

CHAPTER 6

THE ERA OF BISHOP JEAN-LOUIS PLOUFFE: THE DIPLOMAT, 1989-

The challenges required a diplomat, someone who could win the confidence of increasingly cantankerous people. Bishop Jean-Louis Plouffe assumed office at a time when Northern Ontario was losing its population, particularly its young people. As Algoma Steel and the Algoma Central Railway were struggling to survive, there was one new parish in Sault Ste. Marie, Ste-Marie-du-Sault, in 1999, the result of a merger of St. Stanislaus, St. Jacques, and Ste Croix. For the most part, however, this was an era of economy and retrenchment, when parishes in Sudbury, Sault Ste. Marie, and smaller communities shared priests during the summer and on special occasions such as Christmas. Historic St. Ignace, for many years the only French-language parish in Sault Ste. Marie, and Ste Croix on Highway 17 east of that city were the first to close. St. Clement's in Sudbury followed in 2002.

Bishop Plouffe was a native of Ottawa, born 29 October 1940. As a Franco-Ontarian, he was fully bilingual in both of Canada's official languages. Ordained in 1965, he became a Assistant Bishop of the Diocese of Sault Ste. Marie 24 February 1987 when Bishop Gervais traveled to Ottawa for the ceremony. The then-Archbishop of Ottawa, Joseph-Aurèle Plourde, sent him to Belgium in 1968-1969 to study liturgy and to Rome from 1977 to 1979 to study canon law. He taught aspiring priests at St. Jean Marie Vianey Catholic High School in Ottawa, and served as pastor in churches of the Archdiocese of Ottawa, as rector of the Ottawa Cathedral, and as Judicial Vicar of the Ottawa Ecclesiastical Tribunal.

The Belgian experience was particularly useful as preparation for the Diocese of Sault Ste. Marie. By the time that the future Bishop Plouffe went there, the Archdiocese of Brussels had four sections and Councils of Priests: one for the Flemish, one for the Walloons (French-speaking), one for clergy from bilingual Brussels, and one for expatriates. This was a most unusual phenomenon. Yet, before Bishop Plouffe assumed office in the Diocese of Sault Ste. Marie, Bishop Carter had created two Councils of Priests: one for the Anglophones, a second for

the Francophones. In this respect, the Diocese of Sault Ste. Marie is unique among Canadian dioceses.

Bishop Plouffe sees his role as bringing people together, as a conciliator. He has served as Chair of the national commission for the promotion of Christian unity, religious relations with Jews, and interfaith dialogue. There have been divisions within the Diocese of Sault Ste. Marie: North Bay and Sault Ste. Marie versus Sudbury; Anglophones versus Francophones; Ojibway versus others; union membership versus management. Not only does Bishop Plouffe hope to lessen any such animosities—a difficult task when the Cree and Ojibway are suing the Diocese and the Jesuit order for what has happened at residential schools. He hopes to work with other Christians and non-Christians as well. After the events of 11 September 2001, Sudbury's St. Patrick's Church hosted a prayer service at which Muslims, among others, spoke and participated in every way. The Church should heal and unify, says the Bishop. Love is as important as dogma.

One of Bishop Plouffe's achievements has been to move the Diocesan offices from North Bay to Sudbury, with a minimum of controversy. Given the longstanding resentment against perceived Sudbury imperialism by residents of North Bay and Sault Ste. Marie, this was no mean feat. There were important arguments in favour of such a move. Half the Roman Catholics of the Diocese lived within the District of Sudbury. Sudbury was more conveniently located than North Bay to Sault Ste. Marie, Elliott Lake, and other places within the District of Algoma, where another 30 per cent of the Roman Catholics lived. In Sudbury, it was possible to accommodate all the Diocesan offices under one roof, a psychologically important part of the promotion of the sense of togetherness which Bishop Plouffe seeks to promote. Now the Bishop's office, Chancery, administrative offices, marriage tribunal, and French- and English-language pastoral services function under one roof in the former St. Elizabeth School of Nursing, given to the Diocese by the Sisters of Charity in Ottawa. However, North Bay remains home to the *de facto* cathedral and of the official residence of the Bishop.

As young people left Northern Ontario in search of employment, depopulation was only

one of the problems with which Bishop Plouffe had to contend. There was also a decline in religious commitment, with few young people contemplating the priesthood and with a decline in attendance at Sunday Mass. Happily for the Church, there were dedicated lay people like Sudbury's Ernie Savard who helped to compensate for the lack of full time workers. A member of the Knights of Columbus and President of the Friends of the Grotto (the Grotto of Notre Dame de Lourdes), Savard leads the Rosary each evening from May through September.¹ Savard, a professional carpet cleaner, also collects food from restaurants and distributes it to the needy. The Diocesan Order of Women, founded during Bishop Carter's tenure, adopted a less sexist name, the Diocesan Order of Service. Its members, not all of whom were wives of deacons, assisted in the work of the Church.

Bishop Plouffe also coped with the problems of depopulation and declining religious commitment through Vision 2000, the synodal process initiated by Bishop Gervais. The first phase, begun under Bishop Gervais, had dealt with Baptism. The second dealt with Marriage. The problem was not the Sacraments themselves but the fact that the Church appeared no longer to welcome the younger unchurched generation. Parents felt hurt when the Church denied their children a "church wedding" or refused to baptize their grandchildren because of their families' lack of regular religious connection with a parish community. The third phase of the synodal process sought to address the situation of the "distant" Catholics and the need for a more welcoming Church.

In addition, there was the "RENEW" process, intended to unfold in 95 per cent of the parishes across the Diocese over three years. Its purpose was to help everyone to experience a different approach to the Church by helping the membership grow in faith through sharing it in small groups and through experiencing a greater sense of belonging to the community. Sister Nora Muillen of the Congregation of St. Joseph was to spearhead the process in the English and Native Sectors, while Sister Rose-Marie Trahan, s.c.o., did likewise in the French. This highly

¹. *Sudbury Star*, 1 Dec. 2002.

structed process of “RENEW” became the response to the ongoing call of Pope John Paul II for a more committed and missionary Church to allow “Faith” to challenge an increasingly secular culture, thus bridging the gap between culture and faith.

During this three-year process, the fundamental pillars of Church life were challenged; Faith development (Education); Worship (Liturgy); Social Justice (Outreach). The goal was to find a common vision for the whole Diocese. Then, the fourth phase of the synodal process became the implementation of the vision born of the “RENEW” process, the vision of being called to be a more welcoming church reaching out to all, both the churched and the unchurched; to rediscover a missionary spirit, a new evangelizing spirit; to serve TOGETHER as one Diocesan Church, respectful of the linguistic, cultural, and racial differences of the three sectors (English, French, Native); and to grow in a greater awareness of the presence and assistance of the Spirit to experience and witness to a different way of being Church, a more mystical Church. “Serving together in the Spirit” encapsulates the vision, and this call to a new evangelization within the Diocese echoes the worldwide priority of the universal Church.

There have been concrete steps to implement “RENEW” and its vision/mission statements. First, Bishop Bernard Pappin coordinated the Parish Reorganization and Revitalization Process (PR&R). This meant collaboration, clustering and closing of parishes to favour a new Catholic presence in North Bay, Sudbury, and Sault Ste. Marie. Secondly, the consolidation of people and money enabled spending of more effort on re-evangelization and less on “bricks and mortar”, hopefully providing a more meaningful experience of Church to the new generations of Catholics. Thirdly, pastoral units were created, primarily in rural areas, out of clusters of parishes and missions: Thessalon, Bruce Mines, St. Joseph Island, and Echo Bay; Massey, Webwood, Walford; River Valley, Field, Crystal Falls, Cache Bay; Cartier, Levac, and Dowling. Three new parishes were born as a result of mergers. St. Ignace and Ste Croix became Saint-Marie-du-Sault at Sault Ste. Marie. St. Clement and Our Lady of Perpetual Help became Our Lady of Hope in Sudbury. Ste-Thérèse and Notre-Dame-de-l’Espérance became Ste-Marguerite d’Youville in Val Caron.

Church construction and reconstruction facilitated a stronger Catholic presence. Sudbury's Ste-Anne-des-Pins rose from the ashes after a total loss in a fire, the third in its history. Holy Redeemer in the Nickel City built a Church out of the former Catholic Centre or Boys' Home. Valley East gained St. Kevin's and Ste-Marguerite d'Youville; Dowling became home to St. Stephen/St. Étienne; and St. Bernard appeared in Little Current. Parishioners at Sudbury's Christ the King, the Precious Blood Cathedral in Sault Ste. Marie, and the Pro-Cathedral in North Bay found \$2 million for renovations. North Bay's five parishes came together in a process named "Strategic Planning" to address their future in faith.

Important as the buildings were, people were vital. In 2002, the Diocese managed to attract members of the Dominican Order to serve at Ste-Anne-des-Pins and the University of Sudbury. This was the first time Dominicans had served west of Ottawa. A Screening Process of volunteers and paid employees involved in Church ministries and administration is being implemented throughout Ontario in conjunction with the federal and provincial governments. With Roseanne Lyons as co-ordinator, the Diocese of Sault Ste. Marie took the lead and became the first in Ontario to acquire the tools and material needed to complete the process. At the same time, the standardization of administrative matters and accounting through a general policy book and standard computer accounting package in all parishes is beginning.

The Diocese of Sault Ste. Marie was one of the first Dioceses to have its own website, Cath-Com Productions. This new and fully integrated communications system, with a fully interactive website, will serve to circulate information throughout the Diocese and open the Diocesan Church to the world.

The World Since 1989:

The very year when Bishop Plouffe assumed office, 1989, marked a turning point in world history--as surely as had 1914 or 1945. Over the summer, Poles elected their first post-World War II non-Communist government. On 9 November, the government of Communist East

Germany opened the Berlin Wall, in place since August 1961, so that citizens of that country could travel freely to the West. The following year, East German voters elected a non-Communist government pledged to unification with West Germany, and by October Germany had reunited. Within a few months of the opening of the Berlin Wall, all the Soviet-bloc countries had new, usually non-Communist governments, and by the end of 1991, the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact (the military alliance among the Communist governments of Europe) had disappeared. The Cold War ended, and the danger of nuclear annihilation diminished--at least for the moment.

Unfortunately, new problems arose. In part because the Soviet threat had disappeared, tensions among the always uneasy peoples of Yugoslavia became bloody and violent. During Bishop Plouffe's episcopacy, Serbs (distinguished from Croats largely by their Orthodox Christianity) fought Croats (Roman Catholics) inside Croatia and in Bosnia (where there was also a substantial Muslim community). Sudbury was home to both Serb and Croat expatriates. The survival of Canada itself was at stake. As a gesture of national unity, Prime Minister Brian Mulroney and the ten provincial premiers had negotiated a new constitutional arrangement for Canada, the Meech Lake Accord (named after the place in Quebec where the final negotiations took place). In 1990, two provinces (Newfoundland and Manitoba) failed to ratify the accord, which became a dead letter. In the aftermath of that fiasco, one could travel across Quebec from Ontario to New Brunswick without seeing any Canadian flags except atop such federal buildings as post offices and in largely English-speaking communities such as West Island Montreal. To avert the separation of Quebec from Canada, Mulroney's government made another attempt at reconciliation and invited ordinary Canadians to offer suggestions. The Ontario Conference of Catholic Bishops (OCCB) accepted the invitation and offered proposals. In 1992, Ottawa and the provincial premiers reached a second agreement, concluded in Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island. Late that year, Canadian voters decisively rejected the Charlottetown Accord. In 1994, Quebec voters elected a Parti Québécois government headed by a Quebec nationalist, Jacques Parizeau, for whom Quebec independence was the highest priority. In 1995, Quebec voters came

within a whisker of voting their province out of Canada. To maintain, if necessary create, harmonious relations between French Canadians and other Canadians became a major challenge. Also, around the world, non-European minorities whose lands Europeans had colonized became increasingly militant. These minorities included Australian aborigines, black Africans, and Canadian Indians (many of whom lived within the Diocese of Sault Ste. Marie). Undoubtedly the most dangerous confrontation of the years following the Cold War, the one which threatened the largest number of lives, was that between the Islamic world and everyone else: Hindus in India, Buddhists in Thailand, Chinese in Xinjiang province, Jews in Israel, as well as societies with largely Christian traditions. Across the globe, Muslims and Christians fought each other: in the former Yugoslavia, in East Timor and the Philippines, in Nigeria, in Indonesia, even in the United States. Sudbury was home to the largest Muslim community within the Diocese of Sault Ste. Marie.

There was another challenge closer to home. In 1995, Ontario voters elected a Progressive Conservative government headed by Mike Harris of North Bay, the second Premier of Ontario who lived within the Diocese of Sault Ste. Marie. Like Conservative Premier Sir William Hearst (1914-1919), who lived in Sault Ste. Marie and whose contacts with Bishop Scollard appear to have been minimal, Harris was not a Roman Catholic. Indeed, he had right-wing agenda at variance with the 1992 constitutional proposals of the OCCB. For the Harris government, tax cuts (which necessarily benefitted those who had most) and steps toward a more balanced budget were the highest priorities. The government of Ontario reduced spending on education, health services, the environment, and social assistance. In the summer of 2000, polluted drinking water killed residents of Walkerton, Ontario. The next year, a pregnant woman on the reduced level of welfare assistance provided by the Harris government, was convicted of fraud for supplementing her income with a student loan. Sentenced to house arrest, Kimberley Rogers of Sudbury died during a heat wave.

Needless to say, Bishop Plouffe and Premier Harris were not close friends. They first met at a spaghetti supper at St. Rita's Church in North Bay and, because both knew some of the same

people, they saw each other at the occasional social function in the Gateway City. When Bishop Plouffe was president of the OCCB, they met in Toronto, but they never invited each other to dinner. During his first mandate, Premier Harris was anxious not to show favouritism toward any particular religious group, although he would address representatives of many persuasions who had assembled to listen to him. After his government won a second term in the election of 1999, he would accept invitations from the OCCB. Bishop Plouffe thinks that if the OCCB had *any* impact on the Harris government, it was in the field of education, where there was full funding for four distinct publicly financed school systems: English-language public (secular), English-language Catholic, French-language public, and French-language Catholic. Ontario families had greater freedom of choice than at any other time in their history.

Educational Problems and Achievements:

Until 1999, a Jesuit had headed the University of Sudbury, successor to Collège Sacré Coeur. With the retirement of Father Jacques Monet, S.J. that year, the Board of Regents selected the first lay person as president of the institution, Kenneth Roy Bonin. Early in 2002 the faculty at the University of Sudbury voted to unionize, and Peter Simpson of the Laurentian University Faculty Association became the chief negotiator as professors and management endeavoured to write their first collective agreement. This was in keeping with the trend at the Catholic elementary and secondary schools within the Diocese. Once locales where religious sisters and priests taught young people, by 1989 teachers at those schools were almost entirely lay people with families to support. Strikes and threats of strikes became common.

A papal bull, *Ex Corde Ecclesiae*, sparked controversy at the University of Sudbury in 2002, twelve years after its promulgation by Pope John Paul II. Part II, Article IV--the section dealing with "General Norms"--was particularly controversial. Sub-section #3 said that "all Catholic teachers are to be faithful to, and all other teachers are to respect, Catholic doctrine and morals in their research and teaching." Sub-section #4 said: "In order not to endanger the Catholic identity of the University or Institute of Higher Studies, the number of non-Catholic

teachers should not be allowed to constitute a majority within the Institution, which is and must remain Catholic.”

Peter Simpson, the union’s chief negotiator, argued that the University of Sudbury was not, strictly speaking, a Roman Catholic university in that there was “no direct control by the Bishop” and there was no Theology programme. Professors, said Simpson, had never had to disclose their religious preference, and to change that in 2002 might jeopardize provincial funding. In October 2002, with wages and working conditions still in dispute, both sides agreed to language which acknowledged the Roman Catholic and Jesuit heritage of the institution.²

At the secondary level, Roman Catholic education was second to none. The Harris government introduced literacy tests which all Grade X students across Ontario must write. In February 2002, the Sudbury Catholic District School Board scored an 80% success rate, as compared with 75% in the Rainbow District School Board, which covered roughly the same geographical area. The Conseil Scolaire catholique du Nouvel-Ontario had a success rate of 68% as compared with 49% in the Conseil Scolaire du district du Grand Nord de l’Ontario. This was part of a developing pattern. The previous year, the Sudbury District Catholic Board had scored 69%, the Rainbow Board 66%.³ Parents of other religious persuasions sought to enrol their children in Catholic schools, not only for the academic results but also because of the discipline. Many Catholic schools required school uniforms, which ranged even within Sudbury from the formal jackets and ties at Notre Dame to shorts and golf shirts at St. Charles College. Teachers could see at a glance who belonged in the building and who did not, and students developed an element of respect. Also, long before the Harris government made it a mandatory part of the provincial curriculum, Catholic secondary schools stressed community service. Students, individually or collectively, offered their services, free of charge, to needy people or to a needy cause. Students at St. Charles College provided food for the needy. In the autumn of 2002,

². Email from Peter Simpson to the author, 30 Oct. 2002.

³. *Sudbury Star*, 8 Oct. 2002.

College Notre Dame student council members Sylvie Séguin, Natalie Shlemkevich, Christina Ross, Patrick Alain, and Elia Eliev co-ordinated a fundraising campaign to fight cancer. Over 15 years, the school had raised almost \$350,000 for the cause, and in 2002, it was raising more money by raffling a dollhouse.⁴ As Christmas approached, students from Grades 11-13 at Marymount Academy (under the direction of teacher Matthew Wiecha) sang Christmas carols and served a buffet for recovering drug addicts, released prisoners, and others in need of help at the Sudbury Action Centre for Youth on Elm Street in Sudbury. Grade 12 student Tatiana Buba appreciated the opportunity to see a different aspect of life. Laura Laurence from the OAC class was pleased to be making people happier. Wiecha said that all his helpers were volunteers, at the Centre on their own initiative.⁵

Not all the news was good. By the 1990s, the “Pot O’ Gold Lottery” had become a source of contention. Its remaining funds became the Bishop Carter Charitable Fund, but there were challenges against the governance of the fund. It took four years, but Bishop Plouffe managed to clarify the status of the Fund before the courts and the Public Trustee of Ontario. In order further to protect the assets of the Fund for charities within the Diocese, Bishop Plouffe sought incorporation of the Charitable Fund into a foundation now known as the “Bishop Alexander Carter Foundation”. This foundation secures for future generations moneys which can subsidize charitable agencies across Northern Ontario.

One of the beneficiaries of the Bishop Alexander Carter Foundation has been the House of our Lady of Hope in Sault Ste. Marie. The Diocese was home to another experiment, the House of Our Lady of Hope in Sault Ste. Marie. This dated from 1977, when Bishop Carter approved a vision of Monsignor Ray Farrell, pastor of Blessed Sacrament Parish. From 1980 to 2002, Maureen Farrell served as Director of the House of Hope. The ancient building required upkeep and renovation, some provided by volunteers but some by professionals who had to be paid for roof repairs, plastering of walls, laying of carpets, and installation of kitchen equipment.

⁴. *Northern Life*, 6 Dec. 2002.

⁵. *Sudbury Star*, 7 Dec. 2002.

The original Chapel was a large room on the main floor, but after a decision that a smaller room adjacent to it would create a more prayerful atmosphere, a Baptist whom Maureen Farrell had been counseling expressed his gratitude by offering his services as a carpenter rather than through a cash payment. Stephanie Yoemn, a parishioner at Blessed Sacrament in 1980, donated all the furniture for eleven bedrooms. Theresa Brennan, Jessimae Sheehan, and other volunteers, removed old cupboards and floor tiles, changed bedding after retreats, and did the laundry and cleaning. Others served as unpaid cooks, and Pat Rooney, a certified Counsellor and Family Therapist, counselled individuals at the House of Hope in 1984 and 1985. Tony Martin, now MPP for Sault Ste. Marie, co-ordinated youth activities and social justice programmes.

The House has served a number of functions. Prayer teams operated from its rooms. Volunteer receptions answered the telephone. Overnight guests stayed there, and Parish Council meetings took place at the House. Healing services are a monthly event. Parishioners have organized garage sales, with the proceeds going to purchase supplies for the House.

The Canadian Political Context:

The OCCB, including Bishop Plouffe, produced a series of constitutional recommendations before the Mulroney government, provincial premiers, and Ovide Mercredi (on behalf of the Assembly of First Nations) concluded the Charlottetown Accord. Reflecting Church teaching, the document recommended respect for life from conception until natural termination. In other words, abortion, euthanasia, and capital punishment all would be unconstitutional. The bishops deplored “individualism run amuck” into which, they said, Canada had descended. The new constitution should confirm the responsibility of the fortunate for the unfortunate. The rights of French-speaking Ontarians to use their own language should be enshrined in the constitution. Early in 1992, Jesuits at the University of Sudbury invited anyone who was interested to attend a session at the University of Sudbury where a panel, including Bishop Plouffe, would discuss the bishops’ recommendations, and the organizers made a video tape which the community television channel later played. Many attended the event and spoke

for or against the bishop's proposals, but in the end, none of this appears to have mattered. Over the summer, Canada's Minister of Constitutional Affairs, former Prime Minister Joe Clark, the provincial premiers, and some Aboriginal leaders reached agreement during a meeting in Charlottetown, but there is little evidence that they listened to anyone but themselves. Several weeks later, Canadian voters rejected the Charlottetown Accord in a referendum. The 1982 constitution remains the basis for Canada's system of government. Nevertheless, the document produced by the OCCB is significant as a summary of the vision of Ontario held by Ontario's Roman Catholic bishops in 1992.

Balkan Problems within the Diocese:

With the end of the Cold War, Yugoslavia began to disintegrate. Created in the aftermath of World War I, Yugoslavia was a pluralistic country of multiple peoples and three religions. Serbs (the most numerous), by definition, were Eastern Orthodox, as were Macedonians. Croats and Slovenians were Roman Catholic. Many Bosnians and most residents of Kosovo were Muslims. Too many within each group had a horrendous tradition of hatred toward some of the others. Indeed, when Hitler's forces invaded Yugoslavia in 1941, Nazi collaborators of the Ustashe movement detached Croatia from Yugoslavia. In an age of brutality, Croatia's government gained a reputation as one of the most brutal of contemporary régimes. One estimate is that the Ustashe massacred 487,000 Serbs; 30,000 of the 45,000 Jews; 27,000 Gypsies.⁶

^{6.} For a summary of the establishment of Yugoslavia late in 1918, see Margaret MacMillan, *Paris 1919: Six Months that Changed the World* (New York: Random House, 2002), pp. 109-124. For a review of Yugoslavia's subsequent ethnic conflicts, see Mark Biondich, *Stjepan Radic, the Croat Peasant Party, and the Politics of Mass Mobilization, 1904-1928* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000). For a look at Croatia's wartime Ustashe régime, see Cornwell, pp. 248-253; Slavoljub Djukic, *Milosevic and Markovic: A Lust for Power* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2001); Martin Gilbert, *A History of the Twentieth Century, Vol. II* (Toronto: Stoddard, 1999), pp. 367, 484; Philip Hammond and Edward S. Herman (editors), *Degraded Capability: the Media and the Kosovo Crisis* (London: Pluto, 2000). The statistics on Croat atrocities appear in Cornwell, p. 253. To see Croatia as it appeared in the eyes of neutral Chilean diplomats in 1942, see Graeme S. Mount, *Chile and the Axis* (Montreal: Black Rose, 2002), pp. 72-73. For a review of the disintegration of Yugoslavia in the 1990s, see

The Serb-Croat conflict soon became a matter of concern for the Canadian Armed Forces. Krajina is a corner of Croatia inhabited by ethnic Serbs, many of whose ancestors had fled there to escape the Turks when Serbia was part of the Ottoman Empire and Croatian part of the Habsburg's Austro-Hungarian Empire. With Croatian independence in 1991, many Croats regarded Krajina's Serbs as security risks, people whose sympathies probably lay with the hostile Serbian government. Ethnic cleansing--expulsion or death for Krajina's Serbs--appeared a possible solution. President Franjo Tudjman, President of Croatia from 1991 to 1999, ordered the ethnic cleansing of Krajina, and Tony Beljo, who had lived in Sudbury for decades, served his government. The Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry (PPCLI) went to Croatia as part of a United Nations "peacekeeping" mission. To their horror, they discovered that there was no peace to keep. At the Medak Pocket in Krajina in September 1993, the Canadian soldiers discovered the bodies of murdered Serb civilians. In order to prevent further Croatian ethnic cleansing, the PPCLI challenged the Croatian army and fought the most serious battle waged by the Canadian Armed Forces since the Korean War (1950-1953). During the fifteen hours in which the Croatian army bombarded the PPCLI, twenty-seven Croatian soldiers died. The Canadians suffered no fatalities, but since their return from Canada many have suffered from serious physical and psychological disorders.⁷ Clearly, centuries of Serb-Croat hostility have had repercussions on this side of the Atlantic Ocean, and people within the Diocese of Sudbury have been involved.

Timothy Garton Ash, *A History of the Present: Essays, Sketches, and Dispatches from Europe in the 1990s* (New York: Random House, 1999), pp. 141-166; General Wesley K. Clark, *Waging Modern War* (New York: Public Affairs, 2001); Misha Glenny, *The Fall of Yugoslavia: The Third Balkan War* (London: Penguin, 1992); Martin Gilbert, *A History of the Twentieth Century*, Vol. III (Toronto: Stoddard, 1999), several references between pages 712 and 907; Carol Off, *The Lion, The Fox, and The Eagle* (Toronto: Random House, 2000); Ed Vulliamy, *Seasons in Hell: Understanding Bosnia's War* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994) .

⁷. For information on the battle between the PPCLI and the Croatian army, see *Maclean's*, 2 Sept. 2002, pp. 44-46. The CBC's Carol Off had a documentary on that subject on *The National*, 11 Nov. 2002.

The conflict between Serbs and Croats would have a significant impact within the Diocese of Sault Ste. Marie, where both groups have their own churches, the Serbian Orthodox Church of St. Peter and St. Paul on Antwerp Street in Sudbury, and Sveti Marko Croatian Catholic Church on Alder Street, within easy walking distance. (Our Lady of the Highways Church near Sault Ste. Marie is also a Croatian parish.) By the 1960s, relations between Roman Catholics and Protestants were very good, and both throughout the following decades co-operated on many fronts. Unfortunately, antipathy between the local Serb and Croatian communities was intense. In private conversation, Sudbury's Croats would speak at length about Serb atrocities against Croats. Ante Beljo, a leader of Sudbury's Croat community, wrote a book on Serb-Croat relations entitled *Genocide*. According to Beljo, Serbs were attempting to eliminate everything Croatian and the Ustashe régime was right to collaborate with the Nazis against such terrible people as the Serbs.⁸ In 1991, when Croatia again seceded from Yugoslavia, Beljo became a leading official in that country's Department of Information.

According to a history of Sudbury's Croats written to celebrate Sudbury's centennial in 1983, Sudbury's Croatian community numbered approximately 400 people by 1931. If accurate, Croats were Sudbury's largest ethnic group after the British, Irish, French, Finns, Ukrainians, Italians, and Poles.⁹ (The 1931 census did not identify Croats, or even Yugoslavs, as such.) In 1949, Sudbury's first Croatian priest, Jure Vrdoljak, arrived, and a series of Croatian successors served the local Croatian community from the Holy Trinity Church. Those priests also served Croat expatriates in Elliott Lake, North Bay, Timmins, Schumacher, and Kirkland Lake. In 1981, Sudbury's Croats purchased the beautiful stone building used by Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Congregation and named it Sveti Marko, after a church of that name in Zagreb, Croatia's capital.¹⁰ Almost all the founding members of Sveti Marko were Croatian-

^{8.} Ante Beljo, *Genocide* (Sudbury: Northern Tribune Publishing, 1985), especially pp. 21, 49-98.

^{9.} Ljubo Krasič, "Croats of Sudbury, 1880s to 1940", in *Croats in the Sudbury Centennial* (Sudbury: Journal Printing, 1983), p. 65.

^{10.} Krasič, p. 103.

born, and their children have been an exceptional group of high achievers in business and the professions.

Sveti Marko has been a church, but it has also been a cultural centre. There young people have studied the Croatian language and folklore, as well as music and dance. A Croatian-language publishing house directed by Vinko Grubišić operated from its basement. (Grubišić left to become a Croatian language professor at the University of Waterloo.) Parishioners participated in community events and in 1998 received a Distinguished Service Award from Sam Enver, a Muslim of Turkish extraction, in appreciation for their efforts. Musical groups and soccer players from the parish have traveled extensively throughout North America and, since Croatian independence, to Croatia.

According to Father Ljubo Lebo, pastor of Sveti Marko in the post-Cold War period, the wounds from Serb-Croat conflicts in World War II and again in the 1990s, when Croatia fought for its independence and subsequently in the Bosnian campaign, remain very strong. Indeed, they are too strong to permit Serb-Croat dialogue, let alone shared activities, at the local level. After all, the International Court of Justice at the Hague, judging atrocities of the 1990s, has charged, tried, and convicted more Serbs than Croats. Animosities between the two communities, says Father Lebo, arise from politics, not religious differences, and hopefully time will eventually heal. A picture of the controversial Cardinal Alojzije Stepinac hangs at the entrance to the rector's office, and the Cardinal's bust sits at the front of the sanctuary. Local Croats had given it to the University of Sudbury in 1963. Father Lebo makes no apology for this. To him as to other local Croats, Cardinal Stepinac was a Christian martyr unjustly imprisoned for sixteen years by Yugoslavia's Communist government.

Historian Peter Kent offers some support. According to Kent, Stepinac—who served as Archbishop of Zagreb during and following World War II—was a “narrow-minded Croatian nationalist” who initially supported the Ustashe régime. At no point did he call for opposition to the Ustashe nor to its Axis partners, Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy. Stepinac took a high profile role in state functions “at the side of [Ante] Pavelić”, the Ustashe leader whom the Allies

definitely considered a war criminal. However, Cardinal Stepinac opposed attempts by the Ustashe forcibly to convert Orthodox Christians (Serbs) to Roman Catholicism, and he publicly protested Ustashe treatment of Jews and Serbs. He even offered Jews and Serbs a helping hand. After the war, Cardinal Stepinac was a staunch opponent of Yugoslavia's Communist government, in part because it was Communist, in part because its leader, Marshal Josip Broz Tito, tried to reintegrate Croatia into a federation with Serbs, Muslims, and others.¹¹

In 1998, Father Lebo says, Pope John Paul II justified the confidence of Sudbury's Croats in Cardinal Stepinac when he beatified the former Archbishop of Zagreb. "Rome," said Father Lebo, "does not make mistakes in such matters." Father Lebo says that he and parishioner Ante Beljo had first-hand experience of Communist tyranny. On visits to Yugoslavia, uniformed police could tell Lebo what he had said in sermons, and they knew what Beljo had in his living room.¹²

Parishioners at Sveti Marko responded vigorously to the crises of the 1990s. They provided 5,000 pairs of eye glasses, wheel chairs, clothes, and food to the Croatian Medical Relief Fund. They contributed money to support 10,000 war orphans through the Croatian Family Relief Fund. Moreover, the approximately 120 families of the parish did this when Sudbury's economy was less than vibrant, when young people were leaving the city, and when no new blood was arriving.

Challenges with Aboriginals within the Diocese:

For generations, Canada's successive federal and provincial governments encouraged the Churches—Roman Catholic, Anglican, United, and Presbyterian—to assume responsibility for the education of the First Nations peoples. By the 1990s, many of the alumni of the Church-

^{11.} Peter Kent, *The Lonely Cold War of Pope Pius XII* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2002), pp. 48, 98, 104-108, 161-163.

^{12.} Interview with the Rev. Ljubo Lebo, Sveti Marko Church, Sudbury, 18 Dec. 2002.

sponsored residential schools had unhappy memories of their experiences as young people. The teachers, they said, had tried to eradicate their culture and punished them for speaking their own languages. The teachers maintained discipline with an unnecessary degree of brutality. In some cases, the teachers even engaged in inappropriate sexual activity with the children. Lawsuits proliferated across the country and against all four Churches, and the Diocese of Sault Ste. Marie was no exception. Some it has settled out of court; some at time of writing remain before the courts.

Bishop Plouffe takes pride in efforts by the Jesuit Order and the Diocese of Sault Ste. Marie to respect the culture of the First Nations peoples. The residential school in Spanish taught the Ojibway language. Sweetgrass replaces incense at masses for the Ojibway and the Cree, and drums have a role in worship. Instead of a handshake at mass, the First Nations people share a peace pipe. Roman Catholic worship can adapt to the traditions of the worshipers, and, with good reason, Bishop Plouffe believes that the Diocese stands in the forefront of the enculturation process.

Assisting Bishop Plouffe now is Bishop Robert Harris, ordained a bishop 12 December 2002. Bishop Plouffe traveled to Montreal to perform the ordination. A graduate of Loyola College, a Jesuit post-secondary institution which later became part of Concordia University, the future Bishop Harris studied at Montreal's Grand Seminaire. Following ordination as a priest in 1969, he studied at Rome's Gregorian University, where he earned a Licentiate in Canon Law, and served in parishes around Montreal, in Mexico, and in the Diocese of Moosonee (that part of Ontario north of the continental divide). In addition to French and English, Bishop Harris can speak Spanish and Italian.¹³

^{13.} *Sudbury Star*, 15 Dec. 2002.