History is the joint product of myth and fact, soul and body.” In other words, historians do not write outside their innate

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<sup>1</sup> Arthur Lower, History and Myth: Arthur Lower and the Making of Canadian Nationalism ed. Welf H. Heick (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1975), 2. The first chapter, “Historical Essays: Speculative,” is one of the first historiographic discussions of the relationship of history to myth in Canada.

<sup>2</sup> Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, Tenth Edition (1993).

<sup>3</sup> Lower, History and Myth, 4, 6.

knowledge of themselves. Their innate knowledge becomes part of the very history they pen. On the other hand, "fact without myth...is dead: [for] myth without fact is not history."<sup>4</sup> Historians must draw on myth; myth itself is not to be avoided.

### **The Myths of Benedict Labre House**

Myths are important tools for community building, for they are derived from a shared psyche and, simultaneously, they create a shared psyche. The historian plays a key role in a community's psyche. "The myth with which the historian deals...is concerned with a people's conception of itself."<sup>5</sup>

In my research I have encountered the mythology of Benedict Labre House. What was Benedict Labre House? In order to answer that question, many layers had to be peeled away in order to separate the assumptions and the myths from the evidence within the historical record.

Other myths regarding this institution have focused on the life of Tony Walsh, one of the founders of Benedict Labre House. To some degree, this is understandable since Tony died in 1994. Humans are inclined to hyperbole and exaggeration, particularly when memorializing a loved one who is deceased. Desiring to make a fitting tribute to this person, memories become selective and the image of the person becomes aggrandized. This presents a methodological problem in the writing of oral histories from an oral culture when an individual has done something exceptional.

This was the case with Tony Walsh. In Montreal English Catholic culture, the legends and mythologies concerning Tony abound, and there is an

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<sup>4</sup> *ibid.*, 6.

<sup>5</sup> *ibid.*



enduring sense of hagiography connected with his memory at Benedict Labre House. There is even a movement to have Walsh canonized for sainthood. However, there are many who have already canonized him with their words. For the historian, this mythologizing presents an added problem because separating the facts of an individual's life account from fiction may prove to be difficult, particularly in seminal works, such as this thesis. The list below clearly shows the extent of the fictionalization that has occurred.

### The Myths

Myth: Tony Walsh came from a working class background.<sup>6</sup>

Myth: Tony Walsh alone founded Benedict Labre House.<sup>7</sup>

Myth: Tony Walsh worked alone.<sup>8</sup>

Myth: Tony Walsh worked with the "poorest of the poor".<sup>9</sup>

Myth: Benedict Labre House was an unofficial Catholic Worker House.<sup>10</sup>

Myth: Benedict Labre House; everything was praxis 'learning by doing'.<sup>11</sup>

Myth: Benedict Labre House in the 1950s pioneered many lay activities:

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<sup>6</sup> Lucien Miller, Alone for Others: The Life of Tony Walsh, (Toronto: Community Concerns Associates Ltd., 1987), 120; John Buell, "Tony Walsh: Alone For Others," Newman Lecture, McGill University, November 27, 1997.

<sup>7</sup> Tony Walsh is referred to as sole founder of Benedict Labre House in the headline on front page of the Fortieth Anniversary Edition of UNITY (Montreal) Spring 1992, 1.

<sup>8</sup> Tony Walsh, interview by Peter Meggs, Fall, 1990, Open House, CBC Radio Archives, Ottawa, Ontario; Tony Walsh, "The Seed Was Planted..." UNITY (Montreal) June 1977, 5.

<sup>9</sup> Buell, "The Man," 17; John Buell, "Line of silent men waiting outside....," UNITY (Montreal) December 1981, Special Supplement, Labre House Revisited, 3.

<sup>10</sup> David Marvin, "History of Labre House: Centre For Apostolate Set Up With Hospitality as Foundation," UNITY (Montreal) October 1955, 1.

<sup>11</sup> Buell, "Line of silent men," 3; John Buell, interview by author, 17 May 1999, Montreal, tape recording, Montreal, Quebec; Miller, Alone for Others, 83.

dialogue masses, days of recollections, etc.<sup>12</sup>

Myth: The Catholic Church in Quebec was burgeoning in the 1940s to 1950s.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> George Cook, "BLH like university where people came to learn," UNITY (Montreal) December, 1981, Special Supplement, Labre House Revisited, 7.

<sup>13</sup> Buell, "Tony Walsh," Newman Lecture, November 27, 1997.

## **Methodology**

This paper is presented in four sections. The History of the Question (Chapter 2) is written to explain the path I took in the conceptualization and research of the question. The Theological Context (Chapter 3) explains the role of lay theology in the theory and praxis of the House. The Historical Context (Chapter 4) places the narrative in its regional, national and international setting. The post-war period was an exciting time, when all things were possible. One can not write of this time without realizing that many events that occurred had enormous, global, and far-reaching consequences for Catholics everywhere. This section is simply a survey dealing with key aspects and events ideas that influenced the world around Benedict Labre House.(BLH) The fourth part (Chapters 5, 6, 7, 8) is the historical narrative which includes the chronology of BLH and the story of the lay apostolate at the House.

### **Oral History**

The historical narrative of this thesis is strongly based on the methodology of oral history. Though the techniques of oral history are ancient, in Canadian historical writings oral history is still in its infancy.<sup>14</sup> Increasingly, oral accounts are incorporated into traditional histories, (histories that rely on the written sources of the elite, or the powerful). Moreover, in writing cultural histories, which deal with education, religion, science, etc., the use of oral

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<sup>14</sup> Thucydides, (460-400 BC) the historian of the Peloponnesian War, and one of the originators of historical genre, supplemented his written materials with oral interviews. For a discussion on the rise of the new histories in Canada see Carl Berger, "Tradition and the 'New History'" in The Writing of Canadian History: Aspects of English-Canadian Historical Writing Since 1900, 2nd ed. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1986), 259-320.

history has become dominant, as the voice of the powerless is heard.<sup>15</sup>

This trend has been particularly prevalent in histories of the recent, post-Second World War era, for the oral history method uses the voice of the people. The challenge is to capture and to systematize their memories, in order to provide the historical context. This is a crucial objective for incorporating oral histories in this thesis--to analyze the oral accounts of the founders, workers, and volunteers, in order to create a chronology of Benedict Labre House, and to determine the context of the historical and theological underpinnings of this lay association.

Nevertheless, I recognize that oral history is not without its problems, because memory is a very subjective entity, one that is colored by emotions and thoughts, and it can be very selective. Certainly, like the written memoir, the oral account, even the immediate eyewitness account, can become problematic or fraught with inconsistencies. The individual's memories can sometimes impede or contradict the 'facts' found within corroborating historical documents. At this juncture, the oral account becomes a minefield for the objective historian. Yet, the oral narrative may be the only insight into motives and intent. The oral narrative may be the only 'reliable' source available to reconstruct community history.<sup>16</sup> Thus despite these shortcomings, I have opted to rely on oral history, and complement the narrative with written sources.

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<sup>15</sup> In this regard, I am using the historical meaning of 'powerful' and 'powerless'. The powerful were those whose privilege and status generated historical documents, the writers, scribes, church and government officials, politicians, business persons, etc. The powerless were those outside the written record, such as those whose life activities were not routinely nor systematically noted in written forms.

<sup>16</sup> For a discussion of oral history, its users, purposes and intents, see: Russell G. Hann, "Oral History," in Terry Crowley, ed., Clio's Craft: A Primer of Historical Methods, (Toronto: Copp, Clark Pitman Ltd., 1988), 43-64.

## **Sources**

Besides the oral account, obtaining relevant sources was a challenge. First, Benedict Labre House in its desire to conduct themselves in a personal, human manner with the poor, deliberately chose not to collect any intake data so as not to appear to be a social service agency. Perhaps laudable in its objective, this lack of recording has impeded the writing of the historical narrative and affected the corroboration of the facts.<sup>17</sup> Primary sources are scarce. Secondly, no substantial history has been recorded or written before 2001 on the life of Tony Walsh or Benedict Labre House.

It is important to note the use of multiple sources in the footnotes. Due to the number of sources used for corroboration of each thought, the footnote is positioned at the end of each paragraph rather at the end of each sentence. Therefore, the references in the footnote are placed relative to the order of thought in the paragraph. This form of citation is typical of historical writing and described by Kate Turabian.<sup>18</sup>

My criterion for sources was to use authors of articles and interviews of those people whose facts could be corroborated and who were close to the action during this period of time. Therefore I relied heavily on those who were part of the founding group or long-term members of the House, i.e.: Jim Shaw, Tony Walsh, Steve Hagarty, Magnus Seng, Dixie MacMaster, Leo MacGillivray, Marjorie Conners, David Marvin, John Buell and Murray Ballantyne. I also

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<sup>17</sup> Stephen Hagarty, interview by author, 8 June, 1999, Montreal, telephone interview, Montreal, Quebec; Buell, "Line of silent men," 3.

<sup>18</sup> Kate L. Turabian, A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations, 6th ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996).

used accounts from special guests of the House, like Dorothy Day and Dan Berrigan, because their accounts added much veracity to the early history.

### **Newspapers**

Much of this story is reconstructed through newspaper accounts. Because of its importance in English Catholic Montreal, I consulted the Ensign, for the period 1948 to 1950. Jim Shaw was editor and had written about many North American lay apostolate groups. These articles confirmed that Shaw had knowledge of unofficial lay apostolate groups prior to the founding of the House. Thus the House was not created in a vacuum.<sup>19</sup>

The Benedict Labre House newsletters present an excellent account of the founding years. This source was really a series of letters to the supporters of BLH. They were passed around and referred to as newsletters. Through them, I was able to corroborate other sources such as the interviews and other texts. The masthead B.L. House Newsletter was found only on the reprints and not on the mimeographed copy of the House newsletter, March, 1954. Therefore, it cannot be assumed that this masthead was on the original newsletters. Nor can it suggest that the newsletter was referred to as the B.L. House Newsletter. MacGillivray refers to this publication as simply "the newsletter"; thus it may be that the newsletter was titled the B.L. House

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<sup>19</sup> The Ensign (Kingston, Ontario) Campion Press, 1948-1956.

Newsletter later, simply to differentiate it from UNITY.<sup>20</sup>

From 1955 to 1995, Benedict Labre House produced the UNITY newspaper. UNITY contained a wealth of detailed information; thus I was able to corroborate many interviews and other writings. The anniversary and special supplement editions of UNITY were particularly significant because they contained the memories of both the leaders and ordinary lay volunteers at the House. At various anniversary milestones, some UNITY articles were re-formatted into special editions. Some articles were reprised as actual brief histories and other articles were put together as collections of memories. I have consulted articles from the third anniversary (1955) to the fortieth anniversary (1992) since they contain a wealth of information about the 1952 to 1966 period at Benedict Labre House.<sup>21</sup>

Other accounts proved useful as well. Dorothy Day and Charles Butterworth of the Catholic Worker wrote about their visits to Benedict Labre

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<sup>20</sup> Jim Shaw, Montreal, Quebec, to Dorothy Day, New York, New York, letter, c.1952, 1-3; "Jim Shaw's letter to Catherine Doherty reports '53 activities," UNITY (Montreal), December 1981, Special Supplement, Labre House Revisited, 6; Family at 418, "Early B.L.H. Newsletters: Smallness Keeps the Family Spirit," June, 1953, reprinted in UNITY June 1968, 4; Family at 418 "Early B.L.H. Newsletters: Only when there's growth in the individuals is there growth in the group," July, 1953, reprinted in UNITY July/August 1968, 2; Family at 418 "Early B.L.H. Newsletters: Getting an Awareness of the meaning of the Mass," August, 1953, reprinted in UNITY April 1969, 2-3; Family at 418, "We Now Hope To Realise Our Earliest Ambition," March, 1954. (Mimeographed copy of Benedict Labre House newsletter, March, 1954), Benedict Labre House Collection; 1-8. See also Leo MacGillivray, "People Concerned with the Poor-and a Catalyst," UNITY December 1981, Special Supplement, Labre House Revisited, 1.

<sup>21</sup> Particular articles of note are found in the third and sixth anniversary issues. David Marvin wrote in October, 1955. In July-August, 1958, Stephen Hagarty's article was quite useful. Marvin, "History," 1-3; Stephen Hagarty, "In 6 years B L House has had its own experience and time to think: Outwardly, it feeds the poor, but more has been happening. Here's the rundown of that idea....," UNITY (Montreal) July-August 1958, 4; Dave Innocenti, O.Carm., "Labre House: 25th Anniversary," UNITY (Montreal) June 1977, 1-5; Berrigan's article also celebrated the twenty-fifth anniversary. Daniel Berrigan, S.J. "Modesty in Immodest Times," UNITY (Montreal) October 1977, 1-11; Art Coveny, "From a Soup Kitchen to a House of Hospitality: The Story of Benedict Labre House," UNITY (Montreal) Spring, 1992, Benedict Labre House. Fortieth Anniversary. 1952-1992, 2.

House and Patricia House. Butterworth wrote that he had an epiphany about working with the poor while distributing clothing at Benedict Labre House. While recounting her stay at Patricia House, Day portrayed the urban grittiness of Patricia House and Marjorie Conner's work with marginalized women and children. Their articles clarified the image of the House and its services during the 1950s.<sup>22</sup>

### **Interviews**

As addressed previously, the interviews were valuable sources for this thesis and they are referred to quite frequently. In 1995, in a research project for my graduate diploma in Theological and Religious and Ethical Studies (TRES), I interviewed several people who had been connected to the House. In the Spring of 1999, further interviews were conducted with several people who were closely associated with Tony Walsh and Benedict Labre House between 1952-1966: John Buell, George Cook, Stephen Hagarty, William Lawlor, and Gerry Pascal.

Stephen Hagarty gave me insight on the founding and developing years. John Buell and William Lawlor were key sources of information on the developing and Vatican II years. George Cook was a compendium of knowledge because, as a university student, he had planned to write his Masters thesis in Sociology on the House. However, his plans were disrupted

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<sup>22</sup> Dorothy Day, "On Pilgrimage," Catholic Worker (New York) June 1955, 1-6; Charles Butterworth, "Benedict Labre House, Montreal," Catholic Worker (New York) August, 1959, 1-2. See also: Dorothy Day, "Retreat," Catholic Worker (New York) August, 1959, 2-8.



by illness. Unfortunately, the draft of his uncompleted thesis has disappeared.<sup>23</sup>

The three interviews that I had with Gerry Pascal played a significant role in defining the spirit of the House and assisting me to understand the differences between Tony's tenure and what the House was like after Tony left. Pascal was director of Benedict Labre House from 1970-1980. Pascal help to clarify the demarcation when Benedict Labre House became more like a Catholic Worker House. His insight was truly a map into understanding the evolution of Benedict Labre House, and a guidepost to the key people in the history of the organization.<sup>24</sup>

Peter Meggs' CBC Radio interview with Tony Walsh aired in the fall of 1990. This interview gave me an opportunity to hear the story of Benedict Labre House in Tony's own words. Because of Tony's rambling style, this interview was not a chronology, but rather it was useful to help me to identify milestones at Benedict Labre House and to confirm some details.<sup>25</sup>

### **Correspondence**

My liberal use of correspondence reflects the utility of these sources. The letters often contained details not found elsewhere and include a wide range of varying thoughts, conflicts, motives, and intent. Tony Walsh's personalized form

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<sup>23</sup> Hagarty, interview by author, 8 June, 1999; Buell, interview by author, 17 May 1999; William Lawlor, interview by author, 15 June 1999. Montreal, tape recording, Montreal, Quebec; George Cook, interview by author, 16 June 1999. Montreal, tape recording, Montreal, Quebec. Due to Cook's close involvement with the House, it is my belief that the location of this uncompleted manuscript may give us a fresh picture to the late 1950s to early 1960s period. Despite this setback, George Cook wrote an article which gave an excellent picture of lay involvement in the House during its peak period. Cook, "BLH like university," 7.

<sup>24</sup> Gerry Pascal, interviews by author, 2, 6 June 1995, Montreal, tape recording, Montreal, Quebec; Gerry Pascal, interview by author, 13 July 1999, Montreal, tape recording, Montreal, Quebec.

<sup>25</sup> Tony Walsh, interview by Peter Meggs, Fall, 1990.

letters, written during his retirement, informed the community about himself and about the history of the House. I have used the extant letters addressed to George Cook, although many others received the same form letters. Tony's newsletters to George Cook give much data about his life before Benedict Labre House, and substantiate the picture of the House from 1952 to 1966.<sup>26</sup>

The founding group's early missives sent to Dorothy Day and Catherine Doherty also include information on theory and praxis of the House. Before visiting the House in April, 1955, Tony Walsh, Dixie McMasters, and Marjorie Conners corresponded with Dorothy Day. These letters outline Day's itinerary in Montreal and her accommodations at Patricia House. They corroborate Day's description of Patricia House and of the Little Sisters of Jesus in the Catholic Worker. These letters also were aids in establishing the naming of the House and the chronology of House moves.<sup>27</sup>

### **Books and Theses**

Lucien Miller's, Alone for Others: The Life of Tony Walsh, remains essentially the only book on Tony Walsh and Benedict Labre House. Alone for Others is a collection of memories which celebrate the prophetic life and witness of Tony and the House. However, due to its organic style of writing, its lack of a chronology, and the dearth of documented sources, Alone for Others

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<sup>26</sup> See bibliography for a listing of the letters penned by Tony Walsh to George Cook.

<sup>27</sup> Jim Shaw to Dorothy Day, c1952, 1-3; "Jim Shaw's letter to Catherine Doherty," 6; Dixie MacMaster, Montreal, Quebec, to Dorothy Day, New York, New York, letter, 18 March, 1955, transcript in DD-CW Collection, Series D-1.1, Box 7. MUA; Marjorie Conners, Montreal, Quebec, to Dorothy Day, New York, New York, letter, 28 March, 1955, transcript in DD-CW Collection, Series W-6.1, Box 1. MUA; Tony Walsh, Montreal, Quebec to Dorothy Day, New York, New York, letter, 28 March, 1955, transcript in DD-CW Collection, Series D-5, Box 5. MUA; Tony Walsh, La Trappe, Oka, Quebec, to Dorothy Day, New York, New York, letter, 7 May, 1955 transcript in DD-CW Collection, Series D-1, Box 9. MUA.

can not be easily used. The book is a monument to Tony, a figure made larger than life. But the book does serve as a guide to the theological, spiritual and emotional geography of Tony Walsh, of Benedict Labre House and of the Montreal English Catholic community. I have cited Miller's work with some reservation, particularly when there was no other available data.

I noted that many sources after 1987 were strongly influenced by the thrust and tenor of Alone for Others, which seemed to evoke a collective, ritualized memory of Tony and Benedict Labre House. Therefore, many sources created after its publication sound similar in tone and content. The accounts lack the power of individual memories and the accuracy of the accounts that were written prior to Miller's book.<sup>28</sup>

Other writings were utilized. Daniel Callahan's, The Mind of the Catholic Layman outlined the history of the American unofficial lay apostolate. Callahan's gave me insight into the link between the unofficial lay apostolate movement and Benedict Labre House. Davis strengthened this link further through her thesis on five lay apostolates in the New York area, 1933-1967. Despite its lack of a Canadian context, her thesis was essential to understanding the theological underpinnings of the House as an unofficial lay apostolate.<sup>29</sup>

In the writing of the historical context, five works are key to understanding the religious and social history of the Catholic Church in Quebec. Paul-André Linteau brings an excellent understanding to Quebec history. Pierre Elliot Trudeau offers a solid socio-economic history of Quebec before 1948. Jean

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<sup>28</sup> Miller, Alone for Others.

<sup>29</sup> Daniel J. Callahan, The Mind of the Catholic Layman, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1963); Florence Mary Davis, "The Rise and Decline of Catholic Lay Movements in New York City: 1933-1967," (Ph.D. diss., Concordia University, 1988).

Hamelin documents the history of the Catholic church in Quebec, providing the reader with a wealth of information for the period of study considered here. Clément specifically deals with the history of Catholic Action within Quebec. Finally, both Linteau and Gregory Baum provide valuable insight into Quebec and the church, particularly during the Vatican II era.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Paul-André Linteau, René Durocher, Jean-Claude Robert, François Ricard, Histoire du Québec contemporain. v.2. (Quebec Since 1930) trans. Robert Chodos and Ellen Garmaise (Toronto: Lorimer, 1991); Pierre Elliot Trudeau, ed., The Asbestos Strike, trans. James Boake (Toronto: James Lewis & Samuel, 1974); Jean Hamelin and Nicole Gagnon, Histoire du Catholicisme Québécois: Le XXe Siècle: Tome 1: 1898-1940. (Montréal: Les Éditions du Boréal Express, 1984); Jean Hamelin, Histoire du Catholicisme Québécois: Le XXe Siècle: Tome 2: de 1940-à nos jours. (Montréal: Les Éditions du Boréal Express, 1984); Gabriel Clément, "L'Action catholique: Les mouvements spécialisés à Montréal de 1930 à 1966," in L'église de Montréal: aperçus d'hier et d'aujourd'hui. 1836-1986. eds. Jean-Paul Rivet and André Lamoureux, (Montréal: Fides, 1986), 295-315; Gregory Baum, The Church in Quebec. (Outremont: Novalis, 1991).

## **Tertiary Sources**

Without properly documented sources to begin my research I was initially forced to rely heavily upon the tertiary sources.<sup>31</sup> The bibliographies by Claudette Cardinal and Brendan O'Donnell along with the historiography of Robert Grace were particularly helpful in understanding the range of available sources in English, and in assessing the scope of published research about the Irish in Quebec and particularly in Montreal. Kevin O'Donnell's chronology provided information and materials specific to the Montreal English Catholic community.<sup>32</sup>

In writing the theological context, a very helpful aid was a collection of papal documents on the lay apostolate arranged by the Monks of Solesmes. Another important source was the New Catholic Encyclopedia, which helped me to learn about many Catholic movements from the pre-Vatican II era.<sup>33</sup>

## **Problem with Sources**

Putting together the narrative was complicated by the inconsistency of the sources. For instance, due to the high level of unsubstantiated material in

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<sup>31</sup> Tertiary sources refer to reference sources such as bibliographies which direct the reader to primary or secondary sources.

<sup>32</sup> Claudette Cardinal, The History of Quebec: A Bibliography of Works in English, (Montreal: Centre for the Study of Anglophone Quebec, Concordia University, 1981); Brendan O'Donnell, Printed Sources for the Study of English-Speaking Quebec: An Annotated Bibliography of Works Published Before 1980, (Lennoxville, Quebec: Bishop's University, 1985); Brendan O'Donnell, Sources for the Study of English-Speaking Quebec/Sources pour l'étude du Québec d'expression anglaise: An Annotated Bibliography of Work Published Between 1980 and 1990/Bibliographie annotée d'ouvrages produits de 1980 à 1990, (Lennoxville: Eastern Township Research Centre, Bishop's University, 1992); Robert Grace, The Irish in Quebec: An Introduction to the Historiography, (Québec: Institut québécois de recherche sur la culture, 1993); Kevin O'Donnell, A Chronological History of the English-Speaking Roman Catholics of Montreal: Selected Readings from Primary and Secondary Sources, Prepared for the English-Speaking Catholic Council of Montreal (Montreal: n.p. December, 1982).

<sup>33</sup> The Lay Apostolate: Papal Teachings, Selected and Arranged by the Benedictine Monks of Solesmes, (Boston: St. Paul Editions, 1961); New Catholic Encyclopedia, 1967.

Miller's work, I often had to rely on sources produced prior to 1987. Earlier sources provided a more accurate picture of Benedict Labre House from 1952 to 1962. The UNITY and the correspondence from the Benedict Labre House newsletter, were also heavily used because these accounts were written either close to, or during the period under study. However, I did use sources that were produced later than 1987, if the facts could be corroborated.

I stress "corroboration", as newspapers are inclined to errors. I endeavored to be especially diligent with the UNITY newspaper because it was so closely tied to the organization. However, any errors in UNITY were minimized by corroboration from other articles, interviews and personal correspondence. Many footnotes contain multiple citations because the historical chronology required the weaving together of multiple facts and sources. Also, where the contradiction could not be resolved through the "facts", I have offered my own conclusions. The following section concerning the House's moves illustrates this point.

Multiple sources were used to construct four very simple facts about the various locations of the House: 1) from October, 1952 to December 1954, at 418 Lagauchetière; 2) from January 1955 to April 1955, at 123 Duke Street; 3) from April 1955 to April 1956, at 122 Duke Street; 4) in April 1956, the House moved to its permanent residence at 308 Young Street. This chronology was not easy to verify, and some of the data had to be inferred, because many sources contradicted each other. When faced with such conflict, I defined the problem

and then proposed a rationale for the option I chose.<sup>34</sup>

Problems with the sources were also found in the theological context. It was necessary to be extremely precise in the use of terms, since the definition and structure of the 'lay apostolate' and 'Catholic Action' had evolved from the 1900s to 1967. The terms most relevant to BLH are the pre-1952 papal documents from 1905 to 1951. The terms I have used are not based on the Second World Congress for the Apostolate of the Laity in Rome in 1957, since the terms and structures were under reform and by this time the House had already existed for five years.<sup>35</sup>

Beyond the problems inherent with the issue of memory, the interviews revealed another concern. When interviewing people on the founding and developing years, there was a rush of words and a plethora of images. Yet, when querying about the Vatican II era, either the subjects avoided the topic or, like Buell and Walsh, the language of the interviewees became cautious and cryptic as if they were explaining a traumatic event. It seemed that Vatican II and its subsequent repercussions proved devastating to them and to the House as an unofficial lay apostolate. Due to this lack of information provided in the

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<sup>34</sup> Walsh, "The Seed," 2; Marvin, "History", 1-3; Tony states that the founding group rented an apartment and he moved in the next day, opening BLH immediately at '418'. Based on the dating of Marvin's article, BLH was opened in October, 1952; MacGillivray, "People Concerned," 3. MacGillivray states that by the end of 1955, they were out of '418' but note that there is an error in this date. Marvin's dating shows as of January, 1955, that they had moved from '418' to 123 Duke St. Therefore, they left '418' by Dec. c1954. "Cardinal To Bless New Home On St. Benedict Labre's Feast: Arrangements Made for Permanent House," UNITY (Montreal) April 1956, 1; "Cardinal Heads Labre Family In Celebrating Patron's Feast," UNITY (Montreal) May 1956, 1; Art Coveny mentions an interim move to William Street but there is no other evidence for this move; Coveny, "From a Soup Kitchen," 2.

<sup>35</sup> The Lay Apostolate: Papal Teachings, 1961; Permanent Committee for the International Congresses of the Lay Apostolate, ed., Laymen in the Church: Second World Congress for the Lay Apostolate, Rome, 5-13 October, 1957, Volume 1, (Rome: Palazzo Delle Congregazioni, 1958); Yves M. J. Congar, O.P., Lay People In The Church: A Study For A Theology of the Laity, trans. Donald Attwater (Westminster, Maryland: Newman Press, 1957).

interviews, I had to rely even more heavily on the UNITY in order to give a picture of Vatican II through the eyes of the lay apostolate at Benedict Labre House.



## CHAPTER 2: THE PATH OF THE QUESTION

During the second semester of my TRES diploma in the winter of 1994, I took a second course in modern church history. I wrote on Dorothy Day because of my interest in women's roles in the modern Church. I portrayed Day as an early twentieth century pioneer in social justice. Subsequently, Dr. Pamela Bright, my supervisor, suggested that I write on the question of Day's influence on Montreal for my final research paper for the TRES diploma. It was titled: "Contemporary Exemplar or Frozen Icon: A Study of Dorothy Day's influence on Montreal."

I had acquired basic knowledge about Dorothy Day and the Catholic Worker through reading different sources. However, except for The Long Loneliness and back issues of the Catholic Worker, my knowledge was mainly drawn from secondary sources. My real awareness of Day and the Catholic Worker movement, came from my interviews with seven Montreal Catholics who had a connection to Dorothy Day during her visits to Montreal. I also learned about Benedict Labre House in Griffintown, which I subsequently visited.<sup>36</sup>

While completing the requirements for my Master's degree I continued to research the relationship of Day and BLH. In my research on Benedict Labre House, I saw a connection between the ideology and praxis of the Catholic Worker movement and Benedict Labre House. I decided to write my M.A. thesis on Dorothy Day, the Catholic Worker, and on Benedict Labre House in Montreal. My initial thesis proposal was "The Influence of the Catholic Worker

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<sup>36</sup> Dorothy Day, The Long Loneliness: An Autobiography, (New York: Harper & Row, 1981).

Movement on the directorship of Benedict Labre House during the Vatican II era.” There were many obstacles to deal with. I wanted to examine the level of influence that Dorothy Day had on Benedict Labre House from 1952-1980 through the house managers, Tony Walsh, Bob O’Callaghan, and Gerry Pascal.

At this juncture, I assumed that the level of influence with each manager would be different, with Tony being the least influenced and Gerry being the most influenced by Day and the Catholic Worker. Though I was aware that during Tony’s tenure the Catholic Worker did not have a high profile at BLH, I was surprised at just how small the connection had been between Benedict Labre House and the Catholic Worker during Tony’s tenure. It became clear to me that the theory and praxis of BLH was extremely different from the theory and praxis of the Catholic Worker’s movement during Tony’s tenure.

It was also a revelation to discover that my assumptions about UNITY were also false. UNITY, which at first glance looked like a smaller version of the Catholic Worker, was actually quite different in its philosophy. Many of the Church’s documents on social thought in UNITY had been inserted as filler, rather than items reflecting the true theological stance of UNITY. The editorial team of the UNITY had been solely interested in promoting the lay apostolate and its activities across Canada. In contrast, the Catholic Worker’s main mandate was to communicate the social teachings of the Church to the average person. This fundamental difference between the two serials gave me pause. I seriously began to question the commonly-held assumption that BLH had been modeled after the Catholic Worker, and realized the obstacles that would have to be overcome to make such a case.

Also, I had underestimated just how little Bob O’Callaghan had really been influenced by Day. There had seemed to be an obvious connection to

Day, because of Bob's interest in social justice and political action. However, I discovered that O'Callaghan's activities in the peace movement, community activism and the grape boycott were actually due to the influence of larger, broader 1960s social movements. Moreover, another obstacle soon appeared as Bob's memory of his tenure at the House was extremely vague.

Due to my personal interest in social justice, I had wanted to trace Benedict Labre House's shift from social action to social justice. However, at the time of my research, I was not familiar with the concept of the lay apostolate and particularly, with the unofficial lay apostolate. Therefore, I could not decipher where the shift had occurred and became confused about terms like 'social action' and 'social justice' because they were often used interchangeably in the primary and secondary sources describing the House from the 1950s to 1980s.

Finally, due the diaspora of Montreal English Catholics from 1960s onward, it was difficult to have easy access to certain peers who had worked closely with O'Callaghan and Pascal. Given these issues, I determined that it was far more viable to focus my thesis on Tony's tenure, 1952-1966, since sources were readily available and many of his contemporaries and friends were still residing in Montreal.

As I moved closer to the focus of my present thesis, I had to link the personal history of Tony Walsh with the establishment of BLH. I resubmitted my thesis proposal under the title: "Response to the Gospel: The Impact of Walsh and Benedict Labre House on the Montreal English Community from 1952-1966." I sought to trace Tony Walsh's history from childhood to his first four years in Montreal, before Benedict Labre House.

In addition, I felt it was important to look at the influence of Tony Walsh

and Benedict Labre House on several key elite lay and clerical figures, such as Jean Vanier, Benedict Vanier, Daniel Berrigan, and Thomas Merton. I also proposed to examine Tony and BLH's influence on the Montreal English Catholic community, focusing both on key local lay Catholics and the regular group of lay volunteers.

I still did not have a sense of the level of influence that the Catholic Worker had on the House. My ideas were formed by the superficial, hagiographic literature I had read, and from the sympathetic, oral testimony of Tony's loyal admirers. Since I was concentrating on BLH's outward influences, I was still caught up in the concept that Benedict Labre House had been a pioneer lay movement, with no predecessors.

Focussing on Walsh and BLH's influence on the Montreal English Catholic community, I began to do a detailed biographical analysis of Tony's early years (1899-1951) before his commitment to Benedict Labre House. I began to write an historical narrative, and culled out oral testimony about the figure of Tony Walsh. In addition, my research had also broadened to include sources on the Church within Quebec, and sources on the Irish of Montreal. Thus I became aware of Catholic Action's role in the modern history of Quebec. Unfortunately, I did not see its link to BLH.

My preconceptions about the Church in Quebec during the 1950s and 1960s started to change as I read Linteau. He clearly showed that the decline of recruitment of priest and church attendance in Quebec had begun much earlier, in the 1940s and 1950s. Also I was still under the illusion that Griffintown had been the home of the Irish community right into the 1970s.

Convinced that I had developed the thesis soundly, my aim was to present Tony Walsh as the central figure of this new lay movement, the driving

force and missionary to Griffintown. I viewed the other members of the founding group as simply noteworthy individuals who had allowed Tony to direct the work and life of the House. Then, when the founding group broke up, I had envisioned that they had been replaced with a new group of local laity. I saw the role of the laity as predominant only during the developing (1955-1959) and peak years (1960-1966).

These ideas were challenged as I began to study the types of activities and events that had taken place at the House. I realized that BLH as a center for the lay apostolate was a place of informal education. I discovered that BLH had had three types of formation: theological, spiritual, and practical.

As I studied the pages of UNITY, reviewed the interviews and certain secondary sources, I concluded that this thesis should be really a history about the lay initiative and lay power at BLH, rather than simply a biography of Tony Walsh and his influence on the House. I came to understand what was 'the lay apostolate' and what was an 'official and unofficial lay apostolate.' Thus, "Benedict Labre House: the History of an Unofficial Lay Apostolate, 1952-1966" is the story of an unofficial lay apostolate, and how they were influenced by other lay apostolates and how they then influenced lay English-speaking Catholics in Montreal.

### **CHAPTER 3: THEOLOGICAL CONTEXT**

One of the most significant myths of Benedict Labre House revolves around its theological position. To the average Montreal Catholic, Benedict Labre House is associated with social justice and political action because of its involvement in the 1960's-1970's anti-war protests and the grape boycott. Today, images such as these continue to frame the community's collective memory of Benedict Labre House. Thus, when defining the theological emphasis of Benedict Labre House, it should seem that one would focus on practical theology as a critical reflection.<sup>37</sup> However, these images represent Benedict Labre House of a different era.

Benedict Labre House from 1952 to 1966 did not represent a practical theology. Though the House retained a prophetic witness by Tony Walsh's living in voluntary poverty, the House was too conservative, orthodox, and apolitical in theological orientation, and too charity-focussed in its praxis, to be considered a practical theology. Adamant about "remaining small and poor," the House carefully avoided the larger issues of social justice. Their stance led to a lack of critical reflection on the theory and praxis of the House.<sup>38</sup>

This divergence of critical reflection and praxis is essential to understanding where Benedict Labre House stood in its theology. David Tracy states, "practical theology is the mutually critical correlation of the interpreted theory and praxis of the Christian fact and the interpreted theory and praxis of

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<sup>37</sup> Don S. Browning, ed., Practical Theology: The Emerging Field in Theology, Church, and the World, (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1983), 10-11.

<sup>38</sup> Hagarty, interview by author, 8 June 1999; Miller, Alone for Others, 121-123.

the contemporary situations.” For Tracy, practical theology must be “a public theology, one that can take its place in a honest, open, and mutually critical dialogue within the context of a pluralistic society.” Tracy believes that “praxis is misunderstood as mere practice, that is, as the development of technical means and skills for the application of theological theory” without critical reflection. Tracy remarks however, that all praxis is theory-laden. Along the same lines, Edward Farley views practical theology as the reintegration of the socio-political, the personal-existential, and the ecclesiastical, under the umbrella of ecclessial presence transforming the world. Such a reintegration overcomes the alienation between theory and praxis.<sup>39</sup>

Yet, during this period, the House consistently responded to social issues with a charitable approach, characteristic of the American unofficial lay apostolate from the 1930s to 1960s. In response to the problem of poverty around it, the House took a “personal, private and human approach of the Christian living among the poor.”<sup>40</sup> The House did not officially participate in community activism, social change, or social protests regarding poverty or racism. “Tony Walsh was not interested in direct change through political or social action.” Instead, from 1952-1966, the House consistently took a charitable approach (to alleviate), characteristic of the lay apostolate to social issues, rather than a socio-political approach (to affect change), which was

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<sup>39</sup> David Tracy, “The Foundations of Practical Theology,” in Don S. Browning, ed., Practical Theology: The Emerging Field in Theology, Church, and the World, (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1983), 61,76; Browning, Practical Theology, 6; Edward Farley, “Theology and Practice Outside the Clerical Paradigm,” in Don S. Browning, ed., Practical Theology: The Emerging Field in Theology, Church, and the World, (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1983), 34-35.

<sup>40</sup> John Buell, “Labre House, Offers Answers to ‘Why [the] Accent on Poverty?’,” UNITY (Montreal) November 1956, 4.

characteristic of practical theology.<sup>41</sup>

An example of this approach was seen at the Second World Congress for the Lay Apostolate, when Murray Ballantyne reported on the racism witnessed by international Catholic students in Western countries.<sup>42</sup> In response to his report of racism, the House established a hospitality program for international students from Montreal universities and held a series of lectures on East-West relations. Nevertheless, Benedict Labre House was not engaging in a practical theology.<sup>43</sup>

Only after the tenure of Tony Walsh in 1966 did the House take on the mantle of practical theology, with the new young leadership of Bob O'Callaghan and later, Gerry Pascal, in the 1970s. Particularly with Pascal at the helm, Benedict Labre House became strongly involved in social justice by battling local and global poverty through its involvement in the peace movement, and with its high profile support of grape pickers' rights. It was Gerry Pascal who moved the House towards a practical theology by affiliating with the social justice orientation of the Catholic Worker. However, since the period of study for this thesis is 1952-1966, it is clear that the theological orientation of the House was not practical, but rather a theology of the lay apostolate.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Marvin, "History," 1-3; Hagarty, interview by author, 8 June, 1999; Miller, Alone for Others, 121-123.

<sup>42</sup> Murray Ballantyne, "All Colors and No Color in Rome: Black, Brown, and Yellow Men--Whites Least in Global Church," UNITY (Montreal) March 1958, 3.

<sup>43</sup> Buell, interview by author, 17 May 1999; Buell, "Tony Walsh," Newman Lecture, November 27, 1997; Buell, "The Man," 18; David Dyson, "I was a Stranger: Hospitality to Foreigners Subject of Students' Day," UNITY (Montreal) March 1960, 1; "Do-Or-Die Dilemma: Pressures on African Church: It's White and Western," UNITY (Montreal) June 1958, 1-2.

<sup>44</sup> Gerry Pascal, interview by author, 13 July 1999. See also: UNITY from 1970-1980 to see a strong social justice orientation.



## **Theology of the Lay Apostolate**

The lay apostolate consisted of those Catholics, not part of the hierarchy or the clergy, who assisted the bishops in the work of spreading the Christian message. In defining 'lay apostolate,' the word 'lay' comes from the Greek word 'laos' for 'people' and the word 'apostolate' comes from the Greek words 'sending, commission or expedition.' The requirements of the lay apostolate were that the lay person had passed through the sacraments of baptism and confirmation, was willing to practice charity and to defend the truths of Christianity. There were three types of lay apostolate: personal apostolate, familial apostolate, and organized apostolate. For the purposes of this thesis, I am referring to the third form, the organized apostolate.<sup>46</sup>

There were two main forms of the organized lay apostolate: 1) the official, mandated lay organization under the direction of church hierarchy and 2) the non-mandated unofficial lay organization run by the initiative and responsibility of the lay person. Pius X in 1905, regarded the first form as Catholic Action. It was then given its classical definition by Pope Pius XI in 1927: "Catholic Action...[is] the participation of the laity in the Apostolate of the hierarchy and the necessary preparation for this by adequate religious, moral and intellectual training." In 1951, Pope Pius XII elaborated on the narrow and wide sense of the 'lay apostolate.' In the narrow sense, the lay apostolate, as Catholic Action, was an instrument in the hands of the hierarchy. Catholic Action is an initiative of the hierarchy and collaborates closely with it. However, the lay apostolate in

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<sup>46</sup> General conclusions to the First World Congress for the Apostolate of the Laity, Rome, 1951, quoted in Jeremiah Newman, What is Catholic Action? An Introduction to the Lay Apostolate, (Dublin: M H. Gill and Son, Ltd., 1958), 4-22. passim.; Congar, Lay People In The Church, 1.

the wider sense encompassed the non-mandated lay apostolates which, however, must remain within the realm of orthodoxy and are subject to the hierarchy in a general way.<sup>46</sup> Unfortunately, after Catholic Action was made official in 1927, many clergy and laity ignored or belittled the contribution of the unofficial, non-mandate lay groups.

### **American unofficial lay movements**

Yves Congar, author of the first seminal theological work on the laity, noted the plethora of various unofficial lay movements that populated the Catholic landscape in the early 1950s. Congar believed that Pope Pius XI's work with Catholic Action opened up the whole question of the laity. Congar gives equal importance to official movements as Catholic Action, and to the unofficial movements as wide lay initiatives peripheral to Catholic Action. Daniel Callahan suggests that the awakening of Catholic intellectuals, the formalizing of Catholic Action by Pius XI in 1927, along with the Depression of the 1930s, did much to develop both the official and the unofficial lay movements in the U.S. Pius XI stated that "Catholic Action [is] the practical solution of the social question according to Christian principles." In 1933, the Catholic Worker was one of the first unofficial, non-mandated organizations of the lay apostolate in the U.S. The Catholic Worker model fostered the eruption of other similar unofficial movements which would gain significance in the Post-War II era, across the U.S.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Pope Pius XII, Address to the First World Congress for the Apostolate of the Laity, October 14, 1951, quoted in Newman, What is Catholic Action?, 4, 5, 20-21; Pope Pius X, Encyclical, "Il fermo proposito," June 11, 1905, from The Lay Apostolate, 228; Pope Pius XI, Letter "C'est avec la joie, August 18, 1927-to M.Giovanni Hoyois," from The Lay Apostolate: Papal Teachings, 282.

<sup>47</sup> Congar, Lay People In The Church, 245-346 passim; Pope Pius XI, Letter "C'est avec la joie," 282; Callahan, The Mind of the Catholic Layman, 86-88.

Although each of these groups was formed for some specialized task, they all shared a number of common values: a devotion to the social encyclicals, a dissatisfaction with the work already done in their areas, an intense, activist zeal to make their religious convictions count in the world around them, and a persistent search for a spirituality which would uniquely express and shape their interior and exterior religious life. Of special importance as a common bond was the liturgical movement.<sup>48</sup>

Davis studied five of these unofficial lay movements which arose in the U.S. during this period. She proposed one other common value: they were apolitical in nature. Though these lay movements appeared radical at the time of their inception, they were quite orthodox in their Catholic beliefs and practices and were apolitical in nature.<sup>49</sup>

The spiritual lives of these 'unofficial' group members were rooted in the liturgical movement. Buttressed by such encyclicals as "Mediator Dei," the liturgical movement's main agenda was to awaken the laity to their active participation in the liturgy of the Church. The objective of the movement was, "to put the whole of life into the Mass, to put the Mass into the whole of life." The origins of the liturgical movement can be traced back to eighteenth century France. In the twentieth century, the popular liturgical movement in the United States was launched in 1925 by Virgil Michel of St. John's Abbey, Collegeville, Minnesota. There, a passion for liturgy was combined with a concern for social issues. From the 1920s to the 1960s, many publications, conferences, study days, retreats, conventions, and schools were established on liturgy within the U.S. The liturgical movement resounded heavily throughout the American unofficial lay movements, since it was thought that "fuller participation in the

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<sup>48</sup> Callahan, The Mind of the Catholic Layman, 89.

<sup>49</sup> Davis, "The Rise and Decline," 6-9 passim; Callahan, The Mind of the Catholic Layman, 89.

liturgy [was] central to the apostolic life."<sup>50</sup>

The American unofficial groups found their origins in the lay movement of the Middle Ages which was based on a monastic model. This was a combination of asceticism, pilgrimage and charitable activity. In fact, charitable activities were central to the lay apostolate during the Middle Ages. Davis observed that America's unofficial lay apostolate of the 1930s to 1950s returned to this medieval monastic ideal of Christian spirituality. Inherent to the ideal was the belief that the lay person would adhere to the 'normal school of holiness,' incorporating the liturgical ideal of feasting and fasting. This normal school of holiness was itself based on the monastic model but tended to create a kind of two-tiered ideal of holiness. It was believed that "the closer laity could pattern their lives according to this order, the more likely would be their growth in holiness." Moreover that, "this formed part of a positive nostalgic picture of the Middle Ages adopted by the American movements of the modern lay apostolate." By adhering to a monastic model, American unofficial groups fostered an apolitical character.<sup>51</sup> In the same spirit as the American unofficial lay groups, Benedict Labre House was also apolitical in its orientation, and monastic in its style.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Davis, "The Rise and Decline," 5; 14; New Catholic Encyclopedia, (1967), s.v. "Liturgical Movement, Catholic," L.C. Sheppard; Pope Pius XII, Encyclical, "Mediator Dei", November 20, 1947, from Anne Fremantle, ed., Papal Encyclicals in Their Historical Context, (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1956), 275-283; Congar, Lay People In The Church, 212-13; Callahan, The Mind of the Catholic Layman, 89.

<sup>51</sup> Davis, "The Rise and Decline," 9, 14; Congar, Lay People In The Church, 8-9; André Vauchez, The Laity in the Middle Ages: Religious Beliefs and Devotional Practices, (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1993), 60-62.

<sup>52</sup> Lawlor, interview by author, 15 June 1999; Hagarty, "In 6 years," 4; Callahan, The Mind of the Catholic Layman, 89; Family at 418, "Early B.L.H. Newsletters: Getting an Awareness," 2; "Notes On Fr. Berrigan's First Retreat," UNITY (Montreal) December, 1981, Special Supplement, Labre House Revisited, 2; Hagarty, interview by author, 8 June, 1999; Miller, Alone for Others, 121-123.

The monastic model of asceticism, pilgrimage and charitable activity was very evident in the daily life and work of Benedict Labre House. In the spirit of Charles de Foucauld and Saint Benedict Labre, asceticism was demonstrated in the prophetic witness of Tony Walsh's 'living poor among the poor.' In 1952, as a lay person, Tony took on a vow of voluntary poverty to live among the poor in Griffintown. He owned nothing and his basic needs were met through donated clothes, food, and shelter.<sup>53</sup>

With their patron saint Benedict Joseph Labre as the model of the ultimate pilgrim and the despised wanderer, the word 'pilgrimage' at the House had both a concrete and spiritual meaning. As part of their liturgical program, the House held annual pilgrimages to Notre Dame de Bonsecours Chapel on Saint Paul Street in Old Montreal. In terms of their spiritual journey, Tony Walsh commented, that like Saint Benedict Joseph Labre "...most of the people coming to the House either in seeking support or rendering service were wanderers from a spiritual point of view."<sup>54</sup>

The House's theological interpretation of the monastic model of asceticism, pilgrimage and charitable activity in the urban context of Montreal,

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<sup>53</sup> Vauchez, The Laity in the Middle Ages, 60-62; Lord Hylton, "Here suddenly were the poor cared for by Christians," UNITY (Montreal) December 1981, Special Supplement, Labre House Revisited, 5; For biographical information on Saint Benedict Joseph Labre, see the Glossary and Agnes De La Gorce, Saint Benedict Joseph Labre, trans. Rosemary Sheed, (London: Sheed & Ward, 1952). For biographical information on Charles de Foucauld, see the Glossary and Anne Freemantle, Desert Calling: The Life of Charles de Foucauld, (London: Hollis & Carter, 1950); Buell, "Line of silent men," 3; Buell, "Labre House," 1; Buell, "The Man," 16; Murray Ballantyne, "On Tony Walsh...", UNITY (Montreal) June 1977, 6; Murray Ballantyne, "This quiet man challenges us," UNITY (Montreal) December 1981, Special Supplement, Labre House Revisited, 6; Steve Hagarty, "Called to a personal commitment to social justice," UNITY (Montreal) December 1981, Special Supplement, Labre House Revisited, 2; Hagarty, "In 6 years," 4.

<sup>54</sup> "Labre Work Recommended To Young People," UNITY (Montreal) May 1956, 1; Walsh, "The Seed," 5; Buell, "The Man," 17; "Mass At Bonsecours: 60 Go On Pilgrimage Benedict Labre Day," UNITY (Montreal) May 1957, 1.

helped to assuage the alienation that the poor experienced in their daily life.<sup>55</sup>

This attitude affected all aspects of the work at BLH.

Rather than the intake and triage approach of the social work model, the monastic virtues of poverty and humility, in the spirit of Charles de Foucauld, were at the hub of the House's charitable activities. The House's response to poverty and to other social issues was a personal human approach whereby the House existed as a 'family' in the 'presence' of the poor' in Griffintown.<sup>56</sup>

Though situated in Griffintown, the theology of Benedict Labre House was derived from the confluence of lay apostolates from the U.S. and Canada:

A ferment of Catholic lay movements that were socially concerned, the Catholic Worker and Combermere... Little Brothers and Little Sisters of Jesus, the Jocist, worker priests, Catholic Lay Apostolate, all these directed the founding group to a house of hospitality.<sup>57</sup>

Specifically, the House's spiritual and liturgical activities were directly and indirectly influenced by the liturgies of the Little Sisters, the Catholic Worker, Friendship House, and the sodalities. The impact of the American liturgical movement was significant at the House, with its range of liturgical activities. In the summer of 1953, the House members studied Pius XII, "Mediator Dei", 1947, stressing the words of the encyclical, "it is necessary

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<sup>55</sup> Buell, "Labre House," 1-4; Family at 418, "Early B.L.H. Newsletters: Smallness Keeps," 4; "Labre Work Recommended," 1.

<sup>56</sup> The social work method investigates the basic causes of psycho-social, emotional and personality problems to determine effective solutions and preventative measures." See: Francis Kun Suk Han, "A Catholic Communal Welfare Institution in a Changing Society, Montreal: 1931-1986," Ph.D. diss. Concordia University, 1987, 162; Vauchez, The Laity in the Middle Ages, 61; Hagarty, interview by author, 8 June, 1999; Buell, "Line of silent men," 3; Charles, Archbishop of Aix, Arles, and Embrun, Directory For The Charles Of Jesus: Secular Fraternity, (translation) Aix-en-Provence, 24 June, 1956, 1, 23-26; Buell, "Labre House," 1-4; Buell, "Line of silent men," 3; Buell, "The Man" 17; Miller, Alone for Others, 123; Lawlor, interview by author, 15 June 1999.

<sup>57</sup> Hagarty, interview by author, 8 June, 1999.

above all [that] a Christian should live the life of the Liturgy and by its supernatural inspiration be nourished and refreshed." At a House retreat in 1959, Daniel Berrigan emphasized that the Eucharist was central to praxis. "We're not fully Christian until we follow through from the altar to people."<sup>98</sup>

Liturgy was not the only area that BLH applied to their praxis.

Ecumenically, the House may have been inspired by the work done by the Third Hour. Most accounts claim that Benedict Labre House also muted the lines between gender and between lay and clergy. Perhaps so; however, they were not unique in this regard. This was a characteristic approach of the Catholic Worker, Friendship House, and the Third Hour. If, as suggested, that class lines really disappeared at the House, then it can be seen that Benedict Labre House followed the examples of Little Sisters, the Catholic Worker, and Friendship House, places where class distinctions were ignored.<sup>99</sup>

From its very inception, the founding group of Benedict Labre House was aware of many of the official and unofficial lay movements in Europe, the United States and Canada of 1930s-1940s. Jim Shaw, editor of The Ensign, in his column "Among Ourselves" in the late 1940s, had often reviewed many of the lay apostolates that existed. Since Tony read The Ensign during this period, he also was aware of these lay movements. Tony also acquired this knowledge of lay movements elsewhere in his discussions with Father William Power. Power worked with the local Y.C.W. and had acquired an excellent knowledge of

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<sup>98</sup> See Glossary for definition of sodality. Lawlor, interview by author, 15 June 1999; Hagarty, "In 6 years," 4; Callahan, The Mind of the Catholic Layman, 89; Family at 418, "Early B.L.H. Newsletters: Getting an Awareness," 2: "Notes On," 2.

<sup>99</sup> See Glossary for definition of the Third Hour.

European lay movements and current lay thought.<sup>60</sup> It can also be assumed that Patricia Conners' work at Madonna House had given her first-hand knowledge not only of Friendship House but also of other North American unofficial lay movements during this period. Therefore the founding group's understanding of the lay apostolate was not in the narrow, official sense but rather the wider unofficial sense. Influenced by the existence and longevity of the American and Canadian unofficial lay movements, Jim Shaw and Tony Walsh saw the potential of establishing such a venture in Montreal.<sup>61</sup>

### **The Theological Position of Benedict Labre House**

From 1952 to 1966, Benedict Labre House was a non-mandated lay apostolate, a pious association. The founding group did not request official permission from the Montreal Catholic Archdiocese to establish itself both as a house of hospitality and a center for the lay apostolate. Since the House was an unofficial lay organization operating within the parameters of orthodoxy, it was considered acceptable by the local hierarchy, based on Pius XII's guidelines in

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<sup>60</sup> Young Christian Workers (Y.C.W.), or Jeunesse Ouvrière Chrétienne (JOC) in 1912, was established for young Catholic male and female workers by Joseph Cardijn in Belgium. From 1920s to the 1960s, Y.C.W./J.O.C. evolved from a European to an international movement. (New Catholic Encyclopedia, (1967), s.v. "Young Christian Workers," M.Fiévèze).

<sup>61</sup> Two examples of Jim Shaw's reviews are the 'Catholic Worker' and 'The Third Hour', see: J. G. Shaw, "Among Ourselves," The Ensign (Kingston, Ontario) January 29, 1949, 5; J. G. Shaw, "Among Ourselves," The Ensign (Kingston, Ontario) May 21, 1949, 5; Walsh, interview by Peter Meggs, Fall, 1990; Miller, Alone for Others, 72-73, 124-125; Tony Walsh, Montreal, Quebec to George Cook, Ottawa, Ontario, letter, 1 March 1993, TGC; Hagarty remarked that Tony was very influenced by Father Power who led in lay discussion groups at Caritas Centre in the late 1940s to early 1950s. Hagarty, interview by author, 8 June, 1999; Bishop William E. Power, "A means of serving God's poor," UNITY (Montreal), December 1981, Special Supplement, Labre House Revisited, 4; MacGillivray, "People Concerned," 1.



1951.<sup>62</sup> Jim Shaw noted that Benedict Labre House was similar to other unofficial groups of the lay apostolate:

...we were convinced that the Lay Apostolate was for everyone; that there was a great lack of awareness among Catholics of the obligation of Christian Living: that among those Catholics who had become aware of it, often through the Catholic Worker, Friendship House, or some other radically Catholic group...<sup>63</sup>

Considered acceptable, Benedict Labre House received verbal permission from Cardinal Leger of Montreal. When made aware of the establishment of the House, Cardinal Leger decided to take a hands-off approach, making it clear that since they were not disturbing anyone, they should be left alone. Benedict Labre House, by remaining within the realm of Catholic orthodoxy and taking on an apolitical stance, did not pose a threat to the Cardinal or to the Archdiocese. Benedict Labre House possessed all the conditions necessary for its acceptance and longevity within the Archdiocese of Montreal: 1) the verbal permission and blessing of Cardinal Leger, 2) the support of Father William Power, as unofficial overseer and, 3) John Buell, as

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<sup>62</sup> The term 'pious association' used here in relation to Benedict Labre House, does not refer to the 1957 definition of pious union which allows for some pious associations to be part of Catholic Action. But it does refer to the 1911 definition stated by Pius X and the 1930 definition of pious association as stated by Pius XI. Both saw pious association as unions of piety, good works and mutual aid which were auxiliary and outside of Catholic Action. Pope Pius XII, Address to the Second World Congress for the Apostolate of the Laity, October, 1957 quoted in Newman, What is Catholic Action?, 122-123; Pius X, Letter, "Quod hierarchia", June 6, 1911-to the Brazilian Bishops from The Lay Apostolate: Papal Teachings, 258; Pius XI, Letter, "Vos Argentinae Episcopos," December, 4, 1930-to the Argentinian Bishops from The Lay Apostolate: Papal Teachings, 312. Congar also refers to these pious associations as peripheral initiatives to Catholic Action. Congar, Lay People In The Church, 245-246; Pope Pius XII, "Address to Rome Congress for the Apostolate of the Laity", October, 1951, quoted in Newman, Ibid., 20-21.

<sup>63</sup> Jim Shaw to Dorothy Day, letter, c.1952, 1; See also: Marvin, "History," 1-3; Hagarty, "In 6 years," 4.

unofficial liaison.<sup>64</sup>

### **Formation at Benedict Labre House**

Articles and interviews about the House were replete with phrases such as 'learning by doing', 'the action was the message' and 'just do it'. These phrases gave credence to the myth that there was a primacy of praxis over theory at Benedict Labre House. However, the House's praxis was indeed shaped by its theological position and by its three formations: theological, spiritual, and practical. For instance, the House's organized schedule included evening discussions, daily divine office, silent adoration, annual retreats, conferences, days of recollection, and annual pilgrimages, along with the production of the UNITY newspaper, meals, accommodations, clothing and food distribution. Referred to as a 'university' and as 'a school of love' with a 'monastic setting', Benedict Labre House provided an informal, collegial, monastic style of formation.<sup>65</sup>

Specifically, theological formation encouraged lay people to study their faith experience in an informal setting, through the evening discussions, conferences and retreats. In a desire to nurture and maintain a spiritual community and formation, Montreal lay people were also invited to participate in

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<sup>64</sup> Buell, interview by author, 17 May, 1999; Walsh, interview by Peter Meggs, Fall, 1990; Buell, "Tony Walsh," Newman Lecture, November 27, 1997; Hagarty, interview by author, 8 June, 1999; Miller, Alone for Others, 121-123; Joe O'Connor, interview by author, 8 June 1995, Montreal, tape recording, Montreal. See: "Labre Work Recommended," 1; "Cardinal Heads Labre Family," 1.

<sup>65</sup> Dixie MacMaster, "The Action Was The Message," UNITY (Montreal) December 1981, Special Supplement, Labre House Revisited, 4; Buell, interview by author, 17 May 1999; Buell, "Line of silent men," 3; The following articles give a sense of the existence of three types of formations. Jim Shaw to Dorothy Day, letter, c1952, 1-3; "Jim Shaw's letter to Catherine Doherty," 6; Marvin, "History," 1-3; Hagarty, "In 6 years," 4; Cook, "BLH like university," 7; Buell, "The Man," 17-18; Berrigan, S.J., "Modesty," 1-11. See Glossary for definitions for divine office and days of recollection.

the House's liturgical program: daily divine office, silent adoration, retreats, days of recollection, etc. At Benedict Labre House, practical formation was a combination of theory and praxis based on a charity model. Along with frontline experience, volunteers also became informed about poverty and other social issues through evening discussions, retreats, conferences.<sup>66</sup>

In terms of formation for adults and youth, the founding group incorporated elements from the Catholic Worker, Friendship House, the Little Sisters of Charles de Foucauld, Third Hour, Catholic Action, YCW and the sodalities. Even during the Vatican II era, at the House's incorporation in 1961, the team was still concerned with poverty, hospitality, liturgy, ecumenism and formation. This confluence of lay movements influenced the founding group and reinforced the role of the theology of the lay apostolate of Benedict Labre House from 1952 to 1966.<sup>67</sup>

### **The Impact of Vatican II**

From 1952 to 1966, nothing had a more dramatic effect on the theology of Benedict Labre House than Vatican II. Held from 1962-1965, Vatican II, with its sweeping changes and reforms, proved to be so revolutionary that it had a major effect on churches and lay organizations internationally. The impact of

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<sup>66</sup> Family at 418, "Early B.L.H. Newsletters: Getting an Awareness," 2; "What a Layman Hopes To See From the Coming Council," UNITY (Montreal) September 1962, 1-2; "200 Attend Apostolate Week: Canadians Take Part in Syracuse Studies," UNITY (Montreal) August-September, 1956, 1; Fr. Power and J. Buell, "Syracuse Got Laity Together," UNITY (Montreal) November, 1956, 1-4; Lawlor, interview by author, 15 June 1999; Dixie MacMaster, "On Tony Walsh...", UNITY (Montreal) June 1977, 6; MacMaster, "The Action," 4; Marvin, "History," 3; Buell, "The Man," 17; "Notes On," 2; Buell, "Labre House," 1-4; Hagarty, "In 6 years," 4; Buell, "Line of silent men," 3; Tony Walsh, interview by Peter Meggs, Fall, 1990; Ballantyne, "This quiet man," 6; Ballantyne, "On Tony Walsh...", 6.

<sup>67</sup> "Letter From Matt," UNITY (Montreal) May 1961, 2.

Council's reforms on the House were significant, causing a decline at this unofficial lay apostolate.<sup>88</sup>

In 1966, Buell expressed the House's main concerns with council reforms: the Mass, devotions, and morality. He argued that what was first deemed as superficial changes, became profound as the reforms irrevocably altered the spiritual lives of lay Catholics in Montreal and worldwide.<sup>89</sup> Buell and other conservative members of the House felt that these Council reforms had a huge negative impact both locally and globally.

These were not the only concerns facing the House. At the same time, due to political modernization and rapid secularization, the Church In Quebec, was no longer central to peoples' lives, causing a great exodus of lay people from their local churches. Confronted by both these theological and political changes, Benedict Labre House in the post-Vatican II era experienced a decline as an unofficial lay apostolate.

For Benedict Labre House to relinquish its strong focus on the mass, liturgy and conservative morality meant abandoning its monastic model which was inherent to unofficial lay apostolate. With the exodus of the laity in Quebec, the House faced a period of decline, since it was dependent on lay commitment and support. Therefore, the House was caught up in the reforms of Vatican II and the secularization of Quebec. Like its American counterparts, the House

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<sup>88</sup> Davis states that Vatican II was actually the death knell for the American unofficial lay apostolates. For these American groups were seeking a more democratic version of the Church in which lay people were full participants. Unfortunately, they felt that Vatican II did not remove the hierarchal structures that would allow for full lay participation. Davis, "The Rise and Decline," 173-175. In contrast, BLH experienced a period of decline in the post-Vatican II era due to the combination of both Council and political reforms in Quebec, Buell, interview by author, 17 May 1999.

<sup>89</sup> John Buell, "Why the Changes are hurting so many--new Mass, no devotions, new morals," UNITY (Montreal) July, 1966, 1-4.

subsequently endured this time of decline as an unofficial lay apostolate.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Buell, "Why the Changes," 1-4; Baum, The Church in Quebec, 19-25; Linteau, et al. Quebec Since 1930, 474-480. Davis, "The Rise and Decline," 175; Buell, interview by author, 17 May 1999.

## **CHAPTER 4: HISTORICAL CONTEXT**

### **Introduction**

History, and particularly church history, has often been written from the perspective of those in official positions. As a result, many voices have been left out on the margins. I refer particularly to the history of the unofficial lay movements. This section addresses the history of one such organization, Benedict Labre House in Montreal. History mainly tells us that nothing is created out of a vacuum. A recurring theme in this thesis is that Benedict Labre House was a confluence of theological and historical influences, specific socio-economic and demographical conditions. In this section of historical context, we will consider the international, national and regional forces that existed at the time and that must be considered in order to situate the founding and success of BLH.

The historical survey I present in this section will not be a comprehensive church history. Instead, this will be an examination of how official and unofficial lay movements responded to social issues during certain periods of Church history. In my final section I will reconstruct a realistic snapshot of Griffintown during this period, 1952-1966—my goal will be to dispel certain myths about that community .

### **Lay Movements and the Church**

From the time of the early church to the twentieth century, lay movements have been associated with the Church. Christianity in its earliest form was

recognized by its fidelity to the person and teachings of Jesus Christ and by its commitment to a grassroots community-based structure in Jerusalem. Christ and his apostles, as a lay group, were outside of the clerical paradigm, criticizing the abuse of power by the Pharisees. After Jesus Christ died in A.D. 30, this community went into hiding. However, the account of the Resurrection transformed this group of intimidated people into a movement audaciously centered on community, missions and martyrdom. In the second to fourth centuries, Christianity became more formalized as the Patristic fathers, Tertullian, Clement of Alexandria, Origin, and Irenaeus attempted to describe and order this new religion. In the wake of Constantine, the Church became institutionalized and militarised as a state religion in A.D. 313. It was reorganized with a hierarchy at the Council of Nicea in A.D. 325. From this point on the Church looked less like a communitarian lay organization and more like an empire with a military hierarchy. By A.D. 600, the Germanic kingdom was mainly focussed on clerical and military power and their interconnectedness was reinforced during the Caroligian period (700-1050), due to the emphasis of Charlemagne on his military programs.<sup>71</sup>

Though Christianity became more clericalized, lay movements continued to appear throughout church history. These lay movements took a prophetic role calling the Church back to its primary mission. In the medieval period, confronted by a chronic abuse of power by the hierarchy, "intense revivalist movements swept across Europe...awaken[ing] the religious and political

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<sup>71</sup> John McManners, ed., The Oxford Illustrated History of Christianity, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 21-22, 86, 102-103; Alexandre Faivre, The Emergence of the Laity in the Early Church, trans. David Smith (New York: Paulist Press, 1990), 3-4, 43, 147; Jean-Guy Vaillancourt, Papal Power: A Study of Vatican Control over Lay Catholic Elites, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), 25.

conscience of peasants and townspeople alike." Monasteries were established by lay protesters, as small centers of opposition to the "symbiosis between Church and State."<sup>72</sup>

Provoked by the personal faith of Protestantism, European life became more secularized, i.e. more personal, private, and individualized. The rapid secularization of the state and culture characterized Europe during the Enlightenment (1600-1800). There was a split between the secular and the religious realm.<sup>73</sup> During the Enlightenment, the Church began to lose its predominance over Western culture.

By 1914, compared to 1800, there were fewer Europeans professing Christianity. Western society was being reshaped by the role of science, by major demographic shifts from village to city, by industrialization, by religious toleration, and by the emerging perspective that the Bible was only legend. The Catholic Church reacted with an anti-modernist stance.<sup>74</sup>

In the modern period, lay movements were influenced by the concepts of democracy and by the opportunity for higher education. European and North American lay Catholics at the turn of the twentieth century were interested in having a role and voice within the official Church, as they did in the State. Erupting into a lay awakening, European and North American lay Catholics found their voice at various lay congresses from 1848 to 1967. The formalizing of the Catholic Action in the 1920s gave way to other lay official and unofficial

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<sup>72</sup> Vaillancourt, Papal Power, 27.

<sup>73</sup> McManners, ed., The Oxford Illustrated History of Christianity, 267.

<sup>74</sup> *ibid.*, 342-344, 349.



movements in the United States.<sup>75</sup>

### **The 19th Century Challenge of Secularization and Modernization**

The Western modern Church was very much shaped by the attitudes and actions of North American society. Five major factors shaped Catholics in North America: 1) industrialization and urbanization, 2) the Depression, 3) World War II, 4) the boom years and, 5) the idealism and protest of the 1960s. They left an indelible impact on the United States and Canada, affecting the city of Montreal in the province of Quebec, Canada.

The history of the Catholic church in Quebec was different from that of any other part of Canada due to colonization and immigration patterns. In Quebec, the majority of the population was French and the religion was Catholic. In the rest of Canada, the population was mainly English and the religion was Protestant.<sup>76</sup>

Part of this Catholic population was Irish. Irish Catholics appear in New France as early as 1663.<sup>77</sup> In 1815, Notre Dame de Bonsecours was the spiritual home of the Irish Catholics. In 1830, they moved to the Recollet Church where they worshipped until the completion of St. Patrick's Church in 1847 "on the eve of the famine."<sup>78</sup> The famine years (1847-1849) saw the greatest level of

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<sup>75</sup> Vaillancourt, Papal Power, 36-37, 95; Callahan, The Mind of the Catholic Layman, 62-65 83-89; Pope Pius X, Encyclical, "Il fermo proposito," June 11, 1905, from The Lay Apostolate, 228; Pope Pius XI, Letter "C'est avec la joie" 282.

<sup>76</sup> Hamelin, Gagnon, Histoire du Catholicisme Québécois: Le XXe Siècle: Tome 1, 26, 41.

<sup>77</sup> Marianna O'Gallagher, "The Irish in Quebec," in The Untold Story: The Irish In Canada, eds. Robert O'Driscoll, and Lorna Reynolds, vol. 1 (Toronto: Celtic Arts of Canada, 1988), 253.

<sup>78</sup> Rosalyn Trigger, "The Role of the Parish in Fostering Irish-Catholic Identity in Nineteenth Century Montreal," (M.A. Thesis, McGill University, 1997), 22, 31; Grace, The Irish in Quebec, 98.

Irish immigration to Quebec.<sup>79</sup> As early as the 1840s, the Irish community directed its attention towards building of the institutions. The parish map of Montreal was altered to serve these new English speaking Catholics. By the 1880s St. Patrick's, the national parish, was added to by the establishment of other English-speaking Irish Catholic parishes such as: St Ann's, St. Mary's and St. Anthony's, and St. Gabriel's.<sup>80</sup>

"The Irish-Catholic community in nineteenth-century Montreal had a high level of institutional completeness..." Confronted with the poverty and diseases of the famine Irish, "Irish-Protestant and Irish-Catholic individuals, and their lay-run charitable societies, were able to contribute to the relief effort [though] the most effective means of mobilising aid was through the ecclesiastical structures pre-existing in Montreal." Also, there was a proliferation of parish associations in the late nineteenth century which were created for the spiritual, moral and emotional betterment of Irish Catholics in Montreal.<sup>81</sup>

The influx of Irish into the southwest sectors of Montreal created ghettos to accommodate the thousands. One such ghetto was called Griffintown, a small district located in St. Ann's Ward.<sup>82</sup> Griffintown was bounded by McGill

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<sup>79</sup> Patricia A. Thornton and Sherry Olson, The Tidal Wave of Irish Immigration to Montreal and its Demographic Consequences, Montreal: Department of Geography, McGill University, 1993. n.p.

<sup>80</sup> For the best analysis of the Irish-Catholic community in Montreal during the 19th century see: Trigger, "The Role of the Parish." See pages 59-60 for parish maps.

<sup>81</sup> Trigger, "The Role of the Parish," 38-39, 72, 130.

<sup>82</sup> The lamentable conditions of 19th century Griffintown are well known and have been written about and alluded to in numerous studies. For some sources which have graphic descriptions see: Canada, Royal Commission on the Relations of Labor and Capital, Canada investigates industrialism: the Royal Commission on the Relations of Labor and Capital, 1889, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1973), 249-254; Dorothy Suzanne Cross, "The Irish in Montreal, 1867-1896," (M.A Thesis, McGill University, 1969), 200-218.

and William Streets, the St. Lawrence River and the Lachine Canal.<sup>83</sup> This community was favoured by the poor, unskilled, 19th century Irish labourer, because of its proximity to the Lachine Canal and to other nearby employers.<sup>84</sup> The concentration of Irish there, during this period, confirms that in the 19th century, Griffintown was an Irish community.

### **The 20th Century**

Though it is believed that number of Catholics in the early twentieth century stayed constant, in reality the statistics reflect that even at this point, the Catholic church in Quebec was in decline. From 1901 to 1931, in a population of 1.2 million Quebecers, there were one million Catholics and 947,944 were French Catholics. In 1901, 86.8% of the population was Catholic and by 1931, it decreased slightly to 85.7%.<sup>85</sup>

In the early years of the twentieth century, there was a prevalent myth that St. Ann's Ward, which contained Griffintown, had remained predominately Irish.<sup>86</sup> However, the high percentage of Irish in the small confines of Griffintown did not imply that the entire ward was Irish. Indeed, St. Ann's Ward was

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<sup>83</sup> These boundaries set in the 19th century remain fairly constant into the twentieth century. Compare Trigger, "The Role of the Parish," 36, 38; and Herbert Brown Ames, The City Below the Hill: A Sociological Study of a Portion of the City of Montreal, Canada, (University of Toronto Press, 1972), 69; and, "St. Ann's: First Mass celebrated December 8, 1954," The Catholic Times, April 15 (1986) 8. See Figure 3, "Map of Griffintown."

<sup>84</sup> Cross, "The Irish in Montreal, 1867-1896," 219; Edgar Andrew Collard, "St. Ann's and the Irish," The Gazette, September 2, 1978, n.p.

<sup>85</sup> Hamelin, Gagnon, Histoire du Catholicisme Québécois: Le XXe Siècle: Tome 1, 72.

<sup>86</sup> Note that by 1897 Griffintown was subsumed under the district of St. Antoine, not St. Ann's. See: Ames, The City Below the Hill, 88-89. See 1915 federal map in Terry Copp, The Anatomy of Poverty: The Condition of the Working Class in Montreal 1897-1929, (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1974), 74. For my purposes of this thesis, I will continue to refer to it as part of St. Ann's.

predominately French-Catholic.

Even at the turn of the century, their poverty in Griffintown made the Irish stand out. Ames, in his study of poverty in Montreal's southwest, noted that the poorest of all the slums in Montreal was in Griffintown, where the Irish were the majority. In other words, the poorest of the Irish poor lived in Griffintown:

It has often been affirmed regarding old 'Griffintown'...that as soon as a family becomes well-to-do it moves to another locality. That this is the case appears to be corroborated by the evidence...In no other district does one find so many poor and so few well-to-do as in 'Griffintown.' This region appears to have been by the latter class abandoned to its fate.<sup>67</sup>

For many of its poor residents, Griffintown had been the first stop for housing and work once they landed in Montreal. But their sojourn in Griffintown was not fixed because, as the century wore on the numbers of poor Irish decreased as a result of the economic gains of the Irish community as a whole. Trigger states that by the turn of the 20th century the Irish of Montreal, even those whose roots had been in impoverished Griffintown, had succeeded in surpassing the French Canadian.<sup>68</sup> This translated into overall economic mobility and the Irish moved into more affluent areas. Thus by the 1921 census, St. Ann's Ward had a population of over 50,000--of whom only 8,000, just a fraction of the total Irish in Montreal, were of Irish descent.<sup>69</sup> The demographic decline continued even as the Irish of Montreal embraced the fruits of

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<sup>67</sup> Ames, The City Below the Hill, 69, 72.

<sup>68</sup> Trigger, "The Role of the Parish," 67; Ames, The City Below the Hill, 72; "Old St. Ann's," The Gazette, (Montreal) September 25, 1969.

<sup>69</sup> Robin Burns, "Who Shall Separate Us? The Montreal Irish and The Great War," in The Untold Story: The Irish in Canada, Robert O'Driscoll, and Lorna Reynolds, ed., vol. 2, (Toronto: Celtic Arts of Canada, 1988), 578.

industrialization and urbanization.

### Industrialization and urbanization

Industrialization and urbanization had a tremendous impact on North America. It changed how people lived and worked in Canada and particularly in the province of Quebec. At the turn of the century, agriculture was no longer the largest Quebec employer." In 1901, 40% of the population of Quebec lived in cities. This percentage reached 48% in 1911, 56% in 1921." By 1929, the City of Montreal, had reached a population of a million people. At the same time, many Montreal citizens still lived in poverty. In 1921, two-thirds of the male work force in Montreal were labourers and other types of hourly wage earners whose annual incomes were 20 to 30% below the poverty line. Also, Montreal at the turn of the century had the highest infant mortality rate of the civilized world. From 1899 to 1901, 26.76% of all newborns died before reaching their first birthday. This rate was more than double that of New York City.<sup>90</sup>

In response to the level of poverty in Montreal, at the turn of the century, the Protestants were the first to develop a centralized and coordinated approach to the question of social assistance. In 1902, they founded the Central Office of Charity. In 1911, this Protestant organization then invited the Saint Vincent de Paul Society to work in conjunction with them. However, due to issues of orthodoxy, the Saint Vincent de Paul Society decided to go it alone. Then in 1916, there was the creation of a coalition of Catholic organizations

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<sup>90</sup>Brian Young and John A. Dickenson, A Short History of Quebec: A Socio-Economic Perspective, (Toronto: Copp, Clark Pitman Ltd., 1988), 177, 181; Trudeau, ed., The Asbestos Strike, 1-2; Copp, The Anatomy of Poverty, 25-26, 30, 36-38; Linteau, et al., Quebec Since 1930, 1.

which provided various types of social assistance.<sup>91</sup>

The sharp population increase brought with it increased problems of crime, overcrowding, gambling, abandonment and other social ills. Recognizing this new industrial urban context of Montreal, the Quebec Catholic Church responded to both social and ethical issues. From 1898 to 1912, Mgr. Bruchési, Archbishop of Montreal, published seventeen pastoral letters to Montreal Catholics, regarding issues of morality and urban life. The Catholic Trade Union movement, which was established on behalf of workers, appeared in Montreal in 1914. In the same year, Sara Tansey and a group of lay women from the Loyola Literary Club founded the Montreal Convalescent Hospital. The Church voiced its moral concerns in Montreal newspapers and also through the Montreal lay based Catholic newspapers, Le Devoir, True Witness and then the Montreal Tribune.<sup>92</sup>

In a very short period of time immediately following the end of the First World War overwhelming demands were made by Catholics in Montreal as new immigrants flooded in and soldiers returned. They needed support. Many families were now without breadwinners, and war widows found themselves without any means of support. They too needed aid. This created an almost impossible situation, taxing to the utmost, the basic social services supplied by the Church. In 1921, The Quebec Public Charities Act was passed--the first time that the public sector was involved in social welfare assistance in Quebec.<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> Hamelin, Gagnon, Histoire du Catholicisme Québécois: Le XXe Siècle: Tome 1, 252-253.

<sup>92</sup> Hamelin, Gagnon, Histoire du Catholicisme Québécois: Le XXe Siècle: Tome 1, 175-177, 210-213, 217. The Catholic Times, "The English-Speaking Catholic People of Montreal," in L'église de Montréal: aperçus d'hier et d'aujourd'hui, 1836-1986, eds. Jean-Paul Rivet and André Lamoureux (Montréal: Fides, 1986), 333, 336.

<sup>93</sup> See: Han, "A Catholic Welfare Institution," 52-53.

Despite their inability to cope, the bishops sent a confidential letter to Premier Taschereau requesting that the 1921 law be amended to the effect that the government would not be a direct participant in welfare assistance. The Church did not want any intrusion in matters they felt were their exclusive domain.<sup>94</sup>

### Depression

The Great Depression of 1929 was felt internationally but had its greatest effects in Canada in areas that exploited natural resources, ie: the pulp and paper industry of Quebec. High unemployment slowed down consumer consumption. Montreal was worst hit because its economy depended on international trade.<sup>95</sup>

Responding to the chaos of the times, Charlotte Whitton, then Director of The Canadian Council on Child Welfare, was asked to come into Montreal to survey English Catholic Services. Her 1930 report determined that the English Catholic services were in pitiful state; "parishes could not meet their problems adequately...and clergy and people were struggling to meet problems too great for them."<sup>96</sup>

In place on the English Catholic side was a clearinghouse named the Catholic Social Service Guild. Unfortunately, the Guild was:  
not able to meet...urgent social needs..without sustaining

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<sup>94</sup> Antonin Dupont, "Les relations entre l'église et l'état sous Louis-Alexandre Taschereau, 1920-1936," (Ph.D. diss., McGill University, 1971), 117-118, cited in Robert Magnuson, A Brief History of Quebec Education: From New France to Parti Québécois, (Montreal: Harvest House, 1980), 72-73.

<sup>95</sup> Linteau, et al., Quebec Since 1930, 2-4.

<sup>96</sup> Charlotte Whitton, Social Welfare Services of English Catholics, (Montreal, n.p., 1930), 19; See also-The Canadian Encyclopedia, (Second Edition, 1988), s.v. "Whitton, Charlotte," James Struthers; The Canadian Encyclopedia, (Second Edition, 1988), s.v. "Canadian Council on Social Development," Michiel Horn.

continued contact until the problem was solved...the results...are disastrous. Many homes are broken up...and institutions are consequently over-crowded. The English Catholic poor are neglected and...the Catholic Church itself with its venerable record in all works of a charitable nature is losing prestige in Montreal, on account of the continual criticism of this gap in Catholic social work. For instance, hospitals reported that 'if a man who is ill and without funds is a Jew or a Protestant, his family will be looked after, but as a rule, if he is an English-speaking Catholic, it is useless to report the case.'<sup>97</sup>

Obviously, the Quebec Catholic Church was overwhelmed when confronted by the high level of social need during the Depression. In 1933, le Comité des oeuvres catholiques reported that thirty-three thousand Montreal families were in dire need of social assistance. Unable to cope, the Church had to work with the State to respond to social needs during the Depression. Ironically, The Depression revealed the inadequacies of the 1921 government legislation, The Quebec Public Charities Act. The State had the funds, but not the network to distribute them, the Church had the network, but not funds. The Church, though still in charge of the social sector, now had to bureaucratise in order to distribute properly and account for government funding.<sup>98</sup>

But in 1933, over accusations of mismanagement, the St. Vincent de Paul Society stopped distributing government funds. This forced the government to inaugurate a civil network to distribute funds. This resulted in statism. For the first time, the people of Quebec became reliant on the State rather than the Church for their social needs.<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> *ibid.*, 26-27. Note that the report was accepted by the Diocese of Montreal, but has been criticized for its negative portrayal which ignored the role of the religious communities and of the St. Vincent de Paul Society in Montreal. See: Han, "A Catholic Welfare Institution," 126-127.

<sup>98</sup> Han, "A Catholic Welfare Institution," 52-53.

<sup>99</sup> Young, et al., A Short History of Quebec, 235; Hamelin, Gagnon, Histoire du Catholicisme Québécois: Le XXe Siècle: Tome 1, 368-369.



Though the State took control, Quebec lay movements continued to play an important role in the Depression.<sup>100</sup> One major organization was L'Action Catholique, an umbrella group for such groups as Jeunesse Ouvrière Chrétienne (J.O.C.), for Ligue Ouvrière catholique (L.O.C.), and Jeunesse Étudiante de Catholique (J.E.C). It was founded during this state of socio-economic emergency. J.O.C. was established in Montreal in 1929, and set up over forty clubs in the early 1930s. By 1935, J.O.C. had eighty-eight groups in 81 parishes. In 1935, J.O.C. established L'Aide aux désemparés which provided social services for youth, ages 17 to 19. This social service provider dealt with many different needs: the unemployed, juvenile delinquents, vagabonds, homeless, teen-age mothers, and prisoners. In 1936, J.O.C. set up two houses of hospitality, one for men and one for women, offering free accommodations, meals, and clothing for poor young Catholic workers. Throughout the decade, Catholic moral and ethical concerns were voiced in Montreal's newspapers and also through the lay-directed Catholic newspapers: Le Devoir and the Montreal Beacon.<sup>101</sup>

Things were also changing elsewhere as other official lay movements responded to the needs of people during the Depression in North America. However, the task was daunting. Many of the unofficial lay movements that became prominent in the 1950s and 1960s first appeared in North America in the 1930s in response to the urgent social needs of the Depression era.

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<sup>100</sup> See: Han, "A Catholic Welfare Institution," 135 for an analysis of the lay and religious groups that participated in social service delivery at this time.

<sup>101</sup> L'Action Catholique is the translation of 'Catholic Action'; Jeunesse Ouvrière Chrétienne (J.O.C.) is the translation of 'Young Christian Workers' (Y.C.W.); L.O.C. can be translated as the Catholic Workers' League, Clément, "L'Action catholique," 297,304; Hamelin, Gagnon, Histoire du Catholicisme Québécois: Le XXe Siècle: Tome 1, 210-213, 379; The Catholic Times, "The English-Speaking Catholic People of Montreal," in L'église de Montréal, 336.

Catherine de Hueck Doherty established a 'Friendship House' to serve the poor in Toronto in 1930, and another house in Harlem, New York in 1938. In 1933, the Catholic Worker movement was founded in New York City by Dorothy Day and Peter Maurin. They set up both a house of hospitality for the poor and a newspaper called the Catholic Worker.<sup>102</sup>

### The Nineteen Forties

Another major event that had a profound affect was World War II. Urbanization and industrialization accelerated with the high demands of Canada's wartime economy. Catholics in Quebec experienced new freedoms as people entered the armed forces and women worked in war related industries.<sup>103</sup> Concerned about anti-clerical attitudes and religious indifference, the Church and its lay movements launched new morality campaigns against such issues as female workers in factories, alcoholism, pornography, promiscuity and juvenile delinquency.<sup>104</sup> In 1946, 'La Ligue de Vigilance social' assembled a group of prominent Montreal clergy, businessmen, and community

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<sup>102</sup> (New Catholic Encyclopedia, (1967), s.v. "Friendship House" D.M. Cantwell; Catherine de Hueck Doherty, Fragments of My Life, (Notre Dame: Ave Maria Press, 1979), 93-99 passim; Davis, "The Rise and Decline," 53-69, 94-107 passim; J.G. Shaw, "Among Ourselves," The Ensign (Kingston, Ontario) January 29, 1949, 5; (New Catholic Encyclopedia, (1967), s.v. "Catholic Worker, The," J.C. Cort.); Day, The Long Loneliness, 182-186.

<sup>103</sup> Linteau, et al., Quebec Since 1930, 99, 105; For information on the Irish in the two wars see: Edward Atkinson, "Canada's Irish regiments," The Archivist 18 (2) July-September 1991, 21-24. See also: Robin B. Burns, "The Irish of Montreal and the First World War," (typescript) A Colloquium presented to The Department of History, S.G.W., Concordia University, 1977; The Irish-Canadian Rangers, (Montreal, Gazette Printing Co., 1916).

<sup>104</sup> Hamelin, Histoire du Catholicisme Québécois: Le XXe Siècle Tome 2, 29; Micheline Dumont, Michèle Jean, Marie Lavigne, Jennifer Stoddart, Quebec Women: A History, translated by Roger Gannor and Rosalind Gill, (Toronto: The Women's Press, 1987) 283; It was felt that the woman working in a factory was deserting her family and causing many social problems such as juvenile delinquency. She was also sacrificing the interests of Quebec as a nation by not adhering to the role of the woman within a traditional family which was part of Quebec's collective identity.

leaders. It was an ecumenical bilingual organization established to discuss social and moral issues and to implement effective strategies.<sup>105</sup>

It was revealed in a survey from the L.O.C. and the J.O.C. in 1941, that 22% of workers no longer practiced their faith and 19% practised it irregularly. With these findings, both the L.O.C. and the J.O.C. persevered in their outreach to the workers, maintaining their religious and social services. In 1941, J.O.C. published 15,000 copies of their own version of a dialogue mass for young people. To deal with the issue of hunger, in 1942, L.O.C. collaborated with the city of Montreal to provide community gardens. By 1945, 2,000 community gardens were in existence in Montreal for the benefit of workers and their families. L.O.C. also provided family budget services and housing cooperatives.<sup>106</sup> Based on post-war conditions, J.O.C. went through a major reorientation. It moved away from morality crusades and focussed mainly on workers' conditions and rights.<sup>107</sup>

On the secular side, the 1930 Whitton Report continued to reverberate in Montreal's English Catholic community. The Federation of Catholic Charities inaugurated a new institution, St. Martha's Home, in 1947. Situated in the heart of downtown, on St. Marc Street, St. Martha's Home provided emergency shelter, food and clothing to Catholic women. This service continued to serve women in need until 1960.<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>105</sup> Hamelin, Histoire du Catholicisme Québécois: Le XXe Siècle Tome 2, 148-149. Dr. Magnus Seng, one of the founding group members of BLH, was a member of this league- La Ligue de Vigilance social in the late 1940s..

<sup>106</sup> Hamelin, Histoire du Catholicisme Québécois: Le XXe Siècle Tome 2, 29; Clément, "L'Action catholique," 304-305.

<sup>107</sup> Clément, "L'Action catholique," 308.

<sup>108</sup> Valerie MacDermitt, "Golden Square Mile Mansion now a century old," The Catholic Times October 1989, 5.

Unofficial lay groups also remained active in North America. In Ontario, immediately after the war in 1947, Doherty returned to Canada and established Madonna House in Combermere, Ontario.<sup>109</sup> Elsewhere, in 1946-7, Helen Iswolsky created the "Third Hour" in New York City which was an ecumenical group of intellectual elites from different Christian traditions.<sup>110</sup> Reports from The Ensign indicate that by 1948, many American and Montreal sodalities had been established for lay Catholic adults and students for both piety and charity.<sup>111</sup>

Meanwhile in Quebec, perhaps the most significant event in the post WWII era was the Asbestos strike, because it had far-reaching effects in the Church.<sup>112</sup> The Asbestos Strike was of great importance to J.O.C. since their focus was on workers' rights and conditions. Due to their mandate, J.O.C. was unable to involve itself in the political action during the strike; yet they did not hesitate to show sympathy for the workers' cause. The Catholic trade unions also supported the Asbestos workers; yet the Church sided with the Duplessis government. The Church supported the desires of big business and police brutality rather than the needs of workers.<sup>113</sup>

Quebec Catholics followed this strike in several lay Catholic newspapers:

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<sup>109</sup> New Catholic Encyclopedia, (1967), s.v. "Friendship House" D.M. Cantwell; Doherty, Fragments of My Life, 172-3; Shaw, "Among Ourselves," February 12, 1949, 5.

<sup>110</sup> Davis, "The Rise and Decline," 108-120 passim; Shaw, "Among Ourselves," May 21, 1949, 5.

<sup>111</sup> Trigger gives evidence in her thesis for the existence of Montreal parish sodalities in the 1880s. Trigger, "The Role of the Parish," 85-88; Mary Branswell, "What Montrealers Are Doing," The Ensign (Kingston, Ontario) November 13, 1948, n.p. Branswell noted many active Montreal sodalities in her column. Lorraine Fitzgerald, "Shut-In Montrealer Provides Lesson In Worthwhile Living," The Ensign (Kingston, Ontario) November 13, 1948, n.p. Fitzgerald describes a special sodality for shut-ins whose membership included Dixie MacMaster.

<sup>112</sup> For details of this monumental event and its repercussions in Quebec society see: Trudeau, ed., The Asbestos Strike.

<sup>113</sup> Clément, "L'Action catholique," 308; Young, et al., A Short History of Quebec, 257.

Le Devoir, L'Action catholique, Le Front ouvrier (The Labour Front), and The Ensign.<sup>114</sup> The views of the Church were unpopular and for many Catholics, this lack of support signalled the beginning of the decline of Church influence in Quebec. By the late 1940s, Quebec lay Catholic elites opposed the traditional conservative style governing of Duplessis, calling for the modernization of Quebec. Moreover, the recruitment of priests, brothers and nuns declined in the 1940s, and by 1948, between 30% to 50% of Montreal Catholics were no longer attending Church.<sup>115</sup>

### The Nineteen Fifties

#### *Prosperity*

In Quebec, the 1950s was a period characterized by prosperity, poverty and impatience. Many Quebecers enjoyed the benefits of post-war prosperity. Incomes increased, consumer prices were reasonable and the combination fostered a growth in consumerism. Improved incomes caused economic mobility, which directly contributed to a housing crisis as Quebecers desired improved and new housing. With new purchasing power and easy credit, Quebecers bought cars, furniture, and home appliances. Living conditions throughout Quebec improved, but Montreal saw the greatest level of improved living conditions as public health campaigns promoted hygienic standards and the death rate decreased. The most significant change in Quebec was the creation of suburbs with single-family unit housing. More workers found themselves with the benefits of a standardized forty-hour work week. Leisure time went up and with paid vacations, Montrealers patronized the summer

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<sup>114</sup> Trudeau, ed., The Asbestos Strike, 240-247, 256-263.

<sup>115</sup> Linteau, et al., Quebec Since 1930, 240-241, 252-253.

resort towns in the Laurentian mountains north of the city.<sup>116</sup>

### ***Poverty***

The above picture does not characterize the fate of all Montrealers, for many Quebecers were still entrenched in poverty. It was reported that at the end of the 1950s, a quarter of the non-agricultural population still lived below the poverty line and most were francophones. A major factor in this systemic poverty was the low-wage industries which were very key to Quebec economy. Also, large francophone families along with seasonal unemployment perpetuated the high level of poverty.<sup>117</sup>

Federal Government social programs launched in the 1940s, brought some relief to those living below the poverty line in the 1950s. Unemployment insurance, the old-age pension, family allowance and other types of social assistance programs were extended to include the most vulnerable of the poor. However, some programs underwent strong criticism because their strict eligibility criteria excluded many people who were unable to work. In response, the federal government established an unemployment assistance program to include more people. This program required both federal and provincial governments to share the costs of the program. Quebec however, did not join this program till 1959.<sup>118</sup>

### ***Impatience***

In the 1950s, the Church lost its predominance in the socio-political realm. Frustrated with the Church's past response to social and economic issues, Quebec society began to move away from traditional Church ideology to

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<sup>116</sup> *ibid.*, 228-232.

<sup>117</sup> *ibid.*, 233.

<sup>118</sup> *ibid.*, 234-236.

embrace a social ideology based on pluralism. Though Cardinal Leger fought against poverty during the 1950s, he was viewed as part of traditional Catholic thought.<sup>119</sup> Harkening back to its failure in the thirties, the Church of the 1950s was unable to respond to the increasing level of social needs. Thus, as both levels of government became more involved in social funding and programming, the Church became more and more irrelevant.<sup>120</sup>

Also, there was a growing impatience with the symbiotic relationship between the Duplessis government's traditional nationalism and the Catholic Church's conservative ideologies in Quebec. The government's nationalism was based on a religious, agricultural and patriarchal concept of Quebec. Opposition to the Duplessis government came from all sectors, particularly after the Asbestos strike. The rhetoric of protest grew louder in the 1950s, and engaged a broad spectrum of Quebecers, such as the English, the French, communists, socialist, artists, writers, the Canadian and Catholic trade unions, and students from J.E.C.<sup>121</sup>

The heavy-handed tactics over 'the Bishop Charbonneau affair' between the Church and the Duplessis government led to a renewed call for modernization by Catholic elites.<sup>122</sup> This new reform liberalism found its voice in

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<sup>119</sup> Hamelin, Histoire du Catholicisme Québécois: Le XXe Siècle Tome 2, 109, 118. Even university social science departments made this change in their orientation.

<sup>120</sup> Linteau, et al., Quebec Since 1930, 242.

<sup>121</sup> *ibid.*, 250-252.

<sup>122</sup> During the Asbestos Strike, Archbishop Charbonneau of Montreal in a sermon came out in support of the workers. He was the sole Quebec bishop to speak out against the position of big business and the government during the strike. Due to his actions, he was exiled to Victoria, British Columbia to live out the rest of his days. Though officially denied, it has been suggested that Duplessis, and certain Church officials, conspired together to ensure Charbonneau's exile from Montreal. Hamelin, Histoire du Catholicisme Québécois: Le XXe Siècle Tome 2, 110-116; Linteau, et al., Quebec Since 1930, 242.

Cité Libre, a magazine which was established by Pierre Elliot Trudeau and Gérard Pelletier in 1950. These and other lay Catholic elites opposed Duplessis' traditional nationalism which denied the socio-economic realities of Quebec. They strongly advocated for secularization and modernization. They persistently demanded the withdrawal of the Church from Quebec's institutions and politics. These Catholics supported the concept of a progressive Catholicism that would encourage a stronger role for the laity, more dialogue, and a progressive Catholicism that would be predicated upon the individual's conscience.<sup>123</sup>

Their words did not fall on deaf ears, for they voiced what was being mirrored in Quebec society, as most Quebecers supported the modernist stance. For example, in 1951 as part of a morality campaign, the Archbishop had asked the city to close all stores for the feast of the Immaculate Conception on December 8th. Ignoring this campaign, Catholics flocked to do their Christmas shopping in the western part of downtown where stores remained open. It is evident, then that by the early 1950s, the Church had already lost of control over its faithful.<sup>124</sup>

This is not to imply that the Church went underground at this time. In fact, different crusades took place and the Church began to spread its message through radio, film and television. The liturgical movement was strong in Quebec in the 1950s with emphasis on Gregorian chant, the dialogue mass and sacred music. Catholic Action in Quebec held many conferences, and study days, and published many documents in connection with the liturgical movement. On September 13, 1954, Pius XII authorized a bilingual Mass

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<sup>123</sup> Linteau, et al., Quebec Since 1930, 254-257.

<sup>124</sup> *ibid.*, 241-242.



(French-Latin) for Quebec and other francophone churches in Canada. Also, to promote ecumenical dialogue, on January 14, 1952 Father Irénée Beaubien established the Catholic Inquiry Forum. Nevertheless, these efforts, perhaps too little too late, were not enough for the Church to regain its influence in Quebec society.<sup>125</sup>

### *Lay movements*

With the growing opposition expressed during this decade, L'Action Catholique became split over its loyalties to the Church and its concern over the realities of Quebec.<sup>126</sup> The umbrella group, L'Action Catholique, was still prolific, but even it noted lower memberships during this period.<sup>127</sup> However there were still lay Catholics who launched into areas that had previously been the domain of the institutional Church. One such area was the alleviation of poverty. During the decade a group of lay English Catholics established Benedict Labre House. It was to be both a house of hospitality for the poor and a center for the lay apostolate. They dealt with many poor of Montreal who could not meet the strict criteria for the government social assistance programs. In other words, they assisted those who fell between the cracks, the extreme poor in Griffintown and the indigent elsewhere in Montreal.<sup>128</sup>

In the 1950s, Cité Libre, and Le Devoir continued to offer insightful lay Catholic perspectives on different issues for French-speaking readers.

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<sup>125</sup> Hamelin, Histoire du Catholicisme Québécois: Le XXe Siècle Tome 2, 217, 221, 228.

<sup>126</sup> Clément, "L'Action catholique," 306.

<sup>127</sup> Linteau, et al., Quebec Since 1930, 240.

<sup>128</sup> Jim Shaw to Dorothy Day, letter, c.1952, 1-3; "Jim Shaw's letter to Catherine Doherty," 6; Buell, "Labre House," 1-4. Indigent means "any person, (child or adult) being cared for in a hospital, home, refuge, creche, sanatorium, institution for the blind, deaf, dumb, foundlings, or other similar public charitable institution." Whitton, Social Welfare Services, 13.

However, The Ensign, which was launched in 1948, with a Quebec supplement, folded in 1956. No subsequent publication was launched until 1963; therefore, there was no English Catholic community newspaper from 1956 to 1960. Thus, since it was launched in April 1955, Benedict Labre House's UNITY newspaper played an important role for Montreal English Catholics during the second half of the 1950s. UNITY during this period provided Montreal lay Catholics with a cross-section of news and opinion on topics related to the lay apostolate, poverty, and the upcoming council of Vatican II.<sup>129</sup>

Even at this time, Griffintown was served by others of the faithful, by large organizations, and by small groups, all committed to alleviating the extreme poverty there. One small group was the Little Sisters of Charles de Foucauld, women who led a simple contemplative life among the poor. Like BLH they had moved into Griffintown in the 1950s. Like BLH, their example of piety and poverty had an impact both on their surrounding community and on Benedict Labre House.<sup>130</sup>

### *Demographic Decline*

The establishment of BLH in the mid-1950s coincided with the centenary of St. Ann's parish of Griffintown. Articles written around the commemoration of this milestone describe a community under siege. In 1955, the Christian Brothers moved out of St. Ann's school. Plans were drawn up in the late fifties

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<sup>129</sup> The Catholic Times, "The English-Speaking Catholic People of Montreal," in L'église de Montréal, 336; MacGillivray, "People Concerned," 1; Buell, "The Man," 17-18;

<sup>130</sup> New Catholic Encyclopedia, (1967), s.v. "Little Sisters of Jesus," A.J. Wouters; See also: Charles, Directory For The Charles Of Jesus; Joseph E. Haley, C.S.C., ed., Apostolic Sanctity in the World: A Symposium on Total Dedication in the World and the Secular Institutes, (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame, 1957), 179-181; MacGillivray, "People Concerned," 1; Hagarty, interview by author, 8 June, 1999; Lawlor, interview by author, 15 June 1999; Buell, interview by author, 17 May 1999; The Catholic Women's League had also moved into the parish in 1951, see: Rev. John Gallagher, CSs.R., The Centenary of Old St. Ann's, n.p., 1954, 48.

to rezone totally Victoriaville (better known as Goose Village) in order to make way for construction projects in preparation for Expo 67. Many people who had attended St. Ann's Church lived in Goose Village and the loss of this population accelerated the loss of parishioners.<sup>131</sup> Father Baldwin of St. Ann's Church, in an interview in 1961, talked about how the 1950s were disastrous for the Griffintown community. He warned that the "parish probably would not be here today were it not for former parishioners who return to St. Ann's for weddings and funerals and of course for Tuesday Devotions...attendance in St. Ann's schools has decreased 75 percent over the past 20 years..."<sup>132</sup>

The decline in school and church attendance in Griffintown illustrates the severe demographic shift in the old Irish community. This decline, which had started at the turn of the century, accelerated in the 1950s. Figure 1 "Griffintown Population Decline, 1941-1971," demonstrates that in 1951 the population of Griffintown was 4,509. This was a modest 7.2% drop from the 1941 census of 4,858 people. However, between 1951 and 1961 the decline was precipitous. The population had dropped overall to only 2,686, a 41.5% drop in ten years.<sup>133</sup>

It is especially noteworthy that by 1941 Griffintown could no longer be called an Irish community. All census figures show that the French Canadian was predominant. Even assuming that the majority of the population of the British Isles were Irish, they had been seriously eclipsed by the migration of the

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<sup>131</sup> Harold Poitras, "Irish stronghold succumbs to creeping industrialism," The Montreal Star, September 23, 1969, n.p.

<sup>132</sup> Al Palmer, "Two Old Parishes in City Face Extinction," The Gazette, November 15, 1961, n.p.

<sup>133</sup> Dominion Bureau of Statistics, Ninth Census of Canada, 1951: Population and Housing Characteristics by census tracts: Montreal, (Ottawa, 1953), 4; Dominion Bureau of Statistics, Census of Canada, 1961: Population and Housing Characteristics by Census Tracts: Montreal, (Ottawa, 1963), 8. See Figure 1.

rural French Canadian into Montreal, and by the Irish community's departure decades earlier.<sup>134</sup>

## **The Nineteen Sixties**

### ***Modernization***

The 1960s was a period of modernization and secularization in Quebec. It was characterized by reform, the Quiet Revolution, economic prosperity, and by the Church's decline. With a new liberal government of Premier Jean Lesage (1960-1966), the call for modernization of the 1940s and 1950s became a reality. Lesage had won the support of, and 'consensus' from a multitude of sectors: 'trade unions, corporations, and intellectual and political circles.' These new dominant groups, the new francophone power elite, favoured an 'aggressive nationalism'. Lesage's reform liberalism was a modern interpretation of Quebec's old 'nationalism'. These were the years of the 'Quiet Revolution' as Quebec sought to work out its national identity apart from the Church and apart from the rest of Canada. In this period, nationalism was defined in Quebec by 'political, institutional and social reforms'.<sup>135</sup>

In the 1960s, Quebec played catch up with the rest of Canada and the Western world. In the 1960s a series of government policies were put into effect so as to change "Quebec's institutions, image and self-concept." Under the banner of the 'welfare state', the government of Quebec secularized the three main sectors: education, health and social affairs, which were once the domain of the Quebec Catholic church. These sectors were reorganized completely

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<sup>134</sup> Dorothy Day indicates in her April, 1955 visit to Patricia House that Marjorie served supper regularly to a group of about sixteen French children. Day, "On Pilgrimage," 6.

<sup>135</sup> Linteau, et al., Quebec Since 1930, 307-500 passim.

and refitted with government staff, funding, and programs.<sup>136</sup>

Another area of change occurred when the Quebec trade unions shed their Catholic heritage and became more militant, more radical and even violent during certain strikes in the 1960s. For a brief time, in the early 1960s, the unions supported the Lesage government's nationalist policies, but by the mid-1960s, the atmosphere changed as the unions viewed this relationship as a trap. With the government as the key employer, the unions saw the state as the exploiter of the people.<sup>137</sup>

### *Prosperity*

Quebec's strong economic growth in the sixties was due to the rise of business investments and federal and provincial funding. Quebec started to invest in its own corporations like Bombardier and Hydro Quebec. With such economic leverage, the government was able to subsidize many construction and public work projects. A good example was in the city of Montreal, which from 1960 to 1966 was physically transformed. During this period, Montreal's subway system was built. At the same time, the Trans-Canada Highway, the Décarie and Ville Marie Expressways were constructed as feeders to Montreal Island suburbs. Also, many Montreal skyscrapers and government buildings were constructed, including Place Ville Marie. All these projects were built in coordination with the main construction project, Expo 67.<sup>138</sup>

Other changes occurred. Quebec became more urbanized as the

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<sup>136</sup> However, the process of deconfessionalizing primary and secondary schools was lengthier, occurring over a forty year period (1960-2000). Linteau, et al., Quebec Since 1930, 308-476 passim; Hamelin, Histoire du Catholicisme Québécois: Le XXe Siècle Tome 2, 213-278 passim.

<sup>137</sup> Linteau, et al., Quebec Since 1930, 419-422; Hamelin, Histoire du Catholicisme Québécois: Le XXe Siècle Tome 2, 243-245.

<sup>138</sup> Linteau, et al., Quebec Since 1930, 309-404 passim.

majority of its population lived in either Quebec City or Montreal. But the region of Montreal was the hub;--more than half Quebec's population lived there. Disposable income in Montreal was above the Quebec average and Montrealers' purchasing power continued to increase. Quebec was finally recognized as a consumer society in the 1960s. More income coupled with more leisure also led to more expenditures on recreation and cultural activities.<sup>139</sup>

### ***Social Change***

A significant change in the 1960s was the Church's shrinking role on Quebec values and culture. The main means of influence on Quebecers beside the government was mass media during this period. Mass media transmitted American culture and values which Quebecers appropriated as their own. Quebec youth culture and the family were heavily affected by the North American culture and values.<sup>140</sup>

Quebec was seriously affected by the post-war II baby boom: those children born between the late-1940s and the 1960s. Between 1960 and 1970, 1.2 million Quebecers reached the age of fourteen. The baby boomers became the youth culture of the 1960s. Many different services were created in Quebec for this generation of youth, particularly new highschools, universities, and the C.E.G.E.P. system (community college). Quebec youth embraced British and American rock music, the drug culture, the counterculture and the sexual liberation of the 1960s. They also became part of the North American social

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<sup>139</sup> *ibid.*, 385-461 *passim*.

<sup>140</sup> Linteau, et al., Quebec Since 1930, 555-556; Hamelin, Histoire du Catholicisme Québécois: Le XXe Siècle Tome 2, 260-273 *passim*.

protest movement, taking to the streets in support of Quebec nationalism, peace, and students', workers' and womens' rights.<sup>141</sup>

No longer influenced by the Quebec Catholic Church, the traditional Quebec family also underwent serious change, influenced by the broader social movements of the 1960s. During the 1960s, Quebec adults started to choose common-law relationships over marriage. With increased economic power and the widespread use of the birth control pill, men and women's role shifted in relationships in Quebec. Less emphasis was put on having children, resulting in a decrease in birth rate after 1965. Also, in the 1960s, divorce became less expensive, creating more single parent families.<sup>142</sup>

### ***A State of Decline***

Disempowered by the government and propelled by the reforms of Vatican II, the Quebec Catholic Church was in a state of decline in the 1960s. Vatican II (1962-1965) with its sweeping reforms, had a large impact on churches internationally. The effect of Council's reforms on the Quebec Church were significant, adding to its decline. Church attendance declined at a rapid rate in Quebec during this period. In Montreal, church attendance shrank from 61% to 30% between the years 1961 and 1971. In the early 1960s, recruitment to the priesthood and to religious communities almost completely dried up. In the wake of government and Vatican II reforms, in the mid 1960s, there was a large exodus from the priesthood along with nuns and brothers from religious communities. Quebec lay Catholics continued to distance themselves from the

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<sup>141</sup> Linteau, et al., Quebec Since 1930, 310, 321-322.

<sup>142</sup> Linteau, et al., Quebec Since 1930, 310-325 passim; Hamelin, Histoire du Catholicisme Québécois: Le XXe Siècle Tome 2, 260-273 passim.

Church on issues of marriage, birth control and divorce.<sup>143</sup>

During this period of modernization and secularization in Quebec, many Quebec clergy were attending one of the most important events in the Church's history, the council of Vatican II. Several had key roles at the council including Cardinal Leger. Fully aware of Quebec's new context, Quebec's Church struggled to adapt, while attempting to put forth the reforms from Vatican II. In the spirit of Vatican II, the Church did not fight modernization, or the Quiet Revolution. In an understanding of a new Catholicism, many Quebec clergy and bishops supported this new modernized, nationalist-oriented Quebec.<sup>144</sup>

As the Church struggled to find a new role, in 1968 it called for a study of the state of Catholicism in Quebec. The study commission of pastors and theologians led by sociologist Fernand Dumont published its findings in 1972. Unfortunately, by the date of Dumont report's publication, the exodus from the Church in Quebec had already occurred. The report's finding and suggestions for innovations in ministry were now offered to a small remnant of the Quebec Catholic Church whose reaction was mixed.<sup>145</sup>

### *Response*

With Cardinal Leger in a key role at Vatican II, the Archdiocese of Montreal moved quickly to take on the Council reforms. One of the areas where the reforms in Montreal were expressed, was in the Archdiocese's ecumenical ventures. In 1962, the Catholic Inquiry Forum celebrated its tenth anniversary.

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<sup>143</sup> Linteau, et al., Quebec Since 1930, 476-479; Hamelin, Histoire du Catholicisme Québécois: Le XXe Siècle Tome 2, 213-267 passim.

<sup>144</sup> Bernard, M. Daly, Remembering for Tomorrow: A History of the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1943-1993, (Ottawa: Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1995), 42-44; Baum, The Church in Quebec, 25, 38;

<sup>145</sup> Baum, The Church in Quebec, 25-26.



In the same year, Leger authorized a diocesan commission on ecumenism and published a pastoral letter supporting Christian unity. In the same year, the Dominicans set up a series of inter-faith dialogues at their convent. Through such activity, Montreal became a dynamic center for ecumenism.<sup>146</sup>

Though Catholic Action had done much in this area in the past, Leger strongly supported a even larger role for the laity in the parish. Also, a strong emphasis was put on a pastoral ministry, where team members made one-to-one contact with both active and disaffected parishioners. With the support of the liturgical movement in Quebec, many reforms were made to liturgy and religious art. On March 7, 1965, the reforms of Vatican II were reflected in local churches across Quebec as Mass was said in the vernacular: French, English, Italian and other languages. Quebec churches designed in the post-Vatican era were often excellent architectural examples of the use of "simpler lines, modern forms...creat[ing]more intimate places of worship."<sup>147</sup>

In the area of communication, the Catholic church continued to voice its religious and moral concerns through its publications. To do battle against the influence of the mass media, the Church added many new publications to continue to spread its message. In attempt to modernize itself, in the early 1960s, L'Action catholique became L'Action. During the same period, Maintenant was established targeting on the new lay and clerical elites. This publication soon had its adversary with the launch of Aujourd'hui Québec in 1965, that targeted the traditional elites. These and many more publications continued to offer insightful lay Catholic perspectives to various issues for

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<sup>146</sup> Linteau, et al., Quebec Since 1930, 478: Hamelin, Histoire du Catholicisme Québécois: Le XXe Siècle Tome 2, 229.

<sup>147</sup> Linteau, et al., Quebec Since 1930, 478-479: Hamelin, Histoire du Catholicisme Québécois: Le XXe Siècle Tome 2, 214-216, 221.

French-speaking readers. However, the Montreal English Catholic community still lacked a formal community newspaper from 1960 to 1963. During this period, Benedict Labre House's UNITY newspaper continued to provide Montreal lay Catholics with news and opinions on topics related to the lay apostolate, poverty, and Vatican II. For a short period, The Challenge was established in 1963 as an official Montreal archdiocese paper.<sup>148</sup>

One area, that the Church did not give up on easily was education. In October, 1960, the Jesuits proposed to open two more universities. Though much debate ensued, their proposal was refused by the government which felt that such projects reflected the past not the present realities of Quebec. However, a sense of compromise characterized the discussions of confessional schools for primary and secondary level students in the 1960s.<sup>149</sup>

### ***Lay Movements***

In the late 1950s to mid-1960s, Catholic Action was in the process of change. In the late 1950s, there was much confusion between the Catholic Action and pious associations. In February 1960, it was decided that pious associations would be coordinated with Catholic Action in a general way. However, with the deepening process of secularization in Quebec, in the 1960s, Catholic Action found their methods generally ineffectual with the new youth generation. Catholic Action became obsolete as other lay movements and groups adapted and found new ways of engaging youth and adults. Also, Catholic Action lost its role within the parish as the role of the laity was enlarged

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<sup>148</sup> Hamelin, Histoire du Catholicisme Québécois: Le XXe Siècle Tome 2, 260-264; The Catholic Times, "The English-Speaking Catholic People of Montreal," in L'église de Montréal, 336; MacGillivray, "People Concerned," 1; Buell, "The Man," 17-18.

<sup>149</sup> Hamelin, Histoire du Catholicisme Québécois: Le XXe Siècle Tome 2, 231-259 passim; Baum, The Church in Quebec, 39-43.

in the Church with Vatican II. With a larger role for the laity, parish life was reorganized, with pastoral teams, pastoral animators, liturgists, and ecumenical groups, making Catholic Action basically obsolete. This combination of factors and conditions, led Catholic Action to disappear in 1966 from the Quebec Catholic landscape. In the same vein, Benedict Labre House, which was at its peak during the early 1960s due to its strong connection with young people, its work with international students and its ecumenical focus, also experienced a period of decline as an unofficial lay apostolate after Tony Walsh left in 1966. Like the Church and Catholic Action, during this period, BLH became less attractive to both to disaffected lay Catholics, and to active lay people within local parishes.<sup>150</sup>

All the good ventures that arose from the Vatican II era could not stem the tide of modernization and secularization occurring in Quebec. By the end of Vatican II, the Quebec church was disempowered by the State, left with a collection of empty churches, convents and monasteries. By the end of the 1960s, the Church had adapted its voice in Quebec from that of a monopoly to that of a small business. This was a more post-Vatican II type of Catholicism, which was more pastoral, non-triumphal. It called for a larger role for the laity, ecumenism, and acceptance of a pluralistic Quebec.<sup>151</sup>

### ***Demographic Decline***

The bustling 60s did not reverse but accelerated, the demographic trend in Griffintown. In 1970, the priest in a newspaper interview noted, "St. Ann's

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<sup>150</sup> Hamelin, Histoire du Catholicisme Québécois: Le XXe Siècle Tome 2, 223-224, 322-323; Clément, "L'Action catholique," 313; Cook, "BLH like university," 7; Buell, "The Man," 17-18; Sil Galvin, "We Need to Increase Our Family," UNITY (Montreal) May 1969, 3; Davis, "The Rise and Decline," 175.

<sup>151</sup> Hamelin, Histoire du Catholicisme Québécois: Le XXe Siècle Tome 2, 264-279.

Church in Griffintown will be demolished next summer." He continued, "The reason is starkly simple: the parish has almost disappeared. Where once the handsome greystone edifice served 1200 families, it serves barely 90 and of these only half are English-speaking."<sup>152</sup> This is borne out in the census. The 1971 census shows that as Benedict Labre House was nearing its second decade of service, the community around it had almost disappeared. The population in Griffintown had diminished to a paltry 840 souls.<sup>153</sup> The once vibrant Irish community in Griffintown was a shadow of its former self.

Another change was that in 1963 the City of Montreal re-zoned Griffintown as industrial. The housing stock could not be renewed, and many existing homes were slated for demolition. This meant that though many continued to come into Griffintown to work, more and more families had to find housing elsewhere.<sup>154</sup> Unfortunately the rezoning backfired as "it [had] not attracted any new industry because it [did] not have the vast spaces required for modern factories."<sup>155</sup> The municipal efforts to expropriate, raze and redesign the community had not revitalized, but had hastened its demise.

Benedict Labre House then, is a kind of test case to study the larger picture of the shifting landscape of lay movements in the Catholic Church in the

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<sup>152</sup> "Old St. Ann's," n.p.; Harold Poitras, "End of an Era in Griffintown," The Montreal Star, July 4, 1970.

<sup>153</sup> Statistics Canada, 1971 Census of Canada: Population and Housing Characteristics by Census Tracts: Montreal, Series A (Ottawa, 1973). See Figures 1, 2.

<sup>154</sup> Palmer, "Two Old Parishes," n.p.

<sup>155</sup> David Marvin, "Griffintown A Brief Chronicle," The Montreal Star, September 8, 1975, n.p. reprint from Habitat 18 (1) 1795. Ironically, in comparison, the new zoning that took place in Little Burgundy, the northern part of St. Anthony's was residential. It however had huge expanses of land which could have been suitable for industrial or commercial enterprises. Instead, today Little Burgundy is a residential area adjacent to the downtown core. See: Dorothy Williams, The Road To Now: A History of Blacks in Montreal, (Montreal: Vehicule Press, 1997).

mid-20th century. The paradox was that a house deliberately 'small and poor' can provide a key for understanding the complex development of lay apostolates in the 20th century. These ideas will be analysed in the historical narrative which follows.

## **CHAPTER 5: EARLY DEVELOPMENT (1898 -1952)**

### **Tony Walsh: Birth to Performance**

Upon examination of the life of a significant person in history, it is necessary to study the life of the individual from birth to death, to discover where the historical figure fits in family lineage and where the family fits in its community history. To understand Tony Walsh and his development, first as a person and then as a modern Catholic lay leader, his family history is a significant aspect of the story.

It is important to establish the socio-economic level of the Walsh family since Tony Walsh chose to live as poor among the poor, causing some to believe that his choice to live a life of voluntary poverty in adulthood was an extension of his family poverty in his youth. This analysis of Tony's family life will demonstrate clearly the opposite conclusion, for though the family moved often, and on several occasions they did experience some level of financial crisis, Tony's Walsh's immediate family lived a middle-class lifestyle.<sup>156</sup>

Also significant to the physical and spiritual geography of Tony is the pattern of recurring father/son conflict that existed between Joseph Walsh, and

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<sup>156</sup> In fact, Lucien Miller proposes that Tony was not from the middle class because Tony did not study at Oxford University. He also describes Tony's father as a gambler who raised horses, spent impulsively and caused his family financial hardship. However, Tony portrays his father as a shrewd business man who ran a horse farm which allowed him and his family to enjoy a middle-class lifestyle. In terms of Tony Walsh's education, available data is sketchy. Tony did attend a village school when the family was in financial crisis. Yet, he was attending boarding school in the account where his father failed to meet him several times. Miller, *Alone for Others*, 120; Tony Walsh, interview by Peter Meggs, Fall, 1990. Tony Walsh Victoria, British Columbia to George Cook, Ottawa, Ontario, letter, 25 January, 1987, TGC.

Tony's grandfather Walsh Sr. Their conflictual relationship was repeated in the next generation between Joseph and with his own son. Joe Walsh had disdained his own father's social and charitable endeavours. Later, Joe disliked the same characteristics in Tony that he had witnessed in his father. The conflict between Joe Walsh and his father sheds light as to why the same conflict in reverse occurred between Joe Walsh and Tony. It is clear that this conflict propelled Tony into a life and work with marginalized people.

### **Childhood**

In Dublin, Ireland, Tony Walsh's grandfather, a man who provided well for his family, was an orator, a strong advocate for the poor and the worker. In the late 1880s, his son, Joseph Walsh, was a recognized horseman, handler, and trainer. However, Walsh Sr. and his son Joseph had little in common. Walsh Sr. was concerned for the marginalized, whereas young Joe had a passion for horses and thus escaped to England. There he married, and his wife gave birth to their first child, Anne.<sup>157</sup>

From the 1890-1899, the Walsh family lived and worked in several places in Europe. In 1890, the family moved to Hungary. Outside of Budapest, Joe managed a well-known stud farm. Walsh was well connected to the horse show and trade network in Europe. With the winds of war, the Walsh family moved to Vienna, Austria, and then to Brussels, Belgium. In Brussels, the Walsh family suffered deep loss when their two baby boys succumbed to infant

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<sup>157</sup> Tony Walsh, Victoria, British Columbia to George Cook, Ottawa, Ontario, letter, 7 March, 1987, TGC; Tony Walsh, Montreal, Quebec to George Cook, Ottawa, Ontario, letter, 1 July, 1986, TGC.

death.<sup>158</sup>

In the late 1890s, the Walsh family moved again to Paris, France. However, during this period, England and France were immersed in conflict over the Fashoda affair with an immediate threat of war. In 1898, Joe Walsh gathered his family and belongings, ready to flee Paris for Britain. However, his wife went into labour and their second child, Anthony Walsh was born on December 29, 1898, in a British hospital in Paris. Immediately, Joe Walsh went to the British Embassy in Paris to ensure that his only living son was certified as a British subject. In January 1899, Tony and his family moved from France to England. Until the age of eighteen, Tony and his family moved repeatedly between Ireland, England and Scotland.<sup>159</sup>

Tony was a slender, sensitive, and physically fragile boy, so after having lost two infant sons in Brussels, Mrs. Walsh took every measure to protect him from any form of illness. Mrs. Walsh remained very focussed on his health and nutrition. Though Tony grew up in a well-provided middle-class

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<sup>158</sup> Tony Walsh to George Cook, 7 March, 1987. Dating of his parents' move to Hungary in 1890 is based on Tony's comment in this letter that he was born at the end of his parents' 8-year stay in Europe. Since Tony Walsh was born on December 29, 1898, therefore, his parents moved to Hungary in 1890. Tony Walsh to George Cook, 1 July, 1986.

<sup>159</sup> Fashoda- was a town (now Kodok) of the Sudan. It was the scene of a diplomatic incident in 1898, when it was occupied by Marchand on behalf of France, while Kitchener claimed the territory for Britain. After several months of crisis, France withdrew in 1899. The New Lexicon Webster's Encyclopedic Dictionary of the English Language, Canadian ed., 1988, s.v. "Fashoda."; Therefore, the Walsh family moved to Paris in the late 1890's. Tony Walsh to George Cook, 7 March, 1987; Tony Walsh to George Cook, 1 July 1986. Since Tony Walsh was born December 29, 1898, and his parents left Paris within twenty-eight days for England, it can be concluded that they moved from France for England in January 1899. Tony Walsh to George Cook, Ottawa, Ontario, 25 January, 1987; Tony Walsh, "Anthony Walsh Curriculum Vitae" [Curriculum Vitae] n.d. from Private Collection of George Cook; Stephen Hagarty, "Gentle Man Who Challenge Others," Compass (March/April 1995), 39; William Lawlor, "A Life of Imagination, Patience, Commitment," Compass (July 1988), 47.



environment, with love and attention from his mother, he lived in the shadow of his father and the horse farm environment. Tony's fragile physique was the fodder for many comments within his community."<sup>100</sup>

Joe Walsh loved and depended on his wife and dearly cherished his daughter, Anne. However, Joe's rejection of his only son was evident to his immediate family, friends and farm employees. A perfectionist, Joseph Walsh was both publicly and privately embarrassed by his young son's behaviour. Many times, Joe would respond with great rancour and anger at the typical problems of a small boy, and became verbally abusive.<sup>101</sup>

Both Tony's mother and the Walsh's stable grooms were witnesses to Joseph's relentless criticism of his son. During these conflicts, Tony's mother would strongly support her son and the grooms would try to comfort the young boy, when out of earshot of Joe. Joe's need for control and perfection became a wedge between himself and his son. Since Tony could not be held up as a trophy, Joe Walsh's fascination with power and wealth was reflected in his lifestyle.<sup>102</sup>

The conflict between father and son intensified as Tony became a young man and attempted to carve out a future for himself. As already indicated, this father/son conflict mirrored the same conflict from the previous generation between Joe Walsh and his own father. Joe had cared about horses and Walsh Sr. had cared about people in need. Whether consciously or unconsciously, Joe Walsh was

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<sup>100</sup> Tony Walsh to George Cook, 1 July, 1986; Tony Walsh to George Cook, 25 January, 1987.

<sup>101</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>102</sup> Tony Walsh to George Cook, 25 January, 1987; Walsh, interview by Peter Meggs, Fall, 1990.

reacting to similarities of this conflict with his son. Therefore, Tony did not win his father's approval in terms of his career choices. "My father and I, we never agreed, he wanted me a 100% for horses. And I wanted to be 50% for people. And so, he really rejected me...He didn't say much but he was a very sharp tongue, he knew how to cut me down."<sup>163</sup>

After the outbreak of World War One in 1914, a permanent wedge was driven between father and son. During this period, sixteen-year-old Tony was away at school and had to pass through London. On three separate occasions, he arranged to meet his father, who was stationed with the army near London. Each time Joe Walsh failed to meet his son. At this point, Tony became fully aware of his father's emotional abandonment. Later, Tony received news of his father's death. Joe Walsh died from blood poisoning due to bomb fragments. Yet, upon reflection of his father's overt rejection and emotional abandonment of him, Tony stated how his father's actions did not drive him to an embittered life but rather toward a life of ministry to men who suffered the same emotional abandonment.<sup>164</sup>

In 1917, within weeks of his father's death, nineteen-year-old Tony, as an underage recruit, joined the Irish army. Despite the spirited hijinks and jokes of the boys in military gear, Tony witnessed the bloody brutality of World War One in the fields of France and Germany. However, while in the barracks and in the

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<sup>163</sup> Walsh, interview by Peter Meggs, Fall, 1990; see also Tony Walsh to George Cook, 7 March, 1987.

<sup>164</sup> Tony Walsh to George Cook, 25 January, 1987; see also Walsh, interview by Peter Meggs, Fall, 1990.

trenches, Tony found that he had the ability to care and counsel men in need.<sup>165</sup>

### **Immigration to Canada**

After three years with the Irish Guard, in 1920 Tony Walsh entered Reading University where he spent one year in Agriculture Studies. Yet his heart and mind were touched by the post-war social conditions around him. Tony was particularly appalled by Britain's treatment of poor war veterans.<sup>166</sup>

At this time, Britain was plagued by massive unemployment. As of December 1921, the British government was giving aid to 1.5 million people in the British Isles. What Tony was witnessing was the failure of British public assistance for post-war veterans in the 1920s. Men who had spent several years in the military had returned home to face the unenviable choice of either working in the workhouse or the stone yard.<sup>167</sup>

At the sight of such treatment of these British soldiers, Tony decided to leave England. In 1922, at the age of 24, Tony Walsh immigrated to Canada. He went directly to the province of Alberta where he worked for several years on

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<sup>165</sup> Tony Walsh, Montreal, Quebec to George Cook, Ottawa, Ontario, letter, June, 1992, TGC; Buell, "The Man," 19; Walsh, interview by Peter Meggs, Fall, 1990. Walsh, "Anthony Walsh Curriculum Vitae"; Tony Walsh, "Anthony (Tony) Walsh" [Curriculum Vitae] n.d. from Private Collection of George Cook, Ottawa, Ontario.

<sup>166</sup> Walsh, interview by Peter Meggs, Fall, 1990; See also-Walsh, "Anthony Walsh Curriculum Vitae"; Walsh, "Anthony (Tony) Walsh [Curriculum Vitae]".

<sup>167</sup> Lynn Hollen Lees, The Solidarities of Strangers: the English Poor Laws and the People, 1700-1948, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 329.

cattle ranches.<sup>168</sup>

### **Six Mile Creek**

In 1930, while working on a fox farm in Kelowna, British Columbia, Tony received a call from Father Adrian Carlyle, a Benedictine monk, who was involved in Native Affairs in the southern sections of the Okanagan Valley. Carlyle invited Tony to work as a teacher to native children on the Six Mile Creek Reserve near Vernon, British Columbia. Though hesitant at first, after visiting the reserve and meeting federal, and native officials and Carlyle, he accepted the position.<sup>169</sup>

Tony taught a class of thirty students at Six Mile Creek Reserve from 1930 to 1932. As a teacher, he looked past the stereotypes and formulated his own personal teaching strategy to ensure that these native children would be educated with both the approved British Columbia provincial educational curriculum and with elements from their own native culture. Tony would maintain this policy all through his teaching career with native children.<sup>170</sup> Federal policies prohibited the teaching of native culture and language to

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<sup>168</sup> Walsh, "Anthony Walsh Curriculum Vitae"; Walsh, "Anthony (Tony) Walsh" ; Walsh, interview by Peter Meggs, Fall, 1990. Note: In "Anthony Walsh Curriculum Vitae" the document states that between 1920-1922, Tony studied at Reading University. However, in the Meggs interview, Tony stated that he spent one year at Reading University. This author chose the one year at Reading, 1920-1921, since Tony stated the fact in a publicly recorded interview. There is also a discrepancy in the two curriculum vitae, one documents Tony's immigration to Canada in 1922 and the other one documents the immigration in 1923. This author uses the date 1922, since Tony spent a year at Reading which would be between 1920-1921. Since we have no further available documentation that Tony took on any other work or study in England after 1921, it would suggest that Tony emigrated to Canada in 1922, rather than the later date, 1923.

<sup>169</sup> Walsh, to George Cook, letter, 1 March 1993, TGC; Walsh, interview by Peter Meggs, Fall, 1990.

<sup>170</sup> Tony Walsh to George Cook, 1 March 1993; Walsh, interview by Peter Meggs, Fall, 1990.

native students during this period of history. While teaching at Six Mile Creek, Tony took education courses at the University of Alberta. He also travelled to Berkeley, California and to New York, to study native culture.<sup>171</sup>

### **Inkameep**

After two years Tony Walsh left Six Mile Creek. Now thirty-four, he moved onto the Inkameep Reserve, where he taught from 1932-1942. Tony continued to take teacher training courses at University of British Columbia, University of Victoria and University of Alberta and the Banff School of Fine Arts. He also continued researching native culture in Canadian and American archives and museums.<sup>172</sup>

Galvanized by his own training and native research, Tony was even more convinced that the students at Inkameep should regain their native heritage. At Inkameep, Tony taught a class of about fifteen children. Though he followed the official provincial curriculum, he again set up extra-curricular activities for the students which promoted their native Indian heritage and culture. As a result of Tony's encouragement, support and networking, the

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<sup>171</sup> By 1900, 226 federally funded day schools existed on Indian Reserves. The majority of teachers were Anglican and Roman Catholic missionaries and the curriculum included a large proportion of religious instruction. By the 1930s, the curriculum began to be more closely patterned on that of the non-Indian provincial schools. During this period, federal policies prohibited the use of native languages and suppressed native heritage in schools. The Canadian Encyclopedia, (Second Edition, 1988), s.v. "Native People, Education," Harvey McCue; Walsh, interview by Peter Meggs, Fall, 1990.

<sup>172</sup> Inkameep Reserve is situated in the Okanagan Valley between Oliver and the Canadian/American border in British Columbia. Walsh, interview by Peter Meggs, Fall, 1990; See Alice Ravenhill's description of Inkameep during that period in her introduction to The Tale of Nativity: as told by the Indian Children of Inkameep British Columbia, (s.l. , s.n.) 1940, reprinted in (Vancouver Island, British Columbia) The Island Catholic News, December 1994, 10. Note that the original title of the tale in 1940 uses the words 'Indian Children' and the reprinted title in 1994 uses the words 'Native Children.' Walsh, "Anthony Walsh Curriculum Vitae"; See also-Tony Walsh, Banff, Alberta to Dorothea Allison, Vernon, British Columbia, 24 August 1940, letter cited in Miller, Alone for Others, 38-39.

dances, plays, artwork, and performances created by native children of Inkameep gained local, national and international attention.<sup>173</sup>

During his time at the Inkameep Reserve, Tony received a copy of The Catholic Worker. He read of their house of hospitality to the poor in New York and was inspired. He realized that he would not spend the rest of his days at Inkameep but rather would be called to a challenging ministry of living with the poor in an inner-city context.<sup>174</sup>

### **War Services**

While teaching at Inkameep, Tony became aware of the possibility of an upcoming world war. He felt a call to action, but since he was over the age of enlistment, he decided to stay at Inkameep, teach and continue his research. Yet, in 1943, Tony decided to leave his teaching job at Inkameep to join the Canadian Legion War Services attached to the Canadian Army on Vancouver Island. He was stationed at Port Alberni and at Gordon Head in Victoria, British Columbia. Tony worked at a rehabilitation center, which provided care to returning Canadian soldiers from prisoners of war camps who suffered from various types of injuries, disabilities and diseases.<sup>175</sup>

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<sup>173</sup> Tony Walsh, Montreal, Quebec to George Cook, Ottawa, Ontario, letter, February, 1989, TGC; See also-Walsh, interview by Peter Meggs, Fall, 1990; Ravenhill, introduction to Nativity, 10; The Tale of Nativity: as told by the Indian Children of Inkameep British Columbia, (s.l. : s.n.) 1940, reprinted in (Vancouver Island, British Columbia) The Island Catholic News, December 1994, 10; Tony Walsh, "Anthony Walsh Curriculum Vitae" [Curriculum Vitae]; Miller, Alone for Others, 37-42 See also-Hagarty, "Gentle Man", 39.

<sup>174</sup> Walsh, interview by Peter Meggs, Fall, 1990; See also-Tony Walsh, Montreal, Quebec to George Cook, Ottawa, Ontario, letter, November, 1990, TGC.

<sup>175</sup> Tony Walsh to George Cook, 1 March 1993; Tony Walsh, Montreal, Quebec to George Cook, Ottawa, Ontario, May, 1989, TGC; Tony Walsh, "Anthony (Tony) Walsh" [Curriculum Vitae]; Tony Walsh, "Anthony Walsh Curriculum Vitae" [Curriculum Vitae]; Walsh, interview by Peter Meggs, Fall, 1990.

Near the end of WW II while discussing career moves, Tony announced to his friends, "I'm going to be a tramp." Such a statement echoed the resolve he had felt in earlier years, to continue to work among poor and marginalized men. By 1946, the stress and pressure of the Port Alberni rehabilitation work had greatly compromised Tony's physical health. With the army doctor's recommendation, Tony was released from the Army and went south for a health cure. Tony returned to Santa Fe, New Mexico where previously, he had studied for one summer.<sup>176</sup>

### **On Tour**

In Santa Fe, Tony continued his research on native Indians. Also, from 1947-1949, Tony toured parts of Canada and the United States, performing a series of one-man shows of Okanagan Indian dances and plays. Tony had such an affinity with natives that if he had not been convinced of his call to set up a house of hospitality for the poor within an urban context, he would have continued to teach and research native culture.<sup>177</sup>

### **Early Years in Montreal (1949-1951)**

During his one-man show performance tour in North American cities, Tony started to read the Ensign, a Canadian Catholic journal. He was particularly delighted with the column "Among Ourselves" written by Jim Shaw that discussed the lay apostolate. Tony wrote to Jim Shaw, congratulating him on the column, and the two men corresponded for several years. Jim gave

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<sup>176</sup> Miller, Alone for Others, 72; Tony Walsh to George Cook, 1 March 1993; Tony Walsh, "Anthony Walsh Curriculum Vitae" [Curriculum Vitae].

<sup>177</sup> Tony Walsh to George Cook, 1 March 1993. Walsh, interview by Peter Meggs, Fall, 1990; Tony Walsh, "Anthony Walsh Curriculum Vitae" [Curriculum Vitae]; Miller, Alone for Others, 73.

Tony an open invitation to come to Montreal.<sup>178</sup>

Jim Shaw, a journalist and teacher at Loyola College, drew many people to his ideas about the lay apostolate. Jim was strongly influenced by Dorothy Day and the Catholic Worker Movement, and envisioned the establishment of a Catholic Worker type house and newspaper in Montreal. He wanted a house to serve the poor and to be a center for the Canadian lay apostolate. He envisioned a house newspaper which would promote and report on lay apostolate activities on a global and local level.<sup>179</sup>

Jim was able to gather together others in Montreal who were interested in the lay apostolate. Jim connected with Pat Conners, a Montreal dramatist and former staff worker at Madonna House in Combermere, Ontario. Jim knew Dr. Magnus Seng, a doctor, who ran a free medical clinic in the inner city of Montreal. Jim also made contact with a young college graduate, Steve Hagarty who was disenchanted with his new career in advertising.<sup>180</sup>

In 1949, on his way back from his U.S. tour of his one-man shows, Tony decided to go to Montreal to meet with Jim. Tony engaged him in a serious discussion of how to set up a small house of hospitality in the inner city of Montreal. When Tony returned to British Columbia, he continued to correspond

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<sup>178</sup> The Ensign (Kingston, Ontario) Campion Press, 1948-1956; Though referred in Miller as 'Between Ourselves', the correct title for the Jim Shaw's column in The Ensign was 'Among Ourselves.' For correct title see also -Shaw, "Among Ourselves," The Ensign, May 21, 1949, 5; Miller, Alone for Others, 72-73; Tony Walsh to George Cook, 1 March 1993; See also -Tony Walsh, "Anthony (Tony) Walsh" [Curriculum Vitae]; See also-T. P. Slattery, Loyola and Montreal: A History, (Montreal: Palm Publishers, 1962), 256. Tony, in correspondence to George Cook in 1 March 1993, states that he read articles by Jim Shaw during his years with the War Services at Port Alberni from 1943-1946. However, since The Ensign only began publication in 1948, that was not possible. Therefore, it must be concluded that Tony was reading The Ensign while he was on his one-man show tour through Canada and the U.S. from 1947 to 1949.

<sup>179</sup> MacGillivray, "People Concerned," 1.

<sup>180</sup> Both MacGillivray and Tony described each member of the founding group in their respective articles. MacGillivray, "People Concerned," 1; Walsh, "The Seed," 2.



with Jim, exchanging ideas on the subject. Not long after that meeting with Jim Shaw, Tony chose to move permanently to Montreal.<sup>101</sup>

In December 1949, Jim was stunned when, without warning, Tony showed up in Montreal ready to establish the House. In the face of such determination, Jim hesitated. He was a conceptualist, not a concrete thinker who would see a project through to completion. Tony who had left his life in Western Canada behind him, was undeterred by Jim Shaw's indecisiveness. Rather, fuelled by this personal call to establish a house of hospitality in Montreal, Tony found employment and friendship with other like-minded people from Jim Shaw's group, drawn from the Montreal English Catholic community. From 1949 to 1952, Tony began to connect with many more people from the Montreal English Catholic community through his work with the Genesius players theater group and the Caritas Centre soup kitchen.<sup>102</sup>

### **Pre-Founding Year (1951-1952)**

In 1951, Tony worked at Caritas Centre, a soup kitchen on Centre Street in Pointe St. Charles, operated by Ruth Clevely. Father William Power, later Bishop Power, had set up a lay discussion group at Caritas Centre from 1947 to 1950. On Friday evenings, Bishop Power and the group which Tony attended met to discuss the lay apostolate and social issues. Often discussions

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<sup>101</sup> Miller, Alone for Others, 73; See also-Tony Walsh to George Cook, 1 March 1993.

<sup>102</sup> Miller, Alone for Others, 72-76; Tony Walsh to George Cook, 1 March 1993. Dating of Tony's life and work in Montreal is based on the date of his arrival in Montreal, December, 1949 to the date of founding Benedict Labre House in October, 1952. Marvin, "History," 1. Tony states that the founding group rented an apartment and Tony moved in the House. The next day, the House was finally launched at '418'. Marvin states that '418' 'was rented three years ago this month' (as of the date of Marvin's article). Therefore, the opening of Benedict Labre House was in October, 1952.

attempted to solve to the problems of the world. However, Tony would always bring the discussion back to the concrete, local issues of the poor in Montreal.

In 1951, while working at Caritas Centre, Tony became ill with pneumonia, necessitating a long convalescence in the country. Upon returning to Montreal, he took up residence in an old boarding house in Pointe Ste. Charles. Throughout that year, on Thursday evenings, Stephen Hagarty, Pat Conners, Magnus Seng, and Jim Shaw met Tony at home, or on park benches, or in bus or train terminals. The purpose of those Thursday evening meetings was to discuss the possibility of launching a Catholic socially concerned newspaper and a house of hospitality.<sup>183</sup>

During the period of 1951-1952, Tony's recurring illness and impending poverty galvanised the group to turn their plans into reality. Recovering from pneumonia, Tony's return to the hospital was imminent, since his poverty limited him to one meal a day. Therefore, Magnus Seng called the group together to focus on establishing a house of hospitality in the immediate future. At the first meeting, Tony, Jim Shaw, and Magnus met at Magnus' cottage near Magog, to discuss the practical aspects of the idea. Then a second meeting which included Steve Hagarty and Pat Conners was called at the Catholic Information Office located in downtown Montreal. There Jim announced that Betty McCabe, a teacher of modern language and manager of a girls' shelter, found the cost of operating two apartments too expensive and was willing to sublet one. Jim was asked to phone Betty immediately, and the group saw the apartment right away. After assessing the apartment, Tony was willing to move immediately. Magnus paid the first month's rent and the next day in October, 1952, Benedict Labre

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<sup>183</sup> Walsh, "The Seed," 2; Miller, Alone for Others, 76, 124-125; Power, "A means of serving God's poor," 4.

House was launched.<sup>184</sup>

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<sup>184</sup> Walsh, "The Seed," 2; Miller, Alone for Others, 76; Seng, "...418 was best part," 1; Marvin, "History," 1.

## **CHAPTER 6: FOUNDING YEARS (1952-1955)**

### **Establishing a lay apostolate**

By establishing Benedict Labre House In October, 1952, the founding group realized their goal of creating both a house of hospitality for the city's poor and a center for the lay apostolate for the wider Montreal English Catholic community. In a concerted effort, Tony Walsh, Magnus Seng, Jim Shaw, Pat Conners, and Stephen Hagarty founded a house of hospitality at 418 Lagauchetière, in St. Patrick's ward in the downtown area. The House was informally named '418' until its official christening as Benedict Labre House in 1953. The House remained at '418' until December, 1954.<sup>165</sup>

A conflict brewed amongst this founding group within the first months, as they attempted to work out their mission and mandate. In a letter to Dorothy Day in 1952, Jim Shaw mentions that a division existed over the theory and practice of the Catholic Worker Movement. Unable to resolve the conflict, the founding group decided not to align itself officially with Dorothy Day and the Catholic Worker movement. In the same letter, Jim wrote that the group still had not clarified their mission, mandate, or name. However the letter articulated the

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<sup>165</sup> Walsh, "The Seed," 2; Patricia Conners had limited energy due to a serious heart condition. Hagarty, "In 6 years," 4; Marvin, "History," 1-3. Tony states that the founding group rented an apartment and Tony moved in the House. The next day, the House was finally launched at '418'. Marvin states that '418' 'was rented three years ago this month' (as of the date of Marvin's article). Therefore, the opening of Benedict Labre House was in October, 1952; MacGillivray, "People Concerned," 1-3. MacGillivray states that by the end of 1955, they were out of '418' but note that there is an error in this date. Coveny, "From a Soup Kitchen," 2. Art Coveny mentions an interim move to William Street but there is no available evidence to corroborate this move. Information and dating based on Marvin explains the history of the moves until October, 1955. Marvin indicates that as of January, 1955, they had moved from '418' to 123 Duke St. Therefore, they left '418' by December, 1954.

group's vision of the House, and this demonstrated that the founding group was close to formulating its mission and mandate.<sup>186</sup>

Without fanfare, the group went to work at serving the poor in their new home at 418 Lagauchetière. The reality of their commitment became evident as they collected the necessary beds and furniture for this "small, airless apartment." Immediately, Tony moved into the House, to live a life of voluntary poverty and work directly with the men. Jim Shaw also agreed to live at the House on a part-time basis, while the others lived and worked outside and volunteered at the House.<sup>187</sup>

In those early months, the founding group persevered to provide a family spirit and sense of home by remaining small, and poor. Daily meals were prepared and served to between four and seven low income and homeless men. Laundry was hand washed so that beds were ready each night for new guests. At night Benedict Labre House was crowded, as transient men slept on the beds and on whatever floor space that was available. There was little conflict in those early days, as men shared basic shelter, food and clothing. Dr. Magnus Seng provided a free medical clinic for both transients and people from the neighbourhood. Joe Noonan, a lawyer, set up a free legal clinic. The House survived in those early days through the financial support of several

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<sup>186</sup> Jim Shaw to Dorothy Day, c.1952, 1-3. See also- Hagarty, "Called," 2. Hagarty stated that for two years, from 1952-1954, the House was known as "418" based on its address until the group came to a decision about the name of the House.

<sup>187</sup> Seng, "...418, was the best part," 1; Hagarty, "Called," 2; Marvin, "History," 1. There is a question whether '418' Lagauchetière was a second storey building or a third storey building with the House residing on the top floor 'flat.' Hagarty in 1981, referred to it as a second storey building, but Marvin in 1955, referred to it as a third storey building. This author believes the House was located at the top of a second-storey building since Hagarty was part of the founding group in 1952 and worked in the House on a regular basis in its first year, while Marvin's participation in the House did not occur till 1955. Walsh, "The Seed," 2; Jim Shaw to Dorothy Day, c.1952, 1-2.

generous friends.<sup>188</sup>

The founding group recognized that real ministry could only be attempted with the poor if one immersed oneself in a true life of voluntary poverty among the poor. One's witness with the poor would have credibility only if one suffered the same injustices as the poor. This was a long-term commitment. It was the difference between gaining field experience with the poor and living among the poor.<sup>189</sup>

Tony was the sole founding group member to adopt a lifestyle of voluntary poverty. His personal view of voluntary poverty was that certain individuals from the Christian community were called to live a life of poverty and service to poor. Tony's choice had a great impact because he had "narrowed the gap between his words and his body."

Tony Walsh's voluntary poverty came as a shock:

A quiet, sane, and soft-spoken man, now fifty-three years old, celibate and chaste, had chosen to own nothing and live in the slums and help the poor. He ate donated food and wore donated clothing. And he was doing it as a Christian, as a Catholic, to live in accord with what Christ said his followers should do. One could not wriggle out of it: the fact was there, he was doing it. Voluntary poverty was not just being poor: it meant renouncing all possessions and making oneself totally dependent on God's providence.<sup>190</sup>

The founding group had envisioned the House as a home, not as an institution. This home would provide a source of food, clothing and shelter for

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<sup>188</sup> Family at 418, "Early B.L.H. Newsletters: Smallness Keeps," 4; Jim Shaw to Dorothy Day, c1952, 2; Hagarty, "Called," 2; Walsh, "The Seed," 2; Marvin, "History," 1-3; Jim Shaw's letter to Catherine Doherty," 6.

<sup>189</sup> Hagarty, "In 6 years," 4.

<sup>190</sup> Buell, "The Man," 16. See also-Walsh, interview by Peter Meggs, Fall, 1990; Jim Shaw to Dorothy Day c.1952, 1-2; Lawlor, interview by author, 15 June 1999; "Letter from Matt: Voluntary Poverty Explained," UNITY (Montreal) [Reprint] December 1981, Special Supplement, Labre House Revisited, 8; See also-Miller, Alone for Others, 72.

the poor, where a personal, human, family-like atmosphere existed rather than a clinical approach to people. The poor who came for help were treated with dignity; they were not subject to intake surveys. Such practices confused both the Montreal English Catholic community and the poor, leaving people to wonder if the House was some type of communist venture.<sup>101</sup>

Within the first year of its establishment, the founding group broke up, leaving Tony solely in charge of the House. Prior to the official launch of the House in 1953, Magnus Seng, injured in a car accident, temporarily withdrew from the work at the House. After the official opening, Jim Shaw announced to Tony that he was leaving the work of the House. Within the next six weeks, Steve Hagarty hesitantly told Tony that he wanted to join the Jesuits. Tony sent Steve off with his blessing and encouragement. Within the same time period, Tony received the sad news that Pat Conners had died from heart complications.<sup>102</sup>

With the sudden and multiple departures of the founding group, Tony was flung into the lonely, deep waters of operating the House at '418'. This was not a position he had planned for, nor one that he wanted to fill. Prior to these departures, he had envisioned for himself a supporting role as a public relations person for the House. Instead, he was thrust into the sole role of House

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<sup>101</sup> Hagarty, "In 6 years," 4; "Jim Shaw's letter to Catherine Doherty," 6; Walsh, interview by Peter Meggs, Fall, 1990; Hagarty, interview by author, 8 June, 1999. Also, Tony and Stephen Hagarty both recount how Benedict Labre House was labelled as a communist venture by local clergy and the community. Ballantyne, "This quiet man," 6. See also: Hagarty, "Gentle Man," 39.

<sup>102</sup> Walsh, "The Seed," 2-5. In this article, Tony cites Pat Conners' death after the departure of Steve Hagarty, which would suggest late summer. However, Steve Hagarty, author of the Benedict Labre House newsletter of June, 1953, reports her death; Family at 418, "Early B.L.H. Newsletters: Smallness Keeps," 4. This data situates Pat Conners' death before June 1953, since the newsletter was written closer to the event. This is a good example of how memory affects the construction of accurate history.

manager, with no contingency plan.<sup>193</sup>

In November 1954, the work and outreach of Benedict Labre House was extended with the founding of Patricia House. Marjorie Conners, at the age of 64, founded Patricia House in memory of her late daughter Patricia Conners. Marjorie modelled Patricia House on Murray Street in Griffintown, after Benedict Labre House at '418'. Prior to the founding of Patricia House, Marjorie Conners, mother of three, had worked as a psychiatric nurse at the Verdun Protestant Hospital, now known as the Douglas Hospital in city of Verdun. Though Marjorie loved the work at the hospital, she felt called to live a life of voluntary poverty, engaging in a type of work that her late daughter had started. Though Benedict Labre House was the parent house to Patricia House, Marjorie directed the daily operations of Patricia House.<sup>194</sup>

Patricia House was established as a house of hospitality focussing both on the needs of transient, marginalized women in Montreal and on the needs of low-income women and children from Griffintown. Accommodations and meals were offered to transient and marginalized women: sex trade workers, alcoholics, and repeat offenders. Marjorie also prepared meals for low-income neighbourhood women and children in crisis, and provided food distribution for women and their families. Clothes for women and children were first sorted and repaired at Benedict Labre House but Patricia House was in charge of clothing

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<sup>193</sup> Walsh, "The Seed," 5; Walsh, interview by Peter Meggs, Fall, 1990.

<sup>194</sup> Based on Marjorie's reference to her two other daughters in this article, it can be concluded that Marjorie had three daughters. "Pat House Survives," UNITY (Montreal) November 1962," 4; Marvin, "History," 3. Verdun is a smaller city in the southwest sector of Montreal island; MacGillivray, "People Concerned," 1.



distribution for women and children.<sup>195</sup>

In the spring of 1955, Dorothy Day of the Catholic Worker made her first official visit to Benedict Labre House and stayed with Marjorie at Patricia House.<sup>196</sup> Day described the urban grittiness of Patricia House:

Patricia House is one floor of one of the houses, and the back door looks out on a swamp of mud, a courtyard...which opens to other small houses where families of twelve and fourteen live. Here is real destitution. Patricia House is the poorest house on the street...[a] little four room place in which four people can be accommodated...<sup>197</sup>

Due to limited resources, Marjorie Conners' work with destitute women and children was difficult. Daniel Berrigan described Patricia House as a "hovel." Hagarty also considered Marjorie's work was with 'the poorest of the poor.' Dave Marvin situated Patricia House's location in 'one of Montreal's poorest sections.' Tony viewed Marjorie's work as more difficult than his work with the men because she worked alone. Unlike Benedict Labre House, the work at Patricia House was so difficult, that it was hard to retain a sizable group of committed volunteers. But Patricia House did survive with the support of a small group of friends, along with members of Benedict Labre House, and Pauline Vanier. Through the creation of Patricia House, Benedict Labre House

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<sup>195</sup> Buell, "The Man," 17; Marvin, "History," 3; "Pat House Survives," 4. For an honest portrayal of the women who lodged at Patricia House and the women and children of Griffintown see a selection of Marjorie's columns reprinted in "Patricia House: Views From the Past," UNITY (Montreal) June 1977, 8-12; and Gerry Pascal, "At Patricia House: 'Even a Jesuit May be Saved'," n.d., reprinted in UNITY (Montreal) December 1973, 5; Day, "On Pilgrimage," 6; Coveny, "From a Soup Kitchen," 2; MacGillivray, "People Concerned," 1.

<sup>196</sup> During a week long lecture tour and visit to Benedict Labre House, Dorothy Day stayed at Patricia House; MacMaster, to Dorothy Day, 18 March, 1955; Conners, to Dorothy Day, 28 March, 1955; Walsh to Dorothy Day, 28 March, 1955; Walsh, La Trappe, Oka, Quebec, to Dorothy Day, 7 May, 1955; Day, "On Pilgrimage," 6; "Two Visitors Give Insights Into Scope of Apostolate," UNITY May 1955, 3; See also: Brigid O'Shea Merriman, Searching for Christ: The Spirituality of Dorothy Day. (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame, 1994), 125.

<sup>197</sup> Day, "On Pilgrimage," 6.

not only had a thriving frontline work with men but it extended its outreach to include this significant work with marginalized women and children.<sup>108</sup>

### **Early Forms of Public Relations**

In 1952, the founding group of Benedict Labre House planned to launch a small mimeographed publication to promote the lay apostolate in Canada. The mandate of this publication was to inform Catholics of many types of lay work occurring in Canada. In the founding years, the editorial team included Dixie MacMaster, Tony Walsh, Father William Power, Marjorie Conners, and two professional journalists, Murray Ballantyne and Leo MacGillivray. Dixie MacMaster, confined to a bed, an arthritic invalid, was asked by Tony to be in charge of a column on liturgy for the Benedict Labre House newsletter. In those early newsletters, her articles dealt with liturgy, saints and pilgrimages. With such a mix of people, discussions at the editorial meetings moved from the mundane to the sacred, as members of the team participated in all decisions from paying the printing bill to the Christian social responsibility of a House writer.<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>108</sup> *ibid.*; Berrigan, S.J. "Modesty," 11; Steve Hagarty, "The Poorest of the Poor," *UNITY* (Montreal) February, 1969, 1; Marvin, "History," 3; Walsh, "The Seed," 5; "Pat House Survives," 4; Pauline Vanier, the wife of General Vanier was a dedicated supporter of Patricia House. MacGillivray, "People Concerned," 1-3; ; See also Cowley for more biographical information on Pauline Vanier. Deborah Cowley, *One Woman's Journey: A Portrait of Pauline Vanier*. (Ottawa: Novalis, 1992). See also Jean Vanier, "Deeply touched by Labre House," *UNITY* (Montreal) December 1981, Special Supplement, *Labre House Revisited*, 4; Dating of Marjorie's age at her death was calculated based on Buell's dating. Buell, "The Man," 17; Pascal, interviews by author, 2, 6 June 1995. Patricia House operated within the community of Griffintown from 1954 to 1979. Marjorie Conners died at age 78, after serving Christmas dinner to thirty people on December 25, 1968 at Patricia House. The House was closed in 1979, since its surrounding neighbourhood was demolished and people moved to other parts of Montreal.

<sup>109</sup> Jim Shaw to Dorothy Day, c1952, 1; MacGillivray, "People Concerned," 1; Dixie in 1977 referred to herself as an arthritic invalid in MacMaster, "On Tony Walsh...", 6; Buell, "The Man," 16.

Within the first few months of the House's founding, Jim Shaw wrote the first unofficial House newsletters. These were the first letters to Dorothy Day in 1952, and to Catherine Doherty at Madonna House in 1953. Each letter introduced the mission and mandate and activities of the House. These letters were then mimeographed and circulated as newsletters to friends and supporters of Benedict Labre House, as a form of public relations.

In 1953, the official Benedict Labre House newsletter was launched and written by Pat Conners and Steve Hagarty. The House newsletters reflected the family orientation of the House with the signature "The Family at 418" and were the precursors to the UNITY newspaper. After the sudden death of Pat Conners in 1953, Steve Hagarty wrote the subsequent three newsletters for the summer of 1953. When the founding group broke up in 1953, Leo MacGillivray took on the editing of the House's newsletter until the launch of the first issue of UNITY, Benedict Labre's House newspaper, in April 1955.<sup>200</sup>

During those early days, the editorial team worked hard to keep the Montreal English Catholic community informed of the many events and activities related to the lay apostolate, occurring within the Church and the community. The House's newsletter also covered activities and organizations from the francophone sector of Montreal serving the poor.<sup>201</sup>

As the work at 418 Lagauchetière became more widely known, the level

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<sup>200</sup> MacGillivray, "People Concerned," 1; Jim Shaw to Dorothy Day, c.1952, 1-3. "Jim Shaw's letter to Catherine Doherty," 6; Family at 418, "We Now Hope," March, 1954, 1-8; Family at 418, "Early B.L.H. Newsletters: Smallness Keeps," 4; Family at 418, "Early B.L.H. Newsletters: Only when there's growth," 2; Family at 418 "Early B.L.H. Newsletters: Getting an Awareness," 2-3. Also, MacGillivray states that Patricia Conners died in summer of 1953; however, it is more accurate to place her death in the spring of 1953 since Steve Hagarty reports her death in the B.L.H. newsletter of June, 1953. Also, since Hagarty left in the summer of 1953 before starting seminary, it suggests that Steve edited the newsletter until August 1953 and MacGillivray took over editing the newsletter from September, 1953 to March, 1955.

<sup>201</sup> MacGillivray, "People Concerned," 1; See: Hagarty, "Called," 2; Marvin, "History," 3.

of criticism hit flashpoint within the first year of operations. The criticism was strong from the Montreal English Catholic community since the House lacked official Archdiocese recognition, an official name, and an official mission or mandate. Improved public relations were required to deal with the House's image. In response, Jim Shaw recommended that the group set up a public launch of the House to clarify its mandate and mission. Somewhere between October, 1952 and June 1953, such a launch took place. Subsequently, all members of the House were invited to state their preference for the name of the House in a democratic vote to occur two weeks later.<sup>202</sup> On the day of the vote, Tony, as final speaker, read the epistle and gospel for the feast of St. Benedict Labre and recounted the life of this saint:

For me there was one saint...St. Benedict Joseph Labre. He had known defeat, suffering, loneliness and had become a wanderer...most of the people coming to the House either in seeking support or rendering service were wanderers from a spiritual point of view...<sup>203</sup>

The words of the scripture and the description of the life of this saint fit so well with the life and work of the House, that the name, Saint Benedict Joseph Labre was unanimously accepted with some changes. Since, there were volunteers of different faith traditions along with those who had no interest in issues of faith, it was decided that the words 'saint' and 'Joseph' would be

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<sup>202</sup> Walsh, "The Seed," 2-5; Hagarty, "Called," 2; Jim Shaw to Dorothy Day, c.1952, 1-3; Family at 418, "Early B.L.H. Newsletters: Smallness Keeps", 4; Hagarty's article stated that it took at least two years to officially name the House which would suggest that it was officially named 'Benedict Labre House' by the end of 1954. However, in an article, Tony mentioned that the founding group started to disperse after the naming of Benedict Labre House. This would suggest that the House was officially named 'Benedict Labre House' by October, 1953. However, Steve Hagarty reported in the June 1953 newsletter, that the House had officially taken Saint Benedict Labre as its patron saint, which would have been before the publication of the House newsletter. Therefore, because there is no citation of an actual date of the naming in available data, it can be assumed that the naming of the House occurred before June, 1953.

<sup>203</sup> Walsh, "The Seed," 5.

removed so that it was named 'Benedict Labre House'. These public meetings went well and even brought in new supporters. Criticism of the House still persisted; however, the House began to gain much positive interest and new support from the Montreal English Catholic community, and was officially named Benedict Labre House before June, 1953.<sup>204</sup>

After the naming of the House, the founding group started to collapse and disappear. When faced with the dilemma of running the House alone after the breakup the founding group, Tony had to take immediate action, canvassing and networking hard to find more volunteers:

Then I thought, well, I have to get more people involved. And so, that started our Sunday dinners. Peter Pare was on one of their teams, they would cook the meal at home. They would come down with children. They would serve the meal. And they would look at those old men as human beings and not someone you would avoid on the streets.<sup>205</sup>

### **Response of Montreal Laity**

Tony's friends, lay people from the Montreal English Catholic community, responded clearly to this crisis with 'We couldn't let him starve,' which really meant "We couldn't let the work down." Lay people from diverse backgrounds were attracted to the work. The House became inundated with students, social workers, people interested in the lay apostolate, members of the Young Christian Workers, priests, nuns, professionals, etc. John Buell remarked, "you met all kind of people at Labre House, the rich, the poor, the educated, the famous, the non- famous." Counted among the volunteers were professionals like Leo MacGillivray, then city editor of the Montreal Gazette. MacGillivray

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<sup>204</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>205</sup> *ibid*; Walsh, interview by Peter Meggs, Fall, 1990.

became involved in the evening discussion groups, the Christian Family Movement, the Benedict Labre House newsletter and later, UNITY. Another person of note who fitted in well with the volunteers was Madame Pauline Vanier, the wife of General George Vanier.<sup>206</sup>

### **Formation**

From its inception, Benedict Labre House offered a casual type of formation to Montreal lay Catholics. As a centre for the lay apostolate, Montreal lay people had the opportunity to experience theological, spiritual and practical formation.<sup>207</sup>

### **Theological Formation**

In the Benedict Labre Newsletter of March, 1954, the evening discussions were described as "...our sounding board, the forum where we gather poets and psychiatrists, social workers and scholars, laborers and liturgists, and all the people and kinds of people that work by, with and in Christ in the lay apostolate." The House had created an atmosphere where people from all walks of life could come and exchange viewpoints and gain new ideas. Tuesday evening discussions were venues for such exchanges. Guest speakers came and spoke on current issues and topics. The speakers' roster included teachers from Thomas More Institute and Loyola College, chaplains from Newman Club, Jesuit scholars, and recognized names and public figures such as Claude Ryan, Gerard Pelletier, Bernard Lonergan, Dorothy Day, Frank

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<sup>206</sup> Buell, "The Man," 16-17; MacGillivray, "People Concerned," 1-3; Buell, interview by author, 17 May, 1999; Miller, Alone for Others, 128-129; Ballantyne, "This quiet man," 6.

<sup>207</sup> Hagarty, "Called," 2; Jim Shaw to Dorothy Day, c1952, 1-3; "Jim Shaw's letter to Catherine Doherty," 6. Hagarty's article and the two letters attest to the existence of three types of formation found at BLH during its first two years.

Sheed and Jean Vanier.<sup>208</sup> In Jim Shaw's letter to Dorothy Day in 1952, he included a schedule of upcoming Benedict Labre House January-February evening discussions in 1953:

January 20 - Father Ledit, S.J., The Easter Rites  
January 27 - Gerard Pelletier, Quebec Labour Scene & Catholic Social Teaching, (Asbestos & Louiseville)  
February 3 - A"Charles de Foucauld Sister," The de Foucauld Apostolate.<sup>209</sup>

Under the guidance of Father David McKee, during their first summer in 1953, they decided to study Pope Pius XII, Mediator Dei, 1947 the encyclical on liturgy. Their accounts of the study demonstrated how the early lay group at Benedict Labre House wrestled with the topic of liturgy and intellectually with each other.<sup>210</sup>

The ecumenical focus of Benedict Labre House was evident right from its inception, giving Montreal lay Catholics an opportunity to learn about other faith experiences. In Jim Shaw's letter to Dorothy Day in 1952, he included some unscheduled topics for upcoming Benedict Labre House evening discussions. Besides their scheduled roster of speakers and topics, the House planned to have a Muslim discuss Islam and a Rabbi to speak on Judaism in January of

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<sup>208</sup> Family at 418, "We Now Hope," 8; "Jim Shaw's letter to Catherine Doherty," 6; MacMaster, "On Tony Walsh," 6; MacMaster, "The Action," 4; Marvin, "History," 3; Buell, "The Man," 17; Hylton, "Here suddenly were the poor," 5; Seng, "...418 was best part," 1; Hagarty, "Called," 2; Jim Shaw to Dorothy Day c.1952, 3. Dorothy Day's visit in April 18, 1955 was organized by the team at the House. See also: Dixie MacMaster to Dorothy Day, 18 March, 1955; Marjorie Conners to Dorothy Day, 28 March, 1955; Tony Walsh to Dorothy Day, 7 May, 1955; Day, "On Pilgrimage," 6; "Two Visitors," 3; Vanier, "Deeply Touched," 4; MacGillivray, "People Concerned," 3; Jim Shaw to Dorothy Day, c.1952, 3.

<sup>209</sup> Jim Shaw to Dorothy Day, c.1952, 3.

<sup>210</sup> Pope Pius XII, Mediator Dei, November, 1947, abridged, from Fremantle, Papal Encyclicals, 275-283; Family at 418, "Early B.L.H. Newsletters: Only when there's growth," 2; Family at 418, "Early B.L.H. Newsletters: Getting an Awareness," 2.

1953. In keeping with their ecumenical interests, in July, 1953, the House newsletter reported on the visit of Father Charles Preston, an Anglican Franciscan from England.<sup>211</sup>

### **Spiritual Formation**

The founding group put great emphasis on liturgy and contemplative prayer as foundational to any action. Montreal English lay Catholics were invited to participate in the House's liturgical programs. As part of the Divine Office, 'Prime,' and 'Compline,' were said in common, daily. On Thursday evenings, one hour was set aside for contemplative prayer, with the Little Sisters of Jesus in their chapel on Murray Street. There were days of Recollection, retreats, special liturgies on the feast day of Saint Benedict Labre in April.<sup>212</sup>

Weekly, on Thursday evenings, friends of Benedict Labre House attended the Holy Hour in the Chapel of the Little Sisters of Charles de Foucauld. In this chapel, which was situated on the second floor of a tenement building, silent adoration took place in front of the Blessed Sacrament. Among the lay Catholics who attended were General George Vanier and his wife, Pauline Vanier, before his appointment as Governor-General of Canada.<sup>213</sup>

The Little Sisters of Jesus of Charles de Foucauld occupied the second

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<sup>211</sup> Jim Shaw to Dorothy Day, c.1952, 3; "Early B.L.H. Newsletters: Only when there's growth," 2; Hagarty, "In 6 years," 4.

<sup>212</sup> See Glossary for definitions of prime, compline and Divine Office. MacMaster, "On Tony Walsh," 6; MacMaster, "The Action," 4; Marvin, "History," 3; Buell, "The Man," 17; Hagarty, "In 6 years," 4.

<sup>213</sup> Hagarty, interview by author, 8 June, 1999; Lawlor, interview by author, 15 June 1999; MacGillivray, "People Concerned," 1-3; MacMaster, "On Tony Walsh," 6; MacMaster, "The Action," 4; Marvin, "History," 3; Buell, "The Man," 17; Buell, interview by author, 17 May 1999; Charles, Directory, 1956, 21-74 passim.



floor above Patricia House. Following the example of Charles de Foucauld, this contemplative fraternity lived and worked as poor in low-income areas. The Sisters of Charles de Foucauld made an impact in the area and on Benedict Labre House. Through her interest in Charles de Foucauld, Dixie had close connections with the Little Sisters. In 1955, Dixie became a member of Jesus Caritas Fraternity, one of the several affiliates of the Little Sisters and Little Brothers of Jesus.<sup>214</sup>

In its early years, Benedict Labre House organized and hosted evening discussions, days of study, retreats and recollection for the spiritual benefit of the Montreal English Catholic laity. During the founding years, retreats were small scale in the form of weekends to La Trappe Monastery in Oka and to Magnus Seng's country home in Magog, both located in the Eastern Townships, Quebec. More prominent were the Days of Recollection which were part of the pattern of the early years at Benedict Labre House. The team at the House discovered that they could successfully host days of Recollection for lay people in their five-room apartment. It was noted that lay people appreciated 'an intensive day of quiet thought, talk, and prayer in which a varied program lift[ed] the tension.'<sup>215</sup>

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<sup>214</sup> MacGillivray, "People Concerned," 1; Hagarty, interview by author, 8 June, 1999; Lawlor, interview by author, 15 June 1999; New Catholic Encyclopedia, (1967), s.v. "Little Sisters of Jesus," A.J. Wouters; Haley, Apostolic Sanctity in the World, 179-181. See also Charles de Foucauld in Glossary.

<sup>215</sup> An example of spiritual formation in the early years is found in the January-February of 1953 schedule of evening discussions which listed an upcoming presentation on the Charles de Foucauld Apostolate to be given by a Little Sister. Jim Shaw to Dorothy Day c.1952, 3. Marvin, "History," 3; "Jim Shaw's letter to Catherine Doherty," 6; MacMaster, "On Tony Walsh" 6; Family at 418, " Early B.L.H. Newsletters: Getting an Awareness," 3; Family at 418, " Early B.L.H. Newsletters: Only when there's growth," 2; Hagarty, "Called," 2; For a sense of the type of House retreats and days of recollection held during the founding years, see also Charles, Directory, 1956, 69-74 passim.

## **Practical Formation**

With the desire to keep a sense of home and family at the house, volunteers were trained to use a personal, human approach when dealing with the poor on the front lines. In the founding years, such a practical formation mainly occurred on the front lines rather than during discussion or retreats. Student volunteers and lay people were trained to deal properly with the poor: how not to make judgments as to who was really deserving of one's assistance and not to look for praise or results in terms of their work but rather to be Christ's example.

Young people from privileged schools came down to learn how the destitute live, and how delicate is the job of helping them. All classes and ages became involved in cooking, sewing, and cleaning. The relatively rich found families without beds, soap, or hot water. They learned too, not to use phrases like 'the deserving poor.'<sup>216</sup>

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<sup>216</sup> Ballantyne, "This quiet man," 6.

## **CHAPTER 7: DEVELOPING YEARS (1955-1959)**

By the mid-1950s, the House no longer belonged to the founding group or to Tony Walsh, but instead to the laity, who had voluntarily committed themselves to this fascinating frontline work. Though Tony Walsh was the central driving force, Benedict Labre House would not have survived without the voluntary and financial support of Montreal lay Catholics. Through the combination of theological, spiritual and practical formation, lay volunteers became equipped to take on a more predominant role at the House.<sup>217</sup>

### **The Predominance of the Laity**

As more of the Montreal English Catholic laity became involved in the House, they worked together with an equality of work and an equality of social status. Tasks were not gender specific. It was normal to find men and women together, serving meals, washing dishes, distributing food and clothes, writing and editing the newspaper, worshipping in silence, and leading discussions at the Benedict Labre House. Also, as in a monastery, the tasks were also not based on social status. It was not unusual for local laity to find themselves serving a meal along with Madame Pauline Vanier, the wife of General George Vanier or Sister Margaret Power, Director of the Sacred Heart Convent. Though both the laity and religious had many outside responsibilities, they took

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<sup>217</sup> Buell, "The Man," 17-18; Jim Martin, interview by author, 31 May 1995, Montreal; Ballantyne, "This quiet man," 6; Buell, interview by author, 17 May 1999; Lawlor, interview by author, 15 June 1999; Walsh, interview by Peter Meggs, Fall, 1990; Cook, "BLH like university," 7; Hagarty, "In 6 years," 4; Berrigan, S.J., "Modesty," 1-11; Coveny, "From a Soup Kitchen," 2.

their commitment to Benedict Labre House seriously.<sup>218</sup>

### **On the frontline**

John Buell gave a stark portrayal of Griffintown at that time, "Families that didn't have any [groceries]...Cold flats, impossible to heat, a century old, gaping holes in plaster walls, vermin, the children sick..."<sup>219</sup>

In the face of such great poverty, Benedict Labre House in the mid-1950s continued to assist the poor with a personal and human approach that allowed people to retain their dignity. In the House's articulation of a 'unofficial' lay apostolate, there were no intake surveys typical of frontline social work, no statistics, and no reports reflecting improvement in the community. There were no religious requirements, no singing for one's supper. Instead, the House referred to itself as a family, in the monastic sense, as a home.<sup>220</sup>

Through such a personal and human approach, the team and friends of the House on the front lines met the truly poor of Griffintown, those who fell through the cracks of the social welfare system in the mid-1950s. The House worked with those poor who could or would not qualify for social assistance during this period: repeat offenders, the mentally ill, the homeless, vagrants, physically and intellectually handicapped, the ill, the unemployed and the pensioner. The team at Benedict Labre House also came in contact with families on social assistance struggling to survive. In the face of such raw

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<sup>218</sup> Walsh, interview by Peter Meggs, Fall, 1990; Cook, "BLH like university," 7; Berrigan, S.J., "Modesty," 1-11; The Rule of Saint Benedict, (New York: Cooper Square Publishers, 1966), 66-68; Miller, Alone for Others, 129; Margaret Power and Alice Amyot, interview by author, 9, 13 June 1995, Montreal, tape recording, Montreal; Buell, interview by author, 17 May 1999; Gerry Pascal, interviews by author, 2, 6 June 1995; Hagarty, "In 6 years," 4.

<sup>219</sup> Buell, "Line of silent men," 3.

<sup>220</sup> Buell, "Line of silent men," 3; Buell, "Labre House," 1-4; Walsh, interview by Peter Meggs, Fall, 1990; Hagarty, interview by author, 8 June 1999.

poverty, the team at Benedict Labre House challenged other Montreal lay Catholics to get involved.<sup>221</sup>

### **Patricia House**

In the mid-1950s, Marjorie Conners persevered in her life and work at Patricia House with both transient, marginalized women from the Montreal area and with low-income women and children in crisis from Griffintown. In 1957, Patricia House, under the threat of closure, survived through the assistance of Benedict Labre House, its parent house, which provided daily lay, moral and financial support.<sup>222</sup>

From April 1955 to 1979, Patricia House had a column in UNITY; Marjorie Conners was a member of the editorial board. The 'Patricia House' column was filled with honest and realistic portrayals of Marjorie's life and work with transient, homeless women, sex trade workers, alcoholics, repeat offenders, as well as low-income neighbourhood women and children in crisis.<sup>223</sup> As a frequent witness to society's tendency to dehumanize and criminalize marginalized women, Marjorie was outspoken in the face of moral hypocrisy.<sup>224</sup>

### **International student work**

In October 1957, Murray Ballantyne reported on the Second World Congress for the Apostolate of Laity held in Rome. While chairing a discussion

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<sup>221</sup> Buell, "Labre House," 1-4; Hagarty, "In 6 years," 4.

<sup>222</sup> Marvin, "History," 3; "Pat House Survives," 4; "Patricia House," 8-12.

<sup>223</sup> Marvin, "History," 3; Date of closure of Patricia House based on Pascal's dating. Pascal, interviews by author, 2, 6 June 1995; MacGillivray, "People Concerned", 1; Buell, "The Man," 17; Hagarty, interview by author, 8 June, 1999; "Patricia House," 8-12.

<sup>224</sup> "Patricia House: Views from the past," 8.

on cultural relations between East and West, Ballantyne and other white delegates from the West were subject to a tongue lashing from their African and Asian brothers. The African and Asian delegates chided those of the West that it was offensive to preach the human dignity of all peoples while practising segregation on both a personal and institutional level. The African and Asian delegates recounted stories of their young people returning from universities in the West with a degree but without their faith. These African and Asian Catholic university students had been subjected to racism by their white Catholic counterparts while studying in the West.<sup>225</sup>

Though, there is no evidence of a direct link to Ballantyne's article, within next two years, the House launched a new work with international students. John Buell later commented that they saw the need for hospitality for African students studying at McGill University and took action. Reflective and indicative of this new practical work in June 1958, Bernard Chidzero, an African Catholic student, spoke on the problems confronting the church in Africa during an evening discussion. The launch of the House's work with international students demonstrated its enduring commitment to a personal, human approach to social problems.<sup>226</sup>

### **Heightened Profile**

In January, 1955, Benedict Labre House moved from '418' Lagauchetière to 123 Duke Street. By April of 1955, the House was faced with an eviction notice so they moved from 123 Duke Street to 122 Duke Street. However, they

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<sup>225</sup> Ballantyne, "All Colors and No Color in Rome," 3.

<sup>226</sup> *ibid.*, 3; Buell, interview by author, 17 May 1999; Buell, "Tony," Newman Lecture, November 27, 1997; Buell, "The Man," 18; "Do-Or-Die Dilemma," 1-2.

were told that they could only reside for a year at 122 Duke Street. With a year's deadline, the team at Benedict Labre House was pressed into searching for a permanent location. An anonymous benefactor offered Tony Walsh and the board at Benedict Labre House, rent-free accommodations on Young Street.

### **Young Street**

The team agreed and moved into the new House on Young Street in April 1956 this would become their long term residence. Benedict Labre House's new larger location on Young Street had three floors. The new House definitely heightened their profile with the Montreal English Catholic community.<sup>227</sup>

### **Small and Poor**

As the work of the House gained a higher profile, Tony Walsh and Benedict Labre House were pressured often to become a larger and official organization. and/or to become more involved in social justice. Sometimes this pressure came from within the House. Joe O'Connor and Sister Margaret Power challenged Tony Walsh to become more involved in social justice to battle the systemic conditions of poverty. However, Tony and the team did not want to put an emphasis on political action but rather on personal action, so they fought to keep the House apolitical by remaining small and poor. Since it was a small venture, their operational costs were low and they remained debt-

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<sup>227</sup> Marvin, "History," 3; "Eviction Shows Need To Own House," UNITY (Montreal) May 1955, 3. "Cardinal To Bless," 1; Coveny, "From a Soup Kitchen," 2. Art Coveny mentions an interim move to William Street but there is no available evidence to corroborate this. Information and dating based on Marvin clearly indicates the history of the moves till October, 1955. Marvin and the article "Eviction Shows Need," notes that a search occurred in 1955 for a permanent residence for BLH. The article "Cardinal To Bless," finalizes the history of the moves by stating that BLH had found its permanent residence at 308 Young Street in April, 1956.

free . Their size also allowed them to keep unofficial links with the Archdiocese and other institutions. Therefore the House was free of any pressures to conform to the Montreal Catholic social service network.<sup>228</sup>

### **Blessing and Recommendation**

The verbal permission of Cardinal Leger and the support of Father Power, as unofficial overseer and John Buell, as unofficial liaison, fostered the environment necessary for the development of Benedict Labre House within the Archdiocese of Montreal. Throughout those years, the House continued to keep the lines clearly defined between themselves and Archdiocese's social network. Still, with much joy and reverence, the House received an official visit from Cardinal Leger. On the evening of April 16, 1956, the feast day of Saint Benedict Joseph Labre, Cardinal Leger blessed the House at the launch of its new location on Young Street.<sup>229</sup>

At the blessing of Benedict Labre House, the Cardinal strongly advised the team and supporters of the House to remain small, reaffirming the spiritual and social need for small houses of hospitality in the present modern, urban context. Leger reflected on how the immensity of modern society had alienated the individual from his or her soul. The Cardinal confirmed that the work of the House was a witness of Christ to those individuals who were unable to participate in contemporary society and therefore when marginalized

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<sup>228</sup> Lawlor, interview by author, 15 June 1999. See also: Buell, "Labre House," 1; O'Connor, interview by author, 8 June 1995; Hagarty, interview, 8 June 1999; Walsh, interview by Peter Meggs, Fall, 1990. Miller, Alone for Others, 121-123.

<sup>229</sup> Both Buell and Walsh described Father Power's involvement as an unofficial chaplain of Benedict Labre House with the Archdiocese, while John Buell acted as unofficial liaison between the House and Father Power. Buell, "Tony Walsh" Newman Lecture, November 27, 1997; Walsh, interview by Peter Meggs, Fall, 1990. "Cardinal To Bless," 1; "Cardinal Heads," 1.



plummeted into a state of despair.<sup>230</sup>

At Ste. Helene's Church, Cardinal Leger celebrated a dialogue Mass for the Feast of Saint Benedict Joseph Labre. After the mass, the Cardinal spoke to the gathering, reflecting on the life and witness of Saint Benedict Joseph Labre. He then, recommended the work of the House to young people. Therefore, within three years of its inception, Benedict Labre House had heightened its public profile in Montreal and was supported by many lay people, parishes, and religious communities.<sup>231</sup>

### **Launch of UNITY**

Though the House had established and maintained the Benedict Labre House newsletter during its early years, larger ambitions existed. Tony and his team felt that the newsletter was a poor substitute. In the March, 1954 edition of the House newsletter, Leo MacGillivray announced the upcoming launch of a new Benedict Labre House publication.<sup>232</sup>

By April 1955, MacGillivray had transformed Benedict Labre House's newsletter layout into a four-page, tabloid-size monthly paper called UNITY and continued to edit the paper for several months. From 1956 to 1966, John Buell took over the helm of UNITY. "The paper's name, UNITY...express[ed] the Mystical Body idea in all phases of lay apostolate work. It report[ed] on apostolic ideas and endeavours in Canada," heightening the profile of Benedict

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<sup>230</sup> "Labre Work Recommended," 1.

<sup>231</sup> "Cardinal Heads," 1; "Labre Work Recommended," 1. See Glossary for definition of dialogue mass.

<sup>232</sup> Dating and authorship of House newsletters is based on MacGillivray. MacGillivray, "People Concerned," 1; Family at 418, "We Now Hope," 1.

Labre House <sup>233</sup>

Though UNITY paper was not viewed as Tony Walsh's paper, he did at times veto certain subjects from print. Tony regarded UNITY as a reflection of witness and work of the House. His only proviso to the editorial team was that they did not openly attack any agency. The editorial team included Tony Walsh, Dixie MacMaster, Father William Power, Marjorie Connors, David Marvin, Murray Ballantyne, John Buell and Leo MacGillivray.<sup>234</sup>

From 1955 to 1959, the UNITY newspaper's simple layout comprised a column about the daily activities of the House, Marjorie Conner's column on Patricia House, book reviews, articles about the poor, liturgy, the apostolate, and contemporary Catholic thought. In the "Letter from Matt" column, under the alias of 'Matt', Tony wrote a personal letter of counsel and reflection on various topics to a fabricated friend. Steve Hagarty believed that Marjorie's column 'Patricia House' along with Tony's 'Letter From Matt' column, set the editorial tone for UNITY.<sup>235</sup>

In the late 1950s, UNITY moved to a stronger social and global perspective in those years leading up to the Vatican II. Though Benedict Labre House was still strongly centered on a personal and human approach to social issues, a shift became evident as more articles in UNITY dealt with racism, pluralism, social responsibility and ecumenism.<sup>236</sup>

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<sup>233</sup> MacGillivray, "People Concerned," 1; Buell, interview by author, 17 May, 1999; Marvin, "History," 3; See also: Buell, "The Man," 17-18; "Unity," UNITY (Montreal) April, 1955, 2.

<sup>234</sup> Miller, Alone for Others, 82-83; Hagarty, interview, 8 June 1999; Buell, "The Man," 17-18; MacGillivray, "People Concerned," 1; MacMaster, "On Tony Walsh...", 6.

<sup>235</sup> Buell, "The Man," 17-18; Hagarty, interview by author, 8 June, 1999.

<sup>236</sup> Ballantyne, "All Colors and No Color in Rome," 1; "Archbishop Roberts, S.J., Talks on Modern War," UNITY (Montreal) September, 1959, 4; "Towards A Greater Collaboration Between Management and Labour," UNITY (Montreal) September, 1959, 4.

During this era, UNITY boasted of a wide circulation requiring a full editorial team and a second team for distribution. Editor John Buell found it easy to attract student volunteers to work on the UNITY. They learned through participating in the many tasks and responsibilities of putting out the UNITY. To make the publication deadline, reprints from encyclicals, statements from the bishops, were all used as filler. In all, UNITY played a key role in heightening the profile of Benedict Labre House during this period.<sup>237</sup>

### **Formation**

In the mid-1950s, Benedict Labre House expanded and developed its role as an informal educator in theological, spiritual and practical formation for the lay person. Besides its usual schedule of events and activities, it began to offer opportunities for summer study weeks in Syracuse, New York and retreats with trained retreat masters like Daniel Berrigan and Lou Cox. In addition, programs were established for sodalities and seminarians from Syracuse and Plattsburg, New York, so that they could gain front line practical formation at the House.<sup>238</sup> In 1958, Steve Hagarty referred to the House as a 'school of love' that challenged the complacency of Catholics.<sup>239</sup> Berrigan described the image of the House in the mid-1950s as a monastery:

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<sup>237</sup> Buell, "The Man," 17-18; Buell, interview by author, 17 May 1999; Hagarty, interview by author, 8 June, 1999.

<sup>238</sup> In 1957, Daniel Berrigan S.J. was part of the faculty at Lemoyne which was known for teaching current theological perspectives and leading energetic sodalities of students and professionals. Berrigan, "Modesty," 1; Tony Walsh, Montreal, Quebec, to George Cook, Ottawa, Ontario, letter, September 1988; Tony Walsh, Montreal, Quebec, to George Cook, Ottawa, Ontario, letter, August 16, 1960, TGC; Buell, interview by author, 17 May, 1999; "Well-Known Lemoyne Group Visit Here For Week-end," UNITY (Montreal) November-December, 1957, 1; Hagarty, "In 6 years," 4.

<sup>239</sup> Hagarty, "In 6 years," 4.

Young Street in those days was a little like Benedict's description of the monastic setting. It was like a bee hive; on the surface chaotic, going in all directions, composed both of drones and hot headed workers, but drawing on a profound well spring of discipline, symbol, instinct, communal understanding. Down the street lived the Little Sisters of Jesus. Regular evenings of prayer drew the Labre folk as well as others...I think of it as a place of healing and learning above all.<sup>240</sup>

### Theological formation

In the mid 1950s, evening discussions continued to be a key venue for theological formation for the local laity. The House's evening discussions attracted people from a variety of age groups, socioeconomic backgrounds and religious traditions. Not only did the Montreal English Catholic laity benefit from the theological formation gained through regular evening discussions but also from visiting speakers like Dorothy Day.<sup>241</sup>

Benedict Labre House, by fostering its ecumenical focus, continued to challenge lay Catholics to learn about other faiths and traditions. In 1958, Steve Hagarty reported on the mix of Protestant and Catholic high school and college students who shared in the House's work and discussions. Annual House retreats became more ecumenical in tone and focus. William Lawlor considered it to be an inclusive move on the House's part "of not getting hung up on the confines of this or that denomination."<sup>242</sup>

From 1956 to the early 1960s, Benedict Labre House fostered a long-term relationship with American Catholics including Daniel Berrigan, as a result

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<sup>240</sup> Berrigan, S.J., "Modesty," 1-11.

<sup>241</sup> Buell, "The Man," 17; Lawlor, interview by author, 15 June 1999; MacMaster, "The Action," 4; Buell, interview by author, 17 May 1999; Hagarty, "In 6 years," 4; Butterworth, "Benedict Labre," 2; See also: Day, "Retreat," 2.

<sup>242</sup> Hagarty, interview by author, 8 June, 1999; MacMaster, "On Tony Walsh," 6; MacMaster, "The Action," 4; Buell, "Line of silent men," 3; Buell, "The Man," 18; Hagarty, "In 6 years," 4; Lawlor, interview by author, 15 June 1999.

of the series of conferences on the lay apostolate in Syracuse, New York. In August 1956, the first Conference on the Lay Apostolate was held at Lemoyne College in Syracuse, New York, in an attempt to bring together the many branches of the lay apostolate from the U.S. and Canada. Tony Walsh and Father William Power of YCW were guest speakers, along with a large retinue of academics, clergy and other lay leaders. The main objective of the Syracuse conference was to provide sound teaching and discussion on the theological basis of the Lay Apostolate. The conference was significant in the formation of Benedict Labre House lay volunteers.<sup>243</sup>

In 1956, Daniel Berrigan, a young Jesuit priest working in Brooklyn with the YCW, was also invited to participate at this first conference of the lay apostolate at Lemoyne College. While at the conference, Berrigan listened to a talk given by Tony Walsh. Berrigan was struck by Tony's "earnest candour, good humour, and kind of grace of office," as Tony spoke of the demands, errors, the hope and the healing of frontline work with the poor in an urban context in Montreal.<sup>244</sup>

A good snapshot of retreats during this period was the one led by Dan Berrigan to twenty-three lay people at St. Jean Vianney Seminary, August 28-30, 1959. The theological formation of this retreat was clearly evident as

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<sup>243</sup> Berrigan, S.J., "Modesty," 1; "Canadians Take Part in Syracuse Studies," UNITY (Montreal) August-September, 1956, 1; Power and Buell, "Syracuse," 1-4; Buell, interview by author, 17 May, 1999.

<sup>244</sup> There appears to be some confusion over the year that Daniel Berrigan met Tony Walsh - 1956 or 1957. In Berrigan, "Modesty," 1. Berrigan cites the year as 1956, and yet, he cites the year as 1957, in Berrigan, S.J., 'Dedication' June 1987 in Miller, Alone for Others, 5. This author stands by 1956 since it was the year that Berrigan first cites in his article "Modesty," 1. and it was in 1956, that Tony Walsh and Father William Power first participated in the first lay apostolate conference in Syracuse which is first cited in, "Canadians Take Part," 1. This data concludes that Berrigan and Walsh are referring to the same conference in 1956 in their respective articles. See also-Walsh, to George Cook, September 1988, TGC.

Berrigan spoke of creation, stating that "we are here to see the face of God in the created things of our time." Berrigan emphasized that God is found through the Eucharist and our neighbours. Moving along with this concept, he reminded them that 'We're not fully Christian until we follow through from the altar to people.' To be involved in the redemptive work of Christ meant a serious commitment to the Eucharist and to one's vocation by engaging authentically with one's neighbours, making love and truth available in everyday living.<sup>245</sup>

### Spiritual formation

The House continued to maintain a spiritual lay community centered on liturgy and prayer. In addition, in the mid-to-late 1950s, dialogue masses, pilgrimages, retreats and conferences became new venues of spiritual formation for lay people connected to the House.<sup>246</sup>

In April 1956, at the blessing of Benedict Labre House, Cardinal Leger celebrated a dialogue mass, which suggests that the dialogue mass was already in use at House. Though, there is no evidence of when use of dialogue Masses began at the House, they were very popular at House from the mid-fifties to the early sixties. A group of twenty lay people would assemble around the communion table and giving the verbal responses of the Mass.<sup>247</sup>

As a form of Christian witness and as a type of spiritual formation,

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<sup>245</sup> "BL House Retreat: Each One to Feel Responsible If Apostolate Is To Work," UNITY (Montreal) September 1959, 1; "Notes On," 2.

<sup>246</sup> MacMaster, "On Tony Walsh," 6; Cook, "BLH Like University," 7; Buell, "The Man," 17. Buell reported that a non-practising Catholic volunteer said, "These are nice people, but I can't stand the prayers."; Buell, interview by author, 17 May 1999; MacGillivray, "People Concerned," 1-3; Buell, "Tony Walsh," Newman Lecture, November 27, 1997; Coveny, "From a Soup Kitchen," 2.

<sup>247</sup> "Cardinal Heads," 1; Cook, "BLH Like University," 7; Miller, Alone for Others, 82. Though Cook refers to dialogue masses as a new phenomenon in the 1950s at BLH, they had been in use in Quebec since the early 1940s. Clément, "L'Action catholique," 308.

Benedict Labre House led an annual pilgrimage in the spring in honor of Our Lady, Mary. On Tuesday evening, May 7, 1957, the House and sixty lay people set out on its first pilgrimage from Benedict Labre House in Griffintown to Notre Dame de Bonsecours church in Old Montreal. Striking a very different tone, the procession moved through the streets with laity in the front and clergy in ecclesiastical vestments following at the rear. En route, the members of the procession recited the rosary and sang until they reached Bonsecours Church. A dialogue mass was celebrated with participants responding and the singing of the "Litany of Our Lady" in English.<sup>248</sup>

During this period, notable retreat masters like Dan Berrigan and Lou Cox led retreats for lay people sponsored by the House.<sup>249</sup> Dan Berrigan wrote that there was "an atmosphere of gentleness, acceptance, insight, mutuality..." at these retreats. Also, there was a sense of reverence, discernment and direction as the 'nearly lost art' of silent adoration was restored to the retreat's agenda. William Lawlor found the retreats to be "very exciting, very gratifying, very challenging, with Berrigan who was "a lightning rod." "When closing a retreat, Berrigan would celebrate a dialogue mass, moving the participants closer to the witness and wonder of the Eucharist."<sup>250</sup>

The House's retreat with Berrigan in August, 1959, was indicative of this type of spiritual formation. Berrigan stated that St. Ignatius and Charles de Foucauld were individuals who gave their lives entirely to God by immersing themselves in lives of poverty. Using the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius as a

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<sup>248</sup> Buell, interview by author, 17 May 1999; Buell, "Tony Walsh," Newman Lecture, November 27, 1997; Buell, "The Man," 17; "Mass At Bonsecours," 1.

<sup>249</sup> Lawlor, interview by author, 15 May 1999; Buell, "The Man," 17; MacMaster, "The Action," 4.

<sup>250</sup> Berrigan, "Modesty," 1; Lawlor, interview by author, 15 May 1999.

framework to find in "...our time and place the face of God in the Eucharist and our neighbour," Berrigan spiritually challenged the retreatants to start making choices "in Christ's favour, based on our willingness to change and suffer."<sup>251</sup>

In terms of spiritual formation, the conferences on the Lay Apostolate at Syracuse offered the opportunity to look at the sacramental and liturgical dimension of the lay apostolate. At Syracuse, lay people from the House met other lay Catholics who were involved in lay apostolates. A spirit of like-mindedness prevailed as lay people shared their experiences.<sup>252</sup>

### Practical formation

Practical formation for the lay person was found on the front lines and in retreats during this period. The message was conveyed repeatedly that personal service to the poor demanded commitment and authentic engagement from the lay person in contact with the poor. Such intimacy with the poor could not be found in well-organized 'museum' trips to Griffintown and the House but rather on the front line.<sup>253</sup>

In 1956, shortly after meeting Tony Walsh, Art Coveny visited Benedict Labre House. He joined Tony Walsh, on a visit to a woman who just suffered a house fire. As they discussed the house fire, it became evident that the woman had lost even her own bed. Tony Walsh responded, "You mean you have no bed?" The woman responded, "no." Tony declared, "Well, I'll get you one." Upon leaving the woman's house, Art Coveny's curiosity was piqued, so he questioned Tony, "By the way, where are you going to get this bed?" Tony

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<sup>251</sup> "BL House Retreat," 1; Notes On," 2.

<sup>252</sup> Power and Buell, "Syracuse," 1-4; "Canadians Take Part," 1; Buell, interview by author, 17 May, 1999.

<sup>253</sup> Hagarty, "In 6 years," 4.



replied, "I'm going to give her mine." Tony's practical, selfless response made a lasting impression on Art Coveny, who then volunteered as House accountant for twelve years.<sup>254</sup>

In July of 1959, Charles Butterworth, editor with Catholic Worker, while visiting the House, gained frontline practical formation during clothing distribution. Frustrated while serving a poor man who wanted the right pants and shoes, Butterworth experienced an epiphany: "...when I get pants and shoes for myself, I want them to fit. We should want for others at least as much as we expect for ourselves, that's what justice means. Charity should include justice and go still further."<sup>255</sup>

The retreats in this period also dealt with practical issues. Again the Berrigan retreat of August, 1959 gives us insight into the practical formation that occurred at this retreat. On the final day, Berrigan challenged the participants to action through change and decision-making. The final hours of the retreat dealt with the long-term vision and future of the House. Berrigan spoke clearly to the issues: "It's your house, your future. If each one of you waits for the others to take the responsibility, the whole thing will collapse. And so it should. It has to be a group effort. The Lord is placing this small house in your hands." In those last hours of the retreat, Berrigan delivered foreboding words, warning that the group's entrenched dependency on Tony Walsh and a few other volunteers could prove to be disastrous for the future of the House.<sup>256</sup>

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<sup>254</sup> In this lecture, John Buell invited Art Coveny from the audience to retell the story of Tony and the bed. Buell, "Tony Walsh," Newman Lecture, November 27, 1997; See also: Coveny, "From a Soup Kitchen," 2.

<sup>255</sup> Butterworth, "Benedict Labre," 2. See also: Day, "Retreat," 2-8. Dating based on Butterworth and Day.

<sup>256</sup> Lawlor, interview by author, 15 May 1999; "BL House Retreat," 1; "Notes On," 2.

## **CHAPTER 8: THE VATICAN II YEARS (1960-1966)**

### **Introduction**

Nothing was more dramatic to the life and work of Benedict Labre House during 1952 to 1966 than Vatican II. Held from 1962-1965, Vatican II, with its sweeping changes and reforms, proved to be so revolutionary that it had a large effect on churches and organizations internationally. Like many other similar lay organizations big and small, the House was affected by the Council reforms of Vatican II.

From pre-Council to post-Council, 1960-1965, Benedict Labre House followed Vatican II with great interest. There was much excitement as ninety Canadian prelates participated in the Council. A personal connection was developed between Benedict Labre House and Vatican II when Pope John XIII selected Cardinal Léger of Montreal to sit on the prestigious central coordinating committee of the Council. Along with discussions and articles relating to the Council, a number of members of the House were present at several of the public consultations held in Montreal with Cardinal Leger, prior to and during the Council. Therefore, as with any Catholic organization of the Vatican II era, it is important to examine Benedict Labre House's pre-Council, mid-Council, and post-Council history. At the House, there was much hope and excitement in the pre-Council period (1960-1962). However, during the Council (1962-1965), those feelings changed to insecurity and anguish. Finally, by the post-Council period (1965-1970), a sense of shock and despair at the House prevailed as the extent of the changes came to light. In the post-Vatican era,

with the combination of Council reforms and Quebec political reforms, Benedict Labre House, as an unofficial lay apostolate, became a shadow of its former self.<sup>257</sup>

The UNITY played a significant role in keeping the Montreal Catholic lay community aware of the issues, the changes and the implications of Vatican II. It is obvious by the number of articles published in the UNITY during Vatican II, that the friends of Benedict Labre House followed the sessions of the Council with great interest. Due to emphasis on Vatican II, the UNITY moved from a local to a more global perspective during the period of 1960 to 1966. The following pages attest to the role of UNITY during the Vatican II period.

### **Pre-Vatican II (1960-1962)**

A rhetoric of hope and excitement pervaded the pre-Vatican II era at Benedict Labre House. In January 1961, with a desire to challenge local laity, in his "Letter From Matt," Tony wrote a mock letter to St. Francis of Assisi, expressing his hope and loyalty to the upcoming Council. An article, "Council To Deal with Realities," in August 1962, stressed the uniqueness of the Council, focussing on the level of media involvement and on the participation of ninety Canadian prelates. A month before the opening of the Council in 1962, UNITY reported on an evening discussion led by Robert Burns, who enumerated the hopes of laity for the Council in detail.<sup>258</sup>

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<sup>257</sup> Daly, "Remembering for Tomorrow," 41-42; "15 Canadians Working on Preparations For the Council," UNITY (Montreal) March 1961, 4; "Council To Deal with Realities," UNITY (Montreal) August 1962, 1-4; "Cardinal and Laymen meet over Council," UNITY November, 1961, 1; "A Cardinal Talks With His Laity," UNITY (Montreal) February 1962, 1-4; Buell, "Why the Changes," 1-4; Baum, The Church in Quebec, 24-25; Linteau, et al., Quebec Since 1930, 474-480.

<sup>258</sup> "Letter From Matt," UNITY (Montreal) January, 1961, 2; "Council To Deal with Realities," 1-4; "What a Layman Hopes," 1-2.

In this pre-Vatican II era, Benedict Labre House mirrored that sense of hope and excitement with its activities and lay volunteers. Still emphasizing a personal approach to poverty, the basic schedule of hospitality work and activities was enlarged. Also, casual types of theological, spiritual and practical formation continued to occur between Montreal, Syracuse and the Laurentians. The House hit its peak in the year 1960 with an estimated four hundred to five hundred lay volunteers. By 1961, there were more lay volunteers than there was work. Therefore, the work of the House had grown more complex and required more serious planning.<sup>259</sup>

To address the complexities of the work and property needs, the team decided to incorporate Benedict Labre House. Between 1956 to 1960, they had use of the property at 308 Young Street rent free. In 1960, due to his financial circumstances, the owner of the house offered to sell the house for six thousand dollars to the team at Benedict Labre House. On the advice of a lawyer, the team decided not only to raise the necessary funds but also to incorporate the House. The success of the fundraising campaign allowed them to purchase the property and by April, 1961, they became incorporated as a non-profit organization.<sup>260</sup>

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<sup>259</sup> "Group of seven organizes fact-finding with poor," UNITY (Montreal) November 1962, 1; Tony Walsh, Cornell University, Ithaca, New York to George Cook, Ottawa, Ontario, February 20, 1961, TGC; Lawlor, interview by author, 15 June 1999; Miller, Alone for Others, 81-82. Since there is no available evidence on how many volunteers were involved annually between 1952-1966, George Cooke's declaration that 1960 was a representative year in terms of the number of volunteers cannot be corroborated. This author is more inclined to look at these figures for the year of 1960 as reflective of BLH at its peak and therefore refers to this period, 1960-1962. See also: Buell, "The Man," 17; "Letter From Matt," May 1961, 2.

<sup>260</sup> The Charter outlined the House as a non-profit organization, allowed for the election of six directors to the Board and twenty members to the Corporation. Coveny, "From a Soup Kitchen," 2, commented that the incorporation of the House marked the end of its early years; "Letter From Matt," May 1961, 2. Dating for the incorporation, April 1961 is based on Tony's comments of the incorporation in connection with the House's Spring Anniversary traditionally held in April.

With the influence of the upcoming Council, Benedict Labre House continued to develop as a globally-minded organization. In the 1960s, more articles on the Third World appeared in the UNITY. In the 1964 issue, Tony spoke about apartheid in South Africa and the civil rights movement in the U.S. The House extended its involvement with international students through its programs and university events and meetings in Montreal and the U.S. In March 1960, at the University of Montreal, Tony was also part of a panel discussion on international student work. In February 1961, Tony met with the International students at Cornell University in New York.<sup>281</sup>

A number of evening discussions during this pre-Vatican II period dealt directly or indirectly with the Council. In 1962, Burns' discussion, "What a Layman Hopes...From the Coming Council," provided a detailed analysis of lay expectations. For the House, a key area of interest during the pre-Vatican II period was liturgical reform at the Council. Burns articulated the concern of many lay people that liturgy had remained static during the last two thousand years of the Church. There was a sense that the Church was resistant to changes in the liturgy. Burns expressed the hope that liturgical reforms would include the mass in the vernacular, dialogue masses and the institution of male and female lay leaders.<sup>282</sup>

In the January 1961 issue of UNITY, Benedict Labre House put their ecumenical concerns on high profile in celebration of the upcoming ecumenical Council. One article discussed the 'rapprochement' between Catholics,

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<sup>281</sup> Tony Parr, "What We Don't Know of Latin America," UNITY (Montreal) October 1962, 1-4; "Westerners Missing African Boat," UNITY, November 1962, 1-4; "Letter From Matt," UNITY (Montreal) June 1964, 2; Buell, interview by author, 17 May 1999; Buell, "Tony Walsh," Newman Lecture, November 27, 1997; Dyson, "I was a Stranger," 1; Tony Walsh to George Cook, February 20, 1961.

<sup>282</sup> "What a Layman Hopes," 1-2.

Orthodox and Protestants. In the same issue, there was a report on Pope John XXIII's historic visit with the Archbishop of Canterbury. Another article reported on the history of the Catholic Inquiry Forum, a Montreal organization which, since 1952 promoted ecumenical activities. Clearly, this 1961 UNITY issue was loaded with ecumenical-oriented items.<sup>283</sup>

### **Mid-Vatican II (1962-1965)**

During the mid-Council period, the work and activities at Benedict Labre House continued even though it was a time characterized by insecurity and anguish. Tony in his "Letter From Matt" in January 1963 questioned the effectiveness of the changes coming from the Council. Yet in his September, 1965 "Letter From Matt," Tony still expressed hope with the results of the Fourth Session of the Council. By the conclusion of the Fourth session in 1965, Tony reported that there was a mood of deep disturbance and anguish that beset Montreal lay Catholics, confronted by the rapid pace of change of the Council and political reforms in Quebec. He mentioned that there was tension and conflict surrounding the topics of peace, war, authority, churches and their institutions.<sup>284</sup>

Attempting to soften the blow, the House used its evening discussions to develop awareness and understanding about the Council reforms. The roster

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<sup>283</sup> "First in World History: Men and Religions Seek Peace and Union," UNITY (Montreal) January 1961, 1; "The First Visit In 400 Years: Comments From The Press," UNITY (Montreal) January 1961, 4; "Seeds For a Harvest: Many Groups Now Active in 'Contact' Apostolate," UNITY (Montreal) January 1961, 1-4.

<sup>284</sup> "The Daily Round," UNITY (Montreal) July-August, 1964, 4. This 'Daily Round' gives insight into the level of work and activities at the BLH during the mid-Council period. Also, the column confirms BLH's continued attendance at Holy Hour at the Little Sisters in 1964. "Letter From Matt," UNITY (Montreal) January 1963, 2; "Letter From Matt," UNITY (Montreal) September 1965, 2; "Letter From Matt," UNITY (Montreal) Dec. 1965, 2.

for House evening discussions in November 1962 was very Council-related:

Nov.6- Murray Ballantyne on "The Changes Going on In the Church at This Moment".

Nov.13- The House business meeting.

Nov.20- Fr. Paul Dickinson, S.J. on "Eastern Rites and Reunion."

Nov.27- Brendan Griffffin and Greta Mitchell on "Father Yves Congar's book The Wide World: My Parish."<sup>285</sup>

The January, 1963 issue of UNITY was packed with articles and items about ecumenism in the mid-Council period. "Bishop Gives Ecumenist Primer" reported on the council statements made by Bishop Joseph De Smedt of Bruges, Belgium, at the First Session. De Smedt indicated that there had been ongoing ecumenical dialogue in the 1940s and 1950s in the western world. De Smedt then offered a definition and a methodology for ecumenical dialogue. "An Observer Reports Impressions of Council" details Protestant theologian Dr. Oscar Cullmann's statements at a press conference. Cullmann, described the tremendous level of ecumenical dialogue at the Council. Locally, UNITY reports that Catholic seminarians from the Grand Seminaire had participated in a successful day of ecumenical dialogue with Anglican divinity students at the Diocesan Theological College. Also, there was an announcement of the launch of The Ecumenist, a Canadian journal treating ecumenical issues with Gregory Baum as editor.<sup>286</sup>

UNITY articles during the mid-Council communicated the work ethic at Vatican II. Through Claude Ryan's article, "Everything must be done over,"

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<sup>285</sup> "Speakers for November," UNITY (Montreal) October 1962, 1.

<sup>286</sup> "Bishop Gives Ecumenist Primer," UNITY (Montreal) January 1963, 1-3; "An Observer reports Impressions of Council," UNITY (Montreal) January 1963, 2-4; Xavier Rynne, Vatican Council II, (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1999), 50; "Catholic seminarians guests at Anglican divinity school," UNITY (Montreal) January 1963, 1; "Ecumenical journal gets under way," UNITY (Montreal) January 1963, 1.

UNITY readers gained insight into the depth and breadth of the work required to produce the Council documents. At a press conference, Dr. Oscar Cullmann explained his role and work as one of many non-Catholic observers involved in the ecumenical dialogue at Vatican II. Cullmann believed that an observer had to be a person of wisdom, discretion, trust, care and hard work to participate in the work of the Council.<sup>267</sup>

Because of its long-term passion and care for liturgy, BLH continued to follow the news of the liturgical reforms with great concern. Liturgical reform moved at very quick pace during the mid-Council period. With the completion of "Constitution of the Sacred Liturgy" in December 1963, in the following summer of 1964 UNITY readers were told In the article "Details of Changes in language of Mass," that Mass would be changed from the Latin to the vernacular early in 1965. English parishes would receive new missals from the U.S translated into English. Bernard Daly in "Language Change in Mass Part of Larger Reform" explained that the language change of Mass from Latin to the vernacular would "increase the understanding, faith and participation of the people." Daly also stated that this was a process that would occur over several years.<sup>268</sup>

There was a plethora of lay conferences held in Montreal during the Vatican II era. The October 1962 issue of UNITY announced that an upcoming conference would be held Saturday, November, 17, 1962. It would deal with "renewal in the lives of Christians." Sessions were to be led by Robert Burns, Harry Goldsmith, and John Buell. Then in May, 1963, Murray Ballantyne and

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<sup>267</sup> Claude Ryan, "Everything must be done over," UNITY (Montreal) January, 1963, 2, reprinted from Le Devoir (Montreal) 1962; "An Observer reports," 4.

<sup>268</sup> "Details of Changes in language of Mass," UNITY (Montreal) July-August, 1964, 1; Bernard Daly, "Language Change in Mass Part of Larger Reform," UNITY (Montreal) July-August, 1964, 4; See also-Daly, "Remembering for Tomorrow," 52-54.



John Buell spoke at the Regional Congress on the Lay Apostolate held in Montreal. With Cardinal Leger as its patron, the congress dealt with issues of the lay apostolate in Quebec and Ontario. The expectation and also, discontent of the laity were articulated concerning the state of the lay apostolate and the Council.<sup>200</sup>

Prior to Vatican II, UNITY had few articles directly relating to the subjects of peace and war. However, in spring and summer of 1965, UNITY printed two key articles on peace and war. The articles were Dan Berrigan's, "Total War Is A Total God," and Thomas Merton's, "Schema: 13: An Open Letter to the American Hierarchy." Written just prior to the Fourth session in 1965, these articles were distributed widely to challenge the bishops to take a strong stance during the Council discussion on the peace and war section of the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World. Yet, during this period support for the peace movement at Benedict Labre House was extremely low key. John Buell, editor, commented that printing these articles gave basic support to Berrigan and Merton. Tony made a vague reference to the peace and war discussion at the Fourth Session in his "Letter From Matt," in UNITY, December 1965. Consistent with the apolitical behaviour of an 'unofficial' lay apostate, there was no collective support from Benedict Labre House on the peace issue

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<sup>200</sup> "Day Of Conference," UNITY (Montreal) October 1962, 1; The Regional Congress of the Lay Apostolate, Text of the Proceedings of the Regional Congress of the Lay Apostolate, Held at Montreal, May 3, 4, 5, 1963, (Montreal: An-Lo Inc., 1963), 2, 5, 7, 18, 62. See also text of speeches in proceedings by Murray Ballantyne and John Buell, pp.16-22, 86-87.

in 1965.<sup>270</sup>

### **Post-Vatican II (1965-1970)**

The post-Vatican II period at Benedict Labre House was characterized by shock and despair, for the BLH did not travel through the Vatican II period unscathed. Shock and grief was evident as two clergy friends who played significant roles at Benedict Labre House suddenly left North America for the Third World. When Cardinal Leger left for a mission to lepers in Africa, there was a sense of deep shock at Leger's decision. Daniel Berrigan was silenced and exiled by Jesuit superiors to Latin America for his role in the anti-Vietnam war protests. This contributed to a pervasive sense of scandal since it was felt that he had done nothing morally wrong by his support and participation in anti-Vietnam war protest.<sup>271</sup>

By the time of the post -Council, the reforms already had a serious impact on North America. Conservatives like John Buell and others at BLH felt that the Council reforms dismantled the Mass, the devotions, and Catholic morality. At the same time, due to political modernization and rapid secularization, the Church in Quebec was no longer predominant in peoples' lives, causing a great

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<sup>270</sup> Daniel Berrigan, "Total War Is A Total God," UNITY (Montreal) May, 1965, 1-4; Thomas Merton, "Schema: 13: An Open Letter to the American Hierarchy," UNITY (Montreal) July-Aug, 1965, 1-4; Eileen Egan, "Dorothy Day: Pilgrim of Peace," in Revolution of the Heart: Essays on the Catholic Worker, ed. Patrick, G. Coy, (Philadelphia: New Society Publishers, 1988), 97-98, 276; Eileen Egan, "The Struggle of the Small Vehicle, Pax," in American Catholic Pacifism: The Influence of Dorothy Day and the Catholic Worker Movement, ed. Anne Klejment and Nancy L. Roberts (Westport, Connecticut: Praeger Publishers, 1996), 131-133; Buell, interview by author, 17 May 1999; "Letter From Matt," December 1965, 2.

<sup>271</sup> Murray Ballantyne, "Why Did He Do It?," UNITY (Montreal) December, 1967, 1; John Buell, "The Scandal of Father Berrigan," UNITY (Montreal) January, 1966, 2; "Baum on Berrigan," UNITY (Montreal) February, 1966, 1-2; see also-William H. Shannon, ed. "The Correspondence of Dorothy Day and Thomas Merton," in American Catholic Pacifism: The Influence of Dorothy Day and the Catholic Worker Movement, eds. Anne Klejment and Nancy L. Roberts (Westport, Conn.: Praeger Publishers, 1996), 115.

exodus of lay people from their local churches. Due to these theological and political factors, Benedict Labre House in the post-Vatican II era could not continue to operate as an unofficial lay apostolate. The Mass, the devotions, and Catholic conservative morality were key to the life and work of the House in its monastic model. To move away from a heavy emphasis on the mass, liturgy and morality meant abandoning its monastic model, a model which was essential to an unofficial lay apostolate at BLH. With the exodus of the laity in Quebec, the House was in trouble since it had been established as a lay apostolate to challenge lay Catholics on a theological, spiritual and practical level. Also, the House was dependent on lay commitment and support on a volunteer and financial level. Like its American counterparts in the post-Council era, the House subsequently endured a period of decline as an unofficial lay apostolate. The House was caught up in the reforms of Vatican II, and the secularization of Quebec.<sup>272</sup>

### **The Impact of Council Reforms**

In his article, "Why the Changes are hurting so many--new Mass, no devotions, new morals," Buell clearly dealt with three major areas of reforms. His article reflects well the shock, anguish and despair that many Montreal conservative Catholic lay people were experiencing when confronted by the speed and finality of the Council reforms. During Vatican II, Buell had been an advocate for change. However, in this post-Council era, Buell stated that the Council reforms did not offer anything to replace the spiritual practices that were

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<sup>272</sup> Buell, "Why the Changes," 1-4; Baum, The Church in Quebec, 19-25; Linteau, et al., Quebec Since 1930, 474-480. Davis in her analysis states Vatican II was actually the death knell for the American unofficial lay apostolates. Davis, "The Rise and Decline," 175. Buell, interview by author, 17 May 1999. Buell comments that by the mid-1960s, the predominance of Church in Montreal had disappeared and the exodus of laity had occurred.

removed. First deemed as superficial, Buell believed that the reforms irrevocably altered the spiritual lives of lay Catholics.<sup>273</sup>

Buell felt, as with many conservatives, that with the changes to the Mass there was a loss of its mystical dimension. Before the Council reforms, people had a sense of awe and respect about the Mass. During some periods of Church history, people had attended Mass under the threat of death. Buell contested that Catholic spirituality was based on this history of persecution related to the Mass. Such a history created laity's "unshakeable devotion" to the Mass." Buell explained that this model challenged Catholics to attend Mass no matter what adversity prevailed.

Buell contended that the combination of Vatican II reforms to the Mass itself eroded its sacredness. Reforms in liturgical music, the language of the Mass, the physical position of the priest and the altar and the commitments for confession, fasting, communion, and attendance led to the demise of the Mass and of personal lay religious practice.

The second major area of loss and pain for lay conservative Catholics was the changes to the devotions, which Buell referred to as the 'disappearance of the devotions'. Buell specifically spoke of the devotions of Our Lady, the rosary, the Stations of the Cross, and of the miracles and apparitions. These and other devotions were removed in order to focus on the Mass. Buell felt there was nothing to replace the devotions, nowhere to channel one's emotions and finally an obvious lack of new teaching to direct lay people in their spiritual lives.

Buell argued that the reforms created a new Catholic morality. He felt

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<sup>273</sup> Buell, "Why the Changes," 1-4; The Regional Congress of the Lay Apostolate, Text of the Proceedings, 86.

that by removing the 'awesomeness' of the Mass, then this same 'awesomeness' was removed from the obedience to God in moral matters. He remarked that though the pre-Council morality was narrow and legalistic, it had been very clear in its commands and obligations. There had been clarity about most things in Catholic life, whether "dealing with Protestants, marrying a non-Catholic, birth control, communists, war, criticizing priests, recognizing heretics and non-believers ("the others")." For Buell, this new Catholic morality was too vague and open. It promoted too many questions, fostered confusion and created grey areas. Buell's article argues that the Council reforms had a very negative impact on lay people, affecting their understanding and their involvement in the Mass, devotions, and morality, which were all areas of significance to Benedict Labre House. With the combination of these Council reforms and the exodus of lay people from Quebec churches, Benedict Labre House in the post-Vatican II era was in a period of decline as an unofficial lay apostolate.<sup>274</sup>

### **A Period of Decline**

During the post-Vatican II years, just as the BLH was in a period of decline, so was Tony Walsh's health. Because of health problems, Tony started to recede in his presence in the House during the mid-1960s. By 1966, Tony was sixty-eight years old, and had sustained three bouts of pneumonia and the loss of a kidney. Along with a multitude of health complications, Tony was also suffering from exhaustion. Therefore, in the wake of his rapidly declining health, Tony quietly resigned from Benedict Labre House in 1966. Members and

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<sup>274</sup> Buell, "Why the Changes," 2-4 passim.

friends of the House reacted with much shock and chagrin at his departure.<sup>275</sup>

Affected by the fallout from Vatican II, the secularization of Quebec, Tony's departure, and growing family obligations, John Buell resigned as editor of UNITY in 1966. After Tony and John departed, others remained, such as Ray Salmon, Art Coveny, Jim Martin and the weekend teams. However, within the next several years, most of the lay volunteer and financial support attached to Tony, disappeared. Buell stated that due to the changes, the spirit of the House could not be revived. In other words, the House as this type of unofficial lay apostolate was in period of decline.<sup>276</sup>

### **Changing of the Guard**

From 1966-1968, several people including Ray Salmon and Sil Galvin, managed the House. In December 1968, a young, unmarried American couple, Bob O'Callaghan and Joanabbey Sacks, took over the management of the House and attracted a vibrant group of young people who participated in the work of the House. Bob was house manager of Benedict Labre House and Joanabbey was in charge of Patricia House. During this period of changes and departures, there were many questions concerning the survival of the House and its redefinition. In 1969, Steve Hagarty indicated to this new young community at the House that a break be made with the past, suggesting that,

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<sup>275</sup> Hagarty, interview by author, 8 June, 1999; Miller, Alone for Others, 87-88; Buell, "The Man," 18. Dating of Tony's health complications is based on Gerry Pascal who was involved at the House at the time of Tony's departure. Dating of Tony's age in 1966 is based on Tony's year of birth, 1898. Dating of Tony's departure in 1966 is based on the interviews with Buell and Pascal. After ten years as editor, Buell left UNITY in 1966, after Tony. Thus Tony left in 1966-Pascal's date. Buell, interview by author, 17 May 1999; Pascal, interview by author, 13 July 1999.

<sup>276</sup> Buell, interview by author, 17 May 1999; Pascal, interview by author, 13 July 1999; Sil Galvin, "'Chaos Day' At The House," UNITY (Montreal) June 1969, 3; Pascal and Galvin indicate the loss of past volunteers.

**"the ideals of the past are not-and should not be-the ideals of the present."<sup>277</sup>**

In breaking with the past, Bob, Joanabbey and their community of young people immersed themselves in political action through such venues as the peace movement, community activism and the grape boycott. These were tumultuous years at the House as old members were confronted with the switch in direction from its theology of a lay apostolate to the practical theology which was strong on political action. In 1970, when Gerry Pascal, took over from Bob and Joanabbey, he inherited this legacy of political action. During the 1970s, Gerry Pascal moved the House further towards a practical theology by affiliating with the social justice orientation of the Catholic Worker.<sup>278</sup>

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<sup>277</sup> **"Incorporation Members' Annual Meeting:** Labre House family conference ponders present, explores the future," UNITY (Montreal) June 1968, 1; Miller, Alone for Others, 87-88; James A. Martin, "Labre House And The Future," UNITY (Montreal) May 1969, 2; Dating of Bob O'Callaghan and Joanabbey Sacks becoming house managers is based on Battistuzzi. Rick Battistuzzi, "Bob and Joanabbey Get Married," UNITY (Montreal) January 1970, 1; Sil Galvin, "We Need to Increase Our Family," UNITY (Montreal) May 1969, 3; Galvin, "Chaos Day," 3. See also- Rev. S. Hagarty, "Benedict Labre House Conference: Compassion," UNITY (Montreal) June 1969, 1-2;

<sup>278</sup> Pascal, interview by author, 13 July 1999; Pascal, interviews by author, 2, 6 June 1995. See also: UNITY from 1970-1980 to see their strong social justice orientation.

## **CHAPTER 9: CONCLUSION**

**This thesis has attempted to differentiate myth and history and to clarify the motivations behind the founding of the House. On a larger scale, there has been an attempt to understand what was the specific character of this organization against a backdrop of the times, as well as an attempt to understand the dramatic shifts within the larger movements that occurred in the aftermath of Vatican II.**

**In 1952, Benedict Labre House opened a house for the poor and a center for the lay apostolate. Situated on La Gauchetière Street in St. Patrick's parish, Benedict Labre House served the marginalized of Montreal. In 1954, with the support of Benedict Labre House, a parallel mission, Patricia House, was created to assist marginalized women and their children in Griffintown. In 1955, Benedict Labre House also moved to Griffintown, a small community in St. Ann's Ward of southwest Montreal that was once the historical home of the city's Irish Catholic community.**

**Griffintown was the central district in the nineteenth century for the poor unskilled Irish. The heyday of the community was the 1870s with St. Ann's Church and Catholic schools and a plethora of lay organizations. Yet, though the poverty in the community always remained, the people didn't, because by "the beginning of this century, as their fortunes improved, [the Irish] had begun to move away from Griffintown, and [into the 1960s] the migration never stopped...St. Ann's was built to serve an Irish community which is no longer**



there at the time of BLH."<sup>270</sup>

One of many lay organizations operating in Quebec during this period, BLH was not mandated by the hierarchy, and operated as a Catholic unofficial lay organization. Clearly the evidence demonstrates that Benedict Labre did not arise out of a vacuum. The founding group was influenced by a confluence of both North American official and unofficial lay movements that existed at that time: the sodalities, Young Catholic Workers, Catholic Action, the Catholic Worker, Friendship House in Toronto and in New York, Little Sisters of Charles de Foucauld, and the Third Hour. Until 1966, the lay apostolate of BLH provided theological, spiritual and practical education to Montreal English lay Catholics in an informal atmosphere.

The lay theology of Benedict Labre House did not represent a practical theology. Though the House retained a prophetic witness in Tony Walsh's voluntary poverty, the orientation of the House was too conservative, orthodox, and apolitical to be considered as a practical theology. The House carefully avoided the larger social justice issues, while it adamantly endeavored to remain simply "small and poor." Instead, BLH bore all the characteristics of an unofficial lay apostolate situated in the broader theology of the laity.

Perhaps the biggest goal of this thesis has been to demythologize Tony Walsh and Benedict Labre House during the tenure of house manager, Tony Walsh. European born, of a middle-class upbringing, Tony had come to Canada determined to serve others. First he started in the West and eventually wound up in Montreal. In his prophetic style, he decided to make his own life an example to others by renouncing worldly goods and pledging to remain poor--

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<sup>270</sup> "Old St. Ann's," The Gazette, September 25, 1969. The English population of the area was only about one quarter Irish, with Italians and Ukrainians made up much of the rest of the English speaking Catholic community.

this then was his attraction to many English Catholic Montrealers looking for pious leadership in a burgeoning consumer age.

Tony Walsh has been singled out time and time again as the sole energy, the driving force behind the early years of the House. Yet this thesis has demonstrated that Tony was not alone. Benedict Labre House, even from its inauguration, functioned as a result of the commitment of four other lay people: Magnus Seng, Jim Shaw, Pat Conners, and Stephen Hagarty. Truly, over the years, the life and work of Benedict Labre House survived, developed and evolved due to the lay support from the Montreal English Catholic Community.

In the midst of a dying community and a declining institutional Church, Benedict Labre House in its service to Montreal's poor and indigent had garnered support from hundreds of English lay Catholics all over the city. These English lay Catholics were challenged at Benedict Labre House to reach beyond themselves, whether inspired by Tony's example of voluntary poverty or by the example of pilgrims like Benedict Labre or Charles de Foucauld. Lay Catholics were challenged to serve--not for personal profit, not for personal aggrandisement, but out of humanity to their neighbour, the poor person. Though situated in Griffintown, a predominantly French speaking community, Benedict Labre House and its sister organization, Patricia House, served everyone in need regardless of their religion, language, gender or race. The history and the mythology of its establishment continues to illumine this significant movement in the history of the church in Montreal.

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## **Appendices**

**Griffintown**  
**Population Decline 1941-1971**

Census Year	Total Population	British Isles	French	Other
1941	4858	--	--	--
1951	4509	1483	2718	308
1956	3922	--	--	--
1961	2686	629	1773	284
1966	1462	--	--	--
1971	840	240	550	50

Figure 1

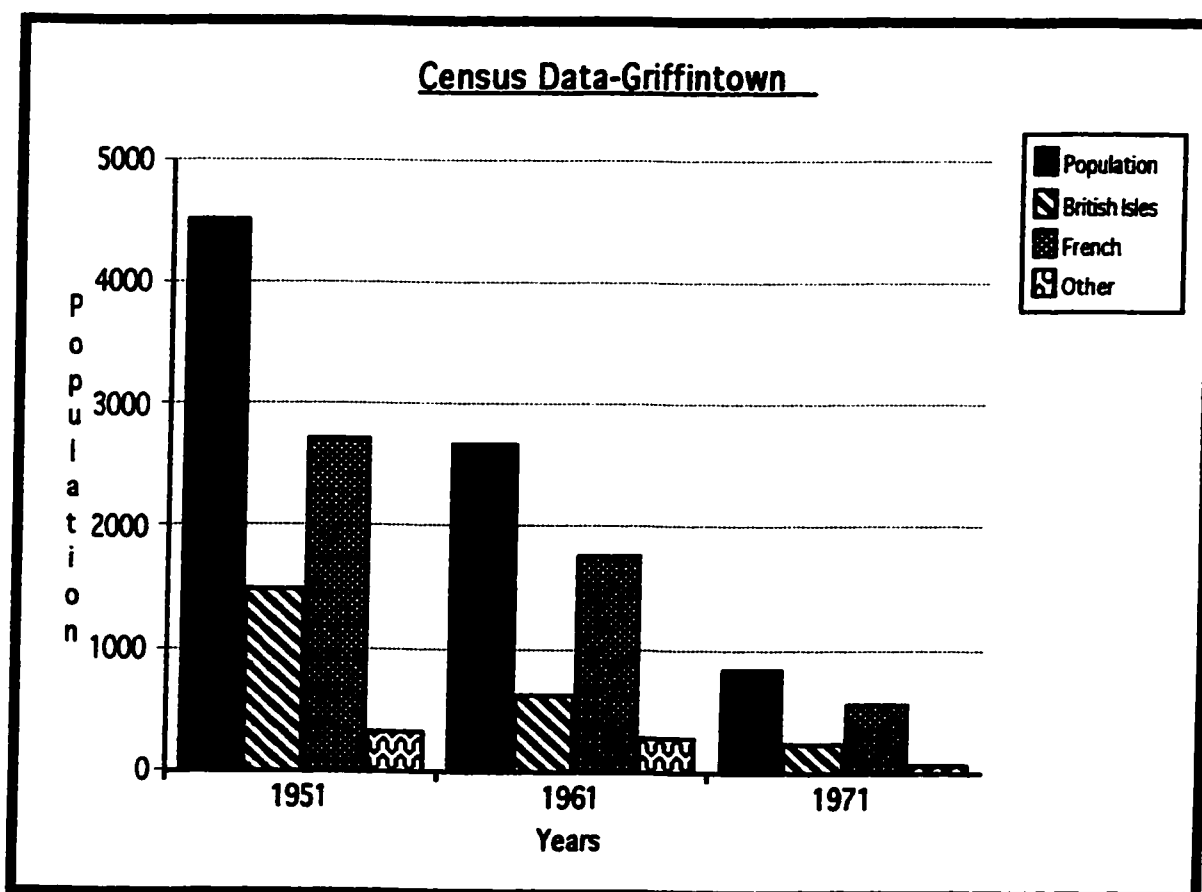


Figure 2

Map of Griffintown

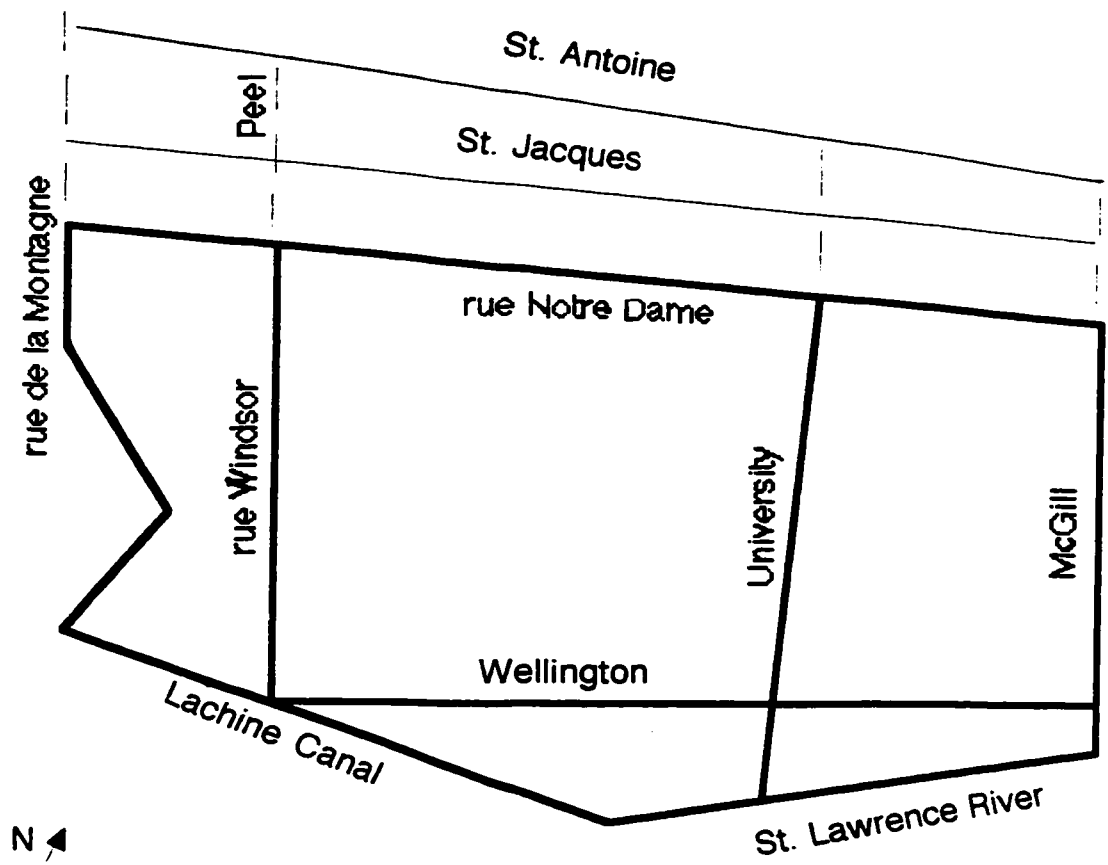


Figure 3

## GLOSSARY

**Compline**-is the last prayer of the day which closes the Divine Office. It is meant to be prayed just before retiring. Compline has two distinct parts, a preliminary period of spiritual reading and confession of faults, and the prayers for retiring. The second part of Compline is faithful to the basic structure of the hours, three Psalms, a hymn, a lesson and responsary, the canticle of Simeon, an oration, and final blessing. Compline originated in monastic circles. (Rule, ch.18, 42) John Cassian (d.435) is the first to refer to it in describing the monastic practices of the Eastern monks of his day. St. Benedict (d.453) gave more shape to it based on Cassian which was inserted by the reform of Pius V (d.1572). (New Catholic Encyclopedia, (1967), s.v. "Compline," G.E. Schidel)

**Day of Recollection**-is a day long period where the individual excludes voluntary distractions, internal and external, to focus one's attention. Recollection in the spiritual life signifies a concentration of one's powers on God or something related to God. Two principal methods of using this spiritual practice are to visualize God as seeing all things at every moment and of directing all things by His providence (this is greatly aided by the use of visual symbols such as crucifixes and paintings) and, second, to live with the awareness of God's presence in the soul. (New Catholic Encyclopedia, (1967), s.v. "Recollection," J. Aumann))

**Dialogue Mass**-a low Mass in which the server and the congregation participates vocally, at least in terms of making the responses. There are several forms outlined in the Instructions on the Sacred Music and Liturgy (Sept,3,1958). The dialogue Mass seems to have originated at the Abbey of Maredsous in Belgium, c.1880 although the idea behind it comes from apostolic times. It is mentioned in medieval times referring to the sung Mass. The practice of these Masses continued into early modern times. The dialogue Mass then fell into disuse by the end of the 19th century. In the early part of 20th century, Pius X brought this type of Mass back into use. In 1947, Pope Pius XII commended the use of the dialogue mass in his encyclical Mediator Dei, 1947 which encouraged lay participation in the Mass. (New Catholic Encyclopedia, (1967), s.v. "Mass, Dialogue," W.J. O'Shea)

**Divine Office**-composed of psalms, hymns, scriptural, patristic, and hagiographical readings, and prayers, is the public prayer service of the Church, recited at different hours so as to sanctify different parts of the day, ie: Prime, Compline. This prayer is to be celebrated by clergy and



members of the religious communities. The origins of Divine Office are found in Jewish prayer. It was used in early church and in the patristic era it shaped by St. Benedict. In the medieval period, it was revived and reformed. At the end of the 16th century, the Jesuits abandoned the choral celebration of the Office but it was revived and adapted in 17th and 18th century by French and German churches. In the first half of the twentieth century, reforms to the Divine Office were made by Pius X In 1911, by Pius XII in 1955. (New Catholic Encyclopedia, (1967), s.v. "Divine Office, Roman," P. Salmon.)

**Foucauld, Charles Eugène de**-born into an elite French Catholic family, Strasbourg, France, Sept 15, 1858. During childhood, he lost both parents and went to live with his grandparents. His adolescence was marked by a loss of faith. Impulsive and arrogant, young Foucauld almost lost his chance for a military career. When restored to his rank, he was sent to the Sahara. There, he experienced a change in his perspective and was honoured for acts of bravery and leadership. Upon returning to France, he left the military to engage in exploration of the Sahara. After intensive study of Muslim language and culture, Foucauld explored the Sahara. His explorations garnered recognition from the Geographical Society of Paris. Immensely impressed with the desert solitude and religious practices of the Muslims, he became reconciled to the Church of Abbé Henri Huvelin (October 1886) Took on a life of prayer and asceticism. First joined the Trappists in Nazareth but then was transferred several times to different abbeys in search of the greatest poverty. He founded a hermitage, "la Fraternité du Sacré-Coeur de Jésus," at Beni-Abbès on the Morocco-Algeria frontier. He sought to bring Christianity to the desert by witness and presence rather than preaching. In 1905, he established a hermitage in the Ahaggar Mountains near Tamanrasset. The Muslims had great respect for him because of his in-depth knowledge of the Tuareg tribesmen. However, in 1916, he was murdered by a terrorist group belonging to a fanatical Senusi sect in Algeria. Foucauld had no disciples during his life, but the publication of his personal papers inspired the founding of the "Little Brothers of Jesus" and "Little Sisters of Jesus." (New Catholic Encyclopedia, (1967), s.v. "Charles Eugène de Foucauld," A.J. Wouters)

**Labre, Saint Benedict Joseph**-known as the "beggar of Rome" and promoter of the Forty Hours devotion was born in Amettes, France, March 25, 1748, and died in Rome on April 16, 1783. His feast day is April 16th. He was the eldest of 15 children of a village shopkeeper. At the age of 12, he was sent to study with his uncle, the parish priest of Erin, where he became interested in Scripture and the lives of the saints. After his uncle died of cholera, Benedict's desired to join an austere religious order. At

age 18, he set out on foot for La Trappe, but was told upon arriving that he was too young. Several times, he was accepted by the Carthusians and the Cistercians, but his eccentricities and poor health led to rejection from several monasteries. In 1770, Benedict started on a pilgrimage to Rome, walking all the way and living on alms. He decided to live the evangelical counsels as a wanderer in the midst of the world and made pilgrimages to all the principal shrines of Europe: Loreto, Assisi, Bair, Einsiedeln, Aix, Compostela, and others. Homeless by choice, he travelled everywhere on foot, slept on the bare ground, and had no possessions except a ragged cloak and a few books. Living on alms, he frequently shared what he received with other beggars. He took no care of his body, and this neglect became a source of mortification and, to Benedict's delight, induced contempt. In the course of his journeys, he often spent hours before some wayside shrine or days in a remote church absorbed in prayer. Hardships, inclement weather, and calumnies were borne with equanimity and joy. After 1776, Benedict settle in Rome. His nights were spent in the ruins of the Colosseum and his days in various churches. He particularly loved [the] Forty Hours and sought out churches where the devotion was being observed. His increasing ill health finally forced him to take lodging in a poor house. Early in 1783, he fell ill and peacefully died during Holy Week. He was immediately popularly proclaimed a saint, and devotion to the "beggar of Rome" and the "saint of the Forty Hours" spread rapidly throughout the entire Church. He was canonized in 1883 by Leo XIII. (New Catholic Encyclopedia, (1967), s.v. "Labre, Benedict Joseph, St.," W.E. Langley.)

**Prime**-the second canonical hour of prayer, appointed for the first hour of the day (ie:6 a.m.). It is part of the Divine Office. (Oxford English Reference Dictionary, 1996, Second Edition).

**Secular Fraternity of Charles de Foucauld**-an organized body recognized by the Church, which enabled Catholic lay men and women of differing origins and vocations who shared a like desire to give themselves wholly to God and to work toward universal friendship. Their goal was to help one another fraternally to put the Gospel into practice in their lives, each according to his or her state in life as followers of Brother Charles of Jesus and in the line of his spirituality. Charles, and Embrun, Directory For The Charles Of Jesus: Secular Fraternity, (translation) Aix-en-Provence, 24 June, 1956, 38; see also- Haley,. Apostolic Sanctity in the World, 179-181.

**Sodality**-is a lay association which promotes a Christian way of life through a well-defined program of spiritual formation which attempts to unite and implement the sacramental nature of the Christian at prayer and action.

Its noteworthy characteristic has been service of the Church under the patronage of Our Lady and the direction of the hierarchy. The first Sodality was established in Rome in 1563 by Father John Leunis, S.J. for students attending the Roman College. Later, many other sodalities were formed in other Jesuit institutions across Europe. During the latter part of the 19th century, and the first few decades of the 20th century, the Sodality of Our Lady was widely used in the U.S. by pastors as a basic parish organization for women and young girls. A substantial number of men's sodalities were also launched. In 1931, in response to the official call to Catholic Action by Pius XI, the sodalities organized the Summer Schools of Catholic Action(SSCA). Also, the challenge of the social apostolate by Pius XII in 1948, in Bis Saeculari brought new depth and vitality to existing adult soldalities and influenced the establishment of many new ones. Since 1948, many sodalities have been established for professional adults, such as teachers, lawyers, doctors, and business people. Other sodalities, parochial and interparochial, have a broad base of membership with diverse backgrounds that channel apostolic effort into local areas of community need. High school and graduate sodalities also have sharper focus as a result of their application of Bis Saeculari. (New Catholic Encyclopedia, (1967), s.v. "Sodalities of Our Lady," A.J. Conley.)

**The Third Hour**-was an ecumenical group established by Helen Iswolsky in New York City in 1946-7. The goal was to bring about Christian unity through an elite group of intellectuals from different Christian backgrounds. This was an important small movement that along with its meetings and its journal The Third Hour sought to promote the growth and evolution of the ecumenical movement during the pre-Vatican II era. Davis, F.M. Henderson, "The Rise and Decline of Catholic Lay Movements in New York City: 1933-1967." Ph.D. diss., Concordia University, 1988, p. 108-120 passim; J.G. Shaw, "Among Ourselves," Ensign (Kingston, Ontario) May 21, 1949, 5.