

Michael Power First Bishop of Toronto

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Michael Power was recognized for his wisdom, firmness and piety and, therefore, was the unanimous choice of the Canadian episcopacy to become the first Bishop of the Diocese of Toronto. Although he did not believe himself worthy of the task, Power obeyed the wishes of his superiors and undertook the challenge of bringing order to a growing area of Upper Canada that had been virtually neglected in the ecclesiastical sense. However his potential was not fully realized because his tenure was too short – just five years. *The Cross*, a Catholic newspaper published in Halifax, Nova Scotia, reported on October 23, 1847 that a native son, Dr. Michael Power, had succumbed to typhus. With the eloquence of the age, the obituary read:

He fell a martyr to duty – concluding, as he commenced, his sacerdotal services in the Church by acts of spiritual heroism and self-devotion. From the Acolyte at the altar of the old wooden fabric of St. Peter's, in this his native city, till his attainment of the episcopal dignity at Toronto, this writer has had opportunities of observing the course of the deceased Prelate, and deeply deploras the inefficiency of his pen, to depict it as it merits.¹

Born on October 17, 1804 in Halifax, Nova Scotia, where his parents had settled after emigrating from Waterford, Ireland, Michael Power attended St. Peter's Church, which stood on the present site of St. Mary's Cathedral.² His father, William, described as a master sailor and as a ship captain and owner, sailed regularly from Halifax to St. John's, Newfoundland. However, either because of bad luck or poor seamanship, William Power lost ships on voyages to Newfoundland and Jamaica. It was Michael Power's mother, Mary, who was the major provider, supporting the family by renting out part of her home.³

¹ "The Late Right Rev. Dr. Power, Bishop of Toronto," *The Cross*, Halifax, Nova Scotia, October 23, 1847. p. 1.

² *Évêques Catholiques du Canada, 1658-1979* (Université Saint-Paul: Ottawa, 1980), p. 91.

³ *Ibid.*

In the absence of Catholic schools, Michael Power attended a local grammar school and was taught Latin by his pastor, Father E. Burke, who later became Vicar Apostolic of Nova Scotia, and by Father Mignault, a Sulpician. Both priests and Michael's mother had an abiding effect on Power's formative years. Power was a promising student and at the age of twelve was sent to the Seminary of St. Sulpice in Montreal to begin his studies for the priesthood. He finished his training at the Seminary of Quebec and on August 17, 1827, in his twenty-third year, was ordained a priest at Montreal by Bishop Dubois of New York.⁴

Following ordination, Father Power was appointed pastor at Drummondville in Lower Canada, where he remained until 1831 when he was sent as pastor to Montebello. At the request of Bishop Alexander Macdonell, Power was entrusted by Bishop J.J. Lartigue with the Catholic missions on both sides of the Ottawa River. Much to Bishop Macdonell's disappointment, Power for some reason refused to attend the south side of the Ottawa River, which included the missions of Plantagenet, Petite Nation, Hawkesbury and Pointe A L'Original. Power's refusal did not inhibit promotion for he was soon made pastor at St. Martine, County Beauharnois, where he stayed until 1839 when he was appointed pastor at Laprairie and Vicar-General of the Diocese of Montreal.⁵

In 1841 Bishop Rémigius Gaulin, Alexander Macdonell's successor to the Diocese of Kingston, was in poor physical and mental health and was seeking a coadjutor. Gaulin appealed to the Holy See and, having learned of Father Michael Power's abilities, submitted Power's name for consideration. At the same time, Gaulin applied to Rome and to the British Government for a division of the vast diocese he had attempted to administer. Gaulin reported to Bishop Ignace Bourget of Montreal that the province was becoming more and more Irish and, therefore, Power should be a candidate acceptable to both Rome and London because:

Ce monsieur est assez Irlandais pour être bien vu ici et assez Canadien pour répondre à tout ce que nous pourrions attendre de lui. [He is sufficiently Irish to be well thought of here and sufficiently Canadian to

⁴ H.F. McIntosh, "The Life and Times of the Right Rev. Michael Power, D.D.," J.R. Teefy, ed., *Jubilee Volume, The Archdiocese of Toronto and Archbishop Walsh* (George Dixon Co.: Toronto, 1892), pp. 109-140.

⁵ Archives of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Toronto (hereafter ARCAT), Bishop Power Papers, "Right Reverend Michael Power, A True Copy of a Sketch of Bishop Power as Found in His Own Hand-writing"; Province of Ontario Archives, Bishop A. Macdonell Papers, Alexander Macdonell to J.J. Lartigue, June 13, 1833.

live up to all expectations.]⁶

It so happened that in 1841 Bishop Bourget was in Rome with his Vicar-General, Michael Power. At Gaulin's request, Bourget discussed the division of the Diocese of Kingston with the Sacred Congregation of the Propagation of the Faith. Pope Gregory XVI agreed to the division and Bishop Bourget and Michael Power were sent to London to obtain assent from the British government for the proposed arrangements.⁷ Power wrote to Lord E. Stanley, stating that the Kingston Diocese, with its ever-growing population, was too large an area for a single bishop to administer efficiently. In his attempt to gain British approbation to the proposal, Power had the foresight to explain the value of episcopal supervision over insubordinate elements in a frontier mission:

A Catholic bishop in case of emergency will provide more authority over those committed to his care than an ordinary clergyman, his presence and his advice may also prove highly serviceable to Her Majesty's Government in quelling that spirit of insubordination and fierce democratic spirit which unhappily exists in a formidable degree in many parts of the frontier line.⁸

The British Government desired the continued loyalty of her Catholic subjects and, therefore, welcomed the proposition for additional control in an area that had been the centre of political and armed upheaval in 1837.

On December 17, 1841, Pope Gregory issued a Bull dividing from the Diocese of Kingston all parts of Upper Canada that lay west of the District of Newcastle. On the same day, Michael Power, a British North American of Irish descent, was named first bishop of the new diocese and was granted permission to choose the city and title of his see. Power was consecrated in 1842 in Laprairie, Quebec, by Bishop Gaulin, assisted by Bishops Turgeon and Bourget. He named Toronto his seat and his see then became the Diocese of Toronto.⁹

Bishop Power faced an enormous task in trying to fulfill the spiritual needs of his subjects in what had been a virtually neglected area. One major problem was the lack of qualified priests, a situation so poignantly described in a letter to Bishop Kinsella of Ireland in 1842:

I have but twenty clergymen throughout the whole county.... I have neither colleges, nor schools, nor men ... I pray to God most earnestly that the Irish

⁶ Archives of the Archdiocese of Montreal, Kingston Section, Copy ARCAT, R. Gaulin to I. Bourget, April 25, 1841.

⁷ McIntosh, "The Life and Times," pp. 109-140

⁸ ARCAT, Power Papers, Power to Lord Stanley, September 27, 1841.

⁹ *The Cross*, October 23, 1847.

College for Foreign Missions may prosper and fully answer all our expectations ... I am determined to have a whole district without any spiritual assistance rather than to confide the poor people into the hands of improper or suspended men.¹⁰

Soon after Bishop Power took possession of his see, he called the clergy of the diocese to a retreat and synod at St. Paul's Church in Toronto. He drew up statutes for the government of the diocese, which were adopted by the clergy. Moreover, he announced that a seminary college was a prerequisite to educate native Canadian priests to serve the needs of the growing population.¹¹

The synod was preceded by a five-day spiritual retreat, conducted by Father Peter Chazelle, S.J., a former rector of St. Mary's College in Kentucky, U.S.A., and his assistant, Father Louis Boué, a secular priest. Bishop Power opened and presided over the synod.¹² Those who attended were: Vicar-General W.P. Macdonald from Hamilton; the former Anglican priest M.R. Mills from the Brantford area; Fathers James O'Flynn from Dundas-Oakville; James Bennet from Tecumseth and Adjala; Edward Gordon from Niagara; Patrick O'Dwyer from London and St. Thomas; Eugene O'Reilly from Toronto Township and Albion; J.B. Proulx from Manitoulin; Michael McDonnell from Maidstone; Thomas Gibney from Guelph and Stratford; Peter Schneider from the Waterloo area; James Quinlan from Newmarket and Barrie; Amable Charest from Penetanguishene; and W.P. McDonagh, Stephen Fergus, and J.J. Hay, who were stationed in Toronto. Only three priests, with legitimate reasons, were absent: Vicar-General Aeneas Macdonell of Sandwich, J.B. Morin of Raleigh, and Augustine Vervais of Amherstburg.¹³

In an impressive ceremony, the Diocese of Toronto was consecrated to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Additionally, Bishop Power described his desire to establish a college at Sandwich to be a centre for the Indian Missions in Upper Canada, under the direction of the Jesuit Fathers, thereby allowing them to renew their work among the Indians.¹⁴ Power did not live to see that plan evolve; it was not until 1857 that Assumption College opened under the Jesuits.

The purpose of the regulations adopted at that first synod was to establish control measures which would exact better discipline among the diocesan clergy and laity. Priests were not permitted to wander beyond the

¹⁰ ARCAT, Power Papers, Power to Bishop Kinsella, July 8, 1842.

¹¹ McIntosh, "The Life and Times," pp. 109-140.

¹² *Ibid.*, pp. 117-118.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

limits of their parish; they were to reside in it and must obtain the Bishop's permission for an absence of more than a week. They were to dress in the appropriate manner (cassock) and to avoid any intimate association with women. Confessional boxes were to be constructed in all churches so that sins would not become common knowledge among the people. Private confession outside the church was forbidden, except in cases where the parishioner was sick or deaf. No fee was to be charged for the administration of a sacrament. Baptismal fonts were to be installed in all churches; private baptism in the home of a parishioner was not permitted except when a child was in danger of death. Moreover, parental consent was required for the baptism of a child. No marriages were to take place in homes and newly arrived immigrants had to produce evidence of their right to marry and that no impediment existed. By January 1, 1843, all priests were to have set up a ledger in which they recorded all baptisms, confirmations, marriages and burials. Bishop Power also stipulated that the use of the Roman Missal, Breviary and Butler's Catechism were normative in his Diocese.¹⁵ There was no recorded dissent from Power's rules during or immediately following the synod.

After the synod, Bishop Power travelled to the western portion of the diocese, visiting Amherstburg, Sandwich and Tilbury where he addressed the clergy and laity on the value of charity and good works, and in the education and training of children.¹⁶ Between 1843 and 1845, he visited the various areas of the diocese, going as far north as Manitoulin Island.¹⁷ One need he recognized was for the establishment of the Association for the Propagation of the Faith. Describing it as "one of the most admirable institutions and greatest work of modern times," the words of his pastoral letter are as applicable to today's world as they were then:

We should not forget that we have not fulfilled our duty towards our neighbour if we confine our charity and our solicitude to those with whom we live; for the divine light of our revelation shows us a brother, a friend in being, a member of the human race ... that all men, without exception, are our neighbours and should be dear to us.¹⁸

From his diocesan travels, Bishop Power also discerned the need for a more decentralized control mechanism. He established a system of deaneries which was intended to improve the widespread communication network by

¹⁵ ARCAT, copy in Bishop Power Papers, *Constitutiones Diocesonae in Synodo Torontina*, 1842.

¹⁶ McIntosh, "The Life and Times," p. 126.

¹⁷ ARCAT, "Right Reverend Michael Power, a True Copy" (autobiographical sketch).

¹⁸ ARCAT, Power Papers, Pastoral Letter, February 21, 1844.

accommodating a more efficient horizontal interchange at the local level, yet retaining the essential vertical control. The diocese was divided into six rural deaneries: St. Michael's for the Home and Simcoe Districts; St. Mary's for the Gore, Niagara and Talbot Districts; St. Ignatius' for the Western District; St. Gregory's for the London and Brock Districts; St. Ambrose' for the Wellington and Huron Districts; and St. Francis Xavier's for the missions on the borders of Lake Huron and Lake Superior. Each deanery was under the supervision of a senior cleric called a dean, who was authorized to call meetings at which problems encountered among the local clergy were solved and discipline effected. In some of the more distant areas, the rural dean was also vicar forane, a position which carried more authority and independence.¹⁹

In the broader view, the absence of an ecclesiastical province in Canada restricted communication among the various dioceses under the supervision of the Bishop of Quebec. The ancient, metropolitan form of Catholic Church government had been held in abeyance in Canada after the British conquest of Quebec. This type of ecclesiastical government required a metropolitan, or *archbishop*, who administered *his* archdiocese from his see and controlled various suffragan bishops in a number of sees, united to form an ecclesiastical province. In 1844, therefore, Bishop Power joined with other bishops in Upper and Lower Canada to successfully petition the Pope for the creation of an ecclesiastical province in Canada. The dioceses of Quebec, Montreal, Kingston and Toronto were united under the metropolitan Province of Quebec. Thus the Diocese of Quebec became an Archdiocese, under the jurisdiction of Archbishop Joseph Signay.²⁰

Through those arrangements, clearly defined lines of authority with the concomitant delegation of responsibility were established, the communication linkage was strengthened, and opportunities were opened for the interchange of ideas. In a pastoral letter to his laity, Bishop Power expressed his expectations:

Let us pray that this complete Ecclesiastical organization may tend to the more rapid progress of the Catholic Church, afford to her now well established hierarchy the means of labouring together in more perfect unity and design, and by the united efforts of her first pastors, of infusing new vigor and fresh energy to the most remote and more infant portions of the Catholic Church in this province.²¹

¹⁹ ARCAT, Power Papers, Pastoral Letter, December 31, 1846.

²⁰ ARCAT, Power Papers, Pastoral Letters, May 8, 1842; Gregory XVI, Sovereign Pontiff, July 12, 1842.

²¹ ARCAT, Power Papers, Pastoral Address, December 29, 1844.

The Canadian bishops had achieved a major feat in obtaining this privilege from the Holy See, one that as yet had not been granted in Great Britain. Nicholas Cardinal Wiseman of England sent his congratulations:

You, on your side, have experienced the blessing of a properly constituted ecclesiastical government, sufficiently to understand our eagerness to obtain the same privilege.²²

Having assisted in institutionalizing the metropolitan form of ecclesiastical government, Bishop Power then decided that he needed a central focus for his own diocese: a cathedral and a bishop's palace. St. Paul's Church, built in the early 1820s in the midst of Irish settlement on the west side of the Don River on what is now known as Power Street, was the only Catholic Church in Toronto and served as a cathedral when the Diocese of Toronto was formed. But it was an age of cathedral building and Bishop Power was aware that similar projects had been undertaken in Kingston, Philadelphia, Chicago, Mobile and Louisville. Power purchased land from Peter McGill in an area that had not yet been incorporated into the city. He asked for a general subscription from the public, Catholics and Protestants alike, and for a contribution of five shillings from each Catholic worker.²³ Excavation on St. Michael's Cathedral began in a spirit of co-operation on April 7, 1845:

An ox was roasted whole, to cheer the parish volunteers digging under the direction of John Harper, contractor for the masonry, brickwork and carpentry. Ishmael Iredale was engaged to roof the building, and John Craig bespoken for the painting. Craig assigned the window sashes to the painstaking care of his young apprentice, Michael O'Connor, the only Roman Catholic in his employ.²⁴

The Cathedral, however, was not dedicated until September 29, 1848, a year after Power's death, because the structure was encumbered with a huge debt. It was John Elmsley and S.G. Lynn who guaranteed the debt, and Power's successor, Bishop Armand de Charbonnel, who lifted it entirely.

When Bishop Power proceeded with his financially draining plan of cathedral building, he could not forecast the impact of the Irish Famine on

²² ARCAT, Power Papers, Nicholas Cardinal Wiseman to the Right Reverend Bishops of Canada, true copy, undated.

²³ ARCAT, Power Papers, Pastoral Address - Inviting the Catholics of the Diocese of Toronto to Contribute Towards the Building of the Cathedral Church of St. Michael's in the City.

²⁴ Marion MacRae, Anthony Adamson, *Hallowed Walls, Church Architecture of Upper Canada* (Clarke, Irwin and Company: Toronto, 1975), p. 148.

the people in his Diocese of Toronto. Because he had such a versatile mind, one can only wonder at what might have been, had Bishop Power's tenure extended beyond the five years allotted to him by his Maker. On his arrival in Toronto, he was quick to notice that the Irish made up the bulk of his flock, informing Bishop Kinsella in Ireland that:

My diocese is mostly inhabited by Irishmen dispersed over an immense tract of land, bounded on all sides by the Great Lakes. Every day our steamer boats bringin new reinforcements from the mother country.²⁵

Having been left with a meagre inheritance of twenty clergy and numerous complaints from a laity who had suffered at the hands of unsupervised and unscrupulous priests, Power attempted to acquire men from Ireland to serve this ever-growing group of Irish immigrants. He anticipated a rewarding life for "young, well disposed, efficient clergymen," who would "always have food and raiment." But Power, perceptive of the effects of loneliness and isolation, admitted: "for a time they may have to contend with those difficulties which are inseparable from the settlement of a new country."²⁶

Bishop Power was a conscientious taskmaster. Having set his standards at that first synod, he expected compliance. Moreover, having explained to the British government the value of a bishop's authority he would not tolerate behaviour among his subjects that might jeopardize the Catholic position in the civil realm. Father W.P. McDonagh had been stationed at St. Catharines by Bishop Power and had reported faction fighting among the Irish canal workers in the Niagara District, which he attributed to secret societies. Irish secret societies were common in the 1840s throughout Upper Canada, particularly in areas of canal building, and were an outcropping of organizations that had arisen in Ireland to provide the peasant population with some protection against English oppression. Bishop Power advised Father McDonagh to adopt any means to suppress the secret societies. McDonagh walked between the lines of the warring Cork and Connaught men, holding a Host and chalice in his hands, an act which quelled the violence and received the approbation of Bishop Power:

You can let the people know that henceforth it will be a case reserved to me and that I am disposed to employ the fervor of censures of the Church for suppression of these illegal societies. I feel as Catholics and Irishmen they will possess sufficient religion, honor and respect for themselves not to compel me, in the presence of a Protestant community, to denounce them

²⁵ ARCAT, Power Papers, Power to Bishop Kinsella, July 8, 1842.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

as dupes of wicked, designing men and refractory members of the Church.²⁷

The clergy also were expected to be obedient to rules and infractions were countered with disciplinary measures. Although there was no dissenting voice at the first synod, many of the priests were resistant to wearing the soutane because it marked them as easy targets for abuse from members of the Orange order. When Bishop Power learned that, contrary to the regulations of the Synod of 1842, Vicar-General W.P. Macdonald appeared publicly without the soutane, the Bishop suspended Macdonald's powers as Vicar-General, leaving him only as pastor in Hamilton. Macdonald was advised:

You are, therefore, hereby commanded under the penalty of suspension to wear habitually after the 12th day of this month the sutan [*sic* in the town of Hamilton].²⁸

Yet Power, though harsh initially, usually relented when the priest in question complied with his directives. In this particular case, Macdonald was reinstated as Vicar-General and later, with Father Hay, was appointed Administrator of the Diocese to cover Bishop Power's absence in Europe for a six-month period.²⁹

Power's episcopacy paralleled the emergence of the separate school system in a period when new political forces were at work in the Union of the Canadas. He lacked the strong, political influence wielded by Bishop A. Macdonell in the colonial administration and, therefore, Power had to tread cautiously to avoid offence. There is no evidence in Power's episcopacy of the extreme ethno-religious hatred that exploded during the administrations of Bishops A. de Charbonnel and J.J. Lynch, which was no doubt the consequence of the massive immigration of Famine Irish. Nonetheless, it has been recorded that:

While we find Bishop Power in no public controversy over Catholic schools such as distinguished Bishop de Charbonnel's period of office, yet there is ample evidence in the Power Papers to prove that his view of Catholic education was not dissimilar to that of his successor.³⁰

²⁷ ARCAT, Power Papers, Power to W.P. McDonagh, March 10, 1844.

²⁸ ARCAT, Power Papers, Power to W.P. Macdonald, May 4, 1844.

²⁹ ARCAT, Power Papers, Power to Joseph Signay, January 13, 1847.

³⁰ E.F. Henderson, A. Kelly, J.M. Pigott, Henri Saint Jacques, *Historical Sketch of the Separate Schools of Ontario and the Catholic Separate School Minority Report* (The English Catholic Education Association of Ontario: Toronto, 1950), p. 20.

Some historians might infer that the scarcity of Catholic schools in Power's time was indicative of the Bishop's disinterest in Catholic education and a willingness to co-operate in an assimilative public system. There is, however, one conclusion that contradicts that position: "if Catholic educational institutes were few it was the fault of Catholic poverty not of ecclesiastical indifference."³¹ Power believed "that parents were conscience bound to provide a Catholic education for their children."³²

The School Act of 1846 included the religious clauses of the 1843 Act under which the Board of Education was to be composed of clerical and lay representatives from the six major denominations. Bishop Power was well regarded and, therefore, was selected for the Chairmanship of the Board of Education for Upper Canada on 21 July 1846. Although he might not have perceived the extent to which the public school system was to become a Protestant institution, Power's acceptance of the Chairmanship, through association, could be viewed as a controversial act. It is Franklin Walker's opinion that Power accepted the position to "demonstrate his desire to associate himself with the new educational movement,"³³ which does not necessarily imply non-support for separate schools. Whatever the reason, Egerton Ryerson used Bishop Power's apparent willingness to co-operate like a stick to beat against Bishop de Charbonnel's inflexibility in the separate school issue. When Bishop Power died:

Egerton Ryerson was "astounded and deeply affected" by the death of this "exceedingly agreeable and amiable man" who had chaired the Board of Education "with firmness ... zeal and intelligence" and a "scrupulous regard ... for the views and rights and wishes of Protestants."³⁴

Granted, the fight for separate schools did not begin in earnest until several years after Power's death when Ryerson had to face Bishop de Charbonnel, a more direct and abrasive individual.³⁵

What Bishop Power did discern was a need to bring religious orders into the diocese which would ultimately promote his interest in education. In 1842, he wrote to Father Roothaan, the General of the Society of Jesus, and through him obtained priests who took over the administration of the Parish of the Assumption at Sandwich, and who expanded to Chatham and Wilmot

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 20.

³² J.G. Hodgins, ed., *Documentar)' History of Education in Upper Canada* (L.K. Cameron: Toronto, 1908), Vol. 5, 156.

³³ F. Walker, *Catholic Education and Politics in Upper Canada* (J.M. Dent: Toronto, 1955), p. 55.

³⁴ J. Moir, *The Church in the British Era* (McGraw-Hill Ryerson Ltd.: Toronto, 1972), p. 174

³⁵ Walker, *Catholic Education*, *passim*

in Waterloo County during Charbonnel's tenure. The Jesuits also arrived in 1846 at Penetanguishene where they began to plan for the religious education of the Indians in the Upper Great Lakes.³⁶ Power had submitted a request in 1847 to the Christian Brothers, asking them to conduct the educational programs in the elementary schools of the Diocese, but that request was not fulfilled until the commencement of Charbonnel's episcopate in 1850.³⁷ While visiting Rothfarnham in Ireland, Bishop Power succeeded in arranging for the services of the Sisters of the Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary (the Sisters of Loretto) with the expectation that:

The Day School will, I hope, be numerously attended after a few weeks, and the Common School in great numbers ... the people, Catholics, mostly Irish or of Irish descent, are not rich. Some families are well able to educate their daughters, but many Protestants will feel happy in being able to avail themselves of the opportunity of giving their daughters a good, sound education.³⁸

Unfortunately, Power's association with the Sisters was cut short; they arrived in Toronto during the typhus epidemic which caused so much suffering and Power's death.

In January 1847, Bishop Power commenced a trip to Europe which was planned to accomplish several objectives: he still needed to obtain priests to operate his parish system and funds to relieve the debt of the Cathedral. He had a full agenda and wasted little time to cover it. In England, he met with Lord Grey and discussed the persecution of one of his missionaries by agents of the Indian Department. He then proceeded to Paris and made arrangements for the future welfare of the German settlers in his Diocese, and then went into Rome. His negotiations with the Sisters of Loretto required him to spend several weeks in Ireland, and in that period he witnessed the distress of the Irish peasantry.³⁹

By the time Power returned to Toronto, the Famine was emptying Ireland and its effects were being felt in the new world. From Grosse Isle to Toronto, death from typhus was a common occurrence among the debilitated immigrants. Eight hundred and sixty-three had died in Toronto and were buried in long trenches near St. Paul's Church. While the city hid in fear of the contagion, Bishop Power gathered what help he could to tend the plague-stricken and starving Irish immigrants. Archdeacon Hay, himself ill with tuberculosis, Father Kirwin, Father Proulx from the north, Father

³⁶ ARCAT, Power Papers, Power to T. Roothaan, November 12, 1842.

³⁷ ARCAT, Power Papers, Power to Msgr. Reisache, May 8, 1847.

³⁸ M. Margorita, "Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary," *Canadian Catholic Historical Association Report*, 1944-1945, pp. 69-81, p. 69.

³⁹ McIntosh, "The Life and Times," pp. 131-132.

Sanded from Waterloo, Father Schneider from Goderich and Father Quinlan from Brantford answered their Bishop's plea. These men, along with John Elmsley, a dedicated Catholic layman, and the Anglican Bishop J. Strachan, courageously entered the fever sheds set up on the wharves to tend the sick and the dying. Bishop Power contracted the disease and paid the supreme price on October 1, 1847 in service to his Church and his laity.⁴⁰

In the town of Power's birth, *The Cross* echoed the sentiments of many:

The loss to the Diocese of Toronto which Dr. Power distinguished by the value of his sacred offices, and the virtues of his life – is at this moment heavy and severe. It is said that neither night nor day witnessed his absence from the depositaries of disease, until at length kneeling over the bed of infection, and listening to the sorrows of some poor penitent, he inhaled the miasmata of death. Grief of such a loss is natural. The associates of his youth, who well remember him, deeply lament in this community the privation even Canada has sustained.⁴¹

It is difficult to evaluate Bishop Power's accomplishments, particularly in light of what might have been had this forty-three-year-old, capable prelate been granted more time. Most certainly, he had begun to set in motion the power structure that was required to govern the vast ecclesiastical territory encompassed by the Diocese of Toronto. Through the building of the Bishop's Palace and St. Michael's Cathedral he provided the external embellishments of diocesan institutionalization. But that left a burden of debt his subjects could ill afford in the face of the Irish diaspora. He had demonstrated his innate interest in education, but his position as Chairman of the Board of Education created problems for his successor when de Charbonnel demanded the same rights for the burgeoning Irish Catholics of Upper Canada as had been granted to the Protestants in Lower Canada. Moreover, too late in his brief career did he begin the push to obtain the personnel he needed. He left behind him a Diocese in chronic need of priests, religious orders and institutions, much as he had found it. Yet, most importantly perhaps, he left to a laity which was to encounter degradation and hardship the example of true Christian charity – the gift of his life.

⁴⁰ E. Kelly, *The Story of St. Paul's Parish, Toronto* (Toronto, 1922), pp. 95-100.

⁴¹ *The Cross*, October 23, 1847.