

Short Biographical Sketches

of Missionaries who have labored among the Indians of the Northwest.

REV. FRANCIS PIERZ

Rev. Francis Pierz (Slovenian Pier) was born near Kamnik, Slovenia, of Slovenian parents, on the 21st of November, 1785. Little is known of his early years. He attended the town school of Kamnik conducted by Franciscans. After having attended school there for two or three years, he went to Ljubljana and entered the Gymnasium. Here he devoted himself to the study of his native tongue and French, besides the other branches of learning taught at said celebrated seat of learning. At the end of his classical course he graduated with special honors and entered the ecclesiastical seminary of Ljubljana, in which his celebrated countrymen and fellow laborers in the Indian missionary field, Rt. Rev. Frederick Baraga and Rt. Rev. Ignacij Mrak, made their studies. By earnest study and fervent prayer Pier prepared himself for the sublime dignity of the priesthood.

Knowing the great utility of linguistic knowledge, he studied a great number of European languages, becoming very proficient in all of them. It is a notable fact that Slovenians and Poles, as a rule, possess linguistic talent in a remarkable degree.

In 1813 he was ordained by Bishop Kovačič and that same year assigned to the parish of Kranjska Gora as assistant priest. In this place he labored for seven years, at the end of which time he was made parish priest of Peče, where he labored zealously and with much fruit for ten years.

Father Pierz took great interest in promoting not only the spiritual, but also the temporal well-being of his poor but pious people, who were mostly farmers. He was a great expert in gardening. Wherever he was stationed he cultivated a large garden full of the choicest vegetables, flowers and fruits. He also published a work in Slovenian, entitled "Kranjski Vrtnar," in which he explains the best method of successful gardening.

From Peče he was removed to Podbreze, where he labored most zealously for five years. Here he published two addition works on gardening. It was while here that the thought occurred to him of going to the Indian country. This resolution was awakened, or at least strengthened, in him by a letter he received about this time from his zealous and beloved countryman, Father Baraga, who was then stationed at St. Claire, Mich. Father Pierz was told, in words dictated by burning zeal, all the good he could accomplish in the wilderness of America, and how few there were to labor in that part of the Lord's vineyard. Baraga's words met with a sympathetic response on the part of his countryman. Father Pierz at once resigned his parish in order to devote the remainder of his days to the salvation of the poor, abandoned Indians.

Although fifty years of age, he set out on his journey to Vienna on the 12th of June, 1835. Thence he went to Havre de Grace, France, whence he took ship to America, and on the 18th of October of the above named year, he arrived at Detroit, where he was most cordially received by Bishop Rese. Being endowed with a poetic vein, Father Pierz composed a poem describing the many incidents of his long voyage on land and sea. Describ-

ing his first impressions and experience as Indian missionary, he wrote as follows:

"On the 16th of June (1835) I left my dear country, Carniola (Krain). After many dangers and sufferings I arrived, well-preserved and happy in Detroit. The bishop received me in a fatherly manner. He told me to go to Lake Superior in order to act as assistant to Baraga in the place missionary is stationed. The place was full of Indians. The season being too far advanced, and no travelling being done on the lake (Superior), I was obliged to stay at La Croix (Cross Village), where I have been working in the vineyard of the Lord for the last four months."

As we learn from a letter of Baraga, written about this time, F. Pierz was intended for Nagadjiwanang (Fond du Lac, Minn.). At a later period he visited that Indian mission and even began the erection of a church there, which, however, was never completed.

F. Pierz continues: "I soon became aware of the truth of all that had been written about this diocese (Detroit). All the priests I have met so far are real treasures of the holy church. This is especially true of F. Baraga, whom all, without exception, esteem most highly. These missionaries live in poverty, as the Apostles also did in the beginning of churches are built of logs; Christianity. The missions there are very plain, but neat. You can see in them only a poor altar, but pious Christians; only candlesticks of wood, but priests of gold. Nowhere in these churches can you notice outward ornaments or treasures, but exemplary Christianity, the spirit of the first Christians manifested in the manners and piety of the people.

"In La Croix I found about two hundred Catholics. With God's help I soon increased this number, through the conversion of Indian pagans. I hope to increase it so much in a short time that this place will become a missionary station. All the converts gained through the fruitful labors of our illustrious Dejean, Baraga, and Senderl still live in their baptismal innocence. They were exceedingly glad to see me as their missionary and this the more so as they are but seldom visited by a priest. They were not idle, but made the best possible use of my visit to them.

"On the first Sunday of Advent I blessed their new little church. I preached in French and was in the confessional every day. Their pious eagerness for hearing the word of God and receiving the sacraments is untiring. Their esteem for the church, for their holy faith and its priests is beyond expression. I often admire their humiliation, purity, and love of their neighbor. They evince laudable eagerness for acquiring social customs and civilization. Many of my (Indian) pupils learned to read their Indian prayer books in four months. They all show great joy in attending divine service and they go to Mass regularly, even those who live far away from church. Mothers bring their little ones to be blessed. It is a great pleasure to live and labor among such Christians and a great joy to preach the Gospel to such hearers. The blessing of God is evidently to be seen. Tears of joy come to my eyes when at the daily Mass I give the Bread of the Angels to these devout Christians, or when, during instruction, I read in their red faces what

the divine mercy is operating in their innocent hearts; above all, when through the Sacrament of Baptism I bring many a poor, lost sheep to the fold of Christ, and when I perceive how the kingdom of God is gaining ground amongst these inhabitants of the forest.

(to be continued)

"Palm Sunday and Easter Sunday were days of great joy. I explained to them the blessing of the palms and what it meant. They all came to church with evergreen boughs of cedar, singing the antiphon: "Hosanna to the Son of David!" I thought these branches were indeed a most becoming sign of heartfelt piety, which alone is dear to the Lord.

"On Easter Sunday I wished to bless, as is customary, meat, bread, and other eatables, that they might have a joyful meal after so long a fast. They answered that they could not fulfill my wish, as they had neither meat nor bread, but only some potatoes and corn and a few fishes. 'But we wish,' they said, 'to receive the True Lamb of God and enjoy so much the more the Food of the soul.' In fact, on Easter Sunday nearly all received their Redeemer. The hopeful young men sang very beautifully during divine service. Those who had not received Holy Communion on Easter Sunday, did so on Easter Monday. Thus I live among the red-colored people very much satisfied. Indeed, I often enjoy more heartfelt pleasure and consolation than in all my twenty years' work in the old country.

"For this reason I praise Divine Providence and thank God that in His holy and fatherly keeping he brought me to the New World. I am often fatigued when performing the many onerous duties which are necessarily connected with my labors, still I am perfectly well and highly satisfied in this flourishing mission. I can exhibit it as a living example (of true Christianity) to my countrymen and other Christians in Europe. Indeed, at the last judgement, these children of the wilderness will put to shame many Christians who are tired of the teachings and consolations of our holy Church. On that account they neglect the supernatural helps of religion and desire only such things as satisfy their natural with gluttony, intemperance, and very often with impure pleasures, those holy days which remind us of the great mysteries."

"By the end of 1836 La Croix (Cross Village) had grown so much that it was made a regular mission station and put in charge of F. Pierz. As the Indians of this place were obliged to leave their village and go to their hunting grounds to follow the chase, F. Pierz went to Sault Ste. Marie. This place was inhabited by pagan Indians and French-Canadians, many of whom were but nominal Catholics. They had not seen a priest for almost a year. The devoted missionary experienced much opposition from some non-Catholics, who disliked the presence of a Catholic clergyman in their midst. In the year 1838 F. Pierz founded two Catholic missions not far from Sault Ste. Marie. These are the northern shore of Lake Superior, namely, one at Michipicoton and the other at Okwamikissing.

"About this time Bishop Rese appointed Very Rev. Frederic Baraga Vicar-General for that portion of his diocese situated in Wisconsin. The chief of the Indians at Kitchi Onigaming (Grand Portage, Minn.) asked F. Baraga to send a priest to his place, as all his people were

desirous of Baptism. This was most joyful news to that saintly man. He at once wrote to F. Pierz, and the latter left Sault Ste. Marie and went to La Pointe, Wis., where Baraga was then stationed. After a few days' rest in La Pointe, F. Pierz embarked for Grand Portage, where he had the happiness of founding a flourishing Indian mission. Besides imparting to his good Indians oral instruction on the saving truths of religion, he devoted a great deal of time in trying to teach them how to read and write their own language, using for this purpose Baraga's Chippewa prayer book, the "Anamie-Masinaigan." In the fall of the same year, 1838, he established another Indian mission at Fort William, in the Province of Ontario, Canada. Then Vicar-General Baraga commissioned him to take charge of Arbre Croche and its dependencies left vacant by the departure of the Redemptorist, Father Sanderl, under whose able and zealous management the mission had been in a very flourishing condition. Speaking of the Indians of the North Shore and elsewhere under his care, he (F. Pierz) wrote, in 1838, to the Leopoldine Society as follows:

(to be continued)

MODERNI SUŽNJI

"List "Gornorabotel" (rudarji) prinaša podatke o plačah in življenjskih razmerah rudarjev v Indiji.

"Indijski delavec je brez zemlje. Da more pridelati vsaj nekoliko živeža, najame kos zemlje od veleposetnika. Če je slaba letina, sploh ne more plačati najemnine. V tem slučaju se zateče k vaškemu oderhu, kateri mu posodi potrebitno vsoto često proti 150 odstotnim obrestim.

"Te gospodarske razmere prisilijo siromaka, da morda iskatati še drugih dohodkov. V skrajni bedi se zateče v rudokope, čeprav sovraži Indijec to delo iz dna duše.

"Premogokopi v Indiji so zelo primitivi, brez modernih načinov. Delavec mora delati pri petrolejkah in često v popolnoma zaduhlih prostorih, ker niti najnujnejše ventilacije. Zasluk je istotako slab, kljub temu, da je delovni čas takoreč neomenjen.

"V premogovniku Pendšab (v severno-vzhodni Indiji) zaslubi moški pri 60-urnem tedenskem delu na teden pet šilingov in tri pence, ženske pa tri šilinge in tri pence. Kopac zaslubi nekoliko več in sicer 10 šilingov in sedem pence. V ostalih rudarskih revirjih zaslubijo moški tedensko od pet do šest šilingov, ženske pa od tri do ene in tri pence.

"Način zasluba je, da morajo tudi delavce delati v jami. Ce ima takoj dojenčka, ga vzame s seboj v jamo, kjer leži otrok v kakem kotu. Da ne moti matere pri delu, ga uspava z opijem. Vsled tega je umrljivost otrok izredna. Od deset otrok jih umre na leto šest.

"Kako izdatke ima indijski delavec? Z navedenim zaslukom mora plačati veleposetniku najemnino, odnosno potolitati oderhu. Istotako mora skrbeti, da poravnava dolg pri trgovcu. Povrh pa mora dajati nagrade svojemu pazniku, sicer ga zoperstavlja.

"Ni čudno, da že neko takoj razmerje delavca v obup, katerega posledica je pijanje. Da so lastniki premogovnikov večjidel Evropejci, se samo ob sebi razume.

KAKO HITRO SE MNOŽE ŽIVALI

"Ako malo natancnejše razmišljamo o tem, pridejemo do neverjetnih številk, ki se pa z dejanskim stanom v naravi ne bodo skladale. Lisica v naših

krajih vrže na leto štiri do pet mladičev in to več let zapore doma. Ako hočemo izračunati njeno potomstvo in vzamemo v poštev, da en lisici par vrže štekom celega svojega življenja samo šest mladičev in od teh tri samice in tri samice in da ti trije pari naslednje leto zopet snako število mladičev vrže, tedaj dobimo po preteklu desetih let 118,098 potomcev. Ta številka bi pa bila mnogo večja, ako bi upoštevali pravo rodilno zmognost. Im med tem ko lisica vrže na leto samo štiri do pet mladičev, jih zajec osem do deset, miš in njeno sorodne vrste pa celo do 30. Se večja številka dobimo potem prirab, kjer leže en sam karp 300,000 do 700,000 jajčec na leto. Naravnost neverjetno pa je, da producira trihine in trakulje do 100 milijonov jajčec.

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zumljivo, ako pomislimo, da stan na kazalcu moške roke služijo manjše živalice vedno znači, da bi se nosilec prstana večji v hrano. Če vzamemo torej to v poštev in pa dejstvo, da jih tudi človek neizmerno pokonča, je naravnost nujna taka hiperprodukcija v živalskem svetu, če so hočejo posamezne vrste vsaj v tolikem številu še ohraniti, v kakršnem so danes zastopane.

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