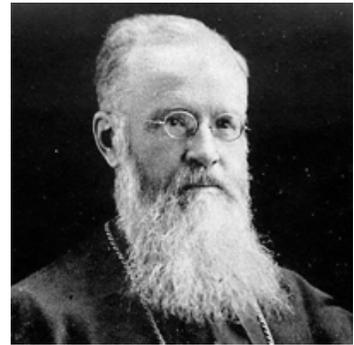


## **Msgr Ovide Charlesbois, O.M.I. (1862-1933)**

Born in Oka (Quebec) on February 17, 1862, the seventh of a family of fourteen children, Ovide is two years old when his family moves to Sainte-Marguerite-du-Lac-Masson. He can't attend school, because it is 8 km away from home, and therefore is taught by his mother at home. When he is twelve he is confirmed by the Bishop of Montreal, Mons Fabre, who notices the boy and recommends him to the Collège de l'Assomption, where a benefactress pays for his board and tuition.



He dreams to follow the footsteps of Father Albert Lacombe, O.M.I., a great missionary of the West. He therefore applies to enter the Oblates and is accepted in 1882. He is a model of regularity, charity and devotion. He is ordained a priest in 1887 and assigned to the Diocese of Saint-Albert, being posted for 16 years to the mission of St. Joseph at Fort Cumberland. The study of the native languages is hard for him. He dedicates himself to building chapels and schools. Evangelisation and alphabetisation is difficult among these nomads. Father Ovide tries to reach out to them becoming nomad himself.

He is appointed Bishop and ordained despite his resistance. He is a very sympathetic, understanding and attentive pastor. He picks up travelling again (five months, by canoe), so as to visit his diocese. Then he builds his bishop's palace himself. Full of energy, courageous, inflexible on matters of justice and rights, he defends minorities (French-speaking people, Catholics and Native peoples). He visits seminaries and works for vocations, trains catechists, welcomes migrants, organises cemeteries, hospitals, old-people's homes and Christian communities.

His biggest joy was that of having had 232 bishops around the world sign a petition so that Saint Theresa of Lisieux may become the patron saint of missions, together with Saint François Xavier. Bishop Charlebois is a man of prayer. In the spring of 1933 he ordains his nephew Mons Martin Lajeunesse, O.M.I., his assistant, who will become his successor. He dies on November 20 of that same year.

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