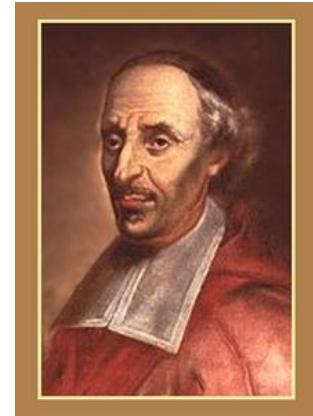


Saint François de Laval (1623–1708)

Born in France from a noble background in 1623, François de Laval was trained and educated by the Jesuits. During those formative years he learned about the order's missionaries in North America and was impressed by their missionary zeal. He was ordained a diocesan priest in 1647. After spending more than a year in Rome training to become an apostolic vicar to missionary regions in Asia, Father Laval returned to France and spent three years living in a retreat house. He was known as a man dedicated to prayer and works of charity, a man of great piety but also of unusually great competence in business matters.



Because of these qualities, in 1658 he was appointed as apostolic vicar to New France and was then ordained a bishop. From the very beginning Laval was regarded as a devoted pastor, generous with the poor, whose life was marked by simplicity and poverty. In 1674, Bishop Laval successfully requested that the Holy See erect a separate diocese — the first in the New World north of Mexico — encompassing most of North America.

Parishes and hospitals were built under his direction and in 1663 he founded the Grand Seminary to support the Church of New France by training future priests and leaders. The seminary eventually evolved into Laval University, the oldest institution of higher education in Canada. His ecclesiastical position required that he be involved in a certain amount of colonial politics, and he was never afraid to disregard civil authority when needed. He boldly defended civil rights in the New World, especially among the natives. As his health began to decline, he resigned his office in 1688. He spent several years in retirement caring for the poor and living a life of prayer. He died in 1708. He was beatified by pope John Paul II in 1980 and canonised by pope Francis April 3, 2014.

LINK:

<http://www.francoisdelaval.com>