

## CHAPTER XII

### New Labourers in the Lord's Vineyard

*"The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few; Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that He will send forth labourers into His harvest."*

The Lord of the harvest had heard the humble but ardent supplications of our dear converts during that memorable week.

There was not a father who, from the bottom of his heart, had not secretly asked the Good Master to take one of his sons to work in His blessed vineyard. There was not a mother who had not offered some of her beloved ones on the altar of her Christian love to spread the Gospel. And many of our boys had said: "Beloved Saviour, here I am: command, and I will obey."

Twice during the week we had had public meetings in the chapel, to pray the "Lord of the Harvest" to make His own choice among our young men, and to fill the hearts of those whom He would choose with His Holy Spirit.

At the morning assembly of the next Sabbath we had an immense meeting. The weather was splendid, and our large chapel was crowded to its utmost capacity.

I had taken for my text the first verses of the sublime one hundred and fifth Psalm, "O give thanks unto the Lord; call upon His name: make known His deeds among the people.

"Sing unto Him, sing psalms unto Him: talk ye of all His wondrous works:

"O ye seed of Abraham, ye children of Jacob His chosen."

After bringing to their memory the marvelous things the Lord had done, by breaking the chains which had kept them

so many years tied to the feet of the idols of Rome, I made them remember their desolation at the ruin of their crops, which had forced them to mortgage their properties at such conditions that they could not be saved from a complete ruin without a miracle of the mercies of God.

"But you understand, dear brethren," I added, "that when our great God performed that miracle of His mercies, He imposed upon you the sweet obligations of gratitude. Your own consciences as well as your intelligences tell you that you have something to do, even before the world, to show that you understand what has been done for you. Now let me mention some of those obligations.

"First, with Joshua, let every one of you say from his heart: 'As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.' Yes; let that great God, who has brought you out of a slavery a hundredfold more degrading and oppressive than that of the Egyptians, be your Ruler, your King, as He has shown Himself your merciful Father.

"Second, let every family of St. Anne be as a tower of light, so bright that it will be seen from a far distance, to expel the dark night of the errors of Rome from our colony. . . . But there is another obligation of which I said a word the other day on my return from the East. Some of your sons must be called to preach the Gospel. O! let them obey the appeal! Let them heroically be ready to give up home, father, mother, brother, and sister, to follow Christ and help me to spread the Gospel truths among the multitudes of our countrymen who are scattered everywhere in the cities as well as in the country places of the United States. This is the third and most sacred obligation we have contracted towards our God when we have accepted the great and many tokens of His mercies."

My whole address was then on the privilege and honour of being associated with the Apostles of Christ when preaching the Gospel, and saving the precious souls for which He shed His precious blood on the cross.

I ended by saying: "Let us spend this whole day in humble supplications to the throne of mercy for those whom the beloved Saviour will choose, that He may give them the courage to follow His voice, and consecrate themselves to His service. This evening, at the end of the meeting, I will call those who have heard the voice of the Good Master to come forward bravely and publicly, that we may know and bless them, and that we may offer them to the Lord, as the most precious offering we can present Him."

My request had been well understood. The hours between the two public services of that day were, almost everywhere, spent in fervent prayer. At last the hour of the evening service arrived. The crowd was so great that the chapel could hardly contain them all. Every one was anxious to know who among our young men would come forward and offer themselves to preach the Gospel. This was a secret known only to God; for not a single one of them had said a word about it to anybody—not even his parents. I, myself, was as ignorant as the rest of the people on that affair. The subject of my evening address was: "The Church of Rome was the great Babylon which had corrupted the world with the cup of her enchantments, idolatries, and impurities. But the time was approaching when the Lamb would destroy it by calling those for whom He had shed His blood out of her walls." I showed them that, in the marvelous providence of God, we were the first people who, as a whole community, had been called out of that Babylon, on the continent of America; but I assured them that we were not to be the last. Our example would be followed.

I gave the names of many places where Roman Catholics, by hundreds, had already expressed to me their desire to break the yoke of the Pope. I told them that they were only the vanguard of an army called by the great Captain of our salvation to fight and destroy Rome on the continent of America; that we had only to keep ourselves faithfully united around

the blessed banners of the Gospel, and the God of heaven would soon give us the most glorious victory, etc.

After the address, I said: "Let us kneel and pray silently our merciful God to make the choice of His own ambassadors, and give them the courage to come forward that we may know and bless them." And we knelt.

The silence of that vast multitude, humbly prostrated, was very solemn. After three or four minutes, I broke the silence by saying: "Dear young men of St. Anne, who have given your hearts to Christ, the beloved Saviour, after washing your souls in His blood, and who wish to spread the knowledge of His mercies and His love among those who do not know them, please come forward around me, that we may know and bless you."

A pretty long silence followed my appeal; but many mothers' and fathers' hearts were beating hard within their breasts in the anxiety to know if one of their boys was to be among those called to be the blessed minister of that Gospel which was now so precious to them.

At last we heard a little noise in the back seat. It was one of our dearest young men, who, rising up from his knees, was walking with a slow step and a face beaming with all the marks of true piety and courage. All along the way, the people had to rise from their knees to let him pass through the aisles. From every side we heard whispers: "May the Lord bless you." He had hardly been half a minute near me, when another one from another place in the church came and took his place by the side of the first one, and then another and another, till thirty-three fine young soldiers of Christ were forming a line between the people and me.

No pen can give a true idea of the sentiments of joy and surprise of the people at the sight of that numerous band of brave boys coming to enroll themselves under the banners of the Gospel. Tears of joy were flowing on every cheek. But the most happy of all were the loving fathers and mothers

who saw their beloved boys marching, with a firm step, to join the recruits of the armies of the Lord.

Beside myself with joy, I took every one of them by the hand, and I presented them, in the name of the whole people, to the Divine Conqueror of souls as the best offerings we could present to Him in return for what He had done for us.

The rest of the evening service was a thanksgiving one. It was very late at night when we left our humble but dear chapel, our souls embalmed with such feelings of gratitude to God as no human words can express.

Before dismissing our dear young Christian recruits, I invited them to come the next day and spend the afternoon with me, that I might give them my plans for their future.

The hope of having, in the near future, so many helpers in my evangelical labours was opening new horizons before me. New blood, I dare say, was put into my veins. I felt a new courage and Christian strength in my heart.

Already more than two hundred heads of Roman Catholic families, all French Canadians, had given me their names, in Chicago, as renouncing the errors of Rome to accept the Gospel for their only rule of faith; forty-five in Ottawa, fifteen in Joliet, forty in Middleport, one hundred in Kankakee City, and more than two hundred in the surrounding cities in Illinois, Indiana, and Michigan had done the same thing, though I had visited them only a few times. What could I do, if left alone, to cultivate such large and promising fields? But with the hope that my merciful God would give me so many helpers, the future was suddenly becoming as bright as it had been cloudy till now. The first thing I had to do was to give them able, Christian teachers, and in the good providence of God we soon found them, and I soon got the means I wanted for that.

But before long I found that the absence of one or two of their young men was too much for our farmers, who were obliged to engage strangers to take their places in the fields.

I engaged myself to give \$8.00 a month to help each

family in getting a supply for the one whom I retained in our modest preparatory college, which we called, "The Saviour's College."

I do not want the reader to believe that every one of these young men became a minister of the Gospel, for some of them had to give up their classes for want of health, some were killed in the Civil War, where they had to go and fight the Southern army, a few changed their minds and took other positions; but we always tried to keep the same number in that company. As in the war, when one falls on the battle-field, his place is as soon taken by another one, so we succeeded, in the good providence of God, to find new ones to take the places of those who were missing from the rank and file. We now count fifteen ordained ministers of the Gospel from among the young converts of our first congregation of St. Anne. One of them, the Rev. Mr. Boudreau, is the pastor of our congregation of St. Anne, which I put into his hands in my eightieth year of age.

To push these young men through their studies till their ordination to the ministry, we had to meet terrible obstacles and to overcome the most formidable opposition from the very men who ought to have helped us. But with the aid of God we have gone through all difficulties, and pulled down all the obstacles. Suffice it to say that after these dear young men had studied two, three and four years in our preparatory modest Saviour's College, we sent them to the colleges of Montreal, Toronto or Chicago to finish their course of philosophy and theology. It is now my unspeakable joy to see fifteen of them working with me with great zeal and success for the conversion of the Roman Catholics in their respective fields.