

Virgin Mary: "If You grant us solid ice on the river by the Feast of St. Joseph, we will not destroy Your small church, and we will dedicate it to Your Holy Rosary."

*\*(excerpted from: www.michaeljournal.org)*

#### THE MIRACLE OF THE ICE BRIDGE IN 1879

**\*\***The Shrine of Our Lady of the Cap or Cap de la Madeleine had a miracle of note in its origin, called the Ice Bridge Miracle.

In November, Father luc Désilets asked the people to pray that a bridge of ice form on the river, so that the building blocks could be carried across. Everyone began praying. The young associate pastor, Father Duquay, each day, prayed the Rosary at a side chapel, in front of the altar of the Brotherhood of the Most Holy Rosary, at the feet of Our Lady of the Cap.

March came and a high wind began to break up the ice blocking the mouth of the Saint-Maurice River to the south and the north shore of the St. Lawrence River. The ice began to drift downstream to the Cap de la Madeleine. It was covering the river several hundred feet from the church.

That Sunday, March 17th, Feast of St. Patrick, Father Duquay told the parishioners that there would be a High Mass for the feast of St. Joseph on March 19th, petitioning Jesus' foster father to ask his Son to form a bridge of ice! He also invited the men to come with him to survey the river.

When they arrived, they saw that the river was covered with a thin layer of ice floating among drifts of snow. They went from spot to spot, looking for blocks of ice floating closely together. They had gone about 1000 feet with no success, when they spotted two of the guides heading upriver to the south shore. Father joined them. Only Father Duquay and the two guides dared continue, the ice was so thin and treacherous.

Having arrived at the south shore, Firmin Cadotte (one of the guides) crawled forward, feeling in the icy waters for a piece of ice that could carry his weight. He persisted and then was joined by thirty other men who began working alongside one another to form a 1600 foot stretch of ice along the river, wide enough for two carts carrying stones to pass one another. At 11 p.m., they returned to the sacristy and Father asked, "*Well men, what are we going to do now?*" **A plan was formulated whereby they would pour water over the thin bridge of ice that had formed and, upon freezing, pour more water over it until it would become thicker**, and when it was thick enough to carry the weight of the carts and stones, they would begin carting the stones across the river.

It was the following morning, March 18th, at 3 a.m., when the men returned to the river's edge and went back to work on the ice. Now considering how temperate it had been and that it was now March, it was nothing short of a miracle that the bridge was now solid enough to walk on! Men kept pouring water on the ice. It was now 6 inches thick! Encouraged, seeing a possible light at the end of the tunnel, they kept on pouring water.

March 19th, Feast of St. Joseph, just as they were trying to decide where the opening should be made for the carts to travel, as much snow had fallen during the night blocking the way, what did they see coming across the bridge of ice? **The first cart carrying blocks of stone!** This cart was followed by other carts, until by Sunday 175 sleighs carrying stones had passed.

The men had carted 1000 feet of dressed stone plus enough stone for a foundation. Father Duquay ordered all work to stop. God had answered their prayers; it was time to say **Thank You, Lord.** That day, the bridge was given the name it carries till today, *The Bridge of the Rosary.*

One of the workers said, "*It was quite extraordinary, a real miracle. It defied common sense.*" And when Father Désilets saw what had come to pass, he said, "*Is this not a clear sign of Heavenly intervention? Can one not manifestly see the Finger of God?*"

*To this day*, many, many people still make a pilgrimage to Canada to visit this very beautiful and powerful Shrine and Rosary Bridge in honor of Our Lady.

*\*\**(excerpted from: www.discover-catholic-miracles.com)

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## *Our Lady of the Cape Queen of the Holy Rosary Queen of Canada*



*The Heart of Our Lady of the Cape  
teaches us the most beautiful love  
from the most beautiful heart:  
that of our Heavenly Mother.*

## OUR LADY OF THE CAPE

*\*The statue of Our Lady of the Cape, seen on the cover, was given to the Shrine of Cap-de-la-Madeleine, Que., in 1854, the same year as the proclamation of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception. We therefore celebrated in 2004 the 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of both events. This very same statue is still venerated in the Shrine today.*

The shrine of Our Lady of the Cape or *Notre-Dame-du-Cap* is located on the St. Lawrence River in the town of *cap-de-la-Madeleine* (Quebec), halfway between Montreal and Quebec City. It is one of Canada's most visited shrines, since it is dedicated to Our Lady of the Rosary, Queen of Canada. The history of this shrine shows that when the faithful abandon the practice of the Rosary, everything collapses in families and society. As Pope John Paul II said, we must return to the practice of the daily recitation of the Rosary in the families, for the survival of peoples and nations.

### HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

French explorer Jacques Cartier, sailing the majestic St. Lawrence River, in 1535, had planted the Cross of Christ on one of the islands of the St. Maurice River, that separates the present cities of Trois-Rivieres (Three Rivers) and Cap-de-la-Madeleine. This was on October 7, which was to be proclaimed a few years later, by Pope Pius V, the Feast of the Holy Rosary.

Master Jacques de la Ferté, a priest of St. Marie Madeleine of Chateaudun, in France, and a member of the Company of the One Hundred Associates, received a plot called the Cape of Trois-Rivieres. In 1651, Master de la Ferté gave to the Jesuit Fathers, the first missionaries in the area, a domain, asking them to establish there a center of missions for the native peoples who went there every year to trade furs. In remembrance of the first owner, the Jesuits called the place Cap-de-la-Madeleine.

In the first years, this land was blessed with the passage of Fathers Brebeuf, Daniel, and Lalemant - three of the eight North American martyrs canonized in 1930. For 18 years, Father Jacques Buteux was the main apostle of this settlement, and was martyred there by the Iroquois in 1652.

In 1659, a modest wooden chapel was erected by the governor of Trois-Rivieres, Pierre Boucher. It was given in 1661 to the new parish of St. Mary Magdalene, which inaugurated the devotion to Our Lady.

Cap-de-la-Madeleine was created a parish on October 30, 1867 by Blessed François de Laval, the first Bishop of Quebec City. In 1694, a Confraternity of the Rosary is established in the parish. Bishop de Saint-Vallier, the successor of François de Laval, wanted to replace the wooden parish church with a stone church, but the parishioners had to ask the financial aid of the other settlements in Canada at that time: Quebec City, Ville Marie (Montreal), and Trois-Rivieres. Our Lady was already establishing the foundations of a national shrine.

The "birth certificate" of the Shrine of the Queen of the Most Holy Rosary is signed on May 13, 1714, by Bishop of Saint-Vallier, of Quebec City. It was opened to the cult in 1720, and as of 2004, is the oldest church in Canada that has retained its primitive state.

Flourishing at its beginning, the Confraternity of the Rosary experienced serious flagging one century later, due to the lack of zeal of a priest. The recitation of the Rosary

was abandoned, and the parishioners did not even go to Mass on Sundays. Deprived of his Protectress and of zealous pastors, the morals of the population declined, as history has shown in every country.

### THE 150<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION AND OF THE STATUE OF OUR LADY OF THE CAPE

In 1854, the year of the proclamation of the Dogma of the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary, Our Lady inspires Zephirin Dorval, a generous parishioner of Cap-de-la-Madeleine, to donate to the shrine a statue of the Madonna as She appeared to Catherine Laboure in 1830. This event is known as the Miraculous Medal Apparition. It shows Mary without the Child Jesus, Her arms outstretched toward the people, standing on a half-globe, Her foot/heal crushing the head of the snake. (cf Gen 3:15.) It is one of eleven identical statues made in Canada by an unknown Italian sculptor. The meaning of the burning heart of Mary is one of burning love beating in union with the heart of Her son, and partaking in His suffering.

The other characteristic element of the statue of Our Lady of the Cape is Her crown. As we will see later, it was added in 1904 to commemorate the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the definition of the Immaculate Conception. The coronation honors and highlights, in particular, the miraculous character of the statue. In fact, since the ice-bridge miracle of 1878, and the prodigy of the eyes of 1888, this statue of Our Lady has been considered miraculous.

The task of the new priest, Luc Désilets, was to arouse the languid faith of his parishioners, who had been without a parish priest for more than a century. When he arrived, the population of Cap-de-la-Madeleine was about one-thousand strong. One day, something strange attracted Father Désilets' attention. He was returning from the sacristy, where he had been hearing confessions, and stopped in the church for a moment to pray. It was the eve of the Feast of the Ascension, in 1867, but the church was empty. Suddenly, the priest was astonished to see a pig with a Rosary between its teeth. The thought came to him unbidden: "The Rosary falls from men's hands to be picked up by the swine." It was subsequent to this curious incident that Father Désilets decided to propagate the devotion to the Rosary, and he dedicated himself to Our Lady of the Rosary on November 5, 1867.

Gradually, enthusiasm began to awaken; and the drowsy faith shook off its lethargy. The Rosary Society enjoyed renewed popularity, and the tiny 1714 church, which could barely hold a congregation of 60, became too small for the parish. People began to talk of a new church, the third in the history of the parish. Unfortunately, money was scarce; as for building stone, it was only to be found on the opposite shore of the St. Lawrence River. Nonetheless, the project of a new church was approved by the church wardens in the fall of 1878. The stone was cut and dressed on the south shore, ready to be carted over the frozen river once winter set in. But the winter of 1878-79 was temperate...and the parish could not afford the luxury of having the stone ferried across the waters.

The wardens wanted to demolish the first church built in 1714 and use the stones to build the new church, but Father Desilets made this vow to the