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Rt. Rev. Edward D. Fenwick, O.P.

BISHOP FENWICK'S APOSTOLATE TO THE NATIVE AMERICANS
by Anthony J. Lisska, Denison University

The narrative indicating the role Rt. Rev. Edward Dominic Fenwick played in the history of Catholicism in Ohio is well known. Travelling along Zane's Trace to the Washington, D.C. area on one of his many trips east from central Kentucky, Fenwick met the Dittoe family on the outskirts of Somerset and offered Mass near the spot where today stands the historic church of St. Joseph. In 1818, Fenwick established St. Joseph's Church and Dominican convent, marking the second Dominican foundation in the United States. A veritable apostle in the saddle, Fenwick traversed the State of Ohio seeking out the diverse and distanced Roman Catholic communities. In 1822, Fenwick

was consecrated the first Bishop of Cincinnati. This vast diocese then covered all of Ohio, Michigan, and the Wisconsin Territory.

Less well known, however, is the narrative indicating Fenwick's total and substantial commitment to the spiritual and temporal welfare of the Native American Indians then living within the confines of his vast diocese. This essay attempts to spell out in some detail that strong commitment on the part of a pioneer Roman Catholic bishop with few resources in terms of personnel or money. The Jesuit missionary role is well known and reiterated often in historical studies of Catholicism in America. But Fenwick's zealous activities and marked successes with the Native American Indians, almost forgotten in contemporary historical work, needs to be recalled. Indeed, Fenwick's missionary role may constitute some of the most illustrious activities undertaken by a bishop known for ecclesiastical heroism.

When he became bishop, Fenwick realized that one of his episcopal obligations was directed towards the Native American Indians living in what was then called "The Northwest" -- an area that today includes Michigan and Wisconsin. For nearly two centuries, the Jesuits had worked assiduously among these tribes, converting many aboriginal Indians to Roman Catholicism. But with the suppression of the Jesuits in 1773, these Native American communities had been left without clerical ministers to care for their spiritual welfare. Here, then, was an important mission field, and Fenwick recognized this fact immediately.

Francis Badin to the Northwest: 1825

Early in his tenure as Bishop of Cincinnati, Fenwick resolved to do something about the spiritual and material care of the Native American Indians in his diocese. During the time of the Jubilee proclaimed by Pope Leo XII in 1825, Fenwick sent the newly ordained priest, Rev. Francis V. Badin, to visit the Catholics in Michigan. He left Detroit on April 27, 1825. Francis Badin was the younger brother of Father Stephen T. Badin, whom Fenwick had known and worked with in the early 1800s in Kentucky. (1)

Young Father Badin's first stop was Mackinac Island on the famous waterway between Lake Michigan and Lake Huron. Today an oft-visited summer resort with its famous porch on the Grand Hotel, Mackinac Island then was a large aboriginal Indian settlement, a fort of the American army, and a stopping place for many French Canadian fur trappers. This island became the center of Roman Catholic apostolic activities in the northwest, first for Badin, and after 1830 for Rev. Samuel Mazzuchelli, the Dominican missionary who has been called the "Apostle of the West." Mackinac Island had been without the services of a pastor from the time of the suppression of the Jesuits in the late 18th century.

From Mackinac, Badin journeyed by water to Green Bay, Wisconsin, where he spent two months. The French Canadians and the Indians in Green Bay had been visited by a priest only once in the prior fifty years. Badin built a church in Green Bay and dedicated this house of worship under the patronage of St. Francis Xavier, the famous Jesuit missionary to China.

From Green Bay, Badin travelled to what was then called Arbre Croche ("Bent Tree"), now called Harbour Springs. Like Mackinac Island, Harbour

Springs is today a prominent summer resort for midwestern vacationers; several Columbus residents have extensive summer homes there. At Arbre Croche, the Indians had built a small chapel prior to Badin's arrival, which he blessed and dedicated under the patronage of St. Vincent de Paul. In his biography of Fenwick, Rev. Victor F. O'Daniel writes of this chapel in the following way:

...a neat little fane of unhewn logs, twenty feet by seventeen, and sitting on the crown of a hill. It was built without other tool than the tomahawk, and was protected on the outside by bark, while the interior walls were ornamented with well-wrought boards. The only iron used in the structure was that for the hinges of the doors. A row of benches stood on each side. (p. 328)

Badin next went north to Sault Ste. Marie, which became the northern-most part of his trip. From there, he travelled to Drummond Island in Canada. Since a priest from Canada visited this place occasionally, Badin found the "Indians fervent and exemplary." (p. 329)

Returning to Mackinac Island, Badin met with Black-bird, who was the Chief of the Ottawas at Arbre Croche. The relationship that Fenwick and Badin established with the Ottawas at Arbre Croche would become very important in the development of Catholicism among the Indians. Historically, this place had been rich in the tradition of Catholicism. John Gilmary Shea has written that Father Gabriel Richard, who was stationed at Detroit, first visited Arbre Croche in 1799 and then again in 1821. During the second visit, Richard was led by the Indians to the spot where Marquette had been first buried.

From Mackinac, Badin visited Port Saint Ignace, which is located on the southern tip of Michigan's Upper Peninsula at the Straits of Mackinac. There Badin found the remnants of a former Jesuit College that had been established in the 18th century. O'Daniel writes that Badin "...was deeply affected at the sight of the outlines, then clearly traceable...." (p. 329) Very little appears to be known about this educational institution. Returning again to Mackinac Island, Badin prepared for his return to Detroit. He left the island on November 14, setting sail for Detroit, where he arrived three days later. His missionary activities had lasted nearly seven months, journeying, as O'Daniel writes, on "...vessels ranging from the stately steamboat to the frail bark canoe of the Indians." (p. 329)

Badin's missionary activities, undertaken at the behest of Fenwick, indicate that the Indians, the French Canadians, and the mixed race of Indian and French, had maintained the memory and traditions of the Church. This occurred in spite of long neglect and adverse circumstances. Shea writes that "the memory of the Jesuit missionaries was still fresh." O'Daniel suggests that some of the Indians still knew hymns that they had been taught by the Jesuit missionaries years before. Furthermore, on Mackinac Island itself, much of the altar equipment had been carefully preserved so that it could once again be used in the liturgy of the Church.

Badin's Second Visit: 1826

In April, 1826, Father Badin once again at Fenwick's request left Detroit for the northwest Indian missions. He visited the same missionary stations he had seen a year earlier. Rather than return to Detroit in the fall, Badin wintered on Mackinac Island during 1826-27. During that time, he rebuilt and

moved the church of St. Anne. This church becomes important three years later when Rev. Samuel Mazzuchelli is named the first permanent pastor on Mackinac Island. During 1826, Badin had some assistance from a young French priest, Appollinaris Herman, who had recently been ordained in Kentucky. Herman preached the Jubilee year activities at Mackinac and Arbre Croche.

In the spring of 1827, Badin travelled by water to Green Bay, Wisconsin. From Green Bay, he journeyed to what was then called the "far western missions." He travelled down the Fox River to Portage City. Then he descended the Wisconsin River to its junction with the Mississippi, where he visited Prairie du Chien and its old mission established many years earlier. Badin discovered that only one priest had visited this mission in the previous sixty years. In the next decade, Mazzuchelli will again follow Badin to the Wisconsin Territory, an area that in the middle part of the nineteenth century will make him famous in the history of the Church.

Badin had planned to return to Michigan by retracing his steps through Green Bay. However, Indian troubles in the area forced him to return to Detroit by way of St. Louis and Cincinnati, presumably using the Mississippi and Ohio Rivers. Of course, one advantage of travelling through Cincinnati was a visit with his bishop, Fenwick.

At this time, Fenwick was busy considering the development of other missionary areas in his extensive diocese. Establishments were set up at Monroe in Michigan and on Maumee Bay near Toledo, Ohio. Fenwick also was working with sites on the Huron River and the Saint Clair River in Michigan.

Fenwick's Commitment to the Northwest

These missionary activities undertaken through the auspices of Fenwick's bishopric in Cincinnati certainly indicate his concern for the Indians living in his vast diocese. Fenwick wrote often to his friends both in America and in Europe about his missionary efforts and the heroic activities undertaken by his small cadre of priests. For example, a letter written on September 15, 1827 contains the following comments:

My good missionaries in Michigan accomplish wonders. The indefatigable Father Badin...has visited the Indians in the northwest two years in succession.... I could not even tell you all that God has done for me in Ohio among both the white people and the red. (p. 333)

Fenwick's efforts were always hindered by the scarcity of priests and the oppressive poverty under which they labored. Yet he was determined to undertake the process of evangelization in the northernmost regions of his diocese. On this point, O'Daniel wrote, "no previous ordinary in the United States seems to have taken so lively an interest in the spiritual welfare of the northwest country as Bishop Fenwick." (p. 357)

Fenwick Visits the Northwest: 1829

In 1829, Fenwick set out to visit the Indian missions in Michigan and Wisconsin. An indefatigable worker himself, he left Cincinnati for the northwest the day after the opening of his seminary. One would think that he would rest a bit following the strenuous and time-consuming activities of

building and assembling the necessary items for his seminary. Nonetheless, Fenwick, apostle that he was, set out for Detroit on May 12 accompanied by Father J. I. Mullan. At this time, Fenwick was also pressuring Rome to make Detroit into a separate diocese. This ecclesiastical division of the Diocese of Cincinnati finally did take place in 1833, the year following Fenwick's death.

Fenwick arrived at Green Bay on May 27. One realizes how rapidly he travelled in reaching Green Bay in a little over two weeks time. He had intended to visit Prairie du Chien, but he did not venture that far west. Instead, he visited the places familiar to Badin at Mackinac and Arbre Croche, where he performed the confirmation exercises. At Arbre Croche, moreover, Fenwick, always supportive of educational endeavors, acknowledged the establishment of a Catholic school.

On this 1829 trip, Fenwick brought back with him to Cincinnati two young Native American men from Mackinac, William Maccatebinessi and Augustine Hamelin, to be educated in his newly established seminary. Commenting on this fact, O'Daniel writes, "As far as we have been able to learn, this was the first attempt on the part of our American hierarchy to enroll the aborigines among their clergy; and it speaks much in praise of the zeal of Cincinnati's first ordinary." (p. 386)

Following his 1829 trip to Michigan and Wisconsin, Fenwick attended the First Provincial Council held in the United States at Baltimore, beginning on October 1, 1829. At this council, the bishop and his cousin, Bishop Benedict J. Fenwick of Boston, were the only members of the hierarchy at the time who were native-born Americans. Travelling to and from Green Bay and then to Baltimore in 1829 in less than five months, with all the stops between, indicates how travel-weary Fenwick must have been. Such stress would eventually wear down the energetic Cincinnati prelate.

Fenwick's Zeal for the Native American Indians

Fenwick's concern for the Indians is clearly demonstrated in his letter to Austria's Emperor Francis I, in which Fenwick sought aid for his struggling diocese. Fenwick wrote that he hoped Francis "...will continue to support us in our feeble efforts to spread the Catholic Religion through this vast country, destitute of all resources, whether spiritual or temporal -- particularly among the Indian tribes that constitute an important part of our diocese." (p. 369)

In a similar vein, on February 25, 1830, Fenwick wrote to a French priest with these words, "I must visit my good Indians at Mackinac, Arbre Croche and Green Bay. Father Rese will accompany me on this journey." (p. 371) Fenwick was conscious of his jurisdictional role over the northwest, as he signed his important letters in the following way: "Bishop of Cincinnati and Administrative Apostolic of Michigan and the Northwest."

On June 13, 1830, Fenwick ordained four young men Dominican priests at St. Rose Priory in Kentucky. On that very same day, he witnessed the giving of the Dominican habit to two young Native American men. This investiture ceremony by which the two Ottawa Indians became novices in the Order of St. Dominic must have pleased Fenwick immensely. Commenting on this event,

O'Daniel writes the following:

In this connection, it is worthy of note that this is the earliest record that we have been able to discover of an attempt on the part of any religious order in the United States to enroll Indians among its priesthood. The undertaking, no doubt, was to a great extent the initiative of Cincinnati's apostolic ordinary. (p. 374)

Fenwick's missionary activities, both personal and sponsored, were paying dividends in terms of beginning religious vocations for his diocese and his religious order.

Stephen Badin and the Michigan Missions

At this time, Fenwick's secular priest colleague from the early Kentucky missions, Father Stephen T. Badin, returned to the United States after being in Europe for almost a decade. Coming back to America, Badin undertook his missionary activities in Michigan, then went back briefly to his original areas of Kentucky. Returning to Michigan, Badin began living and working as resident pastor with the Pottawatomie Indians on the St. Joseph River in southwestern Michigan. In this mission, Badin baptized the aged chief of the Pottawatomes, Pokagan, and eventually built a school for the Indians in this area. (3)

At this point in the narrative, it is useful to list the various north-west missions and the Indian tribes living there:

- a. Arbre Croche.....Ottawas
- b. Mackinac Island.....Mixed Tribes
- c. Sault St. Marie.....Chippewas
- d. St. Joseph's River.....Pottawatomes
- e. Green Bay.....Menominies
- f. Southwest Wisconsin.....Sacs and Foxes; Winnebagos

On September 5, 1830, Fenwick ordained Rev. Samuel C. Mazzuchelli as a Dominican priest. Mazzuchelli was to place his mark on the American Indian missions as did no other Dominican in the United States. Following the ordination, Fenwick assigned the young Mazzuchelli to Mackinac Island, where, as O'Daniel writes, "...he began a career of extraordinary usefulness." (p. 379)

Always the educator, Fenwick established schools at Arbre Croche, Green Bay, and on the St. Joseph's River. These free schools, however, needed assistance, both in terms of finances and personnel. The Green Bay school underwent serious strains and eventually failed.

Fenwick's Second Visit to the Northwest: 1831

In 1831, Bishop Fenwick set out for his second visitation of the northwest. Accompanied by a new missionary, Father Frederic Baraga, Fenwick arrived at Detroit on May 15, 1831. Later Baraga would become the first bishop of Sault Ste. Marie and Marquette. Their first stop was Mackinac Island in order to visit with Mazzuchelli. Fenwick wrote that here he found "an exemplary congregation of American, Canadian and Indian Catholics...." (p. 368)

The second stop was Arbre Croche, where the Cincinnati bishop celebrated the feast of Corpus Christi. He was impressed with the seriousness of purpose with which the Indians undertook their religious duties. Reflecting later on this, Fenwick wrote, "truly I would gladly exchange my residence in populous Cincinnati, together with my dignity, for a hut and the happy lot of a missionary among these good Indians." (p. 389)

From Arbre Croche, Fenwick, accompanied by Mazzuchelli, travelled by water to Green Bay. Concerned about the school there which had failed, Fenwick sought to re-establish this institution. The two Dominicans stayed in Green Bay for three weeks. From Green Bay, Fenwick journeyed to Saint Joseph's River in order to visit with Father Stephen Badin. From there he went east to Detroit.

On this trip to the Northwest, Fenwick confirmed over three hundred persons. Returning to Ohio, he journeyed to Cincinnati by way of his original Ohio home, St. Joseph's near Somerset. There he became ill from the exertions of his laborious trip. This illness was but a harbinger of the state of his health for the next months.

One important part of this trip to the Northwest was that Fenwick brought with him to Cincinnati several young Indians to be trained in the trades. Ever the solicitous bishop, Fenwick provided lodging for them in the episcopal residence. (4)

(To be concluded)

NOTES

- 1) Stephen T. Badin was the first Roman Catholic priest ordained in the United States. Serving first in the pioneer country of Kentucky, Fenwick and Badin knew one another quite well. O'Daniel has written that Badin was influenced by Jansenism and was quite strict with the frontier Kentucky Catholics. Fenwick and Badin disagreed strongly on various theological issues early on. However, by the time Badin was serving as a missionary in southwestern Michigan, he and his bishop collaborated in their work despite their earlier differences.
- 2) John Gilmary Shea, History of the Catholic Missions among the Indian Tribes of the United States, 1526-1854 (New York, 1855), p. 383
- 3) Regarding Badin's work in Michigan just north of present-day Indiana and his appointment as pastor by Fenwick, O'Daniel suggests that this was "a circumstance that in the designs of providence helped to prepare the way for one of our greatest Catholic educational institutions, Notre Dame University, Indiana." (p. 377) Badin's property became the original site of the University of Notre Dame on the St. Joseph River. Badin visited the South Bend area in 1832 and his cabin today remains a historical site on the Notre Dame campus.
- 4) O'Daniel writes that Fenwick also brought a young Indian girl who was entrusted to the Sisters of Charity in Cincinnati. However, Sister Loretta Petit from Project OPUS suggests that there is no reference in archival materials for this claim. Fenwick did bring a young girl from Green Bay, Ursula Grignon. Miss Grignon eventually became a member of the Dominican community of St. Mary's in Somerset.

CHILLICOTHE ST. MARY'S CHURCH
BAPTISMAL REGISTER, 1835-1846
(Continued from Vol. XVII, No. 8)

1839, continued

- 1 April Mary Christine, born 13th of "this" month, daughter of Michael Kirchner and Helen Vunderle; spons. Fidelis Bucheler and Judith Vunderle. HDJ
- 7 April Valentin, born 14 Feb., son of George Geng and Catherine Wittmann; spons. Franz Anton Eid and Anna Maria Eid. HDJ
- same Rosanna, born 3 March, daughter of Michael Flood and Mary Conafree; spons. Anthony Blessing and Catherine Cull. HDJ
- page 10
- 18 April Bridget, born 14 April, daughter of John McLarny [or perhaps McLearn] and Mary Cull; spons. Michael Kunn and Catherine Schelly. HDJ
- 21 April Michael, born 31 March, son of Clement Garry and Bernardine Glider; spons. Michael Digger and Paulina Diederick. HDJ
- same day Margaret Rebecca, born 3 April, daughter of Daniel Laury and Esther Deedarden; spons. John McNally and Mary Bauman. HDJ
- 24 April near Portsmouth, Joseph, 12 weeks old, son of Michael Walder and Mary Ann Burbach; spons. Joseph Spitznagel and Eleona Kromer. HDJ
- same day Herman, born 12 Nov., 1838, son of Henry Liepecker and Catherine Engel Fritscher; spons. Herman Dieger and Agnes Liellemann. HDJ
- same day George, born 18 Feb., son of George --eylip(?) and Gertrude Spitznagel; spons. George Gisler and Maria Anna Seudel.
- same day George, born 31 March, son of Joseph Spitznagel and Mary Ann Seudel; spons. George Legler and Josephina Swen.
- same day Anna Elizabeth, born 9 Feb., daughter of Eberhard Henry Fritscher and Agnes Liellaman; spons. John Beckmann and Anna Maria Fritscher. for all, HDJ
- page 11
- 25 April Boniface, son of Boniface Handwerker and Kunigunda Steuerwaod; spons. John George Schmitt and Anna Maria Schmitt. HDJ
- 27 May John, born 5 May, son of Patrick Heyden and Allen(??) Dielayen; spons. John Heyden and Mary Bauman. HDJ
- 27 May Mary Emily, born 8 May, daughter of Fidelis Bucheler and Bernardine Vunderle; spons. Franz Anton Eid and Helen Kirchner. HDJ
- 2 June Catherine, 8 weeks old, daughter of Michael Conly and Mary Heekins; spons. Daniel Loway and Mary Murphy. HDJ
- 10 June John Henry, born 9 June, son of Herman Hy--immerding and Elizabeth Worman; spons. Alexander Santo and Elizabeth Bohn. HDJ
- 13 June Sophia Elizabeth, born 31 August 1838, daughter of John Sanders and Mary Philippa Elder; spons. John Hughes and Catherine Hughes.
- same day Hannah Susan, born 25 Sept. 1837, daughter of Peter Hughes and Mary Carigan; spons. Michael and Sara Reiss. HDK
- 21 June August, son of ---- Spitznagel and Anna Maria Sulzer; spons. Carl Boggenschitz and Maylina Scheringer(?). Alleman; witness HDJ
- page 12
- 30 June Catherine, born 18 June, daughter of Patrick Coleman and Mary Hallard; spons. John McAlearn and Mary Patterson. HDJ
- 3 July Ignatius, born 17th, son of Leonard Griser and Elizabeth Fischer; spons. Ignatius Jacob and Elizabeth Jacob. HDJ

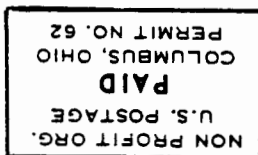
- 3 July Rosanna, born same day, daughter of Thomas Kaely and Bridget Flood; spons. Charles Cull and Margaret Cull. HDJ
- 7 July Mary Eva, born 3 July, daughter of John Baptist Flood and Sophia Eichmann; spons. Francis Xavier Long and Anna Maria Eichenlaub. HDJ
- 7 July William, born 28 May, son of Thadeus Sautter and Christina Kieder; spons. Valentin Hemmerle and Gertrude Hemmerle. HDJ

Portsmouth (July 9 and 10)

- 9 July John Thomas, born 14 April, 1838, son of Green B. Bradman and Emily Mary Fleury; spons. H. D. Juncker and Mary Ann Adam.
- same Francis Matthew, born 29 April, son of Adam Weidman and Agnes Adam; spons. Mathias Hedinger and Mary Adam. HDJ
- page 13
- same Louis Mathias, born 8 Nov., 1837, son of John Woolfer and Mary School; spons. Adam Weidman and Agnes Weidman.
- same Mary, born 25 Dec., 1838, daughter of Timothy Sullivan and Margaret Sullivan; spons. Francis Sullivan and Mary Sullivan.
- same John, born 5 April, 1839, son of Andrew Sullivan and Bridget Sullivan; spons. Patrick Cane, Martin Dunivan, Helen Flin, and Ellen Mahon. HDJ
- July 10 Louisa Paulina, born 18 Dec., 1838, daughter of Anton Novi and Jane Marie Huguenot; spons. Charles Louis Damarin and Henrietta Maria Paulina Damarin.
- same Catherine, born 14 April, daughter of Nicholas Schmitt and Anna Maria School; spons. Michael Hoffmann and Anna Davis. HDJ
- July 21 Mary Theresa, born 18 July, daughter of Joseph Schmitt and Catherine Good; spons. John Hirn and Thersa Hirn. HDJ
- July 24 John, born May 12, son of John Pfarran and Mary Yore; spons. John McNally and Lady Anna Yore. HDJ
- July 28 John, born 27 July, son of George Feller and Elizabeth Hoffmann; spons. John Keller and Constantia Keller. HDJ
- page 14
- Aug. 4 Michael, born 21 July, son of Jacob Wair and Sara Kaline; spons. Denis Riardin and Mary Phelby. HDJ
- Aug. 14 Mary Ann, born the same day, daughter of John Phelan and Jane Mahon; spons. Jane Gorbes. HDJ
- Aug. 14 Catherine Elizabeth Ulmsback, 45 years old, wife of John Diederick Dreyer, baptized conditionally (formerly Lutheran). HDJ
- Aug. 15 Mary Cakrigan [sic, but see June 13, above], wife of Peter Hughes from Highland County, accepted into the Church and admitted to first Holy Communion. HDJ
- Aug. 16 Herman Theodore, born 12 August, son of Henry Knacke and Wilhelmina Wamelink; spons. Herman Bernard Wamelink and Mary Bauman. HDJ
- Sept. 15 Catherine, born 15 August, daughter of Francis Flannigen and Margaret Case; spons. John Fitzpatrick and Jane Case. HDJ
- same Bridget, born the 4th, daughter of John Sevil and Bridget Guilty; spons. Cornelius Solls and Helen Solls. HDJ

(To be continued)

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