

## **The Diocese of Alexandria-Cornwall Celebrates 125 Years**

The Diocese of Alexandria-Cornwall may cover the smallest territory in Canada but its contribution to the Catholic Church in Upper Canada cannot be understated. Located in the most easterly corner of Ontario along the St. Lawrence River, the Diocese is made up of the counties of Glengarry and Stormont.

Catholics first came to the area in the late 1700s to escape the rebellions that were happening in their homeland of Scotland. It was not long before the first missions were established in St. Andrews and St. Raphaels.

In 1801, Father Alexander Macdonell, who would become the first bishop of Upper Canada, arrived from Scotland with his flock and settled in Glengarry. He was one of only a few priests to minister to Catholics throughout Upper Canada. Known as the Apostle of Ontario, he advocated tirelessly on behalf of his people, overseeing the establishment of 48 churches throughout Upper Canada as well as the first public Catholic school located in St. Andrews.

Fifty years following his death, the Ontario bishops sought to have a new Scottish Diocese established in eastern Ontario. That request was granted when on January 23, 1890, Rome created the Diocese of Alexandria consisting of the counties of Glengarry and Stormont. On October 28, 1890, local son Alexander Macdonell, who was named after the original Bishop Macdonell, was ordained the new Diocese's first bishop.

During the early 1900s, there was a large influx of French into the area who had come to work in the many factories located along the St. Lawrence. It was under the second bishop, William Macdonell that French churches and schools were built in the area.

From 1921 to 1941, the Most Reverend Félix Couturier, O.P. oversaw the running of the Diocese. He brought a renewed order and structure to the local Church.

His successor, Bishop Rosario Brodeur led the Catholics of Glengarry and Stormont for a quarter of a century. During his tenure, many new parishes were established throughout the Diocese.

In 1974, the Most Reverend Eugene Larocque was named the new bishop. As the Diocese's longest serving bishop, he successfully petitioned Rome to have Cornwall added to the name of the Diocese. In addition, he established a French Co-Cathedral in Cornwall.

During this ten years (2002 to 2011) at the helm, Bishop Paul-André Durocher enhanced the role of the bishop. He was truly appreciated for his charism as the chief pastor of our Diocese during a time of transition.

Today, Bishop Marcel Damphousse, who like his predecessor Rosario Brodeur, hails from St. Boniface, was named to lead the Diocese of Alexandria-Cornwall in 2012. His youthful enthusiasm for the future is a source of great hope for the Diocese as we move forward together.