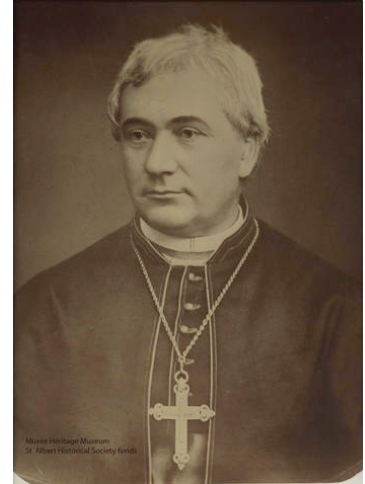


Venerable Bishop Vital Grandin, OMI (1829–1902)

Vital Grandin was born on February 8, 1829, in Saint-Pierre-la-Cour, France. His parents were hotel-keepers and farmers. From an early age he feels a religious vocation and in 1846 enters the Petit Séminaire, with the intention of becoming a parish priest. In 1850 he decides to become a missionary and enters the Grand Séminaire in Mans. The following year, wanting to serve in the Far East, he seeks admission to the Séminaire des Missions Etrangères in Paris but is not admitted because of his speech impediment and poor health.



He therefore turns to the Oblates of Mary Immaculate and on December 28, 1851, enters their novitiate at Notre-Dame-de-l'Osier. Grandin takes his vows on January 1, 1853, and is ordained priest on April 23, 1854, by the founder of the Oblates, Msgr Charles-Joseph-Eugène de Mazenod. In May he is sent to Northwest America, because he is the only one volunteering to serve there. He arrives in Saint-Boniface (Manitoba) and is assigned to La Nativité mission at Fort Chipewyan the following year. On December 11, 1857, Pope Pius IX names Grandin bishop of Satala and coadjutor bishop of Saint-Boniface. He is consecrated in Marseilles on November 30, 1859. He will be a caring, attentive and loving pastor.

He travels all over the diocese to visit the different missions. On September 22, 1871 he is appointed first bishop of Saint-Albert, diocese that, at that time, covered Alberta and a big part of today's Saskatchewan and that, in 1912, becomes the Archdiocese of Edmonton. He has industrial schools built for the Indians and asks the federal authorities to help by increasing grants to existing schools and orphanages. He defends Indians' freedom of choice in religious matters and inaugurates the Petit Séminaire de la Sainte-Famille in Saint-Albert in 1900. As a result of his age and ill health, Grandin asks to be relieved of his office of bishop and responsibilities as vicar of missions. Rome refuses to accept his resignation but gives him a coadjutor. Although his health continues to deteriorate, Bishop Grandin exercises his duties until his death on June 3, 1902. In 1966 the first bishop of the Great North of Canada was declared venerable.

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