IN MEMORIAM

Rev. Claude Grenache, A.A.
(1937-2017)

Born and raised in Leominster, Massachusetts, Father Claude graduated from Assumption Prep in 1955 and Assumption College in 1959. After earning his theological degrees from the Université Catholique de Lyon in France, he was ordained on May 28, 1966 in Sherbrooke, Québec.

In his life as an Assumptionist, Father Claude served in various educational and pastoral ministries in New England, Québec, New York City, and Mexico. From 1989 to 1996, he served Assumption College as Director of Multicultural Education, then as Vice President of Religious Affairs and Director of Campus Ministry. Always a steadfast supporter of the French Institute, he was a member of the College’s Board of Trustees from 2007 until his death.

Dr. Choquette also gave interviews last spring about Notre Dame Church and Worcester’s French Canadians to journalists Jean-François Nadeau of Montreal’s Le Devoir and Brian MacQuarrie of The Boston Globe.

WORCESTER’S FRENCH CANADIANS AT NOTRE DAME AND BEYOND

At the request of William Wallace, Executive Director of the Worcester Historical Museum, Dr. Leslie Choquette lectured at the museum in April 2017 on Notre Dame des Canadiens Church, placing its storied history in the context of immigration into the city of Worcester. She also showed rare illustrations, including a drawing of the original altar made by a student in French school in the 1930s (see below), and photographs of the Russian-inspired icons that will sadly disappear upon demolition, courtesy of Rev. Paul Frechette, a loyal supporter of the French Institute.

Dr. Choquette also gave interviews last spring about Notre Dame Church and Worcester’s French Canadians to journalists Jean-François Nadeau of Montreal’s Le Devoir and Brian MacQuarrie of The Boston Globe.

FRANCO-AMERICAN PARISH ARCHIVES

In April 2017, the demolition delay for Notre Dame des Canadiens Church sadly expired. Dedicated in 1929, the church was once the mother parish of Worcester’s French Canadians, the first of four consisting of Notre Dame (1869), St. Joseph’s (1891), Holy Name of Jesus (1893), and St. Anthony’s (1904).

St. Anthony’s Parish closed in 1975, merging with Notre Dame, and the church was demolished the following year. In 1992, St. Joseph’s Parish closed and merged with Notre Dame, but parishioners occupied the church, which was renovated and reopened in 1996. In 2008, it was the turn of Holy Name Parish and Notre Dame Parish to close. All of the former parishioners now belong to Holy Family Parish at beautiful St. Joseph’s Church. The new parish also serves a diverse population of recent immigrants, some of them Francophones who attend a weekly Mass in French.

Unlike Holy Name’s buildings, which are listed on the National Register of Historic Places, Notre Dame’s architecture may not survive. But its story, like that of Worcester’s other Franco-American parishes, is preserved in the historical archives. Thanks to the foresight and generosity of the current pastor of Holy Family, Rev. Steven Labaire, these historical archives will soon be transferred to the French Institute, with the mission of preserving them and making them accessible to the public.

In the ensuing months, the director of the French Institute, Dr. Leslie Choquette, and its librarian and archivist, Ms. Libby Lipin, will work with Rev. Labaire to identify, organize, photograph, transfer, and eventually digitize historical documents and artifacts from all four of Worcester’s original Franco-American parishes. While the materials will constitute a new collection, they will also be added to our existing data base of parish histories and ephemera. We look forward to becoming the new custodians of this precious parish patrimony.
SCHOLARLY ACTIVITIES

The director of the French Institute, Dr. Leslie Choquette, participated in a number of national and international conferences during academic year 2016-2017. As Past President of the American Council for Quebec Studies (ACGS), she helped organize the association’s 20th-Biennial Meeting in Portland, Maine (November 2016). She also chaired two panels at that conference: “Building Communities, Promoting Identities: From Franco-American Newspapers and L’[opération Amérique to Quebec Studies in Japan” and “Journeys and Exchanges in l’Amérique Francophone.”

Dr. Choquette’s scholarly and public presentations included: “A Forgotten Francophone Confronts French Politics during World War II: The Case of Wilfrid Beaulieu’s Le Travailleur (Worcester, Massachusetts),” at the Annual Meeting of the French Colonial Historical Society (FCHS) in Ottawa (May 2016); “The French Institute at Assumption College,” an interview with Sandra Goodwin for Maple Stars and Stripes: Your French College, (Worcester, Massachusetts),” at the Annual Meeting of the Maine Franco-American Genealogical Society in Auburn (October 2016); “French-Canadian Immigration to New England and Vermont in the 19th and 20th Centuries,” at the Annual Meeting of the Maine Franco-American Genealogical Society in Auburn (October 2016); “French-Canadian Immigration to New England and Vermont in the 19th and 20th Centuries,” for a conference on “French Connections” at the University of Vermont (March 2017); “Worcester’s French Canadians at Notre Dame and Beyond” (see page 4); “Protestants in New France,” at the Annual Meeting of the American-Canadian Genealogical Society (ACGS) in Manchester, New Hampshire (September 2017); and “La diaspora canadienne-française aux États-Unis : une histoire oubliée des deux côtés de la frontière,” at the Assumptionist center in Quebec City, Le Montmartre—Centre de Culture et de Foi (October 2017).

Dr. Choquette was also a discussant for a panel devoted to “Francophone Perspectives on Race, Place, and Identity after the War of 1812,” at the Annual Meeting of the Society for Historians of the Early American Republic in New Haven (July 2016). In Fall 2017, Dr. Choquette was appointed as the new Associate Editor of Quebec Studies, the bilingual scholarly journal of the ACGS, responsible for all submissions in history and social science. She continues to serve on the editorial boards of The Journal of Early American History: The American Colonies, 1500-1830, the journal Recherches sociographiques, and “The Early American History Series: The American Colonies, 1500-1830” for Brill Academic Publishers. In the past year, she also evaluated book manuscripts for McGill-Queen’s University Press and articles for The Canadian Journal of History / Annales canadiennes d’histoire and The William & Mary Quarterly, the flagship journal in early American history.

Additionally, Dr. Choquette’s professional service this year included: visiting the University of Maine at Orono, with several other scholars, to consult on future directions for their Franco-American Centre and Franco-American Studies program (May 2016); serving on the organizing committee for an international conference entitled “Femmes face à l’absence de l’Antiquité à l’époque contemporaine: terre, mer, outre-mer (Europe-Amérique du Nord),” which took place in Rochefort, France (May 2017); and serving on the Scholarly Advisory Board of Historic Huguenot Street (HHS) in New Paltz, New York. Finally, Dr. Choquette served for the third time on an evaluation committee for the Fonds de recherche du Québec—Société et culture, the Quebec Government’s funding agency for grants in the humanities and social sciences.

PUBLICATIONS OF THE DIRECTOR


Forthcoming publications by Dr. Choquette include, in English: “French-Canadian Immigration to New England and Vermont in the 19th and 20th Centuries,” in Vermont History; and “A Brief Summary of Frenchmen into Peasants: Modernity and Tradition in the People of French Canada,” in From Habitants to Immigrants: The Sansovays, the Harpins, and the Potvins by Jacqueline Lessard Finn. In French, she has written a review essay entitled “L’adaptation, concept-clé pour la compréhension de la francophonie nord-américaine?” for the journal Recherches sociographiques, and her review of Inconquis. Deux retraites françaises vers la Louisiane après 1760 by Joseph Gagné will appear in the next issue of Québec Studies.

ARCHIVE AND BOOK DONATIONS

We wish here to express our abiding gratitude to all those who have donated archival materials, books, and artifacts to the French Institute in the past year, including the rare book from 1680 pictured below, a recent gift of the Jobin family. Un grand merci du fond du cœur !