

**Court St. Francis of Assisi # 1859
Catholic Daughters of the Americas
Braintree, Massachusetts**



Unity & Charity

Catholic Daughters strive to embrace the principal of faith through love in the promotion of justice, equality, the advancement of human rights and dignity for all

Chaplain's Message

J.M.J.

October 2003

1789 – 1792 An imaginary Irish youth writes home

Dear Folks,

My last letter about the Catholic Church in Boston was quite negative. What a difference a few weeks have made. Our new pastor, Father Francis Matignon, is a wonderful gift from God. He is open, friendly, kind and yet in a quiet way firm. In a very short time he convinced the French and Irish Catholics that their nationalism didn't belong in the Church, so rather surprisingly, they listened, united and are now praying and working together.

Father Louis Rousselet was ready to start his own church relying on French Catholics to support him. They refused, so he left for the Caribbean. He was among the French Royalist here who were executed by the French Revolutionists. Some wonderful reports came back here. Father Rousselet absolved and anointed all of the victims before he was executed himself. Father John Thayer a convert from Calvinism has been here, a good priest but apt to be harsh and foot-loose. Father Matignon befriended him before he left for Virginia.

We hear much about the French Revolution. There were certainly abuses shown the people, in particular the peasants and other poor people. It is a sad fact that some of the problems came from priests and bishops who used the Church for their own ends. However many more were zealous priests and dedicated bishops. These were forced to flee to England. Our country has been blessed by some of these- The little news we had of Father Matignon was that he was as fine a priest as could be imagined. Now, after some months of his presence, we agree.

I may have mentioned that for reasons, bad and good, Catholics were not only unwelcome here, but really hated. The most vile words were used to attack the Pope and Catholics in general. The problem priests whom we had were no help now, while much of the hatred remains. We have many Protestants who appreciate Father Matignon his kindness, sincerity, and wisdom.

Perhaps I mentioned our only and very run down little church. Father Matignon, his parishioners and craftsman have done a lot to restore, renovate and repair it. It cost over a hundred dollars to do the work. Most of us are poor so we can give little. It was a wonderful surprise to find that many who were not Catholic gave help to the cause.

There are two priests in all of new England, one usually, but not always, among the Indians in Maine who depend on a priest greatly. Father Matignon has to care for the rest of the people. Transportation is poor and often beyond his resources so he is confined for the most part to Boston and some immediate areas, especially those like Salem, Portsmouth or Newburyport that are on the water.

There are strong rumors that a priest named John Cheverus may come soon to assist Father Matignon. Father Matignon is now an American citizen. Among those who recommended him were three ministers!

With love,

Michael