

**“Cautious but Willing”:
Archbishop James Morrison, Fourth Bishop of Antigonish**

by

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Abstract

“Cautious but Willing”: James Morrison, Fourth Bishop of Antigonish.

Peter Ludlow

James Morrison was Bishop of Antigonish from 1912-1950. He represented the last of the remote, powerful and austere 19th century style Catholic bishops who were modeled in a time when their power went unchallenged. He belonged to a generation of men, who directed the Catholic Church through a time of enormous social and economic unrest; who faced difficult challenges while trying to maintain their traditional grasp on the laity. He was a prudent, cautious and pragmatic bishop, but he was also aware of the issues that the diocese faced and was willing to step aside and allow those best suited to face the issues a chance to do so. Exceedingly afraid of debt, Morrison steered Antigonish through two world wars and a devastated Maritime economy and managed to keep the diocese in healthy financial condition. He supported the implementation of the Saint Francis Xavier University extension department and the actions of its workers. His abilities as an administrator were first-rate and although he was open to suggestions, he could be stringent if challenged. The understanding of the Antigonish Movement is incomplete unless one understands the actions and motives of Archbishop James Morrison.

September 2004

Introduction

In April of 1950, the dean of the Roman Catholic hierarchy in Canada passed away at the age of eighty-nine. Archbishop James Morrison, who was the Bishop of one of English Canada's most important Catholic communities, was gone after thirty-eight years of service. His death represented a changing of the guard in the Canadian Catholic hierarchy. He represented the last of the remote, powerful and austere 19th century style Catholic bishops who reigned at a time when their power went unchallenged. He belonged to a generation of men, who directed the Catholic Church through a time of enormous social and economic unrest and who faced difficult challenges while trying to maintain their traditional grasp on the laity. In Morrison's years in Antigonish (1912-1950), much had been accomplished. By the time of his death, the Diocese of Antigonish and its priests had become world famous for their economic and social progressiveness known as the Antigonish Movement. As Bishop of the diocese, Morrison was ultimately responsible for everything that occurred.

A native of Prince Edward Island, Morrison was born into a community that was proud of its Catholic traditions. Educated in local schools and St. Dunstan's University, Morrison entered the seminary at the Urban College in Rome and was ordained in 1887. The next twenty-five years were spent as a priest on Prince Edward Island where he held many important administrative

positions. He was made bishop of Antigonish in 1912 and inherited a diocese that was socially and economically erratic. The increasing industrialization of parts of the diocese brought with it social difficulties which challenged Morrison's rural background. A physically large man, James Morrison was domineering in almost everything that he did. He was a prudent, cautious and pragmatic bishop but he was also aware of the issues that the diocese faced and was willing to step aside and allow those best suited to face the issues a chance to do so. Exceedingly afraid of debt, Morrison steered Antigonish through two world wars and a devastated Maritime economy while managing to keep the diocese in healthy financial condition. His abilities as an administrator were first-rate and, although he was open to suggestions, he could be unyielding if challenged. When the Canadian Catholic community heard of his death they praised his ability to allow his socially minded priests to develop and implement their progressive ideas. The history of the Antigonish diocese and the esteemed Antigonish Movement would be a living testimony to the work of its cautious but accommodating bishop.

History, however, has not been kind to James Morrison as he has been almost written out of the literature of the area. The overwhelming majority of the writing on the Antigonish movement mentions him as a footnote or leaves him out completely. He is used to enhance the struggles or personalities of other important Catholic individuals who served under him. He is most

infamous for the transfer of Rev. James Tompkins from his position as Vice-President of St. Francis Xavier University to the post as parish priest of Canso, Nova Scotia, due to a disagreement over University federation in 1921.

Morrison was thought by past scholars to have been a cold and calculating Highland Scot, conservative in outlook, completely submissive to the Church hierarchy, and closed to change and innovation. He has been perceived to have been a bishop with little interest in either politics or the world beyond the diocese. While he may certainly have displayed a few of these characteristics over his career, Morrison was much more complex and reasonable. Morrison has been omitted from the accounts of the works of his priests and we are left with the misconception that things happened in spite of him instead of because of him.

While complete biographies have been written of some of his priests such as Rev. James Tompkins, Rev. Moses Coady, as well as Morrison's successor, Bishop John R. MacDonald, the life of Morrison has been left unanalyzed. As a result, a large perforation has been left in the historiography of the Antigonish Movement, the Diocese of Antigonish and the English-speaking Catholic community of Canada. This thesis looks to fill this hole to some extent through an analysis of the life and career of Archbishop Morrison.

As this is a biography, it covers a range of topics and issues pertaining to James Morrison's life. The early chapters seek to explain Morrison's

background, youth and seminary experiences which shaped the kind of priest that he was to become. His time in Charlottetown was productive; spending his years at St. Dunstan's university and the Cathedral. The main body of the thesis is diverse as it describes his actions as Bishop of Antigonish. Many of Morrison's decisions affected the diocese in which he lived; however, in some cases his decisions had an effect on the province and country. Central to the thesis is the relationship that Morrison had with his most famous, progressive priests. The relationship of Morrison and Rev. James Tompkins is examined throughout the dissertation. Perceived notions of Morrison are examined and a scrutiny of this important bishop is offered.

Note on Sources

There has never been an extensive study of the life and career of James Morrison and therefore few intimate details of his life are known. During Morrison's tenure as bishop of Antigonish, a short biographical sketch was included in James Donahoe's *Prince Edward Island Priests: Who Have Labored or Are Laboring in the Sacred Ministry, Outside the Diocese of Charlottetown* (1935). The Antigonish diocesan historian Angus A. Johnston also included a small biographical sketch in the abstract of his work, *A History of the Catholic Church in Eastern Nova Scotia* (1971). While Morrison is mentioned in passing in a number of works there is nothing that explains in detail the motives of the man. Some of the better works of biography on Moses Coady and James Tompkins, such as Michael Welton and Jim Lotz's, *Father Jimmy: Life and Times of Jimmy Tompkins* (1997), as well as Welton's *Little Mosie from the Margaree : a Biography of Moses Michael Coady* (2001), make almost no mention of Morrison other than to speak about the transfer of Tompkins from Saint Francis Xavier University to Canso. Perhaps the one book that gives the reader the most insight into the personality of Morrison was Peter Nearing's, *He Loved the Church: The Biography of Bishop John R. MacDonald* (1975). Two recent works by historian James Cameron are useful for understanding Morrison's role in overseeing the diocese. The history of Saint Francis Xavier entitled, *For the People* (1996) as well as the history of

the Sisters of St. Martha, *And Martha Served: History of The Sisters of St. Martha, Antigonish, Nova Scotia* (2000) are useful in trying to understand Morrison's administrative abilities.

The overwhelming majority of the material for this thesis came from the Morrison papers located in the Antigonish diocesan archives (ADA). These papers are very extensive and are a hitherto untapped resource. Morrison kept his papers very organized and his correspondence is very complete. These papers not only give insight into personal and professional relationships during Morrison's time as bishop but they are also a comprehensive guide to many aspects of life in 20th century Eastern Nova Scotia. These papers are the basis on which this thesis is written. The Morrison papers at the Charlottetown Diocesan Archives (DCA) are less extensive and only cover the years 1907 to 1912. There are no papers relating to Morrison's time as a seminary student in Rome and the thesis relies on his later correspondence with classmates for clues to these years. The Provincial Archives of Prince Edward Island are useful for Morrison genealogical records. A query was made to the archives of the Scarborough Foreign Mission's office in Scarborough Ontario and the archives of the Archdiocese of Oakland California for information on Revs. Vincent and F.X Morrison but nothing other than newspaper obituaries was found. Finally, the Robertson library special collection on the campus of the University of Prince Edward Island has copies of the *Collegium* which contain information

on both James and his brother F.X during their time as faculty at the University. The archives do not have copies of the magazine for the period that James was a student, which again hinders the ability to tell the story of his youth.

The Saint Francis Xavier University archives are critical to any historical study that involves the Catholic history of Eastern Nova Scotia. The Presidential papers are of great importance as they help construct the history of the University and are home to important papers on the Extension Department. They are also valuable for pieces of information about Morrison that came through personal correspondence. Especially important are the papers of Rev. Hugh Peter MacPherson who was undoubtedly Morrison's closest friend in Antigonish. Unfortunately, the proximity of the bishop's office to the University means that a great deal of conversation between bishop and President was not recorded. Similarly as the bishop and the rector of St. Ninian's Cathedral shared accommodations there is little correspondence between them.

Some useful information as to the relationship of Morrison and Angus L. MacDonald was found in the papers of the Premier. It contains files of correspondence between MacDonald and Rev. James Tompkins mainly concerning University Federation in 1922. Finally, as always, newspapers are an important element for reconstructing the past. It was no different in this case as the Antigonish paper *The Casket* provided useful information. Similarly the

Halifax Chronicle provided national and provincial items. Other information relating to Morrison and his family was found in the *The Boston American*, *Charlottetown Herald*, *The San Francisco Chronicle*, *The Summerside Journal* and the *Sydney Post-Record*.

Chapter One

“The Struggle”

1861-1912

The community in which James Morrison was born was established by his Scottish ancestors in 1770. Angus Morrison came to Prince Edward Island as part of the mass exodus of highlanders, looking to improve their economic situation and to escape religious persecution.¹ Prince Edward Island along with Cape Breton and Eastern Nova Scotia were the main areas of settlement for Roman Catholic Scottish highlanders.² Located in lot 38 on Prince Edward Island's north shore, Savage Harbour's proximity to the ocean and relatively fertile soil made it a good place in which to make a living. These immigrants worked hard to maintain their farms and their old world traditions. One of these traditions was a strong sense of their Catholic faith.³

¹ Angus Morrison married Flora Steel and they had eight children. There were five sons, John, Angus, Donald, Ronald and Allan, and three daughters, Catherine, Ellen and Mary.

² See J.M. Bumsted, *Land, Settlement and Politics on Eighteenth-Century Prince Edward Island*. (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press), J.M. Bumsted, *The People's Clearance: Highland Emigration to British North America, 1770-1815* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1982)

³ One hundred and fifty years after the first group of Highland immigrants settled in Scotchfort, a celebration and unveiling of a monument in their memory was held. At this occasion Bishop Morrison gave an address. This is part of what he said. “We can all feel satisfied that the Pioneers have done their part in the up building of this great country and if upon our part we commemorate their lives with this Memorial, it is but the least that we can do to honor their memory, not only as a debt to the past, but as an inspiration to the future. We all stand in need of this inspiration. These Pioneer settlers came to Canada for freedom of conscience, and that word freedom must stand out in our national life, if we are to prosper as we should.” Memorial Volume, *The Scottish Catholics in Prince Edward Island, 1772-1922* (Summerside: The Journal Publishing company, 1922), p. 82.

James's father, Donald Morrison, was a fishermen and farmer. Like other farmers on the Island, he was a tenant of an absentee landowner.⁴ He married Elizabeth Campbell on 23 January 1855. He stayed in his father's house on the shore in Savage Harbor until in his twenties when he moved further inland. The Morrison household was lively as Donald was an avid entertainer and was an accomplished violin player. They had their first child, Flora in May of 1857, followed by a boy Allan in August of 1859. Two years later, during a heat wave in July of 1861, the subject of this thesis, James, was born. Rev. Pius MacPhee baptized little James Morrison in St. Andrew's church just down the road from Savage Harbour.⁵ Acquiring more land and expanding their farm, Donald and Elizabeth had younger sons Cyril in 1863 and Francis Xavier in 1865.⁶ Life during this period was not always easy as a great deal of work was done in trying to make a living. The young children were brought up in the Scottish traditions as well as with the customs of the Catholic Church. In the spring of 1867 disaster struck the family as Elizabeth

⁴ The issues of leasehold tenure on Prince Edward Island "resembled more closely those of the Irish land question than any other obviously parallel situation, But as Maguire had noted, the attitudes were different. In the Old World, the tenant typically rented a fully developed farm, ready to be worked. If the tenancy was not renewed and he had to leave, that might be unsatisfactory, but it was radically different from the plight of many Prince Edward Island settlers. The vast majority of farms in the colony had been carved out of the wilderness within living memory. See Ian Robertson, *The Tenant League of Prince Edward Island, 1864-1867* (Toronto: University of Toronto press, 1996), p. 283.

⁵ Rev. Pius MacPhee, 1820-1889. He was the local priest in St. Andrew's, St. Peter's and Tracadie and was a good friend of the Morrison's. James Morrison's Godmother was Johanna Feehan.

⁶ F. X Morrison will henceforth be called Dan as that is the name that was used within the Morrison family.

Morrison died after giving birth to her sixth child, John. As a young boy of five years, James was deeply affected by his mother's death. The family had to send for the neighboring priest to rush to the house as the St. Andrew's priest was away. The priest gave the mother the last rites and baptized the child. The five other children, including James, waited in the next room, unable to grasp the enormity of the situation.⁷ With their mother gone the young Morrison children now relayed solely on their father for assistance. Donald spent the next few years trying to raise the family and manage the farm. In 1870 he remarried to Susan MacAskill and she tried to fill the role left by Elizabeth Morrison. Within two years Donald and Susan Morrison had their first child Stephen and over the next sixteen years eight more children joined the family.⁸

The Prince Edward Island in which the young James Morrison grew up relied heavily on fishing and agriculture.⁹ James was an energetic young boy, helping his father with the work on the farm, and in his spare time he was an avid fisherman. He lived in a period of great change for the island and for Catholics. He was just twelve when Prince Edward Islanders joined the Canadian confederation in 1873. James attended the local religious schools of the area. The tension between Catholics and Protestants over religious schools

⁷ Morrison to Rev. A.P. McLellan, September 26, 1913, letter#5556, Bishop Morrison Papers, Antigonish Diocesan Archives. (Hereafter, BMP, ADA.)

⁸ The children of Donald and Susan Morrison were Stephen 1872, George 1874, Peter 1876, Mary Elizabeth 1878, Margaret 1880, Vincent 1883, Theresa 1886, and Catherine in 1888.

⁹ F.W.P Bolger, *Canada's Smallest Province: A History of Prince Edward Island* (Halifax: Nimbus, 1991), p. 265.

was deep-seated. Bishop Peter McIntyre was determined to obtain provincial government funding for separate schools. When James was eighteen the first Catholic Premier of Prince Edward Island was elected after toppling a Protestant coalition built to implement a public secular school system, and thus denying Catholic schools funding. If James was destined to be a Catholic Bishop, certainly no one seemed to notice. While other young men were advised to think of the priesthood, James was not encouraged by any priest to go on for further education.¹⁰ Short of money and unsure as to his education prospects, in 1877 he decided to train to be a teacher at the Normal School in Charlottetown.¹¹ By the fall of 1879, James was teaching school in Launching and boarding with a Mary MacIsaac. While teaching within a school system that was extremely religious, James felt a call to the priesthood. For many young men in James's position, the priesthood was out of the question unless they could secure some money and a higher level of education. With the money he made from teaching school, James was able to enroll in St. Dunstan's college in the fall of 1882.

¹⁰ Morrison put many of his nephews through college and writing to his brother Allan in 1919, he commented that he felt a little angry that no one took an interest in his education growing up. "I myself cannot help feeling a little angry when I consider that as a young boy I never got a word of encouragement or advice from a priest to go to college, much less any assistance in a financial way, and I am quite sure that there are at least some of my contemporaries who would have made good from an educational standpoint if they had been so advised." Morrison to Allan Morrison, September 6, 1919, letter#6686, BMP, ADA.

¹¹ The Prince Edward Island Normal College was established in 1856 as a school for teachers in training. In 1879 a bill was passed by the Provincial legislature amalgamating the Normal College and Prince of Wales College. During his time at the college, James boarded with John and Mrs. Connolly on Fitzroy Street in Charlottetown.

In 1882 St. Dunstan's college was a small and shaky institution.¹² The Jesuits had abruptly left their teaching positions at the college in 1881, leaving the institution to enter the 1881-1882 academic year with enrollment at less than thirty.¹³ James Morrison arrived the following year to find a college with little money and a total number of classmates of 27. The College was in every way a parochial, Catholic institution. None of the boys came from outside the Diocese of Charlottetown and most had thoughts of some day entering the priesthood. As Lawrence Shook writes,

St. Dunstan's had been founded to assure the diocese a supply of priests and it had done so rather well. It had placed its students in the seminaries of Quebec, Montreal and Rome.¹⁴

Three priests and one lay staff member handled the teaching duties. The college struggled to stay afloat, and between 1881 and 1884 it went through three rectors. While some wondered if St. Dunstan's would survive as a college, the Catholic hierarchy of Prince Edward Island was determined to see it through. The Bishop of Charlottetown offered substantial prizes and scholarships to the graduating class of 1884 as a way of showing that the

¹² Catholics on Prince Edward Island had operated a college since Bishop Angus MacEachern founded St. Andrew's college in 1831. By 1855 the Catholic college had moved to Charlottetown and had changed its name to St. Dunstan's.

¹³ G. Edward MacDonald, *The History of St. Dunstan's University, 1855-1956* (Charlottetown: St. Dunstan's Board of Governors, 1989), p. 153.

¹⁴ Lawrence Shook, *Catholic Post-Secondary Education in English-Speaking Canada: A History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1971), p. 45.

Catholic community should keep its college no matter the cost.¹⁵ Among those benefiting from the Bishop's generosity was James Morrison, studying classics. James's marks at the college were strong and with the small competition at St. Dunstan's, James was sent to the seminary in Rome to train for the priesthood.

Pope Urban VIII had founded the Pontifical Urban College of the Propagation of the Faith in 1627. Here young men from all over the world came to be trained as priests for missionary fields. Two students from Prince Edward Island beginning their studies towards ordination in the fall of 1884 were James Morrison and Peter Curran.¹⁶ Like others before them, Morrison and Curran received a sound academic education while at the Urban College. The culture shock for two young boys from rural Prince Edward Island homes was enormous and Morrison perceived the Italian population as lacking civility, however, he excelled while in Rome and quickly picked up an impressive command of Italian.¹⁷ Other languages followed through living and studying with young men from around the world. Within a few years, James had also mastered Spanish and German. These languages would serve him well and it was not uncommon during his time in Charlottetown and Antigonish to find a

¹⁵ MacDonald, *The History of St. Dunstan's University*, p. 158.

¹⁶ Rev. Peter Curran, 1853-1909. Following his ordination in Rome, Rev. Curran spent one year on the staff on St. Dunstan's college and four years as Pastor of Tracadie Parish. He died of tuberculosis in Colorado Springs Colorado.

¹⁷ Morrison commented that in 1927 he had found the average Italian on the street to have "more civility than was the case in the 1880's." Morrison to Bishop Francis J. Wall, November 30, 1937, letter#23300, BMP, ADA.

priest or layperson bringing him a letter to translate.¹⁸ The multicultural aspect of the college impressed both Morrison and his family at home. They took pride in the fact that they had a brother training for the priesthood. The pictures that he sent home became a source of inspiration for his younger half-brother, Vincent, who was also destined for the priesthood.¹⁹ Morrison became good friends with most of his colleagues at the college but was especially close to Francis “Frank” Wall of Ireland, Willie MacDonald of Scotland and J.J Purcell of the United States. The college was not luxurious but was effective in preparing a young priest for missionary life.²⁰

Europe in the mid 1880’s was in the midst of social upheaval. The Catholic Church was struggling to find its place and maintain its influence in a changing political climate. Pope Leo XIII attempted to show that there was no inherent conflict between the just claims of the Church and the aims of the new democracies, but that the noblest ideals of democracy itself were best served and most surely guaranteed where Christian values and principles were

¹⁸ In later years, Morrison would have his friend G.A. Hornsby in Cuba send him Spanish language newspapers so that he could keep up the language. He also would regularly send away for advanced German and Italian texts so that he could practice in his office.

¹⁹ Rev. Vincent Morrison to Morrison, February 26, 1940, incoming letter#25749, BMP, ADA.

²⁰ In 1933, Morrison complained to Frank Wall, than Bishop Francis Wall of Dublin, that the “new” Propaganda College was too comfortable and thus too distracting to the seminarians. He felt that the old college in which they studied was better suited to train missionary priests. He was however, happy that the new college was closer to the Vatican than theirs had been and thus “more inspirational”. Morrison to Bishop Francis J. Wall, November 21, 1933, letter#19910, BMP, ADA. Without any letters written by Morrison to his family while a student in Rome, all of the facts relating to his time as a student come from later correspondence with classmate Bishop Francis Wall of Dublin.

observed by rulers and subjects.²¹ This idea was not lost on the young seminarians. They were aware of their place and their role within the worlds in which they lived and they were intent on playing an active part in securing and maintaining the influence of the Catholic Church in the new political and social order. In November of 1889 James Morrison, along with fellow islander Peter Curran and their classmates was ordained by Monsignor Lenti, Vicegerent of Rome, in the chapel of the Propaganda College. The next morning the new priests celebrated their first mass on the altar of Our Lady of Perpetual Help in the Church of St. Alphonsus.²² They had much to celebrate and James was particularly pleased with his success in winning the degree of doctor in philosophy and in theology.²³ The years spent at the Urban College in Rome had numerous effects on Morrison. Besides the obvious educational and linguistic advantages that he acquired, he attained a sense of the place and the role of the Catholic Church far greater than any average priest would have had. The graduates of the college would, in due time, come to fill the most important Catholic positions of the world, enabling Morrison to fit neatly within the

²¹ George Rainbird, *The Popes: A Concise Biographical History* (New York: Hawthorn Books, 1964), p. 442.

²² Morrison to Bishop Francis J. Wall, November 16, 1936, letter#22398, BMP, ADA. The following morning, Morrison offered his second mass in the chapel at the Scots college.

²³ Rev. John C. Macmillan, *The History of the Catholic Church in Prince Edward Island, 1835-1891* (Quebec: The Evenement Printing co., 1913), p. 465. Bishop Morrison praised Rev. John C Macmillan's history of the Diocese of Charlottetown when he received it in January of 1914. He wrote to Macmillan, "I hasten to congratulate you on the splendid work you have achieved in writing and publishing such a comprehensive history of the Diocese of Charlottetown. It certainly ought to command a very extensive sale, once it is brought to the notice of the public." Morrison to Rev. J. C. Macmillan, January 26, 1914, letter#1005, BMP, ADA.

world Catholic hierarchy. Although the new graduates enjoyed the fellowship of student life they were ready to return to their respective communities to begin their lives ministering to their fellow Catholics. In the spring of 1890, Morrison and Curran traveled through Scotland and then returned to their native Prince Edward Island.²⁴

The Reverend James Morrison's first posting was to the old wooden Cathedral in Charlottetown where he was to serve as curate to the rector. He moved into the stone Bishop's "Palace" next door and he enjoyed the company of the rector and priests. His duties there were fairly light, but he kept himself active and took over many unwanted jobs such as typing. By the summer of 1891, the new Bishop, Charles MacDonald, realized that the best place for a person with Morrison's academic qualifications would be at St. Dunstan's College. Morrison was suited for the position of professor. He had experience in the classroom from his time spent teaching school as a young man. His academic credentials were far better than those of any other instructor who was currently on staff at the college. Teaching philosophy, he was able to blend his knowledge of philosophical ideas with the teachings of the Catholic Church, making his curriculum a perfect fit with St. Dunstan's. He got along well with the students and found the fellowship with Rector MacLellan and the other

²⁴ In August 1890, a few of the priests destined for North America were taken on a tour through Scotland by classmate and Scottish native, Rev. William MacDonald. In 1932, Rev. William MacDonald was serving in Dunoon, Argyle, Scotland.

Professors to be very rewarding.²⁵ The following year the Bishop saw fit to put the entire university in the hands of the young academic by appointing him rector of the school. Through James Morrison's strong personality, St. Dunstan's obtained a stability it had previously lacked. Morrison also had the vision to seek affiliation with Universite Laval. For a small Catholic college, affiliation with Laval made good sense. Until this point, graduates of St. Dunstan's received no tangible recognition of their scholarly achievements. In other words, they did not receive a degree upon completion of their programs. Affiliation with Laval would give St. Dunstan's graduates a strong degree with which they could go on to further endeavors. G. Edward MacDonald in his history of St. Dunstan's University admits that it is unlikely that Morrison came up with the idea of affiliation with Laval, but regardless of this, he argues that the college credits Morrison with conceiving the plan.²⁶ Morrison wrote to the Laval University Senate,

Having made a perusal of your "Annuaire," I find that the course of studies in our college almost corresponds to that prescribed for taking the degree in the arts course of Laval University. Having received the approval of our Bishop, I thought it would be well if St. Dunstan's

²⁵ Morrison's friendship with Rev. A.P. MacLellan was strong and later in life he would often lament not being able to meet Rev. MacLellan for their usual long chat. Upon MacLellan's death in August of 1937, Morrison wrote, "Our contacts continued unbroken for almost fifty years, and I shall miss him very much, as he was one of the last few links to bind me to the old surroundings." Morrison to Rev. Vincent Morrison, August 13, 1937, letter#22981, BMP, ADA.

²⁶ G. Edward MacDonald, *The History of St. Dunstan's University*, p. 169.

College could be affiliated with the aforesaid university, being that most of our young men of this college prosecute their theological studies at Laval, and thus it would be to their advantage to take a degree in arts prior to entering the Theological Course. I therefore embrace the present opportunity of making this proposal for the consideration of the university being that it may be favorably received.²⁷

The Laval senate quickly agreed to affiliation and with that Rector Morrison was able to give St. Dunstan's a level of credibility that it had not previously enjoyed. In 1893 the first three graduates of St. Dunstan's to receive Laval degrees were honored and with that St. Dunstan's turned a corner, away from simple survival to that of a new beginning.²⁸

From 1892 to 1895, Rector Morrison presided over a college that had a very rural student body and was extremely Catholic. As Edward MacDonald writes,

St. Dunstan's College had changed in many ways since its early years but one characteristic continued to prevail. Roman Catholicism dominated the campus. Religion permeated every aspect of College life.

The school motto, the daily religious instruction, the priest-professors,

²⁷ MacDonald, *The History of St. Dunstan's University*, p. 170.

²⁸ Under the affiliation agreement with Laval University, St. Dunstan's graduates would have to pass a set of exams, which were set and graded by Laval officials. Upon completion they would be awarded their degree. See G. Edward MacDonald, *The History of St. Dunstan's University, 1855-1956*. (Charlottetown: St. Dunstan's Board of Governors, 1989).

the morning masses and evening devotions, the College's growing reputation of seedbed vocations all bespoke the integral importance of Faith.²⁹

Most of the students came from rural island areas; however, others came from as far away as the United States. Life at the college was strictly regulated, although time was found for leisure activity. The college magazine, the *Collegium*, profiles a campus that was active in sport and theatre.³⁰ The classics were taught as well as mathematics and the sciences. Rector Morrison had a part in teaching many of the subjects at the college, including, Philosophy, Chemistry, Greek and Rhetoric. By 1891 it was almost impossible for a student not to have a Professor with the name Morrison, as James's brother Dan had joined the staff, teaching French, Latin and Science.³¹ In 1894, James Morrison traveled to Laval University to receive an honorary degree.³² In truth, he could have remained a member of a university staff for the remainder of his career, as he enjoyed the college life. However in 1896, the Diocese of Charlottetown was about to embark on the construction of a new

²⁹ MacDonald, *The History of St. Dunstan's University*, p. 202.

³⁰ The *Collegium* was started by Francis C Kelly (1870-1948), who later became the Bishop of Oklahoma, U.S.A. The assistant editor of the magazine for much of Morrison's years as Rector was Alfred Sinnott (1877-1954), who was to become Archbishop of Winnipeg. These two prominent St. Dunstan's alumni are good examples of the direction in which excellent scholars of the college were encouraged. Copies of the *Collegium* can be found in Special Collections at the Robertson Library on the campus of the University of Prince Edward Island.

³¹ F.X Morrison left St. Dunstan's in 1892 to enter Brighton Seminary in Boston to begin his studies for the priesthood. In recognition of his abilities, the students gave him a gold-headed cane. The *Collegium* noted, "Dan is a young man of brilliant parts and will no doubt keep up the honor of successful islanders abroad." The *Collegium*, October 1892.

³² The *Collegium*, October 1894.

stone Cathedral and for this task it required a priest who had the presence and ability to see the project to completion. With that, Morrison's days as Rector of St. Dunstan's were over.³³

Since 1843, the Diocese of Charlottetown had had an attractive wooden Cathedral in which to worship. By the 1890's Bishop Peter MacIntyre was contemplating the idea of building a new stone Cathedral.³⁴ Upon MacIntyre's death in 1891, Bishop Charles MacDonald took it upon himself to see that this was accomplished.³⁵ This was no small task and in designating Morrison as the man to oversee fundraising and construction, a statement was being made as to the position of the young priest within the Diocese of Charlottetown. In order to pay for the new Cathedral, the Diocese collected monies from parishioners and held many bazaars and picnics. Morrison was involved in every aspect of the planning and fundraising. He wrote to his brother John in 1896, "I am not at the college now but am at the city of Charlottetown, stationed at the Cathedral. I have plenty of work to do, and have not many spare minutes."³⁶ He was also acting as the Rector of the Cathedral and his duties were many. The years from 1896 to 1907, for him, were hectic and stressful, but he was able to continue the

³³ It is interesting to note that G. Edward MacDonald wrote that Morrison's departure stripped the College of "firm, confident leadership and administrative stability." The *Collegium* wrote that although they would miss Rev. Morrison as their Rector, they were confident that "with untiring zeal and sympathetic devotedness" he would watch over his new flock in Charlottetown. The *Collegium*, September 1895. Rome classmate and friend, Rev. Peter Curran, succeeded Morrison as Rector of St. Dunstan's.

³⁴ Bishop Peter MacIntyre, 1818-1891, Bishop of Charlottetown, 1860-1891.

³⁵ Bishop Charles MacDonald, 1840-1912, Bishop of Charlottetown, 1891-1912.

³⁶ Morrison to John Morrison, August 7, 1896, Box 22, fonds 5, series 1, sub 1-3, BMP, ADA.

construction without any problems. On 15 August 1904, Morrison was made Vicar-general of the Diocese and this added to both his work and his prestige. The office of Vicar-general was the highest office in the diocese after the bishop. Generally it gave Morrison the power to make decisions in the name of the bishop. On 6 September 1905, he was honored with an honorary degree from St. Francis Xavier University in Antigonish.³⁷ This Catholic institution was celebrating its fiftieth anniversary and Morrison was one of twenty-one honorary degree recipients from a prominent list of Canadian educators. Things progressed well for Morrison and despite being in hospital briefly with typhoid fever his work remained steady.³⁸ By 1907 the stone Cathedral was completed. It was built in the form of a Latin cross with twin spires 200 feet in height. In it was installed the finest pipe organ in the province. Many in the Diocese were proud of the new cathedral and none more so than Rev. Morrison himself. By the end of construction Morrison was very tired and in bad health. The strain that the construction had put on Morrison was great and so by 1907 he was looking forward to some time as a rural country priest. He wrote to a friend in Massachusetts,

³⁷ In the evening of September 6, 1905, Morrison gave the sermon at a special Mass in St. Ninian's Cathedral. He sermonized on Ecclesiasticus 44: "Let us now praise men of renown and our fathers in their generation. See, James Cameron, *For the People: A History of St. Francis Xavier University* (Montreal: McGill-Queens, 1996).

³⁸ In later years Morrison commented on the good treatment he received at the hands of the Grey Nuns while in hospital with typhoid fever. Morrison to Sister St. Dorothy, March 13, 1919, letter#6131, BMP, ADA.

I was beginning to break down a little, and it was deemed advisable that I should have a change. The strain upon me in the city during the last twelve years began to tell upon me, so that some kind of rest was imperative. Of course I should miss the city a great deal, but shall make up for it in the good fresh air and the quiet country life.³⁹

His transfer to the Parish of Vernon River on 21 September 1907 was a welcome relief from the responsibilities of Charlottetown. Morrison felt very much at home in Vernon River and commented that although it was not wealthy and was extremely quiet, it was a very comfortable one for a priest.⁴⁰ He soon found, however, that the work of Charlottetown followed him to the country and that small country parishes carried a large workload as well.⁴¹ Morrison was still active as Vicar-general for the Diocese and kept in close contact with the hierarchy of the Church. In 1908 he attended the London Eucharistic congress and returned to Rome to enjoy a brief homecoming with former classmates. As the time passed tending to his flock in St. Joachim's church and Vernon River community, the health of the Bishop in Charlottetown was deteriorating. Bishop Charles MacDonald was likely suffering from

³⁹ Morrison to Mary MacKinnon, November 7, 1907, Fonds 4, Series 1, Sub 1-3, BMP, ADA.

⁴⁰ Morrison to Rev. Peter Curran, November 19, 1907, Morrison File, Diocese of Charlottetown Archives, hereafter DCA.

⁴¹ Morrison later wrote to Rev. Curran, "Well, my dear Father Peter, I am out here in Vernon River with all the problems of a country parish. It is by no means a place of rest, dignified or otherwise. But it is a good thing to be occupied when one is able to work."

Alzheimer's disease and he soon became incapable of fulfilling his duties. His responsibilities went to Morrison as Vicar-general.

Charlottetown was a difficult diocese to manage, as there was some historical tension among Acadian and Irish Catholics towards the Scottish clergy. There was a long-held belief that the Scottish clergy were treated more favorably than were the others. As early as 1819, Acadians complained that Anglophone domination of Catholic life prevented other cultures from progressing. One Acadian wrote to the *Summerside Journal*, "We have to borrow from others almost all our public figures...even our priests are of foreign races, and if there are any small positions available in Acadian Parishes, they are immediately filled by Englishmen."⁴² In 1890 the Irish on the Island complained to the Archbishop of Halifax that the Bishop of Charlottetown was failing to send enough Irish boys to the seminary.⁴³ This sort of situation was not uncommon in the history of the Catholic Church in the Maritimes. In the 1830's, the Irish of Halifax complained that their bishop, William Fraser, was not sympathetic to their concerns. As a result of this the Archdiocese of Halifax was split and the Diocese of Arichat was created.⁴⁴ At the turn of the century,

⁴² *Summerside Journal*, April 14, 1870.

⁴³ Heidi MacDonald, Developing a Strong Roman Catholic Social Order in the Late Nineteenth-Century Prince Edward Island, *Canadian Catholic Historical Association*, Historical Studies, 69, (2003), p. 38.

⁴⁴ See Terrence Murphy, *Trusteeism in Atlantic Canada: The Struggle for Leadership among Irish Catholics of Halifax, St. John's and Saint John, 1780-1850* in Terrence Murphy, Gerald Stortz, *Creed and Culture, The place of English-Speaking Catholics in Canadian Society, 1750-1930* (Montreal: McGill-Queens, 1993).

the Acadians within Nova Scotia and New Brunswick were lobbying for an Acadian bishop to be consecrated and installed in one of the New Brunswick dioceses.⁴⁵ The difficulty in Charlottetown reached a pinnacle in 1907, just as Bishop MacDonald's illness was taking hold the Irish priests of the Diocese made a formal complaint to the Vatican of the unfairness of Scottish dominance of ecclesiastical life. Although Bishop MacDonald denied this charge, everyone felt the hostility between Irish and Scottish priests. Morrison was very aware of the friction that existed and with the onset of the illness of Bishop MacDonald he dreaded the thought of the problems and bad blood that could arise after the eventual death of the Bishop. Commenting on the illness of the Bishop in a letter to the Apostolic Delegate, Archbishop Sbaretti in Ottawa, in December of 1909, Morrison commented on his apprehension,

I feel, however, that the end is not so near as some people suppose and indeed I hope the poor old Bishop will live some time yet. I just dread the thought of the possible confusion and scandalous speculations that will be abroad when it comes to making provision for the Diocese.⁴⁶

As Bishop MacDonald's health deteriorated, Morrison began to assume more of the duties of the Diocese. He was, however, very limited as to the functions that he was able to perform. In many cases he had to write to Archbishop

⁴⁵ Richard Wilber, *The Rise of French New Brunswick* (Halifax: Formac, 1989) , p. 75.

⁴⁶ Morrison to Archbishop Sbaretti, December 31, 1909, Morrison File, DCA.

McCarthy for assistance in matters that needed a Bishop's authority. His situation was summed up in a letter written in December of 1910,

I am not the administrator of the Diocese, but am simply just what I was before the Bishop became incapacitated, i.e. his Vicar General, with limited powers, and consequently enabled to transact only the most necessary things connected with the administration of the Diocese, all of which were clearly specified.⁴⁷

With the administration of the Diocese in limbo, Morrison continued to do his best with what limited powers he had.

In January of 1911, Morrison's father Donald passed away at an advanced age.⁴⁸ *The Charlottetown Herald* printed his obituary which read, "He was a man of sterling integrity; upright, honest and honorable in all his relations with his fellow man."⁴⁹ Morrison wrote to a friend:

I need not be blamed if I say that my dear father was a model of character that can safely be imitated, and my earnest wish is that I may

⁴⁷ Morrison to Rev. M. Monaghan, December 26, 1910, Morrison File, DCA.

⁴⁸ Donald Morrison's will made his oldest son by his second marriage executor. He willed the old homestead to Stephen and the properties at Canevoy to Peter Morrison, and the property at French village to Stephen and Cyril. He left nothing to his other family members, as he believed that their current situation in life did not require any assistance from their father.

⁴⁹ *The Charlottetown Herald*, January 25, 1911.

fulfill the duties of my calling as faithfully as he fulfilled those of his calling.⁵⁰

Donald Morrison's death, for James Morrison, broke the link with Savage Harbour and with most of his brothers and sisters. As was the case with many Maritime families of their generation, all of the other children of Donald and Elizabeth left for the "Boston States" and for central Canada. Out migration had claimed Allan and Cyril to New Hampshire, Flora⁵¹ to Massachusetts, Dan to the seminary in Quebec and John to New York State. The chances of any of them returning home were slim.⁵² There were members of the family from Donald Morrison's second marriage still in Savage Harbour, but James was eleven years older than the oldest boy and did not have a strong personal connection with any of them. He now made fewer and fewer visits to Savage Harbor and focused his energies on running the Diocese of Charlottetown.

In March of 1911, intriguing rumors were beginning to surface in and around Charlottetown. Every few weeks a newspaper or Catholic magazine would make mention that Rev. James Morrison of Vernon River was to be appointed Bishop of Antigonish. Antigonish had been without a Bishop since

⁵⁰ Morrison to John MacEachern, January 25, 1911, Morrison File, DCA. James Morrison provided the headstone for his father's grave at a cost of \$75. Donald Morrison was buried in the St. Andrew's cemetery next to his first wife Elizabeth.

⁵¹ In November of 1910, Flora (Morrison) Campbell died in Massachusetts.

⁵² Morrison's brother Dan wrote in a letter to his brother, "I have been in the best of health since coming to God's own country (Italy). I believe it is the place for me. Life here has just enough of the snap and rush that makes work interesting, and without wishing to appear like your old friend MacPhee who saw nothing good on the island, I may say that I now believe it would be impossible to live there now. Dan Morrison to Morrison, February 1909, Morrison File, DCA.

the death of Bishop John Cameron on 6 April 1910. Rev. Hugh Peter MacPherson was acting as Diocesan Administrator while the search was on for a new Bishop. Upon returning from Bishop Cameron's funeral in April of 1910, Rev. Ronald MacDonald wrote to Morrison, "I hear they have an idea of keeping you there altogether."⁵³ On 15 March 1911 the French language magazine *L'Action Sociale*, carried the news that Morrison was about to be chosen as Antigonish's new Bishop. As Morrison heard more and more rumors and received more and more letters of congratulations he tired of the attention. He told his brother Dan that, although he found the attention rather amusing, he was growing weary of the rumors.⁵⁴ As months passed, Morrison took the opinion that the rumors had no foundation and told his friends and colleagues to simply ignore them; they were, after all, only rumors. However, the evidence suggests that Morrison realized that he was inevitably going to be called to Antigonish. In May, Rev. Dan Morrison wanted his brother to accompany him on a trip to Italy. Although he was deeply interested in traveling with his brother, James Morrison's cautious and prudent nature prompted him to decline. He knew that people were waiting to see if he was going to be appointed as Bishop of Antigonish and did not want to do anything that might

⁵³ Rev. Ronald MacDonald to Morrison, May 5, 1911, Morrison File, DCA. Morrison's name had been sent to Rome as a candidate for the position as early as 10 May 1910.

⁵⁴ Morrison to F.X. Morrison, March 24, 1911, Morrison File, DCA.

cast suspicion on the appointment if and when the time came. In his letter to his brother declining the invitation to travel to Italy, Morrison wrote,

There are so many things, which militate against my going that I have eventually decided to forgo the pleasure. Besides there is the consideration that my meeting you would create the very false idea of my seeking personal ends by reason of the newspaper reports that had been abroad here a short time ago. Of course one could simply ignore such considerations, especially when they have absolutely no foundation in facts, as is in the present case, but perhaps it is better that I not go.⁵⁵

There was enough tension in the Charlottetown Diocese already, and a rumor that Morrison was going to Rome to influence his appointment would not help the situation. This was an example of the cautious nature that would both help and hinder him throughout his career. In September of 1911, the Vatican made James Morrison the Apostolic Administrator of the Diocese of Charlottetown. Bishop MacDonald was now a total invalid and needed constant care.⁵⁶

Archbishop McCarthy of Halifax wrote, "This will certainly settle difficulties for a while."⁵⁷ This appointment at least gave Morrison the official authority to run all aspects of the Diocese. He continued as Pastor of Vernon River and

⁵⁵ Morrison to F.X. Morrison, May 4, 1911, Morrison File, DCA.

⁵⁶ Morrison commented on the Bishop's condition in December of 1911, "It is very sad to see the poor old man in his present feeble and helpless condition." Morrison to F.X. Morrison, December 20, 1911, Morrison File, DCA.

⁵⁷ Archbishop Edward McCarthy to Morrison, November 3, 1911, Morrison File, DCA.

made the trip into Charlottetown as often as he could. The rumors of an impending move to Antigonish died down, and he settled into his role as administrator and parish priest. The future of the Charlottetown Diocese was unknown as there would be no thoughts of a new Bishop as long as Bishop MacDonald was still living. All Morrison could do was wait patiently for something to change.

As Antigonish was without a Bishop, the Vatican was trying to decide who should assume the responsibilities for that diocese. There were qualified Antigonish priests whose names were brought to the attention of the papacy but no decision had been made.⁵⁸ The selection process for a new Bishop was long and complicated. Morrison was a strong candidate and certain key people supported him. One of these was Morrison's former student at St. Dunstan's, Rev. Alfred Sinnott. Sinnott was serving as the secretary to the Apostolic Delegate in Ottawa and had considerable influence. He commented that Morrison had great financial ability and personal character. He knew his old college Rector well enough to point out that, although Morrison cared little about his dress, he was a man with a striking appearance. He even joked that Morrison's only downfall was that he tended to enjoy preaching the word too

⁵⁸ Two names which were most mentioned in connection with the vacant Diocese were Saint Francis Xavier University Rector, Rev. Hugh Peter MacPherson and the Diocesan Vicar General, Rev. Alexander Thompson. Both were prominent within the Diocese and had strong connections with St. Francis Xavier University. There is little doubt that both men wanted the job and there is evidence of some tension in trying to decide which one of them was to act as administrator of the Diocese. See, R.B. MacDonald, *The Succession*. Unpublished paper, 1991. It is located in the St. Francis Xavier University Archives.

much, in other words that his sermons never seemed to end!⁵⁹ By the spring of 1912, the clergy and people of Antigonish were wondering and speculating as to why it was taking so long for the Vatican to make an appointment. The Administrator of the Diocese was growing tired of telling anxious priests pressing for decisions to “wait for the new Bishop.”⁶⁰ There are many theories as to the length of time it took Rome to appoint a new Bishop but the most likely one centers on the illness of Charlottetown Bishop, Charles MacDonald. The tension in Charlottetown between the Irish and Scottish clergy had to be handled with great care. Rome was seemingly anxious to appoint an Irishman as the next Bishop.⁶¹ With Rev. Henry O’Leary already pegged for Charlottetown and Rev. Morrison favored for Antigonish, nothing could be done until Bishop Charles MacDonald passed away. Many did not think that Bishop MacDonald would live as long as he did and each day of survival for MacDonald was another day that Antigonish had to wait for its Bishop. Rome was in a difficult position. The Apostolic Delegate for Canada wrote to the Vatican to say that the appointment of a new Bishop for Antigonish was taking too long and that it was starting to attract considerable attention. In July of 1912, the Vatican could wait no longer for the demise of Bishop MacDonald,

⁵⁹ R.B. MacDonald, *The Succession*, Unpublished paper, 1991, p.15.

⁶⁰ R.B. MacDonald, *The Succession*, p.16.

⁶¹ Although there is little direct evidence for such a statement, most scholars of the Diocese agree that the speedy appointment of Bishop Henry O’Leary from New Brunswick, only one month after the death of Bishop Charles MacDonald makes it clear that the Irish priest had been pre-picked for the position.

and Pius X appointed Morrison to Antigonish.⁶² The Apostolic Delegate hurried off a message to Morrison which read,

It affords me much pleasure to convey to you the official intelligence that the Holy Father has pleased to appoint you to the vacant Episcopal See of Antigonish. This news I received in a cable message from His Eminence the Cardinal Secretary of State.⁶³

Morrison accepted the office with humility and wrote back to the Apostolic Delegate,

I fully appreciate the mark of confidence given by the Apostolic See, and can only hope, that, with God's blessed assistance, I may in some small measure be able to show this confidence has not been misplaced.⁶⁴

It is hard to know whether Morrison was surprised at his appointment or not.

He claimed to Rev. H.P. MacPherson that he had come to believe there was nothing in the rumors of the past few years and that the announcement had indeed shocked him.⁶⁵ However, this is unlikely as he had been prepared for Antigonish for a while. The consecration was set for 4 September 1912, giving Morrison the time to make the necessary arrangements. Still facing the

⁶² The Vatican made a number of appointments on the same day. Bishop Casey of St. John, New Brunswick, was sent to Vancouver. Former Antigonish priest Neil Mac Neil was sent to Toronto as the new Archbishop, and a Weymouth, Nova Scotia, priest by the name of Leblanc was named as the new Bishop of St. John, New Brunswick. The appointment of Rev. Edouard Leblanc was of importance as he was the Maritimes first Acadian to be made a Bishop.

⁶³ Archbishop P.F. Stagni to Morrison, July 31, 1912, Fonds 4, Series 1, Sub 1-3, BMP, ADA.

⁶⁴ Morrison to Archbishop P.F. Stagni, August 3, 1912, Fonds 4, Series 1, Sub 1-3, BMP, ADA.

⁶⁵ Morrison to Rev. H.P. MacPherson, August 6, 1912, RG5/9/9001, President Hugh Peter MacPherson Papers, St. Francis Xavier University Archives.

difficulties in administering the Charlottetown Diocese, Rome asked Morrison not to take control of Antigonish until an administrator could be found for Charlottetown. In the meantime the Apostolic Delegate asked Morrison for his assistance in finding a suitable candidate. He asked Morrison,

Would you kindly propose the one you think best fitted for the charge, which may not last long. Would it be advisable to appoint the Rt. Rev. Mgr. Phelan, who was named Vicar General by His Lordship Bishop MacDonald?⁶⁶

Although Morrison did not think that Rev. Phelan would want the position. He agreed that since it was temporary, it would be the best for all involved.

The news of Morrison's appointment was received warmly in both Charlottetown and Antigonish; to some it was a surprise, to others it was expected. Those in Antigonish were relieved that they finally had a Bishop to guide the Diocese. Although many people in Charlottetown and those in Vernon River were saddened to lose such an effective priest and administrator, they were happy that one of their own was chosen for such an important position. The Parishioners of Vernon River signed a letter, which read,

Great dignity and honor has been bestowed upon you by the Holy See and we rejoice exceedingly, that it was our pastor who was worthy of such distinction. We know it will mean separation from your loving

⁶⁶ Archbishop P.F. Stagni to Morrison, August 15, 1912, Fonds 4, Series 1, Sub 1-3, BMP, ADA.

parishioners of Vernon River, but by the spirit of religion we can rise above all selfish prompting, occasioned by the thought of parting from such a pastor and truly rejoice that God has been pleased to call you to a higher duty and a wider field of usefulness.⁶⁷

Morrison's days as a priest on Prince Edward Island were over and he now directed his thoughts across the Northumberland Strait to his new Diocese, Antigonish.

⁶⁷ Vernon River Parishioners to Morrison, August 1912, Fonds 4, Series 1, Sub 1-3, BMP, ADA.

Chapter Two

“Antigonish”

1912- 1914

James Morrison’s first contact with Antigonish clergy as their new Bishop was from his perspective, very positive. He met with Rev. Hugh P. MacPherson and Rev. Michael MacAdam on his way back from Halifax in early August and they expressed to Morrison that they were “pleased with the appointment.”¹ They were worried about the timing of the consecration. They wished to complete the impending celebration quickly as the university term was quickly approaching. The only place suitable to house the large number of visitors for an important event such as a consecration of a Bishop was St. Francis Xavier University. As the college would be full of students by the end of September it was imperative that the ceremony be held as soon as possible. It could not be held, however, until the official papal bulls² announcing the election of the new Bishop arrived. They were late and there was great worry that this would force a delay in the schedule. Under such a time constraint the administrator, Rev. H.P MacPherson, requested consistorial permission to

¹ Morrison to Most Rev. E.J. McCarthy, August 13, 1912, BMP, ADA. Revs. MacAdam and MacPherson seemed generally happy to have any bishop as it had been so long since the death of Bishop Cameron.

² The fee for the bulls was 2700 lire, or \$540.00 Cdn. The Bishop-Elect, Rev. Morrison, paid this fee.

dispense with their arrival.³ Rome agreed to comply with the request, a result that surprised both the new bishop and the Apostolic Delegate in Ottawa.⁴

Morrison crossed the Northumberland Strait in late August 1912. He planned on making a quiet retreat at the monastery in Tracadie, but the work in Charlottetown followed him to Antigonish County. His consecration as Bishop of Antigonish was one week away and as administrator of Charlottetown he had the added stresses of the affairs of the Diocese on the Island. The issue of appointing a coadjutor for Bishop McDonald was of considerable concern.⁵ Although fond of all three candidates, Morrison favored Rev. Gregory MacLellan for the position. Morrison's reasoning was that MacLellan's knowledge of the church and the people in the capital city would make him the best administrator in Charlottetown.⁶

The Diocese of Antigonish consisted then, as it still does, of the Eastern Nova Scotia counties of Pictou, Antigonish, Guysborough and all of Cape Breton. It had been previously called the Diocese of Arichat when it was

³ R.B. MacDonald, "The Succession", unpublished paper, 1991, p.18. MacDonald argues that the willingness of Rome to speed up the progress was due in large part to the great length of time it took to find a Bishop for the Diocese.

⁴ R.B. MacDonald, "The Succession", p.18.

⁵ The three candidates for the position of coadjutor were. 1. Rev.. Gregory J. McLellan, D.D, of Charlottetown. 2. Rev.. Joseph C. McLean of Summerside. 3. Rev.. John C. Macmillan, D.D, of Cardigan Bridge.

⁶ Morrison to the Most Reverend E.J. McCarthy. August 27, 1912, letter#2, Bishop Morrison Papers (Henceforth known as BMP), Antigonish Diocesan Archives (Henceforth known as ADA).

created in 1844.⁷ It was renamed Antigonish in 1886. Catholicism was synonymous with Antigonish and historians such as Mark McGowan argue that Antigonish's importance to English-speaking Catholics in Canada cannot be overstated. McGowan writes,

The men and women of the Diocese of Antigonish helped to construct a “pan-Canadian network” within the church in Anglophone Canada, which served as a conduit for future waves of Catholic emigrants, ideas and leadership.⁸

During Bishop Cameron's reign as bishop, Antigonish, its bishop and its politicians were conspicuous players in national and ecclesiastical and political affairs.⁹ This was an important diocese and Morrison was well aware of its traditions.

Morrison's entrance into Antigonish as the Bishop elect was an exciting one. As everywhere in the Roman Catholic world these were grand events. All shops and businesses were closed, and the townspeople came out to the train

⁷ The Diocese of Arichat had been created primarily to solve the tension between the Scottish dominance in Eastern Nova Scotia and the Irish Catholic power base in Halifax. Its first three Bishops were William Fraser (1844-51), Colin F. MacKinnon (1852-1877) and John Cameron (1877-1910). See A.A. Johnston, *A History of the Catholic Church in Eastern Nova Scotia*, Volume I, (Antigonish: St. F.X Press, 1971).

⁸ Mark G. McGowan, “The Maritimes Region and the Building of a Canadian Church: The Case of the Diocese of Antigonish after Confederation”, *Canadian Catholic Historical Association, Historical Studies*, 70 (2004), p. 28.

⁹ Mark G. McGowan, “The Maritimes Region and the Building of a Canadian Church: The Case of the Diocese of Antigonish after Confederation”, p. 31.

station in their best attire to meet their new spiritual leader.¹⁰ A long procession escorted Morrison through the brightly decorated town, to the college rink, where a reception was held in his honor. Here speeches were made welcoming the Bishop elect to his new diocese. Morrison also visited the Bishop's residence, which was to be his home for the next thirty-eight years. At nine o'clock in the morning on 4 September 1912, James Morrison was taken by fellow priests to his consecration as Bishop of Antigonish. Many priests and bishops were on hand for the ceremony. The consecrator was the Apostolic Delegate Peregrin Francois Stagni,¹¹ and the service was performed in front of a tightly packed crowd in St. Ninian's Cathedral.¹² The hundreds of people who could not get in the doors waited outside for a glimpse of the new bishop.¹³

Morrison was only able to enjoy his new position as Bishop of Antigonish for a few days before he had to return to Charlottetown. He was still the administrator in Charlottetown and having been instructed by Rome not to take control over Antigonish until an administrator for that diocese was found, he traveled back to Vernon River.¹⁴ It was not until late October that Rev.

James Phelan took control over Charlottetown, allowing Morrison to return to

¹⁰ *The Casket*, September 5, 1912.

¹¹ In 1912, P.F. Stagni, (1859-1918) was the Apostolic Delegate for Canada.

¹² The St. F.X. choir provided the music and the Sisters of St. Martha decorated the Cathedral. There were 26 ushers and officers on hand as well as eight Bishops personally on hand and numerous priests and dignitaries.

¹³ *The Casket*, September 5, 1912.

¹⁴ Morrison came back to Antigonish on 24 September to preach at the funeral mass of Archbishop Ronald MacDonald held in St. Ninian's Cathedral.

Antigonish. Morrison again crossed the Strait and on 19 October was able to assume control of his diocese.¹⁵ The first few months of his time in Antigonish were spent trying to acclimatize himself to his new surroundings. It was difficult for Morrison to leave behind his friends and colleagues on the Island and he felt somewhat lonely in the beginning. To make matters worse, in March 1913 Morrison was stunned by the news that St. Dunstan's Cathedral in Charlottetown, which he had built, had burnt to the ground. Although deeply saddened by the fire, Morrison could not find it in himself to ask the people of Antigonish for rebuilding funds. In a letter to Rev. Ronald Macdonald of Pictou, he confessed that at that time he was "somewhat shy of making such an appeal". It was not appropriate for a bishop to beg, even at the cost of the rebuilding of a building that had special meaning for him.¹⁶ This decision not to appeal to Antigonish for funds was a clear sign of what Morrison's financial position was to be, and it remained true throughout his life. It was up to each diocese to fend for itself, and it was up to each diocese to insure that it maintained a strict rule of remaining debt free.

¹⁵ Morrison to Rev. Donald MacPherson. October 19, 1912, letter#7, BMP, ADA.

¹⁶ Morrison to Rev. Ronald Macdonald. March 17, 1913, letter#324, BMP, ADA. A poem was written on the fire at St. Dunstan's. See Albert Lannan, "St. Dunstan's Cathedral Fire", *The Abegweit Review* (Fall 1994-spring 1995).

Morrison moved into the Bishop's palace behind the Cathedral and began the work of administering his Diocese.¹⁷ Using the same old typewriter as he had used in Charlottetown and Vernon River, he began to punch out hundreds of letters. It was a testament to the new bishop that he worked alone and did all his own secretarial work.¹⁸ Although he was now in charge in Antigonish, certain problems pertaining to Charlottetown seemed to keep popping up, requiring his time and energy.¹⁹ These were of little concern except that they took up considerable time on an already busy schedule. The first month of his reign was spent on the road touring the various parishes within the diocese. He was already somewhat familiar with the diocese, but felt it his duty to visit all his parishes from Pictou to Sydney. As the new bishop, he was welcomed warmly in packed churches across the diocese. Each parish required a different message and while in industrial Cape Breton, Morrison made a point to let Catholics know that he was going to take an active interest in their situations. In Glace Bay he told the people, "I will always take the deepest

¹⁷ The Bishop's Residence or the Bishop's Palace was built in 1883 under the direction of Bishop Cameron. It was a stately building with three floors and high ceilings. It served until after Morrison's death in 1950, when the building had become somewhat dilapidated and Bishop J.R. MacDonald decided to move to Main Street and into the new 'palace'. The missionary sisters of Our Lady of Africa used the building until it was torn down in the early 1970's to make room for expansion of the campus of St. F.X.

¹⁸ Morrison and his typewriter are of great fame as he continued to wear them out, always repairing them. There is a great deal of correspondence between Morrison and A. Milne Fraser about his machine. Fraser's company was located on Hollis street in Halifax. Although he had no secretary, he brought his housekeeper, Miss Vera Campbell, from Prince Edward Island.

¹⁹ Morrison did all he could for his former colleagues on Prince Edward Island. In one instance he agreed to help promote Rev. J.C. Macmillan's *History of the Catholic Church on Prince Edward Island*.

interest in the spiritual and temporal welfare of the people of Glace Bay.”²⁰

This would turn out to be true, as a large part of Morrison’s time over the next thirty years would be used in trying to come up with a solution to maintaining Church influence among the Catholic miners while trying to maintain a decent quality of life for their families.

Another important part of his tour was to assess the educational facilities of the diocese. In mid-October he was welcomed to St. Francis Xavier University, which was the diocesan university and the leader of higher education in eastern Nova Scotia and was read a welcoming speech by Vice-President Rev. James Tompkins. As Bishop of Antigonish, Morrison was also Chancellor of the university. Most of the faculty were pleased to have a bishop with Morrison’s experience in education at the helm. They believed that he was “an ardent and experienced educationist,” and were well aware of the success that Morrison previously had as rector of St. Dunstan’s University.²¹ Morrison told the crowd that “I should always regard this institution as the apple in my eye.”²² On seeing the new Bishop for the first time, Tompkins commented,

²⁰ *The Casket*. November 28, 1912

²¹ James Cameron. *For the People: A History of Saint Francis Xavier University* (McGill-Queens University press, Montreal/Kingston. 1996), p.150.

²² *The Casket*, October 17, 1912.

He is about six feet tall and two inches in height and quite ascetic and intellectual looking. I should take him withal to be a 'canny Scot', which will not do him any particular harm in these parts.²³

Vice-president Tompkins's comments were on the mark and little did he know that in later years he would come to feel the wrath of this "canny scot". There was a great deal of optimism at the university at this time. Many felt that Saint Francis Xavier was on the verge of becoming an eminent force in Catholic higher education and the entire faculty and the Bishop shared this optimism. Writing to one alumnus, Morrison made it clear that it was his ambition "to have one of the best colleges in Canada right here in Eastern Nova Scotia."²⁴ It was, however, difficult for a university to grow without proper financial backing. As chancellor of the university it was up to Morrison to look for outside assistance. It is significant that Morrison's first major act as Bishop of Antigonish was to lead a drive in May of 1913 to raise \$300,000 for the university. Morrison was careful in his dealings with the college and had been warned of a large amount of factionalism that had developed over the years.²⁵

²³ James Cameron, *For the People: A History of Saint Francis Xavier University*, p.150.

²⁴ Morrison to John Beaton, April 8, 1914, letter#1206, BMP, ADA.

²⁵ James Cameron. *For the People: A History of Saint Francis Xavier University*, p.150. Also significant about this was the fact that Morrison first got the impression of Rev. James Tompkins as a man to be carefully handled. One Rev. A.H. Cormier complained that Vice President Tompkins had taken advantage of a weak President MacPherson and patronized and manipulated the staff. Whether this is true or not is hard to tell, although one can be certain that this warning affected Morrison's early attitude towards Rev. Tompkins.

The politics of the previous Bishop, John Cameron, and the damage done thereby within the diocese was another great concern for Morrison. Cameron's reputation for interfering in politics had made it across the Northumberland Strait and Morrison was quite aware of the harsh feelings that people harbored. Cameron had garnered national attention by supporting Conservative candidate Sir John Thompson in both provincial and federal elections in the late 19th century. Upon Cameron's death, Morrison like other Catholics in the Maritimes had two opinions. The official statement read, "In his demise there has passed away a Bishop who was a tower of strength to the welfare of the Church and State and whose long life and arduous labors will continue to be felt for generations to come."²⁶ The unofficial version was closer to the truth of what Morrison thought of Bishop Cameron; "He was a power in his day and I think he had his full share of the trouble incident to his position. I hope he is better off in the next world."²⁷ Morrison intended to reconcile any remaining quarrels that people might have with the Catholic administration of the Diocese. In Bailey's Brook, a dispute had occurred between Bishop Cameron and the people of the parish of Lismore. Cameron was adamant that the people of Lismore attend and support the new church in Bailey's Brook. The people who would not follow orders were denied the sacraments and

²⁶ Morrison to Rev. M.A. MacAdam, April 9, 1910, Morrison File, DCA.

²⁷ Morrison to Rev. J.H. Blacquire, April, 8, 1910, Morrison File, DCA.

threatened with excommunication.²⁸ Not giving up, the congregation appealed to the Apostolic Delegate, creating a lot of tension within the Diocese.

Morrison wanted to put an end to this situation and insisted upon meeting with those involved. When some parishioners in Bailey's Brook made a fuss over not wanting to bury their dead in Lismore, Morrison gave in. Although he still favored the people burying their dead at Lismore, he told the parish priest J.J. MacKinnon:

When a case comes to you for burial, remind the persons who come to you, or the relatives of the deceased, that the Lismore cemetery is the regular parish cemetery and that you would advise that the burial should take place there, but if in the end they still demand for the burial at Bailey's Brook, than in God's name let it go ahead.²⁹

To put to rest all further outstanding issues regarding the administration of Bishop Cameron and to show the solidarity of the diocesan priests and administrators, Morrison and the Rev. H.P. MacPherson³⁰ decided that a monument to the late Bishop James Cameron be purchased by the Diocese and

²⁸ Diocesan historian Rev. A.A. Johnston, author of *A History of the Catholic Church in Eastern Nova Scotia*, was aware of this situation but was unwilling to put this incident to print. Instead he wrote on page 552 of the appendix of volume two. "During the closing half-dozen years of Bishop Cameron's reign, the happiness of people, priests and bishop in two districts of the Diocese was clouded by events whose details, in due time, will probably be given by some future historian."

²⁹ Morrison to Rev. J.J. MacKinnon, March 4, 1914, letter#1102, BMP, ADA.

³⁰ Msgr. Hugh Peter MacPherson. (1867-1949). BA (ST.FX), D.D. (Laval), Hon D.C.L (Kings). President of Saint Francis Xavier University from 1906-1936. Vicar-general of the Diocese of Antigonish 1928-1949. Known as the 'Old Rector'.

erected in front of Xavier hall on the St Francis Xavier campus in Antigonish. It was agreed that a collection would be taken up in all the parishes of the diocese in order to cover the cost of the monument.³¹ Certainly to ask people, many of whom still harbored bitter memories of the late Bishop and his politics, was bold. Morrison, however, felt that a statue to the late bishop would not only honor an accomplished man but would also put to rest a divisive period in the diocese.³² This process was important if Morrison was to ensure that the people of the Diocese were clear that things had changed and a new era was beginning.

Bishop Morrison had a background indicative of a rural priest, and although he had spent considerable time in the city of Charlottetown, he had no experience with the social problems which accompanied heavy immigration and industry. Morrison took over a diocese whose industrial areas were growing steadily. In Cape Breton, immigrants were arriving daily to find work in the mines and steel plants. From the 1890s to 1910 an unprecedented growth took place in several parts of the Antigonish Diocese, including Cape Breton and Pictou County, as immigrants flocked to the pits and steel mills. The new arrivals came from Eastern Europe, the British Isles, Italy and Newfoundland.

³¹ By June 1913, the Diocese of Antigonish had collected \$2685.07 from the parishes for the monument.

³² The statue was not finally erected until 1916. In November 1915, Morrison had received no word on the statue, which was supposed to have landed in Halifax, weeks before. He became worried that the statue had been shipped on the Ancona, which had been torpedoed in the Mediterranean. Convinced that the statue was at the bottom, Morrison was relieved when he received word that the statue had made it safely across the ocean.

Between the years of 1901 and 1921 over half of Canada's Newfoundland-born residents lived in Nova Scotia.³³ Catholics were pouring into towns such as Glace Bay. In 1901 3,466 Catholic persons resided in the town; by 1911 there were 8,434.³⁴

The Catholic Church had a clear strategy when it came to immigration; the best way for to make good Canadians was to make good Catholics.³⁵ There was the perceived threat that new arrivals would be converted by Protestant groups and lose their faith. It was imperative that churches be ready to welcome the new parishioners. More churches meant that more clergy were needed to staff them. Morrison encouraged all Catholic societies within the areas controlled by the Dominion Coal Company to band together and form one federation.³⁶ Morrison's first contact with industrial labour problems can only be characterized as ill informed. He was seriously ill-prepared for the problems that the diocese was facing in industrial Cape Breton and in Pictou. One major problem was that he was too far removed from the industrial part of Cape Breton. Antigonish itself was a long drive from Sydney, separated by a body of water that needed crossing by ferry. Without living with the difficulties on a

³³ Ron Crawley, "Off to Sydney: Newfoundlanders Emigrate to Industrial Cape Breton, 1890-1914," *Acadiensis*, 17 (Spring 1988).

³⁴ Census Canada 1901, 1911.

³⁵ Terrence Murphy, Gerald Stortz, *Creed and Culture: The Place of English-Speaking Catholics in Canadian Society 1750-1930* (Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 1993), p.210.

³⁶ Morrison to Rev. Dr Alexander Thompson, P.P. St. Anne's Glace Bay. July 14, 1914, letter#1269, BMP, ADA. Morrison appointed Dr. Thompson to act as spiritual advisor to the new federation.

day-to-day basis, it was difficult for him to get a sense of the problems. It is true that he was close to Pictou, but the dominance of Protestant churches in that area kept Morrison's influence to a minimum. Morrison was aware of the papal encyclical *Rerum Novarum*, which had been published in 1891, but as many others in Morrison's position found out, the encyclical gave bishops no clear idea of how to implement its ideas. The best he could do for the moment was to try to control the spread of socialist ideology. Morrison was quickly informed of the "red" elements that existed within the industrial centers and they worried him. Socialism in the Church's view was the ultimate threat to the influence of the Catholic Church in Canada. When Morrison became suspicious that interpreters for Polish arrivals may have been inclined to socialism, he wrote to the general manager of the Dominion Coal Company:

At present writing I am unable to say in what particular localities such interpreters are employed by the company; or whether or not they are as socialistic as he represents them, but it seems to me that much harm could be avoided and possibly much good could be accomplished, if good sensible men could be had for interpreters among those people.³⁷

This was all new ground for the bishop and although he had some help from his industrial area priests, it was not easy for him.

³⁷ Morrison to D.H. MacDougall, July 8, 1914, letter#1255, BMP, ADA.

The new arrivals to the industrial towns were eager to have their spiritual needs addressed. Many people of different backgrounds were coming together and as a result certain parishes became multicultural hubs. Whitney Pier³⁸ became the home of many new workers and their families. Missions sprang up all over the Pier area for national and ethnic groups such as the Poles, Italians, Hungarians, Lithuanians and Ruthanians³⁹. Each group tried their best to stay together in order to worship as they felt this was a way for them to keep their cultural identities. Incorporating new arrivals into existing parishes was not always easy as many ethnic communities were not used to North American Catholic customs and practices.⁴⁰ In other Catholic dioceses in Canada, misinformation about ethnic communities and unpopular immigrant clergy frequently caused tension within immigrant communities. This sometimes led to schism and abandonment of the church.⁴¹ Morrison was very much aware of this problem and was determined to avoid it. He tried very hard to cater to the needs of each community, sometimes at great length.⁴² Morrison knew that

³⁸ See Don MacGillivray "Henry Melville Whitney Comes to Cape Breton: The Saga of a Gilded Age Entrepreneur" *Acadiensis* (1979), p. 44-77.

³⁹ In this thesis the author will refrain from using the word Ruthanian (except where it is a direct quotation) and substitute "Ukrainian" as it is now considered pejorative.

⁴⁰ Murphy, Stortz, *Creed and Culture*, p.218.

⁴¹ Murphy, Stortz, *Creed and Culture*, p.218.

⁴² Morrison asked his priests in industrial Cape Breton to inform him on numbers and ethnic make up of the immigrants in the parishes. He was informed by Rev. D.M. MacAdam of the difficulties in trying to get the non-English speaking immigrants to attend his church. Many of them did not understand the Latin rite and were not accustomed to the orthodoxy of Catholicism in Canada. There was urgency in this letter to supply the area with priests who could administer to the various ethnic peoples in their own language. Rev. M.A MacAdam to Morrison, February 13, 1913, incoming letter#241, BMP, ADA.

immigrants in general would be in need of priests who could not only speak their languages but who could also identify with their cultures. If he did not quickly supply these people with a priest and get them back into the churches, there was the fear that they would be taken in by the socialists.⁴³ Examples of these difficulties could be seen in Whitney Pier and Sydney. In Whitney Pier, Rev. Roderick MacInnis, parish priest since 1906, was desperately trying to cope with the new arrivals.⁴⁴ MacInnis already had one assistant who was in charge of ministering to the Italians at Sydney Mines. Reverend Domenico Viola came to Cape Breton from New York to act as a missionary to the Italians in 1908.⁴⁵ By 1913 Viola was complaining of being overworked and understaffed and worried that he was becoming unable to minister to the needs of the Italian community spread across industrial Cape Breton.⁴⁶ In Sydney Rev. Louis Soaib⁴⁷ was administering as best he could to the Syrians, but was hopelessly overworked. The Polish community of Whitney Pier numbered about 500 and was in need of a curate to minister to them in their own

⁴³ The Catholic immigrant society was desperately trying to get immigrants back into the churches, but without a church of their own, many immigrants were simply not going to church.

⁴⁴ Roderick MacInnis.(1863-1920).

⁴⁵ Domenico Viola. (1879-1958). He was said to be a eloquent and attractive preacher, and a very able musician. Pastor of St. Nicholas, Sydney.

⁴⁶ Morrison to Rev. D. Viola. April 22, 1913, letter#415, BMP, ADA.

⁴⁷ Rev. Louis Soaib. (1867-1952). He was the first resident pastor of the Catholics of the Maronite rite in the Diocese of Antigonish.

language.⁴⁸ Morrison also was searching in the United States for a Hungarian priest to provide for the many Hungarians of Whitney Pier.

Immigrant communities tended to want to remain within their own culture, and so demanded to form their own parishes. In January of 1913, the Polish community petitioned Morrison for a parish of their own. They had already set up the St. Michael's Society that was a lay organization for Poles and Russians in the area.⁴⁹ Morrison's approach to these requests was one of caution. Although greatly worried about accumulating debt to the new parish he felt that refusing the Poles would no doubt lead to a financial abandonment of their current church and it could also possibly lead to a schism. Writing to Fr. MacInnis, Morrison reiterated his fear that the grievances of the Poles could lead to problems:

From what I know of these people, the end of this agitation will be that they will open their own church, if not in the regular way, than some schismatical manner, and I may add that some expressions in their letter scarcely conceals such a possibility.⁵⁰

The best thing for the Catholics at this time was in Morrison's opinion to assist the Poles with the building of a new church and the establishment of a new

⁴⁸ Morrison to Rev. R. MacInnis. October 29, 1912, letter#20, BMP, ADA. The first Polish priest to minister to the Poles in Cape Breton was Antoni Plucinski. (1890-1930).

⁴⁹ The Society of Saint Michael erected a hall 60' long and 40' wide. The society held its meeting there every Thursday; there were also Polish weddings, dances, entertainments. For more information see David George Mullan, "A History of St. Mary's Polish Parish Sydney, Nova Scotia," Unpublished paper, 2002.

⁵⁰ Morrison to Rev. R. MacInnis. January 16, 1917, letter#173, BMP, ADA.

parish. At least, in this way the bishop and the diocese would still be able to maintain some control over the details.⁵¹ In industrial Cape Breton, Morrison was thrown into the fire in a manner of speaking. He not only had little experience with the problems of industry but he was barely on the job one year before he had to deal with difficult and complicated parish issues.

There were other communities, such as the Mi'kmaq, which had problems which needed sorting, but Morrison was not immediately worried about them. He quickly realized that getting the sacraments to the Mi'kmaq on reserves was difficult as all First Nation communities were without a priest of their own and were being served as missions by a priest from a nearby parish. Writing to Chief Matthew Francis of Pictou Landing, Morrison promised to look into the matter. Not being able to promise much he hoped that they would continue to pray to God in Heaven by "living good lives and abiding the will of god."⁵² This was certainly not an encouraging response for the Mi'Kmaq of Pictou Landing. Although willing to go to the United States to find a priest to administer the sacraments for people of Polish descent, Morrison was less apprehensive about the First Nation communities. They were obviously not a

⁵¹ The new parish went ahead under the watchful eye of diocesan administrators, carefully watching so that the Poles did not incur a large debt. The 13th of April 1913 was the first official day in the new Parish of St. Mary's, with Reverend A. Plucinski as temporary parish priest. On August 15th, 1914 Morrison was able to send them a permanent pastor. The new priest was Marianus Godlewski. While securing Godlewski, the Poles of Sydney were left without anyone who could give the sacraments in their language. Morrison had to write to Massachusetts in order to borrow a Polish priest in order to give the sacraments during Lent. This priest was Rev. John M. Chielinski.

⁵² Morrison to Chief Matthew Francis, March 10 1913, letter#309, BMP, ADA.

high priority as far as the diocese was concerned. He wrote to Rev. J.D MacLeod,⁵³ pastor of New Glasgow and Thorburn that “some move must be made to give them some regular Sunday service at least occasionally, one cannot help feeling the responsibility for their faith.”⁵⁴ These were unfortunate words from a man who was supposed to be responsible for the faith of all Catholics of the diocese. Morrison’s tact and feeling of responsibility for all Catholics of the diocese would grow with experience.

Along with the building of new parishes came new schools. Separate schools for Catholic children were important for all Catholics in Canada. Archbishop Neil MacNeil of Toronto viewed the separate schools in Ontario as the “assimilating power” of the Catholic religion.⁵⁵ Immigrant children could be assimilated into Canadian society through the study of Canadian art, literature and, of course, religion. When a new school was being built every detail was carefully looked into by the Bishop, as there was a great fear that any discrepancy in the building might lead to greater attacks upon the Catholic Church by Protestants.⁵⁶ Furthermore, the right of Catholics to maintain their own schools was paramount to the future and wellbeing of all Catholics in eastern Nova Scotia. It was in these schools that young minds were formed and

⁵³ Very Reverend John Duncan MacLeod.(1871-1927). Built the church at Fishers Grant Reserve for the Mi’Kmaq.

⁵⁴ Morrison to J.D. MacLeod, April 4, 1914, letter#1196, BMP, ADA.

⁵⁵ Murphy, Stortz, *Creed and Culture*, p.216.

⁵⁶ Morrison to Rev. R MacInnis, letter#687, BMP, ADA.

Catholic teaching installed. Few matters were given as much care as schools and Morrison would spare nothing to find the funding for construction, maintenance and upgrading of these educational facilities.⁵⁷ The Bishop was suspicious of people who questioned the nature of schools, especially in Catholic areas. When the Government of Nova Scotia formed a committee in 1914 to look into the educational system in the province, Morrison was suspicious. He wrote to Premier George Murray,

I trust honorable sir, that your good sense will not be influenced by any wild or irresponsible representations that may be made with a view of injuring those schools, and therefore I hope we can rely upon your Government not to be a party to any move that would be detrimental to them.⁵⁸

Nova Scotia was no different than Prince Edward Island when it came to the tension between Protestants and Catholics over education and Morrison was going to do anything that he could to ensure that the rights of Catholics were protected.

Being the bishop of Antigonish also brought with it an inevitable involvement in political affairs. Morrison was not bishop for very long before he was brought into the world of Senatorial appointments for Catholics.

⁵⁷ In trying to secure a loan for a School in Sydney Morrison pointed it out to the Capital Trust Corporation in Ottawa that the Diocesan property was valued at 1.2 million and offered a large parish hall and gymnasium in Sydney valued at 450,000 as collateral.

⁵⁸ Morrison to George H. Murray, April 4, 1914, letter#1195, BMP, ADA.

Morrison was consumed with writing reference letters for friends who he felt would be appropriate in representing the diocese as senators in Ottawa or Judges in county courts. He not only was worried about ridings within the diocese but on Prince Edward Island as well.⁵⁹ Morrison's view of politics was non-partisan; he cared only about the ramifications for Catholics. He understood the problems caused by the political meanderings of the previous bishop, John Cameron, and he made it clear to his clergy that party affiliation was not to be tolerated.⁶⁰ In politics, Morrison was concerned with demographics. He worried when the voting numbers of Catholics as opposed to Protestants decreased. He worried when the government was interfering in Catholic issues. He worried about the loss of regional power in the Maritimes. When the boundary commission decided to combine the ridings of Antigonish and Guysbrough into one federal riding, Morrison wrote to Joseph A. Chisholm in Halifax with his concerns,

From what consideration I have given to the results of a combination of Antigonish and Guysboro, I have been wondering whether or not such a combination would be safe for a Catholic representative. As far as numbers go, it ought to be safe; but I have understood all along that party lines are pretty sharply drawn, and might easily result in a divided

⁵⁹ Morrison wrote to Prime Minister Borden to recommend that James MacIsaac, who was at the time the editor of the Charlottetown Herald, be made the senator for Queens County, PEI.

⁶⁰ For a complete account of the politics of Bishop John Cameron, see Raymond MacLean, *Bishop John Cameron: Piety and Politics* (Antigonish: The Casket, 1991).

Catholic vote. Accordingly I have been considering whether or not the Pictou County census would be sufficient to let the eastern part of the county be added to Antigonish, as thus save the representation of the County.⁶¹

Redistribution not only bothered Morrison in a parochial sense, but also in a regional sense. Eliminating two seats in eastern Nova Scotia would put not only the Catholics but also the whole area at a distinct disadvantage.⁶² Morrison could clearly see that political power for Catholics and the diocese was disappearing and this would become a problem. In these early days Morrison became very conscious of the loss of influence that the Catholic Church was beginning to suffer and ensuring that he had sufficient political clout was an important step in maintaining his authority in the Province.

One very bright spot in Bishop Morrison's new parish was the order of the Sisters of St. Martha. Begun in 1900 and intended to carry out the domestic duties at the college. The Marthas quickly gained fame throughout the English-speaking Catholic Canada and by 1913 other diocesan leaders believed that they had a need for such an order. The first to come calling was the Archbishop of Toronto, Neil MacNeil, who petitioned the Sisters of St. Martha to come to Toronto to staff a new seminary. Both Rev. H.P MacPherson and Bishop

⁶¹ Morrison to J.A. Chisholm. August 13, 1913, letter#672, BMP, ADA.

⁶² 1913 saw the loss of two seats in eastern Nova Scotia. Inverness and Richmond were joined, as were Antigonish and Guysbrough.

Morrison supported this move. The result of this was that the Antigonish Diocese was guaranteed one free space in the Toronto seminary each year for a candidate from Antigonish.⁶³ More importantly it symbolized the beginning the detachment of the Sisters of St. Martha from St. Francis Xavier University. From the beginning, Morrison felt that the Marthas had a lot more to offer the diocese than domestic work. Beginning with his release of the sisters to Toronto in 1913, he showed a willingness to let the Marthas fulfill their potential, assuming of course that they continued to keep up their duties in Antigonish. This early gesture began a relationship which would always be one grounded in goodwill and a great deal of mutual respect.

After his first year spent getting acquainted with his diocese, Morrison decided to make his Ad Limina visit to Rome, which was required by all the Pope's bishops every five years. In April 1914 he left for Italy, accompanied by Rev. D.M. MacAdam; they sailed on the White Star liner Canopic from Boston on April 23rd.⁶⁴ This was very much a working trip for Morrison and he intended to get to know as many officials, both religious and secular, as he could in Europe.⁶⁵ These connections would be important in the years to come.

⁶³ St. Augustine's Seminary was opened in 1913 on the Scarborough Bluff's within the Archdiocese of Toronto. It was to become the major seminary for training priests for English-speaking Canada.

⁶⁴ Donald M. MacAdam (1867-1924). He was the founder of the Scottish Catholic Society of Canada. He was one of three diocesan priests spoken of as a possible successor to Bishop John Cameron.

⁶⁵ Before sailing, Morrison asked Prime Minister Borden for letters of introduction to the Canadian High Commissioners in London and Paris.

Morrison was fortunate that as a graduate of the Urban College, many of his previous classmates were in positions of some influence, which made it easier to make the required contacts. On the morning of 11 June, 1914, Morrison along with Mabou native, Bishop Alexander MacDonald of Victoria, had a meeting with Pope Pius IX in the Vatican.⁶⁶ The private meeting lasted only a few minutes but Morrison was encouraged and commented that, “The Pope was interested in the account of the thorough education impact by our efficient Catholic institutions.”⁶⁷ Although Europe in 1914 was on the brink of war, very few were aware of it; certainly not the Bishop, who remarked on his trip after hostilities broke out, “there did not seem to be the slightest suspicion of any trouble of this kind.”⁶⁸ But war was to break out and within a few short months Morrison would be faced with the difficulties of administering a diocese in time of war.

The years 1912 to 1914 were crucial years in the career of James Morrison. His first two years as bishop in Antigonish were busy ones. Antigonish was a growing diocese and there was a lot to become familiar with. It was different from Charlottetown in many ways. Morrison would have been the first to admit that he was somewhat unprepared for some of the early decisions which were required of him. He was certainly ill-equipped and

⁶⁶ *The Casket*, June 11, 1914.

⁶⁷ *The Casket*, July 19, 1914.

⁶⁸ Morrison to Rev. McLellan, September 15, 1914, letter#1461, BMP, ADA.

uninformed as to the problems of labour due to the high levels of immigration to industrial Cape Breton. He did his best to try to provide for the people spiritually and he had learned to deal with some of the minor issues of a diocese.⁶⁹ Throughout this period he was able to successfully deal with the business of the Charlottetown diocese, while helping to ease some of the damage that had been caused by the former Bishop of Antigonish. Although his experience as a Diocesan administrator was helpful, he now understood that life as a bishop in Rome's church was much more difficult than most realized as even the smallest situations required his opinions.⁷⁰ Overall he had adjusted well to his new surroundings and he had a good understanding of his new diocese. This would turn out to be important, for as the summer of 1914 came to a close, the threat of war loomed in Europe, and the Catholics of Antigonish were going too soon be thrust into its midst.

⁶⁹ On the 10th of October (1913) Morrison asked the Rev. D. J. MacIntosh, the Parish Priest of Baddeck to serve as Vicar- general of the Diocese. He announced the appointment on December 20, 1913. It was the first major appointment of the few that Morrison was to make.

⁷⁰ The abuse of alcohol was of great concern to Morrison and he was a great supporter of the temperance society of the League of the Cross. Morrison himself made it a priority upon his arrival in Antigonish to meet with the League and to appoint the grand spiritual advisor. Convinced that the League should become an important and powerful force within the community, Morrison wrote to the Apostolic Delegate in Ottawa to promote the work that the society was doing in Antigonish and inquired as to whether or not the society could be canonically erected by the Pope.

Chapter Three

“War Years”

August 1914-December 1918

The years 1914 to 1918 were difficult and demanding for Bishop Morrison. The Great War which erupted in Europe in 1914 put the Diocese under a lot of strain. Morrison was able to come through despite the many obstacles. He cemented his position as a “Empire Bishop” and gave generously of time and effort to the war effort. He insisted that Catholics give financially to the Victory Loan campaign and that the young men of the diocese do their part by joining the armed forces. He played a substantial role in defending the rights of Catholic soldiers to have access to Catholic chaplains and was willing to withdraw from the war effort to insure that anti-Catholic bigotry was stamped out of the Canadian army and government. He did all this while maintaining stability within his own diocese.

On 4 August, 1914, the British government, receiving no reply on an ultimatum that the German government withdraw military personal from Belgium, declared that a state of war existed between Germany and the British Empire.¹ These events were watched with great curiosity in Antigonish. Morrison was unsure of what to expect. He asked Rev. L.E Perrin at the

¹ A. Fortescue Duguid, *Official History of The Canadian Forces in The Great War 1914-1918* (Ottawa: National Defense, 1938), p.9.

Canadian College in Rome, “What a terrible war is on now in Europe. Is it the great Armageddon, or what is it?”² Like all Canadians, Morrison watched the events unfolding in Europe with a curious eye.³ Early thoughts about the war were that it would be short. In fact, *The Casket* believed that the only discomfort that the war would bring to the country was a rise in the cost of living. “It is hoped, however, that costs will not be advanced unreasonably.”⁴

On 18 September 1914, Morrison received his first request on a war related cause. The German army had invaded and moved through Catholic Belgium, and stories of starvation and violence reached Canada. An appeal was being made from Nova Scotia Premier George Murray’s office that supplies be gathered and sent to Belgium in order to relieve the suffering of the people in that country. A Belgium Relief committee had been formed and their information indicated that the people of Belgium would not be able to harvest any crops, and that in the agricultural districts and in towns where the German army had been, absolute destitution existed.⁵ The very next day, the Bishop issued a circular to all the priests of the diocese. In it he indicated that Catholic Belgium had become an unwilling victim of the war and that “for the sacred

² Morrison to Rev., L.E. Perrin, August 15th, 1914, letter#1352, BMP, ADA.

³ In August of 1914, Morrison received word that Pope Pius IX died. He was replaced in September by Pope Benedict X.

⁴ *The Casket*, August 6, 1914. Unlike many Canadians, Morrison felt early on that the war in Europe could be a long struggle. In a letter to Mgr. D. MacIntosh at the Scots College in Rome, he wrote, “For most of them, it is going to be a life and death struggle, and consequently will likely be fought to the bitter end.”

⁵ E.M. MacDonald to Morrison, September 18, 1914, incoming letter#1432, BMP, ADA.

principle of international honesty, little Belgium has dared to face a mighty empire.”⁶ He called upon the priests and laity of the diocese to give all they could.⁷ Also in September of 1914, Morrison was asked to act as honorary president of the Antigonish chapter of the Canadian Patriotic Fund. This chapter was secular, and Morrison welcomed the proposal of working alongside the Protestants of the area.⁸ This cooperation was to last for the duration of the war.⁹ In November, the bishop celebrated the twenty-fifth anniversary of his ordination as a priest and although he was modestly hoping that it would quietly pass by without notice, he took the time to write old classmates and colleagues.

In the spring and summer of 1915, Morrison became concerned with the attitude of Canadians that the war in Europe was of little concern. He sent circulars out to his priests demanding that they encourage men to enlist in the armed forces. He was alarmed that the authorities were not doing enough to fill up the military. In a letter to the commander of the 6th division in Halifax, Morrison commented,

⁶ Morrison circular, September 19, 1914, letter#1479, BMP, ADA.

⁷ The Belgium Relief Committee was calling for clothes, non-perishable food, blankets, etc. The Headquarters of the Eastern section of the Relief committee was in the care of the Acadia Coal Company in Stellerton, Nova Scotia.

⁸ The President of the Antigonish chapter of the Canadian Patriotic fund was Rev. Hugh Peter MacPherson, while the Rev. A.H. Denoon of St. James United Church was selected as second vice-president.

⁹ Recruiting meetings were held in Orange Lodges on stages which included both Catholic and Protestant clergymen.

I think it proper to say that competent military recruiters should be employed to make an active canvass, and that no time should be lost about it. I consider it disgraceful that in this time of stress there seems to be no let up in the round of sports, excursions, plays and what not, without any apparent concern for the safety of our country.¹⁰

Morrison believed that at a time when the Empire's very future was at stake, it was appalling that people could be so non-committal. In Morrison's opinion, it would be a sad reflection on the manhood of the Empire if conscription were needed because of the lack of volunteers to the armed forces. This new sense of urgency was shown within the pages of *The Casket*. The newspaper began to praise the heroism of the men who had already left for Europe. Letters, which were sent to the newspaper from men overseas, were published and given a prominent place in the newspaper.¹¹ This began Morrison's active participation in the recruitment of young men for military service.

In the spring of 1916, Morrison wrote a circular to his priests and instructed them to preach on the subject of recruitment. In the circular, Morrison warned that the war in Europe would have a direct impact on life in Canada:

¹⁰ Morrison to Major-General R.W Rutherford, August 4, 1915, letter#2316, BMP, ADA.

¹¹ *The Casket*, March 25, 1915. These letters were always cheerful ones. They talked of the great adventure which awaited any young man willing to enlist in the armed forces.

Our interests in the final success of this undertaking are wrapped up not only in the cause of the Empire and of justice between nations, which alone would be sufficient to claim our best efforts in supporting such a cause, but also in the fact that the future status of Canada is a very important factor which in no small measure will be affected according as the final results will be victory or defeat for the allies.¹²

Victory would come, Morrison insisted, but not without sacrifice. He called upon the young men of the diocese to enlist and join “the already large number of their brethren in the faith who have enlisted for overseas service.”¹³ These circulars from the Bishop and encouragement from priests were very effective. Men throughout the Diocese, from all communities, began to enlist at a rapid pace. Bishop Morrison’s reaction to the war and his support for recruiting efforts represented the English-speaking Catholic hierarchy’s view that it was the duty of a mature dominion to defend the British Empire. Other Bishops who followed this motto included Bishop Casey and Bishop Alfred Sinnott in the west and Bishops Gauthier, McNeil and Fallon in the East.¹⁴ Morrison was however in a situation which required some cautiousness. His diocese was ethnically diverse, and although he played the role of “Empire Bishop,” he was mindful of the feelings of those non-British elements of his diocese.

¹² Morrison circular, letter#2937, BMP, ADA.

¹³ Morrison circular, letter#2937, BMP, ADA.

¹⁴ Duff Crerar, *Padres in No Man’s Land: Canadian Chaplains and the Great War* (Montreal: McGill-Queens, 1995), p.42.

Many units were filled up with men from the Antigonish diocese. The Acadians of Cape Breton enlisted in the French Acadian Battalion, the 165th; and others in battalions such as the 185th, 25th, 85th, 66th, 27th, and 38th.¹⁵ Cape Breton Island was asked to raise a battalion of its own. The 185th battalion, or more commonly the Cape Breton Highlanders, recruited men from all over the island.¹⁶ In 1916, over one half of the soldiers in the 185th were Catholic. By the end of 1916, the diocese had native sons in almost all of the units in the country.

Bishop Morrison was clearly willing to come to the aid of the Empire, when it needed soldiers for the military. He used his authority to encourage enlistment. However, he felt compelled to ensure that the religious needs of the new recruits were met. The only way that the Bishop could be confident in the spiritual welfare of Antigonish Catholic soldiers was to ensure that an Antigonish chaplain went along with the battalions to Europe. As Mark McGowan writes, “for Catholic recruits the most poignant visible reminder of the Catholic faith during the war was the presence of the Catholic chaplain.”¹⁷

The Canadian chaplaincy service was under the direction of an Ottawa

¹⁵ Charles G. Brewer, “The Diocese of Antigonish and World War I.” MA Thesis, University of New Brunswick, 1975, p.46.

¹⁶ The motto of this regiment was “Siol Na Fear Fearsil,” which means “Seed of many men.” After the battle of Ypres, the Cape Breton Highlanders became known as the “Ladies from Hell” because of their fearless fighting and their kilts.

¹⁷ Mark McGowan, “Harvesting the Red Vineyard: Catholic Religious Culture in the Canadian Expeditionary Force, 1914-1919,” *Canadian Catholic Historical Association*, (volume 64, 1998), p. 52.

Anglican cleric; Richard Steacy.¹⁸ Rev. Alfred E Burke, who was the self-proclaimed defender of Catholic interests in France, unofficially represented the Catholics.¹⁹ From the start of the conflict, much was made of the unfair treatment that Catholics were receiving. Anglican chaplains were perceived to be getting special privileges that other denominations were not. British army regulations called for two Anglican chaplains for every Catholic priest. The first chaplain appointed to a battalion was Rev. Donald MacPherson, who was sent overseas with the 25th Nova Scotia Infantry Battalion.²⁰ On the eve of his departure for France he was transferred to the Dardanelles. The explanation of the authorities was that although MacPherson came over with the 25th, no chaplain could be exclusive to any particular battalion. The experience of MacPherson was an early warning to Morrison of the difficulties that Catholic chaplains would face during the Great War.

For Catholics the transfer of able bodied priests from units presented a serious problem. The word quickly reached Antigonish that there were not enough chaplains in the military to meet the needs of the men. Morrison

¹⁸ Stacey's only experience with the military came from his membership on the Militia departments Cadet Committee. His close relationship to Sam Hughes was enough to pass more qualified men for the job of chaplain.

¹⁹ Duff Crerar, *Padres in No Man's Land*, p.42 Burke had previously been the editor Toronto's *Catholic Register*. His publication had printed in 1915 that Catholic soldiers were being killed without receiving the sacraments. Burke was able to get himself appointed a chaplain by Senator Loughheed, and upon arrival in France, he began to speak on behalf of all Canadian Catholics. This was without permission from any recognized Catholic authority.

²⁰ Msgr. Donald MacPherson, (1872-1959). Educated at St Francis Xavier University, Grand Seminary of Quebec. Ordained by Bishop Cameron on 15 August, 1901. Rev. MacPherson was originally supposed to go to Europe attached to the Argyle Highlanders in September 1914, but he waited for the 25th N.S Infantry battalion in April of 1915.

contacted the acting Minister of Militia to seek an explanation. Morrison saw two problems with the shortage of Catholic chaplains in the Canadian army. The most obvious was that Catholic men would be without a priest to administer the sacraments, and secondly the rumors of the shortage of chaplains were sure to hamper recruiting. Morrison wrote,

I am informed on very good authority that in the British army proper a Catholic chaplain is appointed for each Catholic regiment or battalion or brigade, and one for other battalions partly Catholic, and that according to this computation, the 2nd Brigade of Canadian forces at Shorncliffe or East Sandling should have six or seven chaplains.²¹

Furthermore Morrison was not content with the idea that chaplains were being based at divisional headquarters. He wanted the chaplains on the battlefields, where they could best serve the men. In October with the assurance from military authorities that the transfer of Rev. MacPherson was an error, Morrison was again asked to supply a chaplain for a battalion, this time it was the 85th.²² In allowing diocesan priests to enter the chaplain service, Morrison was aware that it would create shortages within the diocese.²³

²¹ Morrison to Hon. Senator Loughhead, August 12, 1915, letter#3336, BMP, ADA.

²² Rev. Ronald MacDonald, II, (1863-1939). Born in Knoydart (Lismore parish). MacDonald sailed with the 85th, landing in England on 13 October, 1916.

²³ This shortage forced Morrison to give parishes to junior priests who would normally have remained assistants for a few more years. The departure of Rev. Ronald MacDonald from Pictou forced Morrison to appoint to Pictou, Rev. James Decoste from Inverness and the assistant at Glace Bay to Inverness on a temporary basis. The assistant was John Hugh MacDonald, later

On March 9, 1916, Rev. Ronald MacGillvray wrote Morrison to tell him that he too had been transferred away from the unit to which he was assigned. Within days, Morrison received the news that yet another Antigonish chaplain had been reassigned upon reaching England.²⁴ At the same time, letters were arriving from Catholic soldiers who were complaining about the lack of chaplains. A soldier in the 25th wrote to Morrison, "Our colonel don't believe in anything, especially the Catholic Church, so I tell you we ain't getting the best of shows."²⁵ Morrison angrily wrote Prime Minister Robert Laird Borden to protest, citing the fact that he had only allowed his priests to act as chaplains, thinking that they would be servicing Catholics from Eastern Nova Scotia. In Morrison's view, he was working to support the war, while his own wishes were being ignored. Fed up with the situation, Morrison even suggested that Rev. Miles Tompkins come home, as he would be more use in Antigonish than in France away from his Antigonish boys.²⁶ Rev. Burke assured Morrison that not a "single Catholic soldier has suffered for spiritual supply" and that any

Archbishop of Edmonton. The shortage of priests was so acute that Morrison was forced to ask the seminary in Toronto to rush the ordination of Daniel Doyle.

²⁴ The Chaplain was Rev. Miles Tompkins who had sailed with the 40th, but went to France with the 9th Canadian infantry brigade.

²⁵ Morrison to Hon Robert Borden, March 23, 1916, letter#3051, BMP, ADA.

²⁶ Morrison to Rev. Miles Tompkins, May 20, 1916, letter#3255, BMP, ADA. "As the 40th is broken up, I do not see why you should feel obliged to remain there any longer, and if you can get your discharge in an honorable way, I think it would be better to resign and come home."

Tompkins wrote to Rev. James Tompkins, "If the Bishop calls me back, I suppose I shall have to go, but much against my will" Miles Tompkins to Rev. James Tompkins, June 13, 1916, MG 10, 2, 1A, James Tompkins Papers, Beaten Institute Archives.

Catholic soldier in France who wanted a priest could have one.²⁷ Burke and Stacey believed that the complaints of Morrison were nothing more than blatant parochialism.

By the summer of 1916, the situation with Catholic chaplains in Europe was out of control. The apostolic delegate to Canada, Monsignor Stagni, was writing to the Bishops, warning them that Rev. Burke in France was acting without papal authority. In essence there was no one in charge. Without a senior Catholic voice, he feared the Catholic chaplains in France would continue to be hampered by Protestant bigotry. Suspecting the worst, Morrison began to act on behalf of all Maritime chaplains. He wrote to the chaplain of the 64th battalion in Halifax. He told Rev. P. McQuillan to expect the worst once he arrived in England. Morrison insisted that the Halifax priest keep regular correspondence with him at all times. Morrison wanted to know exactly what was happening to the Maritime chaplains.²⁸ By the summer of 1916, the Catholic chaplains had had enough. Led by Rev. Wolstan Workman, the Catholic chaplains demanded that the Government of Canada appoint a senior Catholic chaplain to the new Fourth division. When the post went to a Presbyterian, the Catholics were on the verge of mutiny.²⁹

²⁷ Rev. Alfred Burke to Morrison, April 18, 1916, incoming letter#3198, BMP, ADA.

²⁸ Morrison to Rev. P. McQuillan, March 30, 1916, letter#3085, BMP, ADA.

²⁹ Duff Crerar, *Padres in No Man's Land*, p. 52.

Rev. Workman turned to Morrison for help. He blamed the troubles of the Catholics on the ultra-Protestant views of Stacey.³⁰ The padres in Europe had circulated a petition calling the attitude of the senior officials towards the Catholic chaplains as “simply scandalous”.³¹ When Morrison was told of the petition, he demanded that the Prime Minister conduct an immediate investigation. Morrison felt that the only way that things could change would be if Colonel Stacey was removed. His letters to government officials throughout the winter of 1916 and spring of 1917 were full of appeals for Stacey’s removal. By the spring of 1917, both Colonel Stacey and Rev. Burke were gone. Upon hearing of the dismissal of Colonel Stacey, Morrison commented to a local priest that it was “good riddance.”³² In April of 1917, Morrison wrote to Sir Edward Kemp, Minister of Militia, thanking him for his actions in fixing some of the problems overseas. A few days later Morrison wrote Rev. Ronald MacDonald, telling him that matters should now improve with Stacey gone and Rev. Workman in charge of the welfare of Catholic

³⁰ Stacey had remarked to Rev. Workman that “the Roman Catholic Church in Canada had an unenviable reputation for getting from the Government anything that it wanted and that he would not be a partner to obtaining favors over here.”

³¹ Duff Crerar, *Padres in No Man’s Land*, p. 54.

³² Morrison to Rev. J.J. MacNeil, March 21, 1917, letter#4016, BMP, ADA. There were a great many factors in the removal of Colonel Stacey. He had made enemies out of all the denominational chaplains except the Anglicans. When Sam Hughes left the post of Minister of Militia, his fate was sealed. See, Duff Crerar, *Padres in No Man’s Land: Canadian Chaplains and the Great War*. (Montreal: McGill-Queens, 1995).

chaplains.³³ This was good news for the six Antigonish chaplains.³⁴ The long battle for the fair treatment of Catholic chaplains was at an end. Morrison's work on behalf of Catholic chaplains had been effective. The Canadian bishops decided that the time was right to petition for a complete re-organization of the chaplain services within Canada. Under the guidance of Bishop Morrison, the Maritime bishops wholeheartedly supported the initiative.

As casualties began to pile up at the front, the Canadian government was beginning to discuss the possibility of implementing conscription. In March 1917 Morrison first heard the rumors of conscription but, believed that they were only rumors and that nothing would come of it. When it did come he remained in line with the rest of the English-speaking Catholic Bishops of Canada. He realized that the issue of conscription was a difficult issue for French-speaking Canada. Conscription was an issue which caused great division within Canada. Quebec Premier Henri Bourassa was skeptical of the government's war aims and believed that the war supported British imperialists in their drive for imperial domination.³⁵ He argued that the various fundamental agreements between Canada and Great Britain, such as the Constitutional Act

³³ "From what I have heard of Father Workman during the past eighteen months or so, I would consider him a fair-minded person who wishes to do the right thing for the soldiers, and I would be disappointed should matters turn out otherwise at least as far as concerns the Catholic soldiers from Eastern Nova Scotia. Morrison to Rev. Ronald MacDonald, April 23, 1917, letter#4112, BMP, ADA.

³⁴ Major Rev. Donald MacPherson, Major Rev. Miles N. Tompkins, (M.C), Major Rev. Ronald C MacGillivray, (M.C), Captain Rev. Ronald MacDonald, Captain, Rev. Michael Gillis.

³⁵ Joseph Levitt, Henri Bourassa, Catholic Critic, *The Canadian Historical Society Booklets*, No. 29, (Ottawa, 1967), p. 10.

of 1791 and the British North America Act of 1867 meant that Canada was only responsible for defending her own territory while Britain was bound to assume the role of imperial defense.³⁶ French-speaking peoples in Quebec were against conscription and promoted the idea of passive resistance.³⁷ When Quebecers rioted on 21 March 1917, English-speaking Canada was outraged. One prairie voter demanded to know, "When are the hangings going to start in Quebec? Shooting is too good for them."³⁸ *The Casket* continued support for conscription, but at the same time it recognized the importance of the contribution of Quebec to the war effort. In 1914, *The Casket* had written articles praising the papers *La Patrie*, *La Presse*, *Le Canada*, *Le Soleil* and *L'Evenement* because they were as committed to the war effort as the English-speaking papers.³⁹ *The Casket* objected to English newspapers accusing Quebec of being against conscription because they were Catholic. When a Cape Breton Protestant clergyman preached that Catholics in Quebec were disloyal, *The Casket* shot back:

We have no objections to criticism of Quebec concerning recruitment.

We think it open to criticism, but to seek to fasten a charge of disloyalty on Catholics, or to galvanize the dead carcasses of anti-popery bogies,

³⁶ Elizabeth Armstrong, *The Crisis of Quebec, 1914-1918* (New York: AMS Press, 1967), p. 113.

³⁷ Desmond Morton, J.L. Granatstein, *Marching to Armageddon: Canadians and the Great War 1914-1919* (Toronto: Lester & Orpen Dennys, 1989), p. 193.

³⁸ Desmond Morton, J.L. Granatstein, *Marching to Armageddon*, p. 194.

³⁹ Charles G. Brewer, "The Diocese of Antigonish and World War I". p. 24.

because Quebec has been slack recruiting is a sign of degraded ignorance or cynical rascality.⁴⁰

Morrison's support for conscription showed his continued support for the government and his role as an "empire" bishop. Morrison and *The Casket* were careful to defend Quebec Catholics, while maintaining their relationship with Nova Scotia Protestants. His one worry about conscription was the difficulties which farmers faced upon losing the services of the young men destined for the services. Morrison's attitude concerning the importance to rural production was clear. In a letter to the Hon R.B. Bennett, Morrison wrote,

I think it is fully recognized that farm production is a very essential feature of the Country's welfare and whatever the conditions may be elsewhere in this regard, I have to say that in this vicinity there is a deficiency of manpower as to numbers, so that it is with the greatest difficulty that the land can be worked even to half its capacity.⁴¹

The war clearly outlined the diversity of opinion between English and French Catholics. In fact, however, Catholic Bishops in English and French-speaking areas were similar in their support for the war effort. Despite the criticisms of

⁴⁰ *The Casket*, July 19, 1917.

⁴¹ Morrison to Hon R.B. Bennett, December 27, 1916, letter#3740, BMP, ADA.

Protestant media, the Antigonish diocese continued to do what they could for the war effort.⁴²

During the war, St. Francis Xavier University was functioning without many of its students. In February of 1916, word was received that the Department of Militia had authorized the formation of a Stationary Hospital unit for overseas service. The Hospital unit which had the support of Morrison, was really the brainchild of Rev. H.P MacPherson.⁴³ Morrison left Rev. MacPherson to process the many applications that came in. In fact, Morrison's biggest effort was simply to act as a reference for some of the applicants. The unit served as a way for the University to give both moral and financial support to the war effort. The great pride that the university and the diocese took in the hospital unit was evident in 1919 when Rev. MacPherson enquired into the possibility of having an organization ready to take up the work of the unit should another war arise.⁴⁴

The Sisters of Saint Martha labored long and hard during the Great War. They also helped to establish a new congregation. In 1914, Bishop Henry J

⁴² The reduced number of priests in the diocese due to the six chaplains serving overseas meant that the remaining priests had to take on more duties. Rev. H.P. MacPherson ran the college farm, Mount Cameron, while Rev. Miles Tompkins was serving as a chaplain.

⁴³ In March of 1915, Rev. H.P. MacPherson wrote to Hon. Sam Hughes requesting that the University be able to staff a Hospital unit. The St. Francis Xavier University Hospital Unit was staffed by alumni and friends of the school. The command of the unit was given to Alumnus Lt. Col. Dr. Roderick C. McLeod; he was assisted by Major Dr. H.E. Kendall. Applications to join this unit came in from across the country. The doctors and nursing sisters left for Europe on 19 June, 1916. The unit came home on 8 July 1919 and was welcomed in Halifax by Vice President Rev. James Tompkins.

⁴⁴ Rev. H.P MacPherson to H.L Edmonds, December 24, 1919, RG/5/9/2483, HPMP, STFXUA.

.O'Leary asked Bishop Morrison if he would permit the loan of a few Marthas so that they might train some women for domestic work at St. Dunstan's University.⁴⁵ Morrison agreed to the plan, although secretly he wrote to Rev. H.P. MacPherson that Antigonish was getting the "Heaver side of the burden."⁴⁶ So as the war in Europe raged overseas, four sisters left Antigonish for Charlottetown.⁴⁷ During this same period, with the blessing of Morrison, the Marthas were being recalled for duty at St. Joseph's Hospital in Glace Bay. In 1916, the Marthas were put in charge of the new orphanage, which was opened as the St. Mary's Home in Sydney.⁴⁸ Clearly the Marthas were moving away from their traditional role of domestic service to the university. Morrison recognized this fact and his support gave the Sisters of St. Martha great encouragement. In 1917 the order was granted autonomy from the university

⁴⁵ The Bishop of Charlottetown was asking that the Sisters in Antigonish help start a congregation of the Marthas completely independent from those in Antigonish. The Bishop of Charlottetown was willing to send a sister to Antigonish to replace those helping on the Island. All the expenses that were incurred in bringing Antigonish sisters to the Island and vice versa would be borne by the Bishop of Charlottetown.

⁴⁶ Morrison to H.P MacPherson, October 23, 1915, RG/5/9/9011, HPMP, STFXUA. Morrison's reasons for feeling the heavier side of the burden were 1. Trained sisters were leaving for Charlottetown while Antigonish were taking on the un-trained, 2. Charlottetown was to receive young sisters while the older ones who trained them would return to Antigonish, 3. Antigonish was to pay \$2 per month in wages.

⁴⁷ The sisters were Mary Clare Murray, Mary Bernardine McQuaid, Mary St. John Farrell and Mary Bonaventure Cahill.

⁴⁸ A great deal of the funds for the orphanage came from the 1916 Good Friday collection. The "Moseley property" in Sydney was purchased for the site of the new orphanage at a cost of \$16000. The diocese contacted the Sisters of Charity and the Filles de Jesus but were turned down. Thus the Marthas were the only order left. Morrison to Rev. D.M MacAdam, February 14, 1917, letter#3916, BMP, ADA.

and in that same year they decided to build a new motherhouse.⁴⁹ Morrison not only chaired the building drive campaign, but he also placed the needs of the sisters before the clergy at the annual retreat in 1918, and \$40,000 was raised in support.⁵⁰

Towards the end of the war, Morrison was again called upon to use his influence to raise money for war-related causes. In 1917, Morrison encouraged Catholics to buy Victory Loan bonds. Editorials in support of the bonds were placed in *The Casket*. Writing to the chairman of the Victory Loan Campaign, Morrison stated,

Whoever has the means to invest in a war bond, let him do so, if he wishes in the future to look his country straight in the face. A war bond over and above its money value is for the holder a certificate of enlightened and patriotic citizenship in this Dominion. It would be a disgrace to Canada were she obliged to go outside her own territory to complete this loan, when the money is right here in the country to float it.⁵¹

⁴⁹ Some members of St. F.X. objected to the Marthas leaving the service of the college. Sister S.M. Faustina complained to Morrison that it was the college who first asked the sisters to expand into the hospitals and seminaries and now they could not be expected to give these ventures up. Morrison agreed. Sister S.M. Faustina to Morrison, incomingletter#4481, BMP, ADA.

⁵⁰ James Cameron, *And Martha Served: History of The Sisters of St. Martha*, Antigonish, Nova Scotia (Halifax: Nimbus, 2000), p. 67.

⁵¹ Morrison to G.S Campbell, November 12, 1917, letter#4672, BMP, ADA.

Morrison spent a great amount of energy writing articles and circulars assuring the people that the bonds were safe and would be honored after the war. With this assurance the people of the diocese gave generously to the scheme.⁵²

Morrison supported subsequent drives in 1918 and 1919. The Victory Loan drive pointed out the diversity of the region and the problems of being an “Empire Bishop” while administering a Diocese with a large Acadian population. In the middle of the loan drive in 1917, the chairman of the Richmond County Victory Loan wrote to Morrison to protest the fact that Catholic clergymen in Isle. Madame would not announce the Victory Loans from the pulpits unless approved by the bishop. Morrison not only recommended the loans as a safe investment, but also told the Acadians of the parish that they were all partners in the Dominion of Canada and that as partners they all enjoyed the same rights, but with these rights came duties.⁵³ Although the Acadians in the Maritimes were the most visible opponents of conscription, they had not been uniformly anti-war and had contributed greatly to the war effort within the diocese.

In the midst of war, Morrison’s attention was often turned towards the situation of Catholic soldiers in the trenches. On 8 May, 1917, the Ontario

⁵² The seven counties of the Antigonish diocese gave \$7,740,750 in 1917, while the remaining counties of Nova Scotia gave \$11,774,750.

⁵³ Charles G. Brewer, “The Diocese of Antigonish and World War I,” p. 59.

Knights of Columbus⁵⁴ decided at their annual convention that they were going to begin a fundraising effort in order to improve the living conditions of the soldiers at the front.⁵⁵ Morrison welcomed this initiative, as he had already helped raise the funds for a recreational facility at Camp Aldershot. This facility under the direction of Rev. Ronald MacDonald was open to Catholic and Protestant alike.⁵⁶ On 11 May, 1918, Morrison wrote the officers and members of the Knights of Columbus in the Maritimes. In the letter he wrote,

I feel that it is a pressing duty to ask the Knights of Columbus to organize a general public campaign for funds to provide our Catholic soldiers overseas, or wherever they may be assembled, with Catholic huts, clubrooms and accessories thereto, in which the army chaplains may be enabled more efficiently and more conveniently to minister to their religious welfare, and where the soldiers themselves, irrespective of their denominational affiliations, may have at their disposal, such accommodations in a social life as may be a proper safeguard for their moral welfare.⁵⁷

⁵⁴ The first Canadian group of the Knights of Columbus was established in Montreal in 1897. The Knights were a fraternal order dedicated to the defense of the rights of Catholics, with the motto, "Good Citizenship."

⁵⁵ I.J.E. Daniel, *For God and Country: War Work of the Canadian Knights of Columbus Catholic Army Huts* (1922).

⁵⁶ For information on the facility at Aldershot, see: *Nova Scotia Highlander Magazine*, 14 July, 1916.

⁵⁷ *The Casket*, July 18, 1918.

As the war in Europe moved towards an end, the Protestant's social Gospel movement of Nova Scotia was pressuring the Provincial and Federal governments to implement Prohibition for the duration of the war. The general secretary of the Temperance Alliance was the Protestant minister Rev. H.R. Grant.⁵⁸ Rev. Grant and Morrison had a good working relationship and there was a great deal of respect between them. The Temperance Alliance argued that Prohibition should be implemented out of respect to the enormous sacrifices being made by those fighting in Europe. In order to impress upon the government that Prohibition was supported by all religious communities within the province, Grant requested Morrison's support. Temperance itself was supported by Morrison. He was supportive of the work that the Temperance Alliance was doing. Although the two men shared the desire for temperance, they had different opinions of how to obtain their goal. Morrison's approach to temperance was ambiguous. Alcohol abuse was a problem of Catholic laymen and clergy alike. All new clergy had to join the Priest Total Abstinence League. Morrison felt that it was the clergy's duty to lead by example for moral reasons, but for economic ones as well.⁵⁹ Morrison made it a priority to urge all prominent members of the Catholic community to practice temperance.⁶⁰ He

⁵⁸ H.R. Grant was a native of Pictou County and a graduate of Queens University. Experienced in mission work in Manitoba and New Brunswick, he was pastor in Trenton, Nova Scotia.

⁵⁹ Morrison to Priests Total Abstinence League, July 19, 1918, letter#5385, BMP, ADA.

⁶⁰ Leading members of the community who were looking for Morrison's support in order to gain political office had to ensure the Bishop that they were temperate.

felt that Catholics had the infrastructure in place to deal with the problems of alcoholism effectively.⁶¹ The League of the Cross society was active in the diocese and had the full support of the Bishop.⁶² He did not believe that government legislation was the answer. Furthermore as a Catholic, the availability of wine for sacramental purposes was important. In Morrison's view it was not wise for the government to take any steps by which the ability of the church to receive their wine could be compromised. Although this was his official opinion, he felt that because of the situation in Europe, it would be unpatriotic not to support Grant and the appeal for Prohibition. Morrison wrote to Grant,

It is certainly most desirable that the general public should give every possible assistance towards enforcing the Temperance Laws now existing, and when necessary towards improving them, and in a manner consistent with Christian principles and British ideals.⁶³

Morrison's support of Prohibition would last only for the duration of the war in Europe. Clearly there were problems in enforcing the new Temperance Act. It

⁶¹ Temperance societies had existed in the Antigonish Diocese since 1841. On January 1, 1841, Bishop Fraser took the Oath of Temperance at St. Ninian's Church. On April 11, 1841 the Father Matthew Total Abstinence Society was organized in Sydney. The League of the Cross had been active in the diocese since 1891. Involvement in the League required a public pronouncement of one's intention of temperance.

⁶²When a Cape Breton priest was considering implementing the St. John the Baptist society Morrison wrote to him expressing his opinion: "I feel that as the League of the Cross society is established in so many parishes in the diocese, the temperance cause would be more effective in your parish if that society were established there, as it would have the moral support from the other branches of the society in your vicinity, and in this way the traffic in liquor would be more effectively put down." Morrison to Rev. L.E. Perrin, August 15th, 1914, letter#1352, BMP, ADA.

⁶³ Morrison to Rev. H.R. Grant, September 7, 1918, letter#3425, BMP, ADA.

was clear, however, that he was willing to act in solidarity with Protestants in order to support the war effort.

The war had a great effect on the Diocese and the province. On December 6th, 1917, Morrison was at work in the Bishop's Palace in Antigonish when he felt the house shake. He thought it nothing more than a powerful gust of wind. One hour later word reached him that a munitions ship in Halifax had exploded with the loss of many lives.⁶⁴ Like others across the country, Morrison was horrified by the terrific damage which the explosion caused. The Diocese gave financial support to meet the immediate needs of the city. Later, in a resolution drafted by all Maritime Catholic bishops, they called for the Federal government to assume the responsibility of rebuilding schools and churches.

Morrison welcomed the news in November of 1918 that hostilities had ended in Europe. On 11 November, church bells rang out from every church in the diocese. At the Cathedral Morrison preached the sermon,

The Danger is past and the people feel like breathing freely. It was a long time coming, and we should thank God it has come. We know how the faithful of this diocese rallied to the flag and crowned themselves

⁶⁴ Morrison to Rev. John R. MacDonald, December 6, 1917, letter#4742, BMP, ADA.

with glory. Many have lost their nearest and dearest. Let us be mindful of these boys that God may grant them eternal rest.⁶⁵

The destruction and loss of life due to the war affected everyone in the diocese.⁶⁶ 513 men from the diocese had made the supreme sacrifice during the fighting, and one had won the Victoria Cross for valor.⁶⁷

The men would soon be returning from Europe and that would bring new problems for the diocese. The economic problems of the area would once again be in the forefront. The population of Antigonish County had dropped from 18,060 in 1881 to 11,518 in 1921.⁶⁸ Many priests of the Diocese were aware of the difficulties which were looming. One of these priests was the Vice President of the university, James Tompkins. Tompkins believed that the control of industry in the Maritimes had been unfairly centralized in Montreal and Toronto and he asserted, "Industrially and financially we are living under despotism."⁶⁹ Other priests, such as President H.P. MacPherson, believed that the war had shown what the people could do for their own social and economic welfare. In January of 1918, Rev. James Tompkins wrote the first of a series of

⁶⁵ *The Morning Chronicle*, November 12, 1918.

⁶⁶ The news of the deaths in the war of Morrison's former parishioners on Prince Edward Island hurt him most. One of these young men was Ambrose Hennessey of Charlottetown, who had been the first baby that Morrison had baptized as a young priest. Morrison wrote to his father that "Amidst all the sadness and the many bereavements caused by the war, I feel this one in a special way." Morrison to William Hennessey, November 15, 1918, letter#5723, BMP, ADA.

⁶⁷ John Bernard Croak from St. John's Parish in New Aberdeen was killed August 8, 1918 at Amiens. The V.C. was awarded posthumously to his mother Mrs. James Croak by the Lieutenant Governor of Nova Scotia at Government House on 22 November, 1918.

⁶⁸ Census of Canada, 1921.

⁶⁹ James Cameron, *For the People: A History of St Francis Xavier University* (Montreal: McGill-Queens, 1996), p.167.

articles in *The Casket* entitled “For the People.” These articles brought to the attention of readers the plight of the working man and the Catholic initiatives which could be used to combat socialism. Morrison supported this new movement.

The period between 1914 and 1918 was a particularly busy one for the bishop. He acted in full support of the government and of the war. His support for the war effort, through recruitment and fund raising, cemented him as a “Empire Bishop”. Morrison maintained this position despite the perceived bigotry of the chaplain services and the Ontario English-speaking newspapers during the conscription crisis. He fostered and supported the expansion of the services of the Marthas and he welcomed the spirit of reform minded priests of the diocese. However, the ability of Morrison to adapt to the changes of the post-war society was soon to be challenged.

Chapter Four
“Gaining Control”
1919-1925

The end of the Great War was celebrated in Canada but with the celebrations came the realization that the world had changed. In Antigonish, Catholics were facing an uncertain economy, and with the influx of veterans back into the community the role of the Church was going to be tested. With the war over, Morrison now turned to the social problems of his diocese. There were rumblings during the war from priests such as Rev. James Tompkins arguing that the Catholic Church had a bigger part to play in the economic life of the community. The first part of the 1920's would see the building of the foundation of a movement that would try to take on this part.

In February, 1919, tired from the tasks of the diocese, Morrison left for Oakland, California, for a visit with his brother Dan. On his way home he stopped off in Boston to visit some friends.¹ While there he gave an interview to the *Boston American* in which he came out in support of Irish Home Rule. This was an interesting position coming from a man who was considered an “Empire Bishop” during the war. Morrison was praised by the newspaper

¹ Morrison had a great many friends and relatives in the Boston area. His sister Mary lived in Medford, Massachusetts and brother John lived in Johnstown, New York.

which considered him “A progressive leader in the Church.”² Certainly his opinions on Ireland were progressive. He was always supportive of Irish home rule. He wrote to Rev. T. O’Sullivan in Halifax, “It is hoped that Ireland may soon obtain her just constitutional status, and that peace and happiness may thus gain a lasting foothold in that suffering country.”³ As the troubles in Ireland continued, *The Casket* kept watch over the news of the suffering Catholics across the sea. He returned refreshed and ready to tackle the tasks in front of him, which included, at a personal level, the learning of Spanish.

The everyday life of the average Catholic was important to the clergy of the diocese, but nothing was more important than the welfare of Catholic children. Children who were born to unwed parents ran the risk of ending up in a Protestant orphanage where they would likely lose their birth-faith. In 1917, the Sisters of St. Martha took over the care of Catholic orphans in industrial Cape Breton at St. Mary’s home. By 1919 the numbers of orphans were so high, it was clear that a new facility was needed. Morrison chaired a building committee looking to construct a larger home in the area. Much to the dismay of Morrison, the Provincial government rejected the proposed plans, as they had problems with the design. Fearful of losing Catholic children to the Protestant orphanages, Morrison pressed the Government to reconsider. In a letter to Judge W.B. Wallace, the bishop expressed his outrage about the

² *The Boston American*, March 9, 1919.

³ Morrison to Rev. T. O’Sullivan, November 3, 1920, letter#7759, BMP, ADA.

decision of the government: “Now we do not propose lying down under what looks very much like religious persecution.”⁴ The diocese would not get its new orphanage until 1925, but Morrison continued to add to the amount of monies that the orphanage could use. He was intent on keeping Catholic children with the Church. The episode reminded the bishop of what he considered to be Protestant bigotry within the province. Morrison also continued to press on with the idea of a Catholic hospital in Sydney.

The war had taught Morrison the importance of having his voice heard in the media. His dealings during the war with Protestant military and Government officials left him convinced of the need for a strong Catholic paper, and he set his sights on *The Casket*. Furthermore, Rev. James Tompkins, anxious to utilize the pages of the local paper, encouraged Morrison to take control from current editor, Michael Donovan.⁵ In a letter to his priests in mid-March, Morrison wrote,

You may be aware that for some time there has been more or less informal discussion regarding the advisability of having the Catholic press of this country made as effective as possible with a view to the best

⁴ Morrison to W.B. Wallace, December 1, 1919, letter#6917, BMP, ADA.

⁵ Laurence K. Shook, *Catholic Post-Secondary Education in English-Speaking Canada: A History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1971), p. 84.

moral and religious, as also the material and social welfare of the people.⁶

Morrison wanted to take over control of *The Casket* and distribute the shares among the priests of the diocese. The priests were supportive of this idea. In fact there had been pressure applied upon Donovan by various priests to give up control since 1913, which Donovan refused to do.⁷ The reasons for the takeover were clear. There were sometimes conflicts between Donovan's reporting and the official Catholic position and Morrison believed that Catholics of the area assumed that the paper spoke for the bishop. Therefore he felt that he should have control over what was in it.

The process by which Morrison was able to assume control of *The Casket* was controversial, and exemplified how ruthless Morrison could be when he faced opposition. The official version is that as the head of the Board of Directors, Morrison was able to convince the manager, Michael Donovan, to sell the largest number of shares in the paper for \$18,000. The man who did most of the negotiating was Rev. J.J. Tompkins. In fact Tompkins and Morrison were in complete agreement as to *The Casket* takeover. Donovan was offered the job of manager but refused. In reality the situation was much more complex. Many years later, claiming that he had been cheated of his shares,

⁶ Morrison circular, March 19, 1919, letter#6147, BMP, ADA.

⁷ Raymond MacLean, *The Casket: From Gutenberg to Internet: The Story of a Small-Town Weekly* (Antigonish: The Casket Publishing, 1992), p.136.

Michael Donovan was willing to tell anyone who would listen, including the Apostolic Delegate that the Bishop and Rev. Tompkins had conspired to force him out of *The Casket*.⁸ The evidence seems to back up Donovan's claim. In the same circular to his priests Morrison wrote that, although Donovan was to sell his shares for \$18,000, "I must say that from a business standpoint he is not at all anxious to sell at that figure."⁹ This was a shrewd and calculated takeover by Morrison and his priests. *The Casket* was now in the hands of the diocese and its priests. Fourteen of the twenty members of the Board of Directors were clergy. There were 255 shares and as of 1 May 1919, Morrison controlled 155 of them.¹⁰ *The Casket* was recapitalized and reorganized. This episode is important as it clearly shows that in Morrison's first years as Bishop of Antigonish, he and Rev. Tompkins were collaborators and not adversaries. Long presented as opponents, Morrison and Tompkins worked tirelessly for the take-over and the matter showed that while working together they formed a formidable team. They were, however, soon to clash and the result would be a civil war within the diocese.

⁸ Donovan claimed that Rev. Tompkins threatened him, "I would swear to the fact that Rev. Tompkins said you would not allow me to run a Catholic paper any longer in the diocese, and that if I did not accept your check I would lose all and would go crazy in the end." Donovan also claimed that if he did not sell his shares the Diocese would start a rival paper and put him out of business. Michael Donovan to Morrison, June 28, 1922, incoming letter# 9241, BMP, ADA. In 1926 Donovan was still desperately trying to get what he thought was owed to him by the Diocese. Donovan had been paid nothing for the liquid assets. He also claimed that Tompkins promised him \$1000.

⁹ Morrison circular, March 19, 1919, letter#6147, BMP, ADA.

¹⁰ Rev. H.P. MacPherson had 28 shares, Saint Francis Xavier University 22.

In 1920 a great depression began in many of the communities of Atlantic Canada, as branch-plant closures, cutbacks and unfavorable freight rates undermined the economy. In the Maritimes the depression began in the summer of 1920 and lasted for a full generation.¹¹ In 1921 large increases in freight-rates meant that the Maritimes were at a disadvantage in getting their goods to central Canada. The Nova Scotia Assembly resolved unanimously that “faithful observance of the terms and conditions of the compact of confederation and a generous National Spirit” be adhered to.¹² The region’s continuing loss of political and economic power was on the minds of many prominent Nova Scotians. In July of 1920, Arthur Meighan assumed the Prime Minister’s position from Sir Robert Borden. Echoing Premier George Murray of Nova Scotia, Bishop Morrison in Antigonish hoped that Prime Minister Arthur Meighen would be “less unfavorable towards Eastern Nova Scotia than his predecessor was.”¹³ Meighan’s term as Prime Minister did not last very long, since he was defeated by William Lyon Mackenzie King in 1921. In that election, radical socialist J.B. McLachlan¹⁴ outpolled the Conservative party in Cape Breton South and Richmond. This was a very serious time for the

¹¹ John G Reid, *Six Crucial Decades: Times of Change in the History of the Maritimes* (Halifax: Nimbus, 1987), p. 161.

¹² J Murray Beck, *Politics of Nova Scotia: Volume two, 1896-1988* (Tantallon: Four East Publications, 1985), p.86.

¹³ Morrison to J. A. Gillis, August 25, 1920, letter#7340, BMP, ADA.

¹⁴ James Bryson McLachlan, (1869-1937) Cape Breton labour leader and union organizer. He ran unsuccessfully in the 1921 federal election but managed to collect 8,914 votes. See David Frank, *J.B. McLachlan: A Biography* (Toronto: Lorimer, 1999).

Province and for the Catholic Church. The election of Mackenzie King and the Liberals resulted in the Maritime rights movement losing important ground. Furthermore, the successes of the socialist candidate in Cape Breton had labour leaders such as J.B. McLachlan issuing manifestos calling for class war; telling miners to “carry that war into the country of the enemy.”¹⁵ Having been disappointed with Meighen, Morrison was outraged with what he viewed as a total lack of leadership from Mackenzie King and the government. Writing to him about the state of industry in Nova Scotia in 1921, Morrison did not mince his words.

I am sure you must be aware of how during these recent years, the industrial situation in the eastern part of Canada has been more or less strangled not only by a lack of sympathy on the part of the central railway management of Canada but also by what seemed to be the management’s studied effort to place all business connected therewith among the industrial centers of upper and western Canada, with the result that to no small extent the business conditions of Maritime Canada and especially of Nova Scotia have suffered an economic paralysis.¹⁶

Morrison felt that the Maritimes deserved no less than fair and honest treatment from the government and he called upon King to do what was right. Much of Morrison’s correspondence during this period deals with the abandonment of

¹⁵ J. Murray Beck, *Politics of Nova Scotia*, p.89.

¹⁶ Morrison to Hon W. L. Mackenzie King, December 14, 1921, letter#8885, BMP, ADA.

farms and the economic situation of rural areas. He was very conscious of the declining population of his diocese.

In the fall of 1919, reform-minded priests under the leadership of Rev. Tompkins began putting on educational and social conferences at St. Francis Xavier University. Morrison supported Tompkins with these initiatives and assured him that the university was deeply interested in the subject. Writing to a friend on Prince Edward Island, Morrison agreed that the study of sociology was becoming increasingly important. There is no doubt that Morrison was cautious in his approach to the economic problems of the period. In a letter to Tompkins in September of 1919, Morrison wrote,

A careful survey of the present ethical, social and industrial situation convinces us of the necessity of bringing together along safe and sane lines the various elements of humanity in this North American Continent, and we are no less convinced that it is mainly through the proper channels of educational effort that this can be accomplished.¹⁷

Morrison was confident in this period that the problems of the Diocese could be corrected through education. St. Francis Xavier University was the tool through which society's ills could be cured. Even within his own family Morrison felt that a strong education was a necessity. He financed the education of his nephew Charlie Morrison at St. Dunstan's in Charlottetown. However, true to

¹⁷ Morrison to Rev. James Tompkins, September 29, 1919, letter#6711, BMP, ADA.

Morrison's cautious attitude, he was insistent that the boy have some direction as to what he was going to do with himself, and thus apply his studies accordingly.¹⁸

Rev. Tompkins had recently brought some recognition to St. Francis Xavier University when he received an honorary degree from Dalhousie. With Morrison's support, Rev. Tompkins traveled to New York City in November to meet with officials from the Carnegie Foundation of New York. It was hoped that Tompkins might be able to secure some financial assistance in order to found a chair in French at the university. At this time 23,400 Acadians lived in the diocese, making up 25 per cent of the total Catholic population, but they only represented about 6 per cent of the total enrollment at the university. There had been some opposition to the war from the Acadians of the diocese, although not as great as there had been in New Brunswick. Rev. Tompkins, who grew up among Acadians, was eager to include these Catholics within the college structure.¹⁹ Morrison clearly supported this, as did prominent Acadians within the diocese. The meetings held there by Tompkins and the officials of the foundation left the priest in a state of excitement. Tompkins was able to secure a \$50,000 grant for a chair in French at the university, provided the

¹⁸ Morrison to Charles Morrison, October 4, 1919, letter#6812, BMP, ADA.

¹⁹ James Cameron, *For the People: A History of St. Francis Xavier University* (Montreal: McGill-Queens, 1996), p. 164.

university contributes another \$50,000 with it.²⁰ Morrison was supportive of Tompkins's work and wrote to him on 14 November,

I desire again to express my entire sympathy with your plan for this work. Right here we have the educational plant to do this good work, we have the will to do it and we have the confidence of these Acadian people that we want to help them as best we can.²¹

Tompkins was eager to have Morrison travel to New York and meet with Carnegie officials. Tompkins was convinced that the Foundation was willing to supply St. Francis Xavier with more resources in the future. The priest was beginning to see the opportunity in a close relationship with the Carnegie people. He wrote to Morrison, "Has your Lordship been thinking about that People's School (Danish Type)? I am almost certain I could get 50 or 100 thousand for that."²² Morrison was convinced that caution was the order of the day. In Morrison's opinion, the diocese must be certain of success before it could begin to develop such grand schemes. Morrison did recognize the valuable work that Tompkins was doing for the university and supported him as best he could.²³ For Morrison, and the university, Tompkins's trip to New York

²⁰ The grant was made to the university, provided that the school could raise another \$50,000 to match it.

²¹ Morrison to Rev. James Tompkins, November 14, 1919, letter#6865, BMP, ADA.

²² Rev. James Tompkins to Morrison, December 11, 1919, incoming letter#6846, BMP, ADA.

²³ Morrison offered Tompkins financial support for his work in New York. In a letter to Tompkins, Morrison wrote, "What about your financial status? I do not wish to seem to be unmindful of this aspect of the matter, and may say I shall do all I can to help finance you in these

had been a success. Morrison and the college were willing to meet the Carnegie demands and expected that all the Catholics of the Diocese would “join in heart and soul to make it a success.”²⁴ Clearly Bishop Morrison was a willing participant in the early reform efforts of the diocese of Antigonish. He helped finance and direct the early movement and supported most of Tompkin’s initiatives. Morrison cautiously weighed up each idea, while keeping the diocese away from ideas that would incur debt or be difficult to implement.

In April of 1920, St. Francis Xavier University was in a period of change. With the new French chair commencing in the fall, the Board of Governors decided that a campaign was to be launched in order to raise \$500,000 for the school. Morrison called upon the clergy and the laity to work for the campaign even to the point of “personal sacrifice.”²⁵ The university was to the Bishop a very important part of the diocese and all other collections before the church were to cease in order to obtain the goal for St. Francis Xavier. The future of higher education in the area depended upon this drive and the Bishop was taking no chances.²⁶

There is no doubt that Bishop Morrison had good control of St. Francis Xavier. When the university’s act of incorporation was to be amended by the

undertakings. Don’t be shy about it.” Morrison to Rev. James Tompkins, December 26, 1919, letter#6995, BMP, ADA.

²⁴ Morrison to Rev. James Tompkins, January 14, 1920, letter# 7061, BMP, ADA.

²⁵ Morrison circular, April 21, 1920, letter#7324,BMP, ADA.

²⁶ Morrison was keen on the idea of placing two guns brought back from the battlefields of Europe on the college grounds facing the street. However, nothing seemed to come of it.

Nova Scotia Legislature in 1921, Morrison wanted a clause which gave the Bishop the right to appoint or remove any member of the clergy. Morrison's reason for this was that he wanted to guard the institution against, "precipitated or impulsive measures the full import of which may not always be fully grasped at first sight."²⁷ Morrison's clever and cautious nature was clearly at work here. Although safeguarding himself from any unexpected influences, he was nevertheless still willing to remain supportive of Tompkins. He was cautious but not un-progressive. In 1921 Tompkins published, *Knowledge for the People*, which was funded by Neil McNeil of Boston.²⁸ The first People's School was held on campus in January. Fifty-one students came to the university to be taught on subjects from economics to agriculture. The idea was to take the knowledge to the people. Morrison wrote the foreword in the pamphlet that was issued to the students. In it he wrote,

Present economic conditions are bringing about a great social awakening among all classes of the people, one symptom of which is the hunger for useful and practical knowledge on the part of so many of the young and middle aged adult population.²⁹

A letter written to the Knights of Columbus in July cemented Morrison's position that the university was there to give an education to Catholics who

²⁷ Morrison to Neil R. McArthur, February 12, 1921, letter#8086, BMP, ADA.

²⁸ Neil McNeil was a great friend to the Diocese. He lived in Dorchester Massachusetts, and was a good friend of Morrison.

²⁹ *The People's School booklet*, January to March 1921.

otherwise would have no access to it. He was concerned that due to the industrial conditions of life in the country, high standards of education were necessary. St. Francis Xavier was going to provide the education so that these young men could hope for something more than a “third, fourth or even lower rank.”³⁰ It is here that the ideologies of Bishop Morrison and Rev. Tompkins began to separate. In essence they believed in the same thing, in that they wanted to bring education to people who would not normally be able to receive it. They differed in how they intended to accomplish their goal.

The Carnegie Corporation of New York was besieged by requests from Maritime universities for funding during this period. In May 1921, the foundation set up a commission to examine and report on the educational situation in the Maritime Provinces and Newfoundland. The committee was made up of two men: W.S. Learned, of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching and K.C.M. Sills, president of Bowdoin College in Maine. Their opinion after careful examination was that the Maritime colleges should be centralized and situated in Halifax. Like the University of Toronto, the various Maritime universities would be able to maintain their respective distinctiveness and continue their wholesome rivalry.³¹ The committee held St. Francis Xavier in a fairly favorable light. They thought it a “fairly genuine

³⁰ Morrison to Knights of Columbus, June 24, 1921, letter#8453, BMP, ADA.

³¹ W.S. Learned, K.C.M. Sills, *Education in the Maritime Provinces of Canada* (New York, The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 1922), p. 35.

institution”, praised its People’s Schools and considered it an important institution for English-speaking Catholics in the Dominion.³² However, for Catholics as well as Baptists, Anglicans and Methodists, unification of the universities was needed in order to assure academic excellence. The report left educators buzzing with excitement over its possibilities. One of those who immediately favored the idea of federation of Maritime universities was Rev. Tompkins. Inspired, Tompkins began to argue the merits of federation to anyone in the Catholic community who would listen. He believed that St. Francis Xavier was nothing more than a high school, with professors teaching subjects that they were not qualified to teach.³³ Furthermore, St. Francis Xavier could not afford to stand idly by while the other universities joined together. If it did so, it would further isolate the university as well as poor Catholic students.³⁴ On 11 December, 1921, months before the Learned/Sills report was released, Rev. Tompkins was notified in a letter by W.S. Learned of the committee’s findings. Tompkins wrote to Morrison that “I shall have some very striking things to say when I get home. I think the Catholics may look to a new day if we are only alive to our possibilities.”³⁵ Tompkins enclosed the letter

³² Learned, Sills, *Education in the Maritime Provinces of Canada*, p.25.

³³ Tompkins wrote, “They are only high-schools and they think themselves universities.” Rev. James Tompkins to Angus L. MacDonald, ALMP, PANS, F1348A/106

³⁴ Michael Welton, Jim Lotz, *Father Jimmy: Life and Times of Jimmy Tompkins* (Wreck Cove, Breton Books, 1997), p. 41.

³⁵ Rev. James Tompkins to Morrison, December 11, 1921, incomingletter#8672, BMP, ADA.

from W.S. Learned which left no doubt as to what striking things Tompkins was to say upon his return home.

Traditional opinion is that Bishop Morrison refused to support the federation idea because he was too conservative and parochial to recognize the advantages of such an idea. In truth, although cautious, and worried over the prospect of Catholics being educated alongside Protestants, Morrison's objections to the federation scheme were pragmatic and as ideological as Tompkin's. There were three major concerns Morrison had as Bishop of Antigonish. First and foremost was the fact that St. Francis Xavier was an absolutely invaluable asset to the Diocese. The University not only gave the diocese some prestige, but it also acted as a springboard for young men to enter the seminary. Also, the economic repercussions of federation to the town of Antigonish, and thus to the church would be enormous. It was clear later on that the Catholic Bishops of the Maritimes who supported federation were without a college of their own and thus had less to lose than Antigonish. Secondly, Morrison did not believe that the Diocese had the finances to sustain relocation. He did not feel that the Carnegie monies to be spent on relocation were adequate. Also he did not feel that he could ask the people of the Diocese to give, as they had already paid a great amount to develop the current campus.

Morrison's mistake was in tactics. He did not recognize the delicacy of the situation. Morrison sent Rector MacPherson to New York to take part in a

meeting of college presidents involved in the merger but little was thought of it. Morrison was unaware of the amount of support the idea had, not only within his own Diocese, but among prominent Catholic leaders of Canada. The faculty of St. Francis Xavier, having been persuaded by Tompkins, voted unanimously in favor of federation. Outsiders such as Archbishop Neil McNeil of Toronto, a native of the diocese, saw the scheme as ideal for Catholics. He volunteered to help Rev. Tompkins with a pamphlet or book for propaganda purposes.³⁶ Maritime bishops such as Edward McCarthy in Halifax and Bishop Roach in Newfoundland were in favor of merger. In March of 1922, Tompkins went before a large audience in Moncton and gave a speech giving his opinion on federation. He told those present, "Colleges we have plenty, but the great university is yet to come."³⁷ Very quickly Morrison saw that he was in danger of losing his college. His first move was to write other prominent Catholic administrators of the Maritimes to get their opinions. He cautioned them about the Protestant mentality of the country and argued that every point of view must be reviewed before they agreed to the scheme.³⁸ A meeting was called by Archbishop McCarthy in Halifax to discuss the proposition.

³⁶ Archbishop Neil McNeil to Rev. James Tompkins, April 8, 1922, incoming letter#9125, BMP, ADA.

³⁷ *The Casket*, March 22, 1922.

³⁸ Morrison to Rev. G.J. McLellan, June 3, 1922, letter#9368, BMP, ADA. Rev. McLellan was the Rector of St. Dunstan's University.

Morrison set up a committee at St. Francis Xavier to study the merger question. The committee consisted of the Rector, H.P. MacPherson, and Rev. H.D. Barry, Mr. Archibald A McIntyre and Mr. Neil McArthur. There was not a pro-federation man among them and they reported accordingly. Morrison had played his cards effectively and forced his will upon the university. Thinking this to be enough, he gave Tompkins a two-week leave of absence and considered the matter dead. In October, it was clear that Tompkins was not going away. The word on campus was that the university was eventually going to support federation. Worried about this sentiment, Rector MacPherson warned Morrison that people were boasting that Tompkins had been down and out but is “on top now”.³⁹ He cautioned Morrison that the federation scheme could be disastrous to Catholic education, and that even Catholic post graduates at such a federated college would eventually mean the end for St. Francis Xavier. MacPherson also told Morrison of his disappointment in Rev. Tompkins, complaining that Tompkins was strongest “where he is not.”⁴⁰ According to MacPherson, Tompkins, who had previously held the posts of vice-rector, principal of the high school, prefect of studies and registrar was a terrible failure at all of them. Tompkins’s days were clearly numbered.

Morrison’s next moves were arguably the right ones for St. Francis Xavier but the wrong ones for his historical image. In a second merger meeting

³⁹ Rev. H.P. MacPherson to Morrison, October 7, 1922, incoming letter#9496, BMP, ADA.

⁴⁰ Rev. H.P. MacPherson to Morrison, October 7, 1922, incoming letter#9496, BMP, ADA.

between the Maritime bishops he was able to convince them that they should wait to make a decision on merger until Rome could be notified and queried. This was a major tactical move on Morrison's part. It was clear at the meeting that at least three of the five Bishops present had some sympathy for the scheme. On 11 October, 1922, Archbishop McCarthy of Halifax wrote to Morrison to tell him that he now believed University federation to have "far-reaching possibilities for the promotion of Catholic interests and the advancement of the Church in the Maritime Provinces."⁴¹ A meeting of the St. Francis Xavier Board of Governors was called for 20 October. Morrison was already assured that the committee looking into merger would come out against it, but, decided to add one more assurance.⁴² He announced to those in attendance that the bishops of the Maritimes were against the scheme, knowing full well that that was not true. Morrison's mistake was in failing to make an intelligent and clear argument as to why he was against the merger. His arguments were as sound as those in favor of federation and he certainly had the backing of many of the laymen of the diocese.⁴³ His reasons for rejection of

⁴¹ Archbishop Edward McCarthy to Morrison, October 11, 1922, incoming letter#9502, BMP, ADA.

⁴² Neil R. McArthur, Glace Bay barrister and member of the Board of Governors and the committee on federation, wrote to Morrison a week before the meeting at St. Francis Xavier to tell him that they were willing to be guided by Morrison decision. The decision of the committee was worked out long before they gathered on October 20.

⁴³ Morrison received many letters from laymen of the diocese protesting against the possible federation. One Cape Bretoner wrote that "the taking away of the rights and privileges with which our university is endowed, will positively kill to a great extent, the fertile recruiting ground

federation were defensible; it was his tactics that could be portrayed as ruthless and dictatorial.

With St. Francis Xavier Board of Governors now officially against the federation scheme, Morrison had to wait for word from Rome. Morrison was anxious for word from the Holy See. Twice he wrote the Apostolic Delegate for news, and twice the Delegate told him to be patient. Morrison was contemptuous in his opinion of the Maritime Bishops who were for merger. He told one official that Archbishop McCarthy, who was rather advanced in years, had been partly won over.⁴⁴ Rev. Tompkins still had a lot of support from the Catholic community. The secular press in Halifax had begun to campaign in favor of federation and it was obvious to Morrison who was behind it. Tompkins had enlisted the aid of a prominent young alumnus by the name of Angus L. MacDonald to keep the merger question alive in the press.⁴⁵ While Morrison and *The Casket* editor Robert Phelan did not allow Angus L. to publish his letters in *The Casket*, they felt the need to defend themselves. On 7 December, an article appeared which read:

known as the Island of Cape Breton.” V. Mullins to Morrison, November 14, 1922, incoming letter#9568, BMP, ADA.

⁴⁴ Morrison to His Eminence Raphael Card, November 11, 1922, letter#9767, BMP, ADA.

⁴⁵ This episode marked the beginning of a long and bitter relationship between Angus L. Macdonald (1890-1954) and Bishop Morrison. Rev. Tompkins was successful in persuading Macdonald to use his great writing skills in order to defend federation in the Halifax press. Macdonald’s attempts to have his articles published in *The Casket* were unsuccessful as *The Casket’s* editor, Robert Phelan, not only dismissed Macdonald’s arguments but also challenged Macdonald’s authority as a Catholic to write on the issue.

The Catholics of this diocese are not going to be stampeded by country election methods into opposition to their bishop; and they will support him all the more solidly when they see him sniped at by people who do not have the courage to sign their letters with their own name.⁴⁶

Rev. Tompkins had obviously not bowed to the will of the Bishop. Frustrated by Tompkin's refusal to let federation die, Morrison decided to act. On 13 December 1922, Morrison sent Tompkins a letter in which he wrote:

It is of course unnecessary to point out that the first duty of the priesthood of the diocese is the pastoral office, which takes precedence over any other employment of the diocesan clergy, and it is a consolation to know that the priesthood of this diocese fully appreciate this fact and are ever ready to undertake this duty...and therefore I hereby appoint you to be parish priest of Canso and attached missions.⁴⁷

Morrison had played his last card, and in an attempt to maintain St. Francis Xavier, he removed the one man whom he had worked alongside for the betterment of the school. This was not a conservative reactionary decision to destroy the progressive social reform of the diocese; rather there was only one reason behind it, and that was Tompkins's support for merger. In a letter to the outgoing pastor of Canso, Morrison expressed his wish that Tompkins not leave

⁴⁶ *The Casket*, December 7, 1922.

⁴⁷ Morrison to Rev. James Tompkins, December 13, 1922, letter#9855, BMP, ADA.

the diocese; however, “he must leave the college.”⁴⁸ Perhaps no other issue would do as much harm to the reputation of Bishop James Morrison as would university federation. In the following months and years, clear lines were drawn between those who supported Rev. Tompkins and those who supported the Bishop. Many of these ill-feelings would last until Morrison’s death in 1950.

University federation was one way that some believed that Maritime education could be revived.⁴⁹ In the economy of the 1920s, it was difficult to maintain any endeavor that required extensive financial capital. The industrial areas of the diocese were slowing down as the post-war recession was setting in. This did not help living conditions among Catholics in the industrial areas of Cape Breton. The labour situation in Cape Breton was in constant flux. The steel plant and the coalfields of Cape Breton were drawing large numbers of Catholic immigrants into the community. They came from places such as Poland, Yugoslavia, Ukraine, Italy and the British Isles and Newfoundland. The areas that these people came to settle in were hardly ideal. In the industrial towns new immigrants were placed together in unhealthy conditions. The towns were not equipped to handle so many people. Sufficient and proper

⁴⁸ Morrison to Rev. J. W. MacIsaac, December 18, 1922, letter#9885, BMP, ADA.

⁴⁹ Historian P.B Waite argues that St. Francis Xavier University’s refusal to enter into federation was not crucial to its success. According to Waite, it was the decision of Acadia University against federation that really weakened its chances. See P.B Waite, *The Lives of Dalhousie University, Volume One, 1818-1925* (Montreal: McGill-Queens, 1994).

housing was not available at the time and as a result many lived in overcrowded situations. As a newspaper in Cape Breton pointed out:

The shacks are a positive disgrace to the most filthy parts of Constantinople. The very look of them is enough to make you feel pale and fathers of children should unite in having the surrounding thoroughly cleaned of these undesirable environments. They are little more than graveyards where humans are buried before they are dead.⁵⁰

Worse than this was the domination which the British Empire Steel and Coal Company (BESCO) had over the laborers. In 1908, the *Canadian Mining Journal* described Glace Bay with the following words: "Everybody in Glace Bay is either the servant of the Coal Company, or the servant of the servant of the Coal Company."⁵¹ One of the most efficient ways of controlling the miner was to control his spending. Many of the workers in towns such as Glace Bay rented their homes from the company and bought their goods from the company store. Their whole lives were controlled in one manner or another. From 1920 to 1925 the coal miners of the area went on strike no less than fifty-eight times. Some of these strikes resulted in violence; and all of them caused upheaval.

⁵⁰ David Frank, "The Cape Breton Coal Miner, 1917-1926.", Ph.D. Thesis. Dalhousie University. 1979.

⁵¹David Frank, "Company Town/Labour Town: Local Government in the Cape Breton Coal Towns, 1917-1926," *Histoire Sociale/Social History*, (XIV, 27), p. 178.

Morrison had little experience with industrial unrest, but was aware of the Catholic encyclical *Rerum Novarum*, which called for Catholics to become more active in helping alleviate the problems of industrialization. Morrison was in regular contact with the priests in the industrial areas. There was no clear answer as to what to do. He had few dealings with industry and thought “long and hard” over the problem. He favored calling a conference of all clergy from industrial areas so that they would have a uniform line of action in dealing with the labour difficulties. Morrison and the clergy worried over the fact that they could never be sure when a strike might occur. Morrison’s own belief was that the threat of a strike was being thrust upon the good Catholics by foreign demagogues. He even looked to the deportation of alleged troublemakers as a solution.⁵²

In July of 1922, Morrison wanted to limit the numbers of radicals who were being elected to leadership positions in the United Mine Workers. The plan was to issue a pastoral letter before 15 August, 1922, when the officers of the union were to be elected. However, due to the threat of a strike, Morrison thought that labour would feel that he was playing into the hands of capitalists, which would result in the miners paying “little or no heed to any such admonition in their present temper, but also that the authority of their own

⁵² Morrison to Rev. John R. MacDonald (New Waterford), November 3, 1919, letter#6837, BMP, ADA.

immediate pastors would be lessened.”⁵³ Clearly the Catholic Church did not have the kind of influence in industrial Cape Breton that it did in the more rural areas. In the industrial areas there were many Catholics who looked first to the radical element of their labour unions before their priests. Alex S. MacIntyre, eventually a prominent member of the Antigonish Movement, told the clergy in Antigonish on their first meeting that he “felt more at home with the communists than with the clergy.”⁵⁴ He thought that the latter were a part of the establishment that made life miserable for the workers and their families. Although MacIntyre eventually came around, it was difficult to convince other industrial working Catholics to do the same. Morrison could not simply swing his power around in the industrial areas; instead he had to act very pragmatically and carefully in order to have any influence at all. It was the recognition of this loss of influence which began Morrison’s interest in a Catholic labour union.

The strikes in the coal fields of Cape Breton left Bishop Morrison with the opinion that the only way to ensure peace in the industrial area of Cape Breton was through a Catholic labour union. This union he believed could either be affiliated with or patterned after the Quebec Catholic union. This would give the church a greater sphere of influence and allow for the rooting

⁵³ Morrison to Rev. C.F. MacKinnon, August 4, 1922, letter#9483, BMP, ADA.

⁵⁴ Peter A. Nearing, *He Loved the Church: The Biography of Bishop John R. MacDonald* (Antigonish: The Casket Publishing, 1975), p. 31.

out of radicals from the union ranks. Morrison was encouraged by a letter from Rev. J. J. MacNeil who wrote that many parishioners in Dominion # 4 were in favor of such a proposal.⁵⁵ Morrison wrote to prominent members of the communities asking them to talk the matter over with other laypeople. In a letter to Michael MacNeil, a prominent Catholic layman in Dominion, Morrison stated:

I suggest that you yourselves also talk this matter with due tact and consideration among your fellow workmen of the faith, so that as many as possible will come to see the present irreligious and Godless tactics of some of the present labour leaders can be productive of only the most baneful results.⁵⁶

Although pragmatic, this approach showed Morrison's lack of understanding of the situation within the industrial areas. The situation was far too complex to be solved through a union dominated by clergy. The Quebec Catholic union, barely recognizable before the Great War, became a powerful province-wide labour movement in the post-war years. They were rooted in "Social Catholicism," and were formed in part as a nationalistic alternative to English-speaking unions. Although the Catholic Church had sizable influence in the union, its leaders were far from pawns in the conspiracy among church, state

⁵⁵ Morrison to Rev. J.J. MacNeil, March 14, 1923, letter#10174, BMP, ADA.

⁵⁶ Morrison to Michael MacNeil, June 5, 1923, letter#10377, BMP, ADA.

and business.⁵⁷ The Catholic union had worked in Quebec, but Quebec was a special situation. The Catholic labour unions there were confined to areas that were practically one hundred percent Catholic. The union was strongest in areas outside of Montreal where the Church institutions as employers and dispensers of contracts could exert a direct influence.⁵⁸ It did not take long before many of Morrison's priests in the industrial areas wrote him of the folly of this idea. Rev. Donald MacAdam, pastor of Sacred Heart Parish in Sydney; wrote a strong letter to his Bishop telling him that a proposed Catholic union may indeed do more harm than good. He wrote: "it would not only set Protestant against Catholic; but it would also tend to a division among Catholics themselves."⁵⁹ When the issue was brought up at a meeting of the clergy of the diocese in June of 1923, almost all of them rejected the idea. There was a great amount of worry about a "religious and civil war" should the clergy try to organize a rival union. A Catholic union could very well make matters even worse, they argued. Morrison wanted to end the culture of strikes and agitation in industrial Cape Breton, but would have to look to other alternatives in order extend his influence among the miners.

Upon his arrival in Canso, Rev. Tompkins was shocked by the situation of the people living in coastal communities. By the 1920's, traditional markets

⁵⁷ Bernard L. Vigod, *Quebec before Duplessis: The political Career of Louis-Alexandre Taschereau* (Montreal: McGill-Queens, 1986), p. 91.

⁵⁸ Evelyn Dumas, *The Bitter Thirties in Quebec* (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1975), p.24.

⁵⁹ Rev. D.M. McAdam to Morrison, April 12, 1923, letter #10231(incoming), BMP, ADA.

were disappearing, and fishermen were having trouble feeding their families. By the end of the decade, the inshore fishermen in Nova Scotia would have the lowest income of any group in the Maritimes.⁶⁰ The fishermen of Canso had the same problems as the miners of Glace Bay. Every aspect of their economic life was controlled by the capitalists who made profits off their labour. In 1922, Rev. James Tompkins was sent to Canso because of a dispute with the Bishop of Antigonish. There he recognized the need for the Church to play a more active role in the eradication of the poverty of the area. As Rev. Tompkins commented, "Even Christ did not undertake to preach to men who were hungry."⁶¹ Morrison was aware of the problems in Canso and he felt obliged as did Tompkins to do something about them. Although the coastal communities were subjected to the effects of a collapsing industry, they did not have radicals in their ranks, which made the process much easier for the Church. It was still, however, difficult to come to a consensus about what to do. Many of the priests other than some of the more educated ones at the university were not prepared for changes in the economic structure of the Diocese. Most of the priests came from more rural backgrounds and were used to dealing with rural issues. As a result, the early development of Catholic social and economic assistance in distressed areas was firmly rooted in the rural areas.

⁶⁰ S.A. Saunders, *The Economic History of the Maritime Provinces*. Edited by T.W. Acheson (Fredericton: Acadiensis Press, 1984 (1939)), p. 78.

⁶¹ Michael Welton, Jim Lotz, *Father Jimmy: Life and Times of Jimmy Tompkins (Wreck Cove)*: Breton Books, 1997), p.69.

In the mid 1920's, it was clear that agriculture and education were the principal areas of concern for the clergy in Antigonish; not fishing and industry. Many priests in the diocese not only worked in rural parishes but overwhelming majorities of priests were raised in rural areas. Antigonish was still an extremely rural diocese and the Bishop was from the rural province of Prince Edward Island and had himself been born on a farm. The concern of the clergy and the Bishop in Antigonish was to try to repopulate abandoned farms. The Church had a great interest in keeping people on the farm and in rural areas as the rural areas were the stronghold of Catholicism. Parishes like St. Andrew's, Heatherton, St. Joseph's, Margaree and Mainadieu gave the Church the kind of stability it could not get in its larger industrial parishes in Sydney and New Waterford. The Church was intent on making sure that the radicalism that had penetrated industrial Cape Breton did not affect rural Catholics. When the workers in the early 1920's created an independent labour party and joined with the United Farmers Party, *The Casket* newspaper in Antigonish warned Catholics against a third provincial party.⁶² One of the most productive Church committees in Antigonish was the annual diocesan Rural Conference. Bishop Morrison was intent on making the Rural conference effective. In charge, he

⁶² Gregory Baum, *Catholics and Canadian Socialism: Political thought in the Thirties and Forties* (Toronto: Lormier, 1980), p. 206.

placed one of his most promising young priests, Rev. John R. Macdonald.⁶³ In 1924 the first Rural Conference was held in Antigonish. At this time, Rev. Moses Coady gave a paper on rural education. In his speech he outlined a plan for developing leaders and enabling people to take control of their own economic destinies.⁶⁴ In December of 1925 at the second rural conference in Antigonish, the priests in attendance argued for the financing of some twenty young men to attend rural short courses at the Truro Agricultural College.⁶⁵ The Church was fully in tune with the problems of rural life and acted accordingly. Morrison wrote in a circular to his priests,

It should not be necessary to develop here the thesis that whatever may be the future of other industries in our midst, agriculture is the chief main-stay of this country's stability, and for very many years to come the farming avocation must be recognized as the corner-stone of every other industry in the province.⁶⁶

Meanwhile the situation in the industrial areas of Cape Breton was not improving. In January of 1923, news of an impending strike reached

⁶³ Bishop John R. MacDonald, (1891-1959). Born in Port Hood Nova Scotia, educated at St. F.X. Nephew of Archbishop Neil McNeil of Toronto. Ordained by Bishop Morrison in Antigonish on January 23, 1916. Appointed Bishop of Peterborough, June 1943. Appointed coadjutor to Bishop Morrison, March 3, 1945. Appointed Bishop of Antigonish, April 13, 1950. Received an honorary degree from Saint Mary's University on May 12, 1952.

⁶⁴ Malcolm MacLellan, *Coady Remembered* (Antigonish: St. Francis Xavier University Press, 1985), p. 50.

⁶⁵ Morrison to Rev. H.P. MacPherson, December 16, 1925, letter#12714, BMP, ADA. Priests in the Diocese collected funds to provide the young men's tuition with the Nova Scotia Agricultural college and the Halifax Fisheries School.

⁶⁶ Morrison circular, December 21, 1925, letter#12725, BMP, ADA.

Antigonish and Morrison vented his frustration at “mischief-making” radical labour leaders who were stirring up trouble.⁶⁷ Eventually in the spring of 1925, trouble again came to the area. At 11 P.M., on 6 March, 1925 all men working within U.M.W.A District 26 were instructed to leave the pits. The great strike had begun. BESCO immediately stopped issuing credit in company stores. Morrison immediately left for Cape Breton to see what was going on for himself; what he saw startled him, notably the stark poverty. On 12 March, 1925, Morrison issued a circular to his priests in which he called upon them to “come hastily to the assistance of the distressed ones in these sadly affected areas.”⁶⁸ A relief committee was formed and was put in the charge of Rev. J.H. MacDonald of Sydney. Morrison called upon laypersons and his own priests to give money, food and clothing of all types in order to relieve the suffering miners. This was an effort to help the distressed miners, but it was also another attempt by Morrison to extend the influence of the Catholic Church in order to quell the strength of the “red” elements. As Rev. J.H. MacDonald wrote,

Among the good effects, apart from the alleviation of misery and distress, which this appeal will have, is the telling rebuke administered to the Red element for criticisms and complaints that the Church has been indifferent to their real welfare. Many of those who have been heretofore

⁶⁷ Morrison to J.J. MacNeil, January 23, 1923, letter#10984, BMO, ADA.

⁶⁸ Morrison Circular, March 12th, 1925, letter#12057, BMP, ADA

very critical in this respect, are now loud in their praises of the prompt action taken under your direction by the Catholics of the Diocese.⁶⁹

Morrison's fear of greater socialist influence was seen when the Soviet government sent labour leader J.B. McLachlan a \$5,000 donation. The relief committee rejected it because "its acceptance would be construed in certain circles as Russian propaganda, and would result in diminishing contributions throughout the dominion."⁷⁰

As the strike continued, Morrison continued to build up the influence of the Catholic Church. In March, 1925, he traveled in secret to Halifax to meet with the provincial government and voice his concerns. On the way he stopped in Westville to try and gauge the feeling of the miners in Pictou County. He was concerned that the Catholics in Pictou County would be affected by the strike in Cape Breton. When Morrison arrived in Halifax he was greeted with the utmost courtesy. A night session of the Provincial Legislature was called off so that the whole Executive Council could be present at the meeting between Morrison and the Premier. Morrison went over every angle of the strike with the government and impressed upon the Premier "the necessity of having the company submit to a thorough investigation if they were not prepared to accede to the demands of the miners, or at least agree to the 1924

⁶⁹ Rev. J.H. MacDonald to Morrison, March 27th, 1925, letter#12212 (incoming), BMP, ADA.

⁷⁰ David Frank, *J.B. McLachlan: A Biography*. (Toronto: James Lorimer, 1999), p.376. By 1 April, 1925 the Relief Committee had collected \$8564.06 and by mid-April it had grown to \$10,597.68.

rate.”⁷¹ Morrison noted that the government was worried that pressuring the company to give into the demands of the striking miners would in fact destroy the company. However, they agreed to apply reasonable pressure on the company in order to end the strike. Morrison was pleased with the meeting and did everything in his power to maintain its secrecy. In a letter to Rev. L. Minehan in Toronto, Ontario, Morrison wrote:

Unless they [Government] have the courage to deal with these matters in a statesman like manner, there can be nothing but chaos from these perennial struggles between labour and capital that have so stifled the industry in the country.⁷²

This meeting was of great importance for both the striking miners and the Bishop. This was the first time that Morrison clearly came out against the company. The traditional alliance between the Catholic Church and capitalism in Eastern Nova Scotia was broken. It also was the first time that Morrison tried to implement the principles of *Rerum Novarum*, which called upon the Church to intervene between labour and capitalism. Finally, it was the beginning of Morrison’s new priority in building the Catholic Church’s sphere of influence within the industrial communities of Eastern Nova Scotia. Morrison was aware that this was going to have to be done slowly. He knew his influence was as weak in 1925 as it had been in 1922. In June of 1925, when the Government

⁷¹ Morrison to Rev. J.H. MacDonald, March 20, 1925, letter#12075, BMP, ADA.

⁷² Morrison to Rev. L. Minehan, April 11th, 1925, letter# 12145, BMP, ADA.

inspector was in Sydney to assess the problems brought on by the strike, Morrison thought it wise that he not be in the area.

The temporary settlement of the 1925 strike pleased the Bishop very much. He strongly believed that it was the Church which had to act. He felt confident that the Reverend fathers would “spare no pains to find some remedy to provide against a reoccurrence of such conditions.”⁷³ Morrison still hoped for a Catholic labour union, and had the support of labour leaders in Quebec who “would appreciate the foundation of Catholic unions among their English-speaking brothers.”⁷⁴ Although pleased with this support, the bishop recognized that it was still too dangerous for such a proposition. Much depended on the Duncan Royal Commission which was appointed to study the labour situation in the area.⁷⁵ If the commission decided that District 26 was justified in going on strike, than a Catholic labour union would have to be put on hold, but if they found that the district organization did not have the best interests of the men in mind, than the Church would be ready to step in. Morrison was clear in his belief that the current leadership in District 26 was hurting Catholic miners. He wanted his priests to study the situation so that “should the time come when separate Catholic action ought to be taken, we may be in a position to know

⁷³ Morrison Circular, August 7, 1925, letter#12466, BMP, ADA.

⁷⁴ Aime Boileau, August, 1925, incoming letter#12352, BMP, ADA.

⁷⁵ Morrison had influence on the commission as his rector, Rev. H.P. MacPherson was appointed as a member of the commission. Gordon Harrington wrote Morrison telling him that “At the present moment, there is no greater patriotic duty that one can perform than to assist in unraveling the matters that now so greatly agitate the coal fields of the Province.” Gordon Harrington to Morrison, September 29, 1925, incoming letter#12519, BMP, ADA.

what line of action should be followed, in the best interests of religion as also of the economic welfare of the miners.”⁷⁶ This was only the beginning of Morrison’s interest in the plight of labour in the Diocese.

In 1924, Morrison suffered a personal loss which stayed with him for the remainder of his life. Morrison’s brother Dan was a prominent priest in Oakland, California. He had been very ill with stomach cancer for the previous year and Morrison spent a considerable amount of time worrying over his brother. The distance between Antigonish and Oakland made the situation more difficult, although Morrison did his best and visited when he could. As Dan’s condition grew worse there was little doubt that the end was near. Both the Bishop and his brother were very realistic as to what the outcome of Dan’s illness was going to be, but when the telegram arrived on 18 September, 1924 telling him of his brother’s death, Morrison was very upset.⁷⁷ He did receive some comfort in the number of telegrams and letters of condolence which he received from across North America, but the fall of 1924 and spring of 1925 were difficult. For Morrison, Dan’s death left a big hole in his life. Morrison was already a very private man, who did not have a great number of close

⁷⁶ Morrison Circular, November 9, 1925, letter#12637, BMP, ADA.

⁷⁷ Rev. Dr. F.X. (Dan) Morrison, (1869-1924) The *San Francisco Chronicle* wrote of Rev. Morrison, “he was always a man of the greatest zeal and a man of high ideals and noble character.” Rev. Morrison had been Pastor of St. Francis de Sales Parish in Oakland. The funeral service was reportedly one of the largest in the history of the Catholic community of California. Thousands of grieving parishioners and friends, representatives of societies, members of religious orders, delegations of school children and one hundred and fifty members of the clergy, including many Monsignors and the Bishop of Sacramento assisted in the service. The *San Francisco Chronicle*, September 21, 1924.

friends. Dan was not only the Bishop's brother; he was also his best friend. Morrison's younger half-brother Rev. Vincent Morrison went to China as a missionary in fall of 1925. As the third person to be ordained for the Scarborough Foreign Mission Society his time spent in China was very significant and challenging.⁷⁸ The correspondence between the two men began to grow after Vincent's departure and this helped Morrison fill the void of his lost relationship with Dan, although it was never again the same. The episode served as a reminder as to how lonely the life of a priest and a bishop could be.

The first half of the 1920's were important years for the diocese and for Bishop Morrison. In six years, Morrison had taken control of *The Casket*, overseen the beginnings of Catholic social reform in Antigonish, ensured that Saint Francis Xavier remained in the diocese and asserted his influence in the labour problems of the diocese. These years were not without turmoil. Morrison's transfer of Rev. James Tompkins in Canso caused a lot of ill-feelings among clergy and laymen alike. These were very troubling times. The economic position of the Maritimes was growing worse. There was no lasting solution for peace in industrial Cape Breton, and the Catholic Church was having difficulties asserting its influence among the people. Morrison had

⁷⁸ As a gift, Morrison gave his younger brother one hundred dollars and wished him the best. Never very close with his younger half-brothers and sisters, he wrote, "I pray that God may bless your missionary work, and that in due time the field assigned to the China Mission Seminary will prove fruitful in conversions to the faith. It is noble work, and no doubt will be productive of many blessings for that country." Morrison to Rev. Vincent Morrison, December 14, 1925, letter#12707, BMP, ADA.

realized that *Rerum Novarum* required he and his clergy to take a more active role in solving some of the problems of the period. However, he was intent on making sure that as his priests became more active within the diocese, he remained in control.

Chapter Five
“A New Movement”
1926-1933

The first five years of the 1920's were difficult for the Province of Nova Scotia and the people of the Diocese of Antigonish. The recession that had begun in the spring and summer of 1920 forced many people in the Maritimes to emigrate. Maritime businesses were among the most severely affected by the recession, especially the fishery and the coal industry.¹ As a result the industrial areas of Cape Breton had become riddled with strikes and violence. The people of the coastal communities were poverty stricken and traditional farming communities were being abandoned. The Catholic Church was in a fight for its very survival. Its influence in places like Glace Bay and New Waterford was extremely weak, while its traditional strong rural connection was being severed through depopulation. The response of the Church was to try to shore up its influence in the most traditional and non militant economic area; rural Eastern Nova Scotia. Bishop Morrison was engaging in an attempt to bring some economic stability to certain economic sectors of the Diocese, while trying to maintain some influence in the more radical and militant areas of the diocese. Many priests in the local area were beginning to take a more active role in

¹ Ernst R. Forbes, *Maritime Rights: The Maritime Rights Movement, 1919-1927, A Study in Canadian Regionalism* (Montreal: McGill-Queens, 1979), p. 55.

trying to find answers to the problems which they faced. The diocese was sponsoring annual rural conferences and financing the education of promising young men from the diocese to attend the Agricultural College in Truro. For Morrison the first five years of the 1920's were personally difficult. He lost his brother and best friend, Dan, to illness and was in many ways alone. In making the choice to keep St. Francis Xavier out of the University federation scheme in Halifax, as well as the subsequent removal of Rev. James Tompkins to Canso, Morrison incurred unpopularity among the Antigonish clergy. However, the priests respected him, and in some cases they even feared him, as they knew that he was willing to go to great lengths to preserve the traditional function of the diocesan hierarchy.

In the spring of 1926, things seemed to have calmed down in the industrial centers of the diocese. Supporters of militant labour leader J.B. McLachlan in the union executive were defeated in the elections and were replaced by moderate or outright opponents of union militancy.² The new policy of compromise coming out of District 26 headquarters was looked upon with great satisfaction by Morrison as he acknowledged that there was some room for compromise between the socialists and the diocese. There was excitement among the rank and file of the clergy in Antigonish as the priests at the university were searching for solutions to the problems of the area. This

² John Mellor, *The Company Store: J.B. McLachlan and the Cape Breton Coal Miners, 1900-1925* (Toronto: Doubleday, 1983), p. 319.

new interest in the political economy of the diocese presented a problem for Morrison. He wanted his priests to be socially active but also to maintain a certain distance from everyday politics in the interests of the impartiality of the Church. He was not willing to tolerate clergy who became involved in partisan politics, fearing that local politicians would use such priests to further their own political or personal ambitions. Morrison believed that as long as the issues before the public were of an economic nature, the Church and its clergy should stay clear of any partisan entanglements. In his judgment, when political partisanship was removed, the Church would be able to count on all Catholics to vote as the Bishop instructed when the time came. In a letter to Neil McArthur, Morrison outlined his position:

The object in taking this attitude is that all suspicion of political partisanship may be removed, should the time unfortunately come when I would be obliged to take political issues in any measure or policy calculated to be injurious to the just interests of religion from a Catholic standpoint. In such a contingency I would expect every Catholic to be loyal to the stand taken by the Bishop in defense of these interests, irrespective of partisan affiliations.³

Morrison was careful to maintain this position for the remainder of his career, ensuring that his more progressive priests were unable to get involved with the

³ Morrison to Neil R. McArthur, July 1, 1925, letter#12340, BMP, ADA.

political parties that were most aligned with their work. It also meant that the clergy of Antigonish would keep its distance from the general population, and thus help maintain the church's traditional position in the community.

As the political climate in Nova Scotia during the second half of the 1920's was extremely partisan, the church was careful to stay out of everyday antagonisms while concerning itself with major issues such as maintaining separate schools. Each government action was carefully weighed and judged as to its effects on Catholic interests. In March of 1926 there was talk of abolishing the Nova Scotia Legislative Council. The Council, which supposedly provided a sober second opinion regarding the acts of the elected Legislative Assembly, had become partisan and redundant. The Catholic community did have worries that the abolition of the Legislative Council could weaken Catholic political power in the government. Morrison was afraid that without the legislative council, the government had the authority to abolish Catholic schools. In 1927, there were 10,950 pupils in Catholic-run schools.⁴ Morrison was convinced by local party leaders and government officials that "no political party in Nova Scotia that valued its political existence would dare to interfere with the school act to the detriment of the Sisters and school teachers."⁵ He was careful to make sure that the selections of new school

⁴ Diocesan Stats, 1927, BMP, ADA.

⁵ Morrison to Most Rev. Peter Di. Maria, Apostolic Delegate, March 12, 1926, letter#13009, BMP, ADA.

superintendents were sympathetic to the situation in Catholic schools; this was especially important in Pictou, where the Protestant majority were in Morrison's opinion very intolerant.⁶ Schools continued to be a source of antagonisms between Catholic and Protestants. In Sydney, elections were held on the issue of dismissing the orders of Sisters teaching in the local schools.⁷ The Catholic Church in Eastern Nova Scotia had to be careful and pragmatic in maintaining peaceful Catholic-Protestant relations. When Premier Edgar Rhodes suggested to Morrison that he appoint a clergyman to the position of Superintendent of Education for the Province of Nova Scotia, Morrison argued against it with great energy. Morrison believed that no matter how fair and impartial, a Catholic priest would be open to suspicion by a considerable portion of the community. Under such circumstances, "no real progress could be made in educational matters, and indeed in many respects a retrograde effect might well be expected."⁸ He also cautioned the Premier against appointing a Protestant clergyman, for he felt that many Catholics would be angered by such an appointment. These episodes are important as they not only illustrate

⁶ In 1926 the Antigonish Diocese had 26 Parochial schools and 8 Boarding Schools for young ladies. In total there were 11,281 pupils enrolled. The three towns which Morrison found the most difficult in which to maintain Catholic schools were New Glasgow, Stellarton and Pictou.

⁷ Morrison claimed that prominent Protestant clergyman in Sydney were the leaders of the movement to have the sisters removed from the public schools. They pressed for the local government to remove any recognition from schools that employed Catholic teaching sisters. Year after year the civic elections were fought over this issue. Although they were unsuccessful in Sydney, Protestant politicians in New Glasgow were successful in not recognizing a school that was staffed by sisters. The Diocese was forced to fund the school to keep it in operation. Morrison argued that Catholics were required to pay taxes towards schools without the benefit of a Catholic education.

⁸ Morrison to Edgar N. Rhodes, March 23, 1926, letter#13040, BMP, ADA.

the sometimes difficult relationship between Protestants and Catholics but also show the many angles to which any Bishop would have to give consideration. This would become very important in the late 1920's and 1930's as the Antigonish Diocese began to take a more active role in education and the economy of the area. While others were able to concentrate on specific projects and endeavors, Morrison had the unenviable task of having to focus on the big picture, and this would eventually cause anger and resentment in certain quarters.

In 1926 the coal fields of Cape Breton were peaceful but Morrison worried about how long this would last. He wanted very much to avoid another work stoppage in the area. While the situation for the Catholic Church in industrial Cape Breton was still precarious, Morrison remained on guard against anyone who looked to upset the peace. In January he was dismayed at what he viewed to be unfair tactics by BESCO as they closed down the Princess colliery and practically shut down the Florence mine. His priests in the area complained that the company was going to make "Bolsheviks by the hundreds."⁹ The left-wing element of the executive of District 26 had recently been voted out of office and Morrison feared that decisions such as this one would drive them back into office. In a letter to Sydney Mines Pastor, C.F. MacKinnon, Morrison expressed his outrage, "What on earth can the company

⁹ Rev. C.F. MacKinnon to Morrison, January 12, 1926, incoming letter#12787, BMP, ADA.

have in mind by this step at this time of year, when there is practically nothing else for the people to do? It is impossible to understand them.”¹⁰ Morrison was even more concerned with the Duncan Commission’s recommendation that the check-off system be abolished. The check-off helped the Church as it required the company to automatically take a small percentage of the miner’s wage off his cheque each month to support the Church, hospitals and schools. Morrison asked the company not to stop this practice and warned them that if the check-off was abolished it would hurt the ability of the Church to have any influence in Cape Breton. It would be detrimental to the efforts of the priests in helping to maintain law and order.¹¹ There would be less money for orphanages, schools, parishes and the university. The check-off was maintained, however, only after the local unions decided that they wanted to keep it. Again, although Morrison was kept in the loop by government officials, priests and company managers, he had very little influence among the miners of the area. As in the past, Morrison was unsure what to say or what to do. In the spring of 1927, as the unions in the industrial area were deciding whether to stay affiliated with the United Mine Workers or to join the One Big Union, Morrison grappled over how to weigh in on the situation. Some of his priests wanted Morrison to admonish the miners about the godless opinions of the O.B.U., and its socialist agenda. The problem was that Morrison felt the U.M.W. and its *Labour Herald*

¹⁰ Morrison to Rev. C.F. MacKinnon, January 14, 1926, letter# 12814, BMP, ADA.

¹¹ Morrison to J.E. McLurg, January 23, 1924, letter#12853, BMP, ADA.

had “also been an offender in regard to religious matters.”¹² Morrison hoped that his priests in the area might be able to give some advice as to what to do, but in reality Morrison was adrift on this issue. His lack of action did not have the repercussions that it might have had a few years before as the unions in the industrial areas were now relatively inactive. As David Frank writes, “On the eve of the great depression conditions were quieter in Cape Breton. The May Day celebrations were the smallest in years and gathered only small handfuls of supporters.”¹³ Morrison was happy to have some peace in the area but was unable to use the calm to come up with any solutions to the economic problems. This inability to conceive of workable solutions would become more evident as Antigonish priests began to press for agricultural remedies for a suffering economy.

The economy in the later 1920's was not very good in Nova Scotia. As John Reid argues, the Maritime economy began to decline in the 1920's long before the Wall Street crash in 1929.¹⁴ Out-migration was a problem. In 1925 there were 87,327 Catholics within the diocese, by 1928 there was 83,431; a loss of 3896.¹⁵ Although this difficult period meant that the Church had less money to spend in the community, it still managed to build up the infrastructure

¹² Morrison to Rev. A.L. MacDonald, April 26, 1927, letter#14063, BMP, ADA.

¹³ David Frank, *J.B. McLachlan: A Biography* (Toronto: Lorimer, 1999), p. 439.

¹⁴ See John G. Reid, *Six Crucial Decades: Times of Change in the History of the Maritimes* (Halifax: Nimbus, 1987). Ernest R. Forbes, *The Maritimes Rights Movement, 1919-1927: A Study in Canadian Regionalism* (Montreal: McGill-Queens, 1979).

¹⁵ Diocesan Stats, 1925, 1928, BMP, ADA.

of the Catholic community, notably schools and hospitals. In 1925 a new hospital opened in Inverness and in the same year Morrison announced the building of a new \$ 300,000 hospital in Antigonish. Asking the people of the diocese for donations towards any new endeavor was always difficult, but trying to find the money in the 1920's was even tougher with the state of the agriculture, mining and the fisheries. Morrison's cautious nature would not allow him to spend money on things that he felt were unnecessary. He was, however, more than willing to spend money on causes that he felt were needed to enhance the communities within the diocese. In Morrison's opinion, a new hospital in Antigonish would be "usefully employed in that it will save for many additional years a large number of lives of the people in this part of the province."¹⁶ Hospitals always received favorable attention from the Bishop. Not only did they serve the community in practical ways but also a Catholic hospital was likely to have Protestant patients as well and thus further expand Catholic influence in the province. These hospitals opened their doors to anyone who needed assistance and this was important.¹⁷ During the campaign for funds for the new hospital, Morrison declared that Catholics of Antigonish were a "Progressive, forward-moving people," and the new hospital was going

¹⁶ Morrison Circular, May 5, 1924, letter#12297, BMP, ADA.

¹⁷ From June 1, 1923 to June 1, 1925, St. Martha's hospital in Antigonish treated 1544 Catholics and 907 Protestants; most of the Protestants were from Guysbrough County. Statistics come from *The Story of St. Martha's Hospital, 1906-1925* (Antigonish: St. Martha's Hospital Fund Campaign, 1925), p.6.

to help Eastern Nova Scotia receive services already taken for granted by people in more favored parts of the world. As Catholic immigrants and settlers had played a large role in building and maintaining Eastern Nova Scotia, he argued, it was only natural that Catholics of the 1920's should continue the good work.¹⁸ The new St. Martha's hospital was completed in the spring of 1926. The Sisters of St. Martha, now much more than a domestic order, were staffing and maintaining hospitals in Antigonish, Glace Bay, Sydney and Inverness. In 1928 alone, the hospitals of the diocese treated over 5000 patients.¹⁹ What influence the Church lacked in the union halls of places such as Glace Bay was made up in part by the Church's ability to provide services such as health care.²⁰ Certainly the hospitals of the diocese were not the best "east of Montreal," as Morrison had boasted, but none the less they were clear examples of modernity, not only in the province as a whole but among Catholics as well.

In 1926 the priests in Antigonish continued to look for answers to the economic problems of the rural communities. At the annual Rural Conference in 1926, Morrison opened the meetings by declaring that the clergy had an important part to play in helping to solve the problems confronting the

¹⁸ *The Story of St. Martha's Hospital, 1906-1925*, p.18.

¹⁹ Diocesan Stats, 1928, BMP, ADA.

²⁰ While the Church took great pride in the service that they provided through the hospitals of the Diocese, they took up a considerable amount of the Diocese finances. In 1928 the Ross Hospital in Sydney required a special diocesan drive to raise \$ 75,000 in order to maintain the facilities. This was a lot of money in an era with a poor economy.

province.²¹ The diocese was already sending young men to the agricultural college in Truro on special bursaries provided by the Church.²² Finding the cure for the problems of the agricultural areas of the diocese was the number one priority for Morrison and many of his priests. They believed it necessary to keep the people on the land and in the rural parishes as these parishes acted as the backbone of the diocese. Morrison complained to the Nova Scotia government that many within the diocese felt that the provincial government attached greater importance to political considerations than to developing the agricultural resources of the country.²³ Morrison was happy with the progress that the students made during the short courses in Truro. He told his priests that the young men who took the course “have had a much more optimistic outlook on agricultural conditions, and have developed a new and encouraging interest in rural life.”²⁴ Although all were happy with this small success in agriculture many other priests who lived in coastal or urban communities complained that the diocese had to do more for the people within their parishes. At the 1927

²¹ Minutes of the Fourth Annual Rural Conference of the Diocese of Antigonish, November 10, 11th, 1926, letter#13652, BMP, ADA.

²² There were certain conditions that the candidates for the bursaries had to meet. 1. They were not under seventeen years of age. 2. They were interested in farming. 3. They had good moral character. 4. They had the ability to follow the course profitably. 5. There was a certainty of having an opportunity of putting into practice on the farm the knowledge acquired at the course. In case the candidate does not own a farm, this would require the co-operation of the father or guardian with the candidate. There was a special committee set up to select the candidates, Morrison did not sit on this committee and felt that in his position he should not have any influence on the selections.

²³ Morrison to J.A. Walker, Minister of Agriculture, September 4, 1926, letter#13409, BMP, ADA.

²⁴ Morrison circular, December 7, 1926, letter#13795, BMP, ADA.

Rural Conference in Antigonish, Rev. J.H. MacDonald of Sydney spoke to the need for further education in order to offset the socialistic environment in which he believed the workers lived.²⁵ At the same conference Rev. Tompkins made the point that “Too much stress is being placed on Agriculture. Prosperity depends much more on industry, commerce and manufacturing.”²⁶ Tompkins had been successful in bringing attention to the plight of the fishermen in Canso through effective use of the press. Towards the end of the 1927 Rural Conference, Tompkins met with other priests who ministered to people who made a living off the sea. They decided to send the federal and provincial governments a list of proposals which might be used to fix some of the problems that existed in the fishery. Those priests who had attended this informal meeting went back to their parishes and began writing letters to the local and provincial press asking that something be done for the fishing communities. One of these concerned priests was Rev. Alfred Boudreau²⁷ of Petit-de-Grat. Boudreau and Morrison had corresponded on the problems of the fishery. Morrison wrote to him in the winter of 1926 showing support for an organization of the fishery:

²⁵ Minutes of Fifth Annual Rural Conference, September 28-29, 1927, BMP, ADA.

²⁶ Peter A. Nearing, *He Loved the Church: The Biography of Bishop John R. MacDonald* (Antigonish: The Casket Publishing, 1975), p. 31.

²⁷ Msgr. Alfred Boudreau, (1893-1977). Ordained by Bishop Morrison on 29 June, 1916. Boudreau earned a BA from St. Anne's college and was awarded an honorary LL.D from St. Francis Xavier University in 1974. He was active in the union movements as well as co-operative ventures.

It seems to me that the fishing industry could organize some of its markets nearer home, that is right in the province itself. When, for example, here in Antigonish we have to pay around 30 cents for a single mackerel, and proportionately for other kinds of fish, it seems to me that it would pay the fishermen to have some kinds of distributing agencies in the inland parts of the province, which would bring the fishermen and the purchasing public more closely tied together in the matter of business, with better results for both.²⁸

Morrison was aware of the difficulties that the fishermen were having but in keeping with his cautious nature he wanted first to insure that the endeavor to fix some of the problems in the agricultural areas would be successful. He wanted first to make sure that he had the full support of the Catholics in the diocese before he could go ahead with a new endeavor in a new sector of the economy. This cautious attitude was frustrating for priests living in the afflicted coastal communities and Rev. Tompkins, for one, decided to push ahead.

In October 1927 a federal royal commission to investigate the problems of the fisheries in Nova Scotia and the Magdalen Islands was announced. The MacLean commission reported on 4 May, 1928, recommending that cooperatives be set up among the fishermen of the Maritime Provinces. In September 1928, the Scottish Catholic Society offered to raise a capital sum of

²⁸ Morrison to Rev. A. Boudreau, February 20, 1926, letter#12949, BMP, ADA.

\$100,000 with the interest to be applied for education purposes within the diocese. As Anne Alexander writes, “The Scottish Catholic Society exerted pressure that accelerated the operational phase of the Extension Department. The Society did not have an ideology of social justice but was rather a traditional group disturbed about the departure of so many people from the rural areas.”²⁹ Its main goal was to keep people firmly rooted in Scottish tradition and the best way to do this was to maintain the rural lifestyle. This was particularly convenient for the Antigonish Diocese, for it shared the latter goal. At the sixth annual Rural Conference in October 1928, two priests stood and proposed a resolution, that adult education was badly needed and that the conference authorize the proper agencies to address this problem.³⁰

The relationship between Morrison and his priests was on the mend as well. With much of the new enthusiasm for the fishery progress coming out of Canso, Rev. Tompkins was continually finding problems that had to be fixed. Tompkins had become fatigued in organizing fishermen while maintaining his ecclesiastical duties. He had petitioned Morrison for an assistant but the bishop was unable to provide one due to shortages. In September of 1928, Morrison was in a position to provide an assistant for Tompkins and readily did so.³¹ This appointment helped mend some of the ill-feelings between the two men and it

²⁹ Anne Alexander, *The Antigonish Movement: Moses Coady and Adult Education Today* (Toronto: Thompson Educational Publishing, 1997), p. 72.

³⁰ The two priests were Rev. Michel Gillis and Rev. Leo J. Keats.

³¹ The priest Morrison appointed was Rev. Alex Poirier.

seemed to restore their faith in each other. After this gesture, Tompkins began a more open correspondence with his bishop and Morrison seemed grateful to have the priest's advice. Even Tompkins's biographer, George Boyle, commented on the better relations between the two men. He wrote,

Bishop Morrison sent Father Tompkins a curate in 1928, the first ever appointed to the Star of the Sea. He also sent a donation to the people in their darkest hour. There are other instances of good will between his bishop and himself, despite their former disagreements on policy in higher education.³²

This is important as the sometimes rocky relationship between Morrison and Rev. James Tompkins was mended to a large degree. Although they are remembered as combatants over the university federation question, they had begun as friends and they ended up with a good working relationship. They were not life-long foes.

The year 1928 was a busy one in Antigonish. The report of the MacLean commission and the \$100,000 donation laid the foundation for a new movement in rural education. Morrison was 67 years old and was in good health. There were no major labour problems in Cape Breton and the visit of

³² George Boyle, *Father Tompkins of Nova Scotia* (New York: P.J. Kennedy & Sons, 1953), p. 147.

the Apostolic Delegate in the summer of 1928 had been a success.³³ It was the first good year in what had been a very difficult decade.

In the early spring of 1929, with the decision made to establish a Extension Department at St. Francis Xavier, Morrison sent a letter of introduction with Rev. Moses Coady, who was going to travel to Alberta. In this letter Morrison summed up the recent activities of Coady and the university:

His present efforts are being directed towards developing the rural life of the Province, and in connection with the University of Antigonish to give scientific and practical instruction to the agricultural and fisheries communities for the proper development of these industries, as also to promote the re-colonization of the Province by re-patriating its absentee population from beyond the Canadian border.³⁴

These were clear and very obvious goals for Morrison. He wanted people back on the farms and he wanted to attract expatriates and new Catholic immigrants to come to the diocese and settle.³⁵ Thanks to Tompkins in Canso, the plight of the fishermen was foremost among diocesan matters. In March of 1929,

³³ The arrival of the Pope's Canadian representative in Antigonish was a major event. The Diocese planned all events very carefully and every detail from the official reception to the placing of the papal flag on the Delegate's car was looked after.

³⁴ Morrison letter of Introduction of Rev. Moses M. Coady, February 8, 1929, letter#15686, BMP, ADA.

³⁵ Morrison worried that not enough effort was being put into attracting immigrants to settle in the east. While new Scandinavian immigrants were being encouraged to go West, Morrison felt it unfair that they were not also encouraged to stay East. Morrison to Rev. Andrew MacDonell, December 26, 1928, letter#15542, BMP, ADA.

Morrison wrote to Prime Minister Mackenzie King, requesting that Cyrus MacMillan be made the first federal minister of Fisheries. Morrison told the Prime Minister that MacMillan was not only well qualified but that he had the support of every quarter in the Diocese. The appointment of MacMillan as minister would not only be popular but would be “decidedly helpful to the fishing industry throughout the diocese.”³⁶ Morrison wrote this letter and many others at the request of Rev. Tompkins and in many ways acted as a courier of Tompkins’s ideas. Morrison, although knowledgeable regarding the economic problems of the diocese, was wise enough to let Tompkins and Coady determine what was to be done. Morrison offered guidance but his interventions were suggestions.³⁷ What was also important about the mended relationship between Rev. Tompkins and Morrison was that they saw eye to eye more often than not. Tompkins even warned the Bishop of the activities of the “reds” in the mining areas.³⁸ They both hoped that the farmers and fishermen would quickly realize the necessity of meeting the new conditions and circumstances of their respective industries, so that they might achieve a

³⁶ Morrison to Prime Minister Mackenzie King, March 8, 1929, letter#15789, BMP, ADA.

³⁷ It is important to understand the relationship between Morrison and Tompkins/Coady during this period. Morrison was supportive and cautious but he helped the two priests implement their ideas. An example of this comes after Morrison wrote to Mackenzie King asking him to make Cyrus MacMillan the first Minister of Fisheries, Morrison wrote to Tompkins, “I may say that a letter has gone forward to the Prime Minister along the lines you suggest. I take it that the Fishermen’s unions themselves are taking active measures with the Ottawa authorities in support of the same proposition.” Morrison to Rev. James Tompkins, March 8, 1929, letter#16790, BMP, ADA.

³⁸ Morrison to Rev. James Tompkins, December 11, 1929, letter#16412, BMP, ADA.

reasonable return for their labours.³⁹ They also felt that if the diocese was successful in its attempts to alleviate the problems of the fishing industry, it might be able to organize “every other industry that counts for something.”⁴⁰ Although the literature which has been written on this period mentions very little about the bishop, he was in solidarity with the priests working to organize the fishermen and farmers, as long as fiscal responsibility was maintained. In one letter to Rev. Tompkins, Morrison wrote,

It is estimated that the total catch in Nova Scotia during 1929 will be 285,000,000 pounds, compared with 269,000,000 pounds in 1928. The catch is valued at \$12,000,000, an increase of nearly \$500,000 over the preceding year. Just how much the fishermen got out of the above sum, it does not say, but a twelve million business in one year would seem to show that it has favorable possibilities when properly organized, and let us hope soon to see such organization.⁴¹

This is no doubt about the position of the bishop regarding the actions of his priests.

In the late summer of 1929, the Federal Minister of Marine and Fisheries requested that Rev. Moses Coady be released from his duties within the diocese for the fall, in order to organize the fishermen of the Maritimes and the

³⁹ Morrison to Rev. J.A. Decoste, December 19, 1929, letter#16428. BMO, ADA.

⁴⁰ Morrison to P.J. Arthur Cardin, August 30, 1929, letter#16187, BMP, ADA.

⁴¹ Morrison to Rev. James Tompkins, January 9, 1930, letter#16497, BMP, ADA.

Magdalen Islands. This was requested in harmony with the Royal Commission report of 1928 on the state of the fishery in the Maritimes. Morrison was very willing to release Coady and was glad to know that the Department of Marine and Fisheries was interested in organizing the fishermen. Although things were moving along and some effective work was being done, the poverty in places like Canso was alarming. Organizations such as St. Vincent de Paul worked tirelessly to alleviate the situation, but the task was great.

In the fall of 1930, the work of the St. Francis Xavier University Extension department officially began. Some of the money to fund the department had come from the donation of the Scottish Catholic Society. The general purpose of the Extension Department was to improve the economic, social, educational and religious conditions of the people of Eastern Nova Scotia. Its staff set out to survey the different industries, conditions and possibilities of the area. They had plans for short courses, study clubs, radio courses, folk schools and circulating libraries.⁴² Morrison was not only supportive in picking A.B. MacDonald to assist Coady but it was Morrison who suggested, on the advice of prominent laymen and priests, that St. Francis Xavier should get into the field before another institution did so.⁴³ In fact he was acting on a threat by the Scottish Catholic Society to begin an operation

⁴² Michael R. Welton., *Little Mosie from the Margaree: A Biography of Moses Michael Coady* (Toronto: Thompson Educational Publishing, 2001), p. 66.

⁴³ St. Francis Xavier University Board of Governors Meeting Minutes, January 14, 1930, SFXUA.

itself if the university authorities did not hurry up and get organized.⁴⁴ Rev. Coady later commented that the whole situation scared the Bishop into action.⁴⁵ This was where Morrison's cautious nature was obvious. Although it took a threat from the Scottish Society to get Morrison to act, act he did.

Morrison was impressed with the results that were achieved when the fishermen began cooperating with each other. When fishermen in South Ingonish organized their own transportation to get their catch to market, Morrison wrote the Parish priest, "It is very creditable to their public spirit, and it is to be hoped that good results will be forthcoming. With this well-balanced sense of cooperation, they will accomplish much economic good among themselves."⁴⁶ For Morrison and many of his priests the opportunity to take education out into the communities did two things. As John Reid argues, "Popular education was a means of asserting a moral and ultimately a religious view of the purposes of society while also enabling the population at large to gain a greater understanding of economic principles and thereby a greater measure of economic self-reliance."⁴⁷ This would be the approach of the Antigonish priests.

⁴⁴ Alexander Laidlaw, *The Campus and the Community: The Global Impact of the Antigonish Movement* (Montreal: Harvest House, 1961), p.67.

⁴⁵ Rev. Moses Coady to R.J. MacSween, March 24, 1953, RG 30-2/1/2963-6, STFXUA.

⁴⁶ Morrison to Rev. J.B. Kyte, January 12, 1931, letter#17370, BMP, ADA.

⁴⁷ John G. Reid, "Beyond the Democratic Intellect: The Scottish Example and University Reform in Canada's Maritime Provinces, 1870-1933," in Paul Axelrod, John G Reid, *Essays in the Social History of Higher Education* (Montreal: McGill Queens, 1989).

In 1931 Pope Pius XI issued the encyclical *Quadragesimo Anno*, which outlined the position of the Church in regard to the reciprocal rights and duties of labour and capital and their bearing on present day conditions, and stressed the necessity of applying Christian principles to the grave economic problems that beset the world with the onset of the Great Depression. Morrison was clear in an open letter to the diocese that the people were going to have to suffer in order to make the economic situation better. He knew that the young people were going to have to leave for other parts of the continent to find work but promised that it would only be a temporary situation. He outlined his support for the efforts of those in the extension department and prayed that the dole would never get a hold on the country. To the bishop there was nothing that could sap more surely and effectively the self-respect of people than a degrading system such as welfare. He believed that implementing the welfare state usually spelled the “beginning of the end for anything and everything that has to do with economic prosperity.”⁴⁸ This opinion was one that served Morrison for the remainder of his career. It also explains why he was so keen on the activities of the extension department. Time and time again, Morrison alluded to the parable that if one gives a man a fish he eats for a day, teach a man to fish and he will eat for ever. Morrison was no fan of a welfare state and this opinion also shaped the tone of the Antigonish movement.

⁴⁸ Morrison circular, September 26, 1931, letter#17993, BMP, ADA.

As the extension department workers continued to build the foundations for their work in the communities, Morrison remained supportive. In letters to priests he called for plans so that fishermen might get their fair share of the profits on their catch. He was angered at the continuing difference between the price of coal and the wages of the miner. In a letter to Rev. James Tompkins he wrote,

It can scarcely be wondered at that the whole capitalistic system is being placed on trial before the public conscience, when such exploitation is being practiced. It certainly needs a fundamental overhauling to place it on something like an equitable basis, and eventually this will have to be brought about. The sooner it comes, the better for the community at large.⁴⁹

Morrison also let Tompkins know that he supported his work in trying to beat the fish barons. Hoping to have a group of Sisters of St. Martha commit to working in the area, Tompkins needed money. Morrison came through with the funds for the project and wrote the following letter,

I need not tell you how pleased I am that you continue to maintain an unflinching interest in the improvement of these conditions, and that as far as circumstances permit, you are making a real effort to remedy this situation. I feel confident that the people of that area will react favorably

⁴⁹ Morrison to Rev. James Tompkins, November 4, 1932, letter#18959, BMP, ADA.

to any such effort, and will endeavor to avail themselves of whatever educational endeavor may be made for their welfare along those lines.

As an evidence of my own sympathy with this good work, I am giving you the promise that I shall get together for you One Thousand Dollars (\$1000.00) to aid this undertaking, and I hope to have it available for you by the time the plan begins to function.⁵⁰

In giving a grateful Tompkins the funds needed, Morrison was clear to him that he wanted no one to know that the donation came from the bishop. At the time, this kind of gesture from Morrison may have actually hurt his image as by not taking any of the spotlight for himself, many got the idea that he was not a participant in the good works happening in communities such as Canso. It also hurt his historical image, as biographers of Tompkins have given credit to Tompkins and Mother Faustina for the arrival of the sisters but do not mention the bishop. Similarly, many contemporary scholars of Coady, Tompkins and the Antigonish Movement mistakenly paint Morrison as a conservative without the vision to follow the more progressive ideas of those in the movement.

However, in reality, Morrison was no more conservative than were many of his priests and, indeed, he and more recognizably progressive priests such as Rev. Tompkins were equally wary of anybody who was deemed too radical. Rev. Tompkins himself was usually the first to send Morrison Catholic newspaper

⁵⁰ Morrison to Rev. James Tompkins, November 28, 1932, letter#19029, BMP, ADA.

and magazine articles that he felt were too extreme.⁵¹ The relationship between Bishop Morrison and Rev. Tompkins in the late 1920's and early 1930's is important as it shows that the gap between the priest in the field and the bishop was actually very small. Where Morrison was cautious, he had good reason. The troubled dioceses in Western Canada were examples of what could go wrong due to reckless financing. In the late fall of 1931, the Archbishop of Regina wrote to Morrison to beg for contributions to alleviate the growing debt of the diocese. The Bishops of Canada suggested that each diocese in the country help out Regina. Antigonish was to give \$10,000 dollars over five years.⁵² This kind of financial disaster angered Morrison and he resolved to have none of it in his diocese. So as long as priests such as Tompkins were prudent, Morrison was willing to help and do whatever he could. Morrison was certainly cautious and took a great deal of time making important decisions. This kind of wait could make someone who was very passionate about a subject, very impatient. Even Rev. Hugh P. MacPherson, Morrison's closest friend among the clergy, felt that Morrison was at times too long in deliberation. Writing to Sister M. Faustina in 1933, MacPherson commented, "I

⁵¹ In October of 1933, Tompkins sent Morrison *The Catholic Worker* (Volume one, #5) which contained articles which Tompkins felt were too radical. Morrison wrote back to Tompkins, "I quite agree with you that it is rather extreme and radical." Morrison to Rev. James Tompkins, October 23, 1933, letter#19842, BMP, ADA.

⁵² Archbishop James C. McGuigan wrote Morrison a letter in which he pleaded for assistance. This was a difficult letter for McGuigan to write. A fellow islander, Morrison had been friends with the Archbishop's father. See, Peter T. McGuigan, "*Cardinal James McGuigan: Tormented Prince of the Church.*" MA Thesis, Saint Mary's University, 1995.

presume his Lordship finds it difficult to make changes immediately.”⁵³ This does not, however, mean that Morrison was shortsighted or deliberately obstructing his clergy. In December of 1933 an ailing Tompkins suggested to Morrison that he be allowed to leave his position in Canso and go to Bethany to act as resident chaplain to the Sisters of St. Martha. Morrison agreed and Tompkins eventually left the community he had done so much to help. It is also important to note that Morrison did not send Tompkins to Bethany; he was granting the request of the priest.

The Antigonish Movement has significance in many different ways. For Bishop Morrison, he saw the extension department not only as a tool for economic progress, but also as a way to get Catholics back to rural settings, thus giving them stronger ties to the Church. Morrison wanted very much to secure Catholic immigrants to the diocese and he pressed the extension workers to look into it. Morrison found his priests favorable to these kinds of ideas, especially the Boisdale priest, Rev. Michael Gillis. In the winter of 1932, coinciding with the opening of an extension office in Glace Bay, the Duncan Commission released its report on the state of the coal industry in the Maritimes. The report caused Morrison to believe wrongly that many of the current miners would be heading back to the land in the spring. Although he was encouraged by this news, he was worried that they were not in a position to

⁵³ Rev. H.P. MacPherson to Sister M Faustina, September 25, 1933, RG/5//3486, SFXUA.

be ready to plant a crop. He pressed the provincial government for plans as to what they were going to do to assist the men and their families. In the spring of 1932, the government of Nova Scotia implemented a land settlement bill.

Morrison was not only hopeful that new Catholic immigrants would take advantage of the opportunity but that Catholic men working in industrial sectors would return to the rural life. In a letter to the premier in Halifax, Morrison wrote,

These young men would make good farmers, which in itself are worth considering, and their making a success of it would be an inducement to the miners themselves to get back to the land. I do not anticipate that the miners will rush for the land in any appreciable number, and so I do not think the Act as it stands will be overburdened with applications by that quarter, at least for some considerable time.⁵⁴

Although there would be no immediate rush of miners to the countryside, Morrison was so sure of the collapse of the mining industry that he instructed his priests in heavily industrial areas to begin paying off their debt so that it would be eradicated before the parish was forced to close. In a letter to a priest in New Waterford, Morrison wrote,

In view of the uncertainty as to the future of the mining industry, it would be well to get the parish debt cleared off the slate as soon as

⁵⁴ Morrison to Premier G.S. Harrington, March 16, 1932, letter#18482, BMP, ADA.

possible. I know Nos. 12 and 16 are still going to function, but one can never tell what may happen without much notice, and so it is well to be prepared for any adverse eventuality that may come about. So father I ask you to tackle the debt as among the first obligations of the Parish, and we may hope that within a reasonable time it will be taken care of.⁵⁵

The extension department even discussed the idea of a colonization association be implemented to create solutions to the problems of ongoing depopulation.

While the extension work was proceeding well, Morrison continued to stick to his original position that his priests were to stay out of partisan politics. The formation of the CCF in Western Canada and its perceived natural affiliation with the work of the extension department forced Morrison to be diligent in warning his priests against any participation in party politics. Early in 1932, the Bishop was concerned that the extension department was beginning to be associated with the CCF and its leader James Shaver Woodsworth. More worrisome was a speech given by Woodsworth in Regina in March in 1933 where the politician activist stated that there was a priest in Nova Scotia organizing fishermen and miners into co-operative societies and that it was simply a matter of time before those organizing co-operative societies began to get involved in the political movement. Morrison was

⁵⁵ Morrison to Rev. Miles Tompkins, April 28, 1932, letter#18594, BMP, ADA.

angered by this development and wanted to know who the priest was.⁵⁶

Morrison contacted the persons affiliated with the CCF to deny that any priest of his was going to help organize the party in the diocese. In a letter to one Ontario CCF official, Morrison wrote,

To that statement I desire to give a point-blank denial. Any social work and Catholic action undertaken by the Catholic priests in this part of the country is solely on its own merits, and has no association whatever either directly or indirectly with the CCF or any other political party within or beyond the Province.⁵⁷

The workers in the extension department were not to enter the political field while Morrison was Bishop. It was a signal that the extension department, like the church itself, was above partisan politics and it also makes clear that the extension department leaders were Catholics first, reformers second.

Bishop Morrison had other reasons to be wary of partisan politics. The election of Angus L. MacDonald to the Premiership of Nova Scotia on 22 August 1933 was an important one for Catholics. MacDonald was the first Catholic premier since Sir John Thompson gained the office in 1882. Angus L. was a native of Inverness County, Cape Breton and came from a Scottish and Acadian Catholic home. He attended the local Catholic University in Antigonish and had been an important recruiter for regiments in Eastern Nova

⁵⁶ Morrison to Rev. H.P. MacPherson, March 30, 1933, letter#19418, BMP, ADA.

⁵⁷ Morrison to James McKenzie, September 25, 1933, letter#19790, BMP, ADA.

Scotia during the Great War. MacDonald represented the spirit of the Catholics of Eastern Nova Scotia and his election was symbolic for the people of the Antigonish diocese. What would have been a surprise to many Catholics in 1932 was the fact that Angus L. MacDonald and Bishop Morrison were on very unfriendly terms. Angus L. had supported Rev. Tompkins and his quest for university federation in 1922. In doing so he clashed with the leaders of the diocese and a lifelong rift between himself and Morrison was begun. This fissure between these two important Catholics took its toll on the diocese as they both dug in their heels and made life difficult for each other. After his election Angus L., did not have the traditional interview with Morrison upon his first stop in Antigonish. Morrison took the slight in silence, but when MacDonald did finally make a call at the Bishop's residence he was received in a cold manner. MacDonald commented that it "would be a long time before I call upon him again."⁵⁸ Making matters worse in 1932 was the strained relationship between Morrison and Angus L.'s brother, Rev. Stanley MacDonald. Morrison had removed MacDonald as pastor of Judique for inappropriate behavior and sent him as an assistant to Sacred Heart in Sydney. For the next 18 years MacDonald was to serve as an assistant in various parishes until he was again given a parish of his own by Bishop John R. MacDonald in 1950. Rev. Stanley MacDonald felt that his treatment by

⁵⁸ J. Murray Beck, *Politics of Nova Scotia: Volume Two, 1896-1988* (Tantallon: Four East Publications, 1988), p. 166.

Morrison was unjust and complained to the Apostolic Delegate that he was being targeted unfairly by Morrison because of his political views. Angus L. believed that Morrison was persecuting his brother because of the bad blood between the bishop and himself and he viewed the actions of the bishop as vindictive. Rev. Stanley strongly refuted Morrison's reasons for dismissal and complained to the Apostolic Delegate that he was being unfairly treated.⁵⁹ This difficult situation was made worse in November of 1933 when Morrison learned that the man in charge of supplying mass wine for the diocese of Antigonish was being removed. The distributor had committed the ultimate sin against Angus L.: he had campaigned for a Conservative in Antigonish. MacDonald's response was to remove him and replace him with a Liberal. Morrison, who was strict in keeping his priests out of politics, sent MacDonald a letter of complaint; the distribution of Mass Wine, he said, "is not an Antigonish Town or County affair. It concerns every parish of the Diocese from the Bay St. Lawrence to Pictou town, and if it is going to be made a political football, we cannot sit down as idle spectators."⁶⁰ This situation dragged on for years with no solution. Morrison thought MacDonald an

⁵⁹ It is of interest to note that Rev. Stanley MacDonald claimed that he was removed as a parish priest because of his influence among the labour movement in industrial Cape Breton. Writing to Angus L. Rev. Stanley argued that he in fact was the only priest trying to do anything for Industrial Cape Breton. He wrote, "Coady wouldn't do anything to help, he is too thirsty for glory and didn't want me in the limelight". He went further, "They are concerned with maintaining the status quo, and the Antigonish supremacy. I refuse to be a tool." Rev. Stanley MacDonald to Angus L. MacDonald, October, 1937, PANS, ALM Papers. F422/18.

⁶⁰ Morrison to Angus L. MacDonald, December 1, 1933, letter#19934, BMP, ADA.

“unscrupulous leader” who had led a “ruthless invasion of the Catholic sanctuary.”⁶¹ MacDonald tried a compromise by submitting a proposal to the Bishop which would see a neutral Mass-Wine distributor appointed. Morrison again rebuked MacDonald and explained that only when the original distributor was reinstated would the situation be at an end. Morrison saw this as not only an attack on the Church but an attack on him as well.⁶² Writing to Angus L., he commented that “Surely there are enough serious problems in the Country without adding this one which never should have existed.”⁶³ A compromise was eventually reached but the relationship was now beyond repair. The premier, frustrated with his inability to influence Morrison, complained “If there were an Archbishop here, I should, myself go to him and ask him to intervene to curb the Bishop of Antigonish, who attempted to ride roughshod over me a few weeks after I took office here.”⁶⁴ The feud between the bishop and the premier gives insight into the personalities of both men. It also speaks to the fragmentation of the Church at this period. Although many in the Orange Lodges feared a great conspiracy of the Catholic Church, the Catholic Church in Eastern Nova Scotia was not without its disputes. The era when a Catholic

⁶¹ Morrison to Most Rev. Thomas O'Donnell, March 12, 1934, letter#20240, BMP, ADA.

⁶² Not everything that went under the name of “mass wine” could be accepted as such by the Catholic clergy without previous certified investigation. It had to be made clear that the goods offered were genuine mass wine in accordance with the rules of the Catholic Church; otherwise it was rejected. The manufacturers themselves had to submit to their having the wine chemically tested and analyzed.

⁶³ Morrison to Angus L. MacDonald, March 21, 1934, letter#20264, BMP, ADA.

⁶⁴ Angus L. MacDonald to Alex Johnston, October, 1937, PANS, ALM Papers. F1397/65. In October 1937 the Archdiocese of Halifax was waiting for a new Archbishop to be appointed.

Premier needed the full support of his Bishop, as had been the case with Sir John Thompson, was over. Morrison knew this, and that it was another example of the Church's loss of power and influence.

Other than Rev. H.P. MacPherson, Morrison had few close friends within the diocese. Although he kept in touch with members of his family he was not particularly close with any one sibling and the void left in his life after the death of his brother Dan had not been filled. He continued to pay the university tuition for family members. He was happy to support nephew John Morrison but he kept a close eye on his studies and threatened to pull his support if his grades did not improve. In December of 1932, his brother Cyril died and the following year his step-mother passed away. Morrison wrote to the members of his family to express his sympathies, but his letters seemed as though they were written by a friend and not a brother. The age difference between Morrison and many of his younger step-brothers and sisters was great and he was not very close to them. He paid the cost of the funerals and burials, but did not attend due to a busy schedule⁶⁵ Morrison did begin to reach out to his former classmates from the Propaganda College in Rome in order to rekindle old relationships. Having only kept brief contact with them over the

⁶⁵ Even in dealing with his family, Morrison was frugal and wary of debt. In offering to pay for his step-brother Cyril's funeral expenses, Morrison wrote. "Will you be so good as to get together the bills connected with the funeral and such matters, and let me know what they are. You will of course see that they are reasonable in their charges." Morrison to Mary Morrison, December 30, 1932, letter#19148, BMP, ADA.

past forty years, Morrison's correspondence with them picked up considerably. In particular, he began to correspond with the Dublin Bishop, Francis Wall, a British Guiana missionary priest Rev. J.J. Purcell and a former Prince Edward islander Rev. James Reardon.⁶⁶ Morrison used these friends as an outlet through which to express himself in matters other than those of a Catholic Bishop. The relationship between Morrison and these men is interesting as it gives some insight into his personality. As his closest friends were thousands of miles away, it was clear that James Morrison was not good at making or keeping friends within the clergy of Antigonish, and that, coupled with the fact that he had no close family members paints a picture of a very secluded man. Morrison sums up the lonely life of the priest in a letter to Bishop Wall in 1933,

There are so few left of our contemporaries of 1890, that one feels lonelier as the years go by. On this side I think the only ones left are Purcell of South America, and Russman who I think is a Chaplain in some convent out west. This decimation naturally makes one do some thinking that the end cannot be very far off.⁶⁷

The years from 1926 to 1933 formed what is arguably the most important era for the Catholic Church of Eastern Nova Scotia in the twentieth

⁶⁶ Dr. Francis Wall was appointed Auxiliary Bishop of Dublin on 23 January 1931. He was born on 16 October 1866. He was educated at Belvedere College (SJ), the Diocesan Seminary, Holy Cross College, and Propaganda College, where he was ordained on 1 November 1889. He died 16 May 1947. Information provided by David C. Sheehy, Diocesan Archivist, Archdiocese of Dublin.

⁶⁷ Morrison to Bishop Francis Wall, November 11, 1933, letter#19910, BMP, ADA.

century. There was great turmoil and depression within the diocese and the clergy looked for a way to alleviate some of the economic problems, while keeping the Catholic population firmly in the rural areas. What is most important from Morrison's standpoint is that he was a supporter of most of the actions of his priests and gave them a great deal of room in which to work. He was certainly very open to the thoughts and ideas of his progressive priests and clergy as long as they made sound financial sense. His relationship with Rev. James Tompkins was mended and they enjoyed a fairly good working relationship. Morrison was more than an aloof Bishop at this period, he was a participant. This is extremely important as, in analyzing the actions of the St. Francis Xavier extension department, it must be clear that the Bishop of Antigonish was possibly the most important voice at the table. He not only gave his personal and financial support to the active clergy but he had a hand in many of the ideas and decisions which came about. His wish not to be publicly credited with many of his endeavors has meant that he has been almost ignored as an important figure in the movement. In ignoring Morrison, the motives of the Church have also been ignored. The primary goals of Morrison's actions was to alleviate suffering but most importantly it was to keep Catholics on the land and in small communities where the influence of the Church on their lives would be great. Morrison had come through a very difficult period. He managed to keep the diocese in fairly good shape in a very poor economy.

While dioceses in the west faced bankruptcy situations, Antigonish was able to build hospitals and schools. There was great optimism during this period as the extension work was beginning to take hold and the traditional problems in the industrial areas seemed to be dying down. Morrison was hopeful that within a few years there would only exist a reduced industrial area, which, he believed would be good for the Church.

Chapter six
“Hanging On”
1936-1945

The latter part of the 1920's saw the inauguration and early development of the Extension Department at St. Francis Xavier University. The actions taken by Morrison in this period were intended to help alleviate the effects of a depression that had begun after the Great War, but they also had the secondary purpose of extending Catholic influence as far as possible. Morrison struggled to keep the diocese and the university out of debt, and remained committed to building the diocesan infrastructure. The 1930's brought new challenges for Morrison and the Diocese of Antigonish. The economy remained stagnant and out-migration to the “Boston States” and central and western Canada continued. Morrison continued his financial struggle and tried his best to position the church within society so that Catholics could achieve a better social position within the province. Soon another world war would again disrupt the diocese and Morrison continued his patriotic duties while pressing other Catholic Dioceses to do the same. By the end of the war, however, Morrison's career would be moving towards its end, his position as bishop increasingly challenged.

In 1933 the Canadian economy was in shambles. The American market, which had collapsed in 1929, was showing little signs of improvement while Canada's small economy, which depended so much on exports of primary products, found that the world no longer required them. By 1933 nearly twenty percent of the Canadian labour force was listed as unemployed.¹ In Antigonish, as elsewhere in the Maritimes, the weak economy was evident. While some dioceses in the hardest hit areas of Canada faced bankruptcy, Antigonish slowly and carefully crept along. The Maritimes had in fact been dealing with a poor economy since the early 1920's. By the end of 1935, things began to improve in Nova Scotia. The coal mines in Cape Breton were more active than they had been in years and with the Sydney steel plant in full operation and the lumbering and agriculture sectors in a healthy condition, there was reason for optimism.²

Though still concerned about the state of the economy, Morrison turned some of his attention to other issues, such as addressing the attitudes of the Protestant community in the area. In most cases, Morrison and the various Protestant communities got along very well. During the push for prohibition, the Anglican minister H.R. Grant worked with Morrison and the cooperation between the communities during the Great War was an example of tolerance

¹ Alvin Finkel, Margaret Conrad, Veronica Strong-Boag, *History of the Canadian Peoples, 1867-Present* (Toronto: Copp Clark Pitman, 1993), p. 328.

² J Murray Beck, *The Politics of Nova Scotia, Volume Two, 1896-1988* (Tantallon: For East Publications, 1988), p. 164.

that other communities looked to emulate. However, in some cases disputes between the two communities took on a nasty tone and because of this Morrison in the mid-1930's looked to cement Catholic unity within the diocese. The major problem in areas of the diocese in which Protestants made up the majority of the population was in the school system. In New Glasgow, where religious tensions ran high, the town council tried to block St. John's Catholic School from receiving free text books from the government. The situation was summed up in Morrison's letter to the corresponding secretary of the Knights of Columbus:

The intolerant attitude of the towns of Pictou County has been a menace to our Catholic schools in that section of the country since they were first instituted, and it has only been by dire sacrifice that they have been able to survive, and were it not for the timely financial assistance they receive from other parishes of the Diocese, it would be impossible for them to continue.³

Morrison was concerned that incidents such as this would discourage Catholic parents from sending their children to Catholic schools. He felt that it would be "rather shocking to think that any Catholic parent with even an ordinary appreciation of what our Catholic faith means to us, would jeopardize the welfare of the children by neglecting the benefits of an education to be obtained

³ Morrison to Knights of Columbus, January 3, 1939, letter#24075, BMP, ADA.

in a Catholic school.”⁴ Thus Morrison encouraged Catholics to reach out to Protestants as a way to exert more Catholic influence in the area. In the meantime, Morrison collected monies from other parishes to help fund the schools in Pictou. This was a battle that he did not intend to lose. Even when the government of Nova Scotia turned a blind eye to the injustices, Morrison refused to be silent. This was a part of his personality; he could be very stubborn when he thought he was right and even more so when he felt that the rights of Catholics were being ignored.

The diocese continued to work towards its vision of economic and social justice. Along with its involvement through the Extension Department the diocese continued to support its hospitals and orphanages. In industrial Cape Breton the Sisters of St. Martha were engaging in all kinds of social tasks including the operation of a social work agency in Holy Redeemer Parish in Whitney Pier. The Little Flower Institute in Bras D’or, the diocesan orphanage, was operating at full capacity. Morrison supported all Diocesan projects but worried constantly about the finances of each operation. In 1938 Morrison admitted the order of the Augustinians to the diocese. This order of monks took over the Monastery in Antigonish County and built a retreat house which opened in 1948. Morrison’s diocese was always evolving, albeit slowly.

⁴ Morrison to Rev. J.A Butts, August 25, 1934, letter#20532, BMP, ADA.

Morrison's energy was extremely high for a man in his mid-seventies. He regularly drove alone to events as far away as Sydney and continued to do all his own secretarial work. The Canadian Catholic community recognized this and was quick to call upon him for advice and counseling. In the summer of 1935 he had been appointed to the list of directors for the St. Francis Xavier seminary in Scarborough, Ontario, but declined, feeling that the archbishop of Halifax would make a better director. Although Morrison managed to release himself from that responsibility, he was called upon for more important work in 1939 during a dispute between the Archbishop of Halifax and St. Mary's College. Morrison was wary of causing any ill-feelings between the Archdiocese of Halifax and the Diocese of Antigonish but he agreed to try and help resolve the conflict.⁵ Cardinal Villeneuve in Quebec had come up with a settlement between the two groups and Morrison urged the Archbishop of Halifax to accept, because he really did not want to have to intervene and cause a disruption of the good understanding between Antigonish and Halifax.⁶ This

⁵ Morrison was right to be cautious in stepping in to mediate a problem in another diocese. In the late 19th century Bishop John Cameron of Antigonish stepped in to mediate on a contentious question between the Archbishop of Halifax and a religious institution in that city. This caused a lot of hard feelings between the two dioceses.

⁶ Morrison to Most Rev. J.T. McNally, June 12, 1939, letter#24389, BMP, ADA. The disagreement was between Halifax Archbishop John T. McNally and the Irish Christian Brothers who were operating the college. McNally believed that as Archbishop he should have complete control over the college. The matter was settled when the Irish Christian Brothers left Halifax for New Rochelle, New York where they founded Iona College. See J. Brian Hanington, *Every Popish Person: The Story of Roman Catholicism in Nova Scotia and the Church of Halifax, 1604-1984* (Halifax: Archdiocese of Halifax, 1984). In the spring of 1941, Saint Mary's college asked Morrison to preach on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of the college. Although flattered, Morrison declined because of a busy schedule.

exemplified his cautious nature. Where other Bishops might have been quick to intervene as a way to help their stock rise within the Catholic community, Morrison wanted none of it. While age may have partly explained Morrison's decisions at this point, his unwillingness to take a very public role outside of Antigonish meant that he remained an under-appreciated bishop.

In 1936, St. Francis Xavier University received the news that Rev. Hugh Peter MacPherson was resigning his post as Rector and President of the institution because of ill health. He had served for thirty years and was a fixture at the school. Morrison wrote to MacPherson to express his deep regret that the rector was leaving. In recognizing the services of the rector, Morrison was intent on keeping his friend on the campus in Antigonish. He wrote,

In view of your long and untiring service as President, covering as it does some thirty years during which the university has made immense strides in educational achievement and today stands in the vanguard of enlightened effort, I desire to have you remain in residence at the University and to this end I hereby designate you as its President-Rector Emeritus.⁷

Morrison also expressed to MacPherson his thanks for his unfailing loyalty over the years. This had been never more evident than during the University Federation question in 1922. The loss of MacPherson was certainly felt by

⁷ Morrison to Msgr. H.P. MacPherson, June 9, 1936, letter#22020, BMP, ADA.

Morrison. MacPherson came as close as anyone to being a friend to Morrison in Antigonish. They saw eye to eye on most issues and had spent many years together. MacPherson's retirement represented the first of many personal changes that were coming to the diocese over the next decade.

In MacPherson's place, Morrison appointed Rev. Dr. D.J. MacDonald as President.⁸ MacDonald's appointment as President of the University was interesting as he was known to be much more radical than MacPherson. In the 1920's Rev. James Tompkins had commented that Rev. MacDonald had been the most radical of the entire St. Francis Xavier faculty.⁹ It was, however, his knowledge of the work being done by the Extension Department which most helped his case. He was the brother of Rev. Coady's assistant, A.B. MacDonald, and had been an active supporter of their work. He was also a safe appointment for Morrison. For as much as the bishop wanted a man who could help chart a progressive future for the school, Morrison also wanted a man who would stand by him if need be. During the 1922 University Federation issue, Rev. D.J. MacDonald had supported the Bishop and had drafted the 1922 report that condemned the proposal of University federation. Morrison was not going to put anyone in charge of the university who harbored any pro-federation feelings.

⁸ Rev. Dr. Daniel Joseph MacDonald. (1881-1948) St Francis Xavier University President, 1936-1944.

⁹ James Cameron, *For the People: A History of St. Francis Xavier University* (Montreal: McGill-Queens, 1996), p.241.

It became evident to Bishop Morrison and President MacDonald that if Saint Francis Xavier was going to continue to act as the home base for the Extension work, the campus was going to require an upgrade both financially and physically. The Extension Department was costing the university \$16,000 a year and St. Francis Xavier was not a wealthy institution. Morrison again went to the people of the diocese for financial support. He asked all those who were interested in the social and economic welfare of the community to give money to support the university. In a circular to the people of the diocese, Morrison stressed that the Extension Department was not offering mere platitudes or theoretical ideas, but was tackling social and economic problems at the root.¹⁰ Morrison sent representatives to various parishes to try and solidify some financial support. The university under Morrison and MacDonald was determined to expand despite the depression. A new dining hall was completed by the spring of 1938. Unfortunately for the university, there were some difficulties in collecting the monies necessary to finance the building. Worried over the increasing debt, Morrison personally offered to contribute \$1000 for every \$5000 dollars collected by the university. He further offered a sum of \$20,000 when the university had raised \$100,000. This was a great deal of

¹⁰ Morrison Circular, July 30, 1934, letter#20482, BMP, ADA.

money and, as in past instances; the bishop wanted absolutely no publicity.¹¹

The university named the new building Morrison Hall in honor of Morrison's contributions. Morrison was uncomfortable but gave his consent. The building stands as a legacy to the enduring commitment of the Bishop to keep his institutions out of debt.

Meanwhile, certain countries in Europe were turning increasingly to totalitarian governments to solve economic and social problems. In 1922 politicians like Benito Mussolini were viewed by some in North America as a constructive force, but by the late 1930's their true intentions were becoming clear.¹² In 1937 the Catholic Church became increasingly worried over the persecution of religious groups in Germany. Bishop Morrison was under no illusions as to the troubles brewing in Europe and the rest of the world. He was kept informed by three major sources. In Europe Msgr. Clapperton¹³ of the Scots College in Rome wrote regular letters, full of news from Italy and Europe. Likewise, Morrison's brother Vincent, who was serving as a

¹¹ Morrison to Dr. Rev. D.J. MacDonald, January 29, 1937, letter#22636, BMP, ADA. Morrison's number one condition on his offers was there was to be no newspaper or press publicity about the monies.

¹² In writing about the need for Catholic social action in the mid-1920's, Rev. James Tompkins commented to Angus L. MacDonald to "Keep a sharp eye on Mussolini and the fascist movement in Italy, It is very worth while." Rev. James Tompkins to Angus L. MacDonald, November 20, 1922, F1348/19, ALPS PANS. On November 23, 1922, Tompkins wrote, "We need a league of youth and a few Mussolinis." Rev. James Tompkins to Angus L. MacDonald, November 23, 1922, F1348/20, ALPS PANS.

¹³ In 1941, Morrison became greatly worried about Msgr. Clapperton's safety, as he or anyone else was not able to make contact with him for months. Communication to Italy through the post was impossible. Morrison wrote the Archbishop of Glasgow, Scotland for any word on Clapperton's situation.

missionary in China, gave the bishop insights into the issues in Asia and the Pacific. However, the best source of information came from the *Halifax Herald* publisher W.H. Dennis.¹⁴ Dennis sent the bishop copies of correspondence between himself and the Canadian-born newspaper baron, Lord Beaverbrook. This kept Morrison knowledgeable as to events in the British and Canadian Parliaments. The letters which Morrison was receiving from his brother Vincent served as a first person view of what was to come. In July of 1938, Morrison's brother narrowly escaped with his life when the Japanese air force bombed his mission parish in China. Concerned for the welfare of his brother, the bishop offered these words,

We can only hope and pray that there will not be a repetition of such an experience. However, it might be well to have your dug-out strengthened and so made more bomb-proof.¹⁵

In September 1939, Hitler invaded Poland, and Canada and Britain declared war. Morrison was set to sail for Rome to make his traditional Ad

¹⁴ The relationship between Bishop Morrison and Senator William H. Dennis was a very good one. Starting in the early 1930's, Dennis sent an annual donation of \$500.00 to the diocese to help the poor and needy. Dennis did not want any publicity from the matter and enjoyed Morrison's respect because of it. Writing to Dennis after another contribution in 1943, Morrison commented, "I know you are motivated by Christian charity, wherein one hand is not expected to know what the other gives, but many a time I have wished to be free to tell the beneficiaries just who the benefactor is." Morrison to W.H. Dennis, January 9, 1943, letter#27066, BMP, ADA.

¹⁵ Morrison to Rev. Vincent Morrison, July 26, 1938, letter#23777, BMP, ADA. Rev. Vincent Morrison's letters to his brother are valuable for their detail and candor. On 5, November 1940, Vincent wrote, "Japanese raids and bombers have not molested us for about a month but they are busy in other provinces here and on the border where much merchandise destined for China was destroyed." Rev. Vincent Morrison to Morrison, November 5, 1940, incomingletter#26404, BMP, ADA.

Limina visit to Rome when he heard the news. Unsure whether it was safe to travel, Morrison was forced to cancel his trip. War was nothing new to Morrison and he regretted its renewed outbreak. In a letter to Archbishop John Hugh MacDonald, with whom he had arranged to travel, he commented, “the nightmare is with us again.”¹⁶ For Morrison the war against Nazism and Fascism was in fact a great crusade to help save Christianity from the assaults of aggressive atheism. Again, he would have to do his duty as an “Empire Bishop.” Unlike during the Great War, Antigonish was not swept up in war fever. However, many were still willing to show their support. The President of St. Francis Xavier saw the war as a “noble cause” and felt that an allied victory would lay the foundation for universal peace.¹⁷ News of the war took over the pages of *The Casket* and *The Xaverian*, as readers awaited news from Europe. As he did during the Great War, Morrison gave his support to government initiatives such as recruitment to the armed forces and the Victory Loan campaign. He involved himself as much as he could, although at 78 years old he did not have the energy for national matters as he had in 1914.

In November of 1939, Morrison celebrated fifty years in the priesthood. Although he tried to be low key about the anniversary, he was besieged with

¹⁶ Morrison to Archbishop J.H. MacDonald, September 13, 1939, letter#24549, BMP,ADA.

¹⁷ James Cameron, *For the People*, p. 258.

calls and letters.¹⁸ A special mass was held in St. Ninian's Cathedral in Antigonish and Morrison preached the homily, telling those gathered that he was one of only three priests left alive from his class which had been ordained in Rome, fifty years before. The news of Morrison's achievement was front-page material in the *Halifax Herald*, which led with the banner, "Pontiff sends Blessing to Bishop on Jubilee."¹⁹ He was now Canada's oldest Catholic Bishop, and one of its most respected.

Thanks in large part to the effort of Morrison during the Great War, the Catholic chaplains during the Second World War had a much easier time in dealing with military and government officials. The miscommunications between chaplains and army and government officials that caused so many problems during the Great War were not repeated in 1939. Morrison's problem in 1939 was that so many of his younger priests wanted to serve overseas. In trying to balance the need for Chaplains with the need for priests within the diocese, the bishop was careful to make sure that many of his younger priests remained at home. Having sent five priests to the front during the Great War, Morrison intended to send five more over for this war and was adamant that the

¹⁸ Letters came from all over Canada, the United States and Europe. May old friends who had not been in contact with the Morrison for years wrote to him at the house. Pope Pius XII sent an autographed picture. The most special letters were from his old classmates who of course had all been ordained on the same day. Writing to Bishop Francis Wall in Dublin, Morrison joked, "For myself, I do not know how long this may continue, but I have always felt that it is better to wear out than to rust out, and so I have kept going, and, thank God, I am feeling fairly fit." Morrison to Bishop Francis Wall, November 11, 1939, letter#24706, BMP, ADA.

¹⁹ *Halifax Herald*, November 2, 1939.

other dioceses across the country must fill the rest of the ranks.²⁰ Morrison pushed the Catholic authorities to make sure that the distribution of chaplains from the different Dioceses of Canada was more even than in 1914.²¹ He argued that if all the dioceses of Canada gave as many chaplains as Antigonish, the armed services would have over 400. He clearly believed that it was unfair to expect Antigonish to carry the burden of the chaplaincy service. The chaplains who did go to the front kept in relatively close contact with Morrison although they were not as keen about writing letters to the Bishop as had been the case during the Great War. They supplied him with as much news from the front as they could and he sent them letters with bits and pieces of diocesan happenings.

On 7 December 1941, the news that the Japanese had attacked Pearl Harbor and the ensuing decision by the United States to enter the war gave encouragement to Morrison. Although saddened by the loss of life in the attack; he was glad that Canada and Britain would now be able to count on the military support of America. This news seemed to awaken some of Morrison's American friends who might have had isolationist feelings up to that point. In a letter to Major Rev. R.C. MacGillivray, Morrison wrote

²⁰ The five Chaplains from Antigonish were, Rev. Michael E McLaughlin, Rev. Michael Gillis, Rev. Angus J MacIsaac, Rev. James F. MacIsaac and Rev. Ronald C. MacGillivray.

²¹ Morrison to Rev. C.L. Nelligan, November 16, 1939, letter#24732, BMP, ADA.

I am inclined to think the few voluble antis over here will feel pretty rotten in regard to the attitude they have been taking on this question, but of course they will wriggle out of their predicament, and will be the foremost patriots from now on.²²

In May of 1943, Morrison was encouraged by the news that North Africa had been “Mopped up”; he hoped that the victory would be the modern “Delenda est Carthage.”²³ It was also in 1943 that Morrison began to fear for his brother Vincent’s life, as he had not heard from him in months. Finally in March, Morrison received a letter from the Scarborough Foreign Missions that his brother had escaped from China unharmed. In June 1944, the Allies invaded Europe and two of Morrison’s priests landed on the Juno beach with Canadian troops. By the night of 8 June, Morrison was relieved by the news that the British and Canadian beaches had linked up with Utah beach to the west. Although optimistic about the success of the Allied drive through Europe, Morrison was saddened by the loss of young men at the front. Writing to Captain Rev. M.E. McLaughlin, Morrison commented,

I am glad to know from you that our Canadian boys are giving such a magnificent account of themselves. There are of course casualties. And most every parish here has to mourn over the deaths of some of its

²² Morrison to Major Rev. Ronald C. MacGillivray, December 11, 1941, letter#26185, BMP, ADA.

²³ Morrison to Lt. Col. Rev. R.C. MacGillivray, May 11, 1943, letter#27291, BMP, ADA.

members. Well, we expected that such things had to happen, but all the same they are a cause for sorrow, especially among the home friends of the dead and wounded.²⁴

The war in Europe was being fought by peoples of all faiths. Catholics were aware, however, of the danger of scrutiny being directed toward them in a time of national crisis. Making matters worse this time around was the fact that Italy was a major supporter of Nazi Germany. The spiritual and physical headquarters of the Catholic Church was Rome and even though the Vatican and the government of Italy were separate there were many non-Catholics who viewed Catholicism as suspicious and unpatriotic. This was the cause of much worry for Morrison and he went out of his way to publicize the patriotic deeds of Catholics in Eastern Nova Scotia. When he was faced with what he believed to be unfair and prejudiced situations he acted as faithfully and proactively as he could. In 1942, some Italian Catholics of Cape Breton were interned because of suspected links between them and Fascist Italy. They were associated with Rome and Rome was associated with Mussolini and Mussolini with Hitler. This was a grave situation for all Catholics. The internment of Italian Catholics did not help the situation. Through the Apostolic Delegate, Morrison was able to secure some assistance for the families of the internees. Even in securing some financial support, Morrison and the Italian Catholics of

²⁴ Morrison to Captain, Rev. M.E. McLaughlin, November 14, 1944, letter#28436, BMP, ADA.

industrial Cape Breton were afraid of renewing more prejudice against their community. What greatly distressed Morrison was that twenty of the twenty-two men detained by the Canadian Government were married men with small children. Morrison wrote the Federal Minister of Justice with harsh words,

From the general information I have received it is my considered opinion that the action taken against them was altogether too drastic and sweeping, and I respectfully commend them for a favorable finding by the official investigators in the hope that they may be released from further internment, and be permitted to return to their homes and families.²⁵

Replying to letters from the detainees, Morrison encouraged them to remain strong and he stressed that he was doing all that he could to secure their release.

Meanwhile, planning to address post-war economic and social problems began long before the war ended. As early as 1942, the Catholic hierarchy of Canada had begun to plan for the eventual end of the war and the problems of a post-war society. In 1942 the Catholic hierarchy of Canada released a pastoral letter. In it they set down specific guidelines, which they felt, must be guarded against during a time of war. Some of the points dealt with the use of contraceptives, women in the workforce, and temperance. Bishop Morrison was personally responsible for one of the principles. Having dealt substantially with

²⁵ Morrison to Hon. Louis St-Laurent, July 31, 1942, letter#26701, BMP, ADA.

the problems of communism, Morrison was concerned that the country might drift into some form of state totalitarianism, which they were currently fighting.

In wartime citizens willingly and cheerfully give up many things, and submit rightfully to whatever centralized control is felt necessary for the proper prosecution of the war. But the present sacrifice of freedom as a war necessity should not be regarded as a standard for times of peace. Services that can be adequately controlled and directed by smaller units within the state should not be continued under centralized control when the war is over.²⁶

Morrison felt that the federal government was not going to be able to help the economic and social position of people because the country was too big and the issues were different from region to region. Morrison believed that the Catholic Church would have to play an important part in post-war society.

I am of the opinion that each area will have to do its own thinking and follow it up by properly planned concrete action in order to get the returned men and women resettled into useful employment and to set up their homes in a Christian atmosphere. This is our problem at the present time, and I hope and pray that we may measure up to what is expected of us in this regard.²⁷

²⁶ Morrison to Archbishop Rodique Villeneuve, May 25, 1942, letter#26604, BMP, ADA.

²⁷ Morrison to Rev. R.C. MacGillivray, February 16, 1945, letter#28659, BMP, ADA.

The Second World War changed the way people thought about radio and its importance. The leaders of the extension department at the university realized that radio might be a good way to take their message to the people; they believed that the airwaves were a natural area in which to bring adult education. On 25 March 1943, the new radio station CJFX was opened in Antigonish.²⁸ The station became known as the “university of the air.” It was intended to broadcast over Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island and the Magdalen Islands, and reached as far as Newcastle, New Brunswick. Morrison was proud of this accomplishment as were other Catholics across North America.

The war years also brought to Antigonish a sense of accomplishment. Although the war had interrupted the work of the Extension Department, its progress began to be recognized by the Catholic authorities in North America and in Rome. In 1938 the Pope commended the work that was being done in Antigonish and bestowed on its promoters the apostolic benediction. Morrison wrote back to the Apostolic Delegate:

This distinguished communication from so eminent a source is surely an inspiration for all who have at heart the religious, moral and economic welfare of the community at large, and will be productive of many

²⁸ The idea for the station came from a group of Cape Breton priests who had become dissatisfied with the programming of CJCB in Sydney. It was Rev. James Boyle who made the formal suggestion to St. Francis Xavier President Rev. D.J. MacDonald that a station be organized.

salutary results throughout the country in general, and wherever the message is made known.²⁹

Many have argued that it was at this point that the work of the Extension Department had reached its peak. In April of 1939 the Extension Department had a staff that totaled 11 full time members, 7 part-time, and 30 additional staff in the various fishing communities. It is important to note that during the period Morrison was in charge, the Extension Department made viable economic sense. This was not the case after his administration was over. As Jim Lotz points out, "In the early 1950's the Extension Department was \$155,000 in the red."³⁰ It would be unfair not to point out that the movement had been hindered by loss of personnel during the Second World War; however Morrison's careful financial attitude played a large role in the success of the Extension Department. As a consequence of the newfound appreciation of the work being conducted in Antigonish some of its key priests were chosen as bishops for other parts of the country. In June, 1942, Rev. John R. MacDonald, Morrison's rector at St. Ninian's Cathedral, was named Bishop of Peterborough, Ontario.³¹ In March of 1944, another of his priests was elevated

²⁹ Morrison to Rt. Rev. Umberto Mozzoni, April 12, 1938, letter#23626, BMP, ADA. Rev. Moses Coady, who was very much responsible for the Extension work, was encouraged by the Pope's message. In 1939 Coady had finished his book, *Masters of their own Identity*.

³⁰ Jim Lotz, "The Historical and Social Setting of the Antigonish Movement." *The Nova Scotia Historical Quarterly*, Volume 5, (June 1975), p. 113.

³¹ Rev. John R MacDonald had been the only Antigonish Priest recommended for consideration. Morrison thought highly of MacDonald and enjoyed his company in the Bishop's Residence while MacDonald acted as Rector of St. Ninian's Cathedral. Morrison was genuinely happy for

to the rank of Bishop, when Rev. James Boyle was made Bishop of Charlottetown.³² These were all great achievements for the Diocese and for Morrison but perhaps the greatest symbol of the regard that the Church had for Antigonish came in the first week of March 1944. A letter from the Apostolic Delegate arrived from Ottawa that read,

It affords me a great pleasure to inform your Excellency that the Holy Father, wishing to give you a public token of paternal appreciation for your long and zealous Episcopate, has graciously deigned to confer upon you the honorific personal title of Archbishop, while remaining, at the same time, Bishop of your beloved Diocese of Antigonish.³³

This was a significant honor for Morrison and to be an Archbishop in a smaller diocese such as Antigonish made the honor even more special. It was agreed by all Morrison's priests that he was very deserving of such an honor. Bishop John R. MacDonald wrote to the Apostolic Delegate, "To receive such an honor in the evening of a hard life will surely give him consolation and happiness. He has, I know, never sought honors, nor comforts. He was always devoted to duty as he saw it, and he never spared himself."³⁴ Archbishop John Hugh MacDonald wrote to Morrison, "Your clergy and your many other acquaintances know that

Bishop MacDonald and wrote fairly regularly to offer the new Bishop advice on operating a diocese.

³² Bishop James Boyle, 1885-1954. Bishop of Charlottetown, 1944-1954. In January 1946 another Antigonish priest was made a Bishop when Rev. George Leo Landry, 1895-1977, was made Bishop of Hearst.

³³ Apostolic Delegate to Morrison, March 2, 1944, incoming letter#30174, BMP, ADA.

³⁴ Bishop John R. MacDonald to Morrison, March 4, 1944, incoming letter#30182, BMP, ADA.

honors were never sought, but thrust upon you. For that reason they will probably rejoice more than you will.”³⁵ The telegrams of congratulations came in from across the diocese and the country.³⁶ Morrison disliked the attention, although, deeply honored, he was interested to know who was responsible for petitioning Rome for such a mark of distinction. Suspecting that Bishop MacDonald had been one of those who secured the title for him, Morrison wrote to him,

I am wondering where the initiative of this move came from. Perhaps you know something about it, and if so, I would be glad to hear about it, in confidence of course. The whole thing came to me like a bolt from the blue, and I scarcely knew what to think of it.³⁷

Although Morrison was never told, Bishop MacDonald knew that the initiative had come from Archbishop John Hugh MacDonald. Archbishop MacDonald's intentions were not completely forthright. Although he was happy to see that Morrison had gained some recognition, he was hoping that the personal title of Archbishop would give Morrison enough pride in his accomplishments that he would allow a coadjutor bishop to assume many of the responsibilities of

³⁵ Archbishop John H. MacDonald to Morris on, March 6, 1944, incoming letter#30222, BMP, ADA.

³⁶ A special ceremony was held at St. Ninian's Cathedral to honor Morrison's achievement. The local newspaper covered his speech. "If ten percent of what had been said about him were true, he commented, he would feel that he had accomplished a great deal, but he accepted what was said in the spirit in which it was offered. He had come to the community as a stranger, but he had come to know the people well in his long residence here, and he appreciated the spirit of co-operation which he had found." *The Casket*, April 13, 1944.

³⁷ Morrison to Bishop John R. MacDonald, March 5, 1944, letter#27898, BMP, ADA.

Antigonish. Archbishop MacDonald of course lacked the courage to tell his former bishop the truth behind his deed and instead dropped hints to Morrison about enjoying the fruits of his labour, while a coadjutor handled all the work.³⁸

It was probably better that Morrison never realized that those who had petitioned Rome to make him an Archbishop did so with mixed motives and best that he did not ever read a letter from Archbishop John Hugh MacDonald to Bishop John R. MacDonald in which the Archbishop poked fun at Morrison:

It gave me a great deal of amusement. I was pretty sure that our venerable friend would be pleased with the recognition accorded him. At the same time I could not help picturing him murmuring something like this, "Well, well, I wonder who is behind all this." It never occurred to me that he would try to find the source of this suggestion. I well believe him when he says that the whole thing came to him like a bolt from the blue. I am not sure whether he wrote you before receiving my letter. Mine was written on the 6th and the hope expressed therein that he would soon be rewarded with a Coadjutor may have aroused a bit of suspicion.

³⁸ Morrison never had any idea of the alternate motives of his fellow bishops. Writing to his friend Bishop Francis Wall in Dublin he commented, "I got a document from the Holy See giving me the personal title of Archbishop. Well, did you ever? It was something I had never thought about, and as a matter of fact I would have preferred not to have been molested by such dignities, but not having known anything about it until the document came along, and then it was too late to lodge a caveat, and so there was nothing to do but accept it as gracious as I could." Morrison to Bishop Francis Wall, December 9, 1944, letter#28491, BMP, ADA.

I think it would be better not to tell him. I think it would be better to let him have the impression that the Holy See honors him “Moto Proprio.”³⁹

The situation of Bishops trying to help remove the sitting bishop of Antigonish was nothing new. It had been tried and accomplished in 1877 when Bishop John Cameron successfully lobbied Rome to have the sitting Bishop Colin F. MacKinnon removed.⁴⁰ Unfortunately for those who wished Morrison to step aside, his personality and health were much stronger than Bishop MacKinnon’s had been, and he was going to prove a tough man to remove. Bishop John R. MacDonald was about to find out that the matter of a coadjutor bishop for Antigonish was going to soon stop being a laughing matter.

In 1942 a rumor spread through Antigonish that Morrison was going to be appointed an auxiliary Bishop. This kind of talk was becoming more and more common, as Morrison was in his eighties and the stresses of running a Diocese were great.⁴¹ The 1942 rumor was false, and the Apostolic Delegate assured the bishop that no one would be appointed without first consulting him. Morrison was smart enough to see the handwriting on the wall and went out of

³⁹ Peter Nearing, *He Loved the Church*, p. 56.

⁴⁰ In 1877, Bishop John Cameron serving as Coadjutor to Bishop Colin MacKinnon convinced Rome to remove MacKinnon as Bishop of Antigonish on the same day that they made him an Archbishop. Bowing to the pressure of such a request Archbishop MacKinnon resigned 17 July 1877. See Raymond MacLean, *Piety and Politics, Bishop John Cameron* (Antigonish, The Casket Publishing, 1991).

⁴¹ Still driving himself to Church events, Morrison’s priests started to insist that he have a driver. They were very worried about his safety; however, Morrison continued to drive. In a letter to a friend in California he wrote, “Some of the good Reverend Fathers around here think I should no longer risk driving a car, but I have not yet shifted around to their views on the matter.” Morrison to Sister M. Ignatius, December 17, 1942, letter#26997, BMP, ADA.

his way to mention that if he was forced to have a coadjutor bishop down the road than he would want it to be the current rector of St. Ninian's Cathedral, Rev. John R. MacDonald. In fact, upon hearing the news that Rev. MacDonald was made bishop of Peterborough, Morrison lamented the fact that he had wanted MacDonald as his future coadjutor.⁴² By 1945, Rome was facing a difficult situation. Morrison was clearly in need of some help in Antigonish as he was 84 and, although very independent, he had a large diocese with a number of important responsibilities, such as the Extension Department; giving Morrison a coadjutor made perfect sense. The problem for Rome was who to choose for this position. There was no doubt that the priests of Antigonish wanted Rev. John R. MacDonald to come home. Priests such as Michael Gillis felt that their social cause could be greatly improved if they had one of their own as their bishop. Morrison was supportive of the Extension Department; but was now seen by its priests as cautious and slow moving. On 1 May 1945, Morrison received word that his former priest and current Bishop of Peterborough Ontario, John R. MacDonald, was being made coadjutor Bishop of Antigonish, with right of succession. It was clear that MacDonald's knowledge and familiarity with the Extension Department and his relationship

⁴² Writing in 1942, Morrison expressed his desire to see Rev. John R MacDonald made Coadjutor Bishop of Antigonish. "Personally I would like to be looking forward to seeing him appointed as Coadjutor Bishop cum iure successionis for the Diocese of Antigonish, when the proper time arrives. He understands the duties and responsibilities of the Episcopate, and in his dealings with the clergy of the diocese he has always been fair and impartial. I may add that his prestige as a priest goes far beyond the limits of this diocese." Morrison to Apostolic Delegate, November 23, 1942, letter#26942, BMP, ADA.

with Morrison were the reasons that he was chosen by the authorities. Although he seemed to be the perfect candidate for the job, convincing both MacDonald and Morrison that they needed each other was another matter. When the two bishops found out about the decision they reacted in a similar manner, Bishop Morrison did not want a coadjutor and Bishop MacDonald did not want to go back to Antigonish. As Bishop John R. MacDonald's biographer writes,

To pretend that he was happy would be sheer make-believe. The announcement actually reduced him to tears. Said one close to him, "I don't think I ever saw a sadder man than Bishop MacDonald the day I walked into his office and he told me that he was told by the Apostolic Delegate he was to be moved back to Antigonish."⁴³

Morrison's reaction was one of silent protest. In acknowledging MacDonald's appointment, he complained to the Apostolic Delegate that the Bishop's residence was too small for another Bishop. Morrison took the appointment as a sign that Rome felt he could no longer fulfill his duties and to an independent man like Morrison this was a bitter pill to swallow. Writing to Msgr. James Reardon, Morrison commented,

When Bishop John R. MacDonald was rector of the Cathedral here, we got along well together, and I would have wished him to remain here.

The present set-up may be different who knows? You are the only

⁴³ Peter A Nearing, *He Loved the Church: The Biography of Bishop John R MacDonald* (Antigonish: The Casket Publishing, 1975), p. 58.

person to who I mention this, so keep it “sub rosa”, but I have been wondering if it would be better for me to resign and retire to some monastery to prepare for the end.⁴⁴

Morrison did not join a monastery but instead tried to make do in a difficult situation. It is difficult to account for the change in opinion that Morrison had since 1943. He clearly had wanted MacDonald to stay in Antigonish to assist him as his coadjutor but now that he had him he was hesitant. One of the problems in 1945 was that Morrison knew that Bishop MacDonald was not going to be thrilled about coming back to Antigonish. Morrison felt that it was unfair to expect Bishop MacDonald to leave Peterborough after only a short time as its bishop. Writing to him about the appointment he commented, “I am not sure whether to send you congratulations or condolences.”⁴⁵ It was a sad realization for Morrison that Bishop MacDonald was forced to leave his diocese in order to help effectively run Antigonish. Perhaps Morrison should have retired and allowed MacDonald to take on the responsibilities, but this was not in his nature and he was determined to continue with a near-disregard for the talents and feelings of Bishop MacDonald.

In Antigonish, the town was excited when the news appeared in the press that Bishop MacDonald was coming home. He was after all a local boy who had made good. The celebration of MacDonald’s arrival in Antigonish was

⁴⁴ Morrison to Msgr. James M. Reardon, May 13, 1945, letter#28797, BMP, ADA.

⁴⁵ Morrison to Bishop John R. MacDonald, April 15, 1945, letter#28746, BMP, ADA.

made more electrifying because of the recent victory in Europe.⁴⁶ Sadly the next five years of life for Morrison and MacDonald would not be happy ones. Although the two liked and respected each other, each found it very difficult to live with the other. For Morrison it was not so much MacDonald's personality as it was his own perceived loss of independence and responsibility. Morrison was also very comfortable in his surroundings and the company of his housekeeper, Vera Campbell. Introducing another bishop into the house with all the added issues that went with that did not suit him. For Bishop MacDonald, living with Morrison was not easy. Bishop MacDonald was in the uncomfortable position of being the appointed successor to a man who was still in control. When Bishop MacDonald pressed Morrison for increased responsibilities, Morrison became defensive. Secondly, Morrison kept his life and his house in a very unpretentious state. He demanded that his priests and his housemates follow his lead. MacDonald found the living conditions outdated and the house cold as no one but Morrison had control over the heat. The experience in the words of MacDonald's biographer was "painful."⁴⁷ In truth, these difficult years had less to do with the personalities of Morrison and MacDonald than they did with the situation. Morrison in his eighties had been

⁴⁶ Antigonish like other towns across Canada was full of celebration on V-E Day. Morrison was kept busy with one prayer service after another. Writing Bishop MacDonald two days after V-E day on May 9th he commented, "The V-E events of these days have kept things in such a swelter that it is only today I find myself able to acknowledge your letter of the 3rd instant in the matter of you intended arrival at Antigonish." Morrison to Bishop John R MacDonald, May 9, 1945, letter#28788, BMP, ADA.

⁴⁷ Nearing, *He Loved the Church*, p. 62.

bishop of Antigonish for 33 years, and had lived his life with a degree of independence never before seen by a Catholic Bishop in the Maritimes. It was a lot to expect of Morrison to simply open up his life and allow Bishop MacDonald to assume responsibilities that had been his for so long. For MacDonald, being placed in this situation was daunting. MacDonald wished to help Morrison, but was well aware that his help was not wanted. These were also wasted years for Bishop MacDonald as he felt that his time could have been spent elsewhere accomplishing things other than assisting the bishop with everyday issues. Although Morrison spent his remaining days with MacDonald, the whole situation was very embarrassing and uncomfortable.

The years 1936 to 1945 were the last influential and productive years for James Morrison. He was able to continue to expand the services in his diocese without incurring a large amount of debt. He guided the people through another World War and worked to prepare the diocese for post-war problems. Although still extremely busy and in good health, Morrison was facing the end of a long and successful career. Many in Antigonish felt that it might be time for Morrison to retire. When the Church tried to offer Morrison some help, he resented the act and refused to allow his coadjutor to assume any of his responsibilities. It was difficult for a man like Morrison to bow out gracefully when he still believed that he had something to offer. Unfortunately for Morrison, the end of the War would put the people of Canada and Antigonish

in the mood for change and those connected with the diocese were looking past the old bishop to someone new to guide them through the post-war years.

Chapter Seven

“Final Days”

1946-1950

In 1945 the Catholic hierarchy had decided that Archbishop Morrison required a coadjutor bishop. Morrison's objections to this move were strong, even though it was clear to everyone that help was required. His struggle to maintain his duties and his responsibilities made living conditions within the Bishop's Residence in Antigonish very stressful. Morrison's final years were spent trying to hold on to his authority; and although he was still effective as a bishop, he was slowing down and the frustration of many of the priests in the diocese was beginning to show. Morrison's coadjutor, Bishop John R. MacDonald, was powerless to intervene. This was, unfortunately, a situation that happened all too often during this period of church history as many of the Bishops remained in office too long. Morrison himself as a young man was forced to assume a great amount of responsibility in order to run the Diocese of Charlottetown when Bishop Charles MacDonald was too ill to continue. It was unfortunate that he was not able to call upon his experience in Charlottetown to help ease the situation in Antigonish, but instead he continued at his post, making life difficult for most involved. Bishop MacDonald was aware of the concerns of the priests but was at a loss to deal with Morrison. As Peter

Nearing wrote, “It hurt him (MacDonald) also to have priests come to him from the Archbishop with their problems unsolved, especially when there was little he could do to allay their concern. He could neither grant permissions, issue dispensations nor make appointments.”¹ Although some of the priests wanted to complain, no one was willing to speak to the Archbishop about it. Morrison always believed in the strict order of the Catholic hierarchy and even in his late eighties, he was not going to allow any dissidents to operate within his diocese. Morrison was intimidating; Msgr. Moses Coady once commented that he disliked going for interviews with the Bishop as Morrison always made him feel as though he was nothing more than an altar boy.² Bishop MacDonald stressed to his priests that they were the ones who had wanted him back in Antigonish, so they were the ones who had to convince Morrison to give him more responsibility. When Bishop MacDonald did get up the courage to tell Morrison that his priests were dissatisfied, Morrison’s only response was “And who are they?”³ The Archbishop was stubborn and determined to stay in control.

In July of 1946 another birthday passed for the Archbishop and he found it amusing that he did not receive very many birthday wishes. He assumed that people were afraid that reminding him that he was eighty-five might seem as

¹ Peter A Nearing, *He Loved the Church, The Biography of Bishop John R. MacDonald* (Antigonish: The Casket Publishing, 1975), p. 63.

² Interview, Rev. Michael Gills, 1970, STFXUA.

³ Nearing, *He Loved the Church*, p. 63.

though they felt that he should be retired. Morrison drew energy from the fact that people thought he should be “through and taking a back seat somewhere.”⁴ Morrison’s letters to his close friend, Rev. James M. Reardon in Minnesota, were testimonials to his desire to prove to those who felt he should retire, that he was more than capable of fulfilling his duties.⁵ Writing in the summer of 1946, Morrison told his friend,

I am thankful to be able to report that during the year I have been in good health, and can say that I have not been out of commission for even one day since my former letter to you. Of course I have not the ‘pep’ that I had in former years, but yet I keep going. I had two confirmation functions per day through the whole program, and I delivered what was supposed to be a special sermon on a parish centenary celebration at the conclusion of the itinerary. So there!”⁶

In the meantime Morrison continued to administer his diocese. In April of 1946 he was able to convince a fellow-islander, Cardinal James C.

McGuigan, to accept an honorary degree from St. Francis Xavier University.⁷

Interestingly, another prominent Maritime Catholic received an honorary

⁴ Morrison to Rev. James M Reardon, July 23, 1946, letter#29426, BMP, ADA.

⁵ Rev. James Reardon, 1872-1963. He was a native of Prince Edward Island but served as a priest in the Diocese of St. Paul Minnesota. See Art O’Shea, *Prince Edward Island Priests Away* (Charlottetown: Rev. Art O’Shea, 2001), p. 213.

⁶ Morrison to Rev. James M Reardon, July 23, 1946, letter#29426, BMP, ADA.

⁷ Cardinal McGuigan was very busy at the time but felt that he could not turn down Morrison’s request given his childhood memories of the Bishop. Morrison had been a friend of the Cardinal’s parents back in PEI. Peter T. McGuigan, *Cardinal James McGuigan: Tormented Prince of the Church*, MA Thesis, Saint Mary’s University, 1995, p. 179.

degree that day, although it was much to Morrison's displeasure. Angus L. MacDonald, who had been Nova Scotia's premier since 1933 and a member of the federal war cabinet during the Second World War, was finally honored by his Alma Mater. The feud that had existed between Morrison and Angus L. had not gone away and contributed to continued embarrassment among local clergy. The two still resented each other, due to their respective actions, during the 1922 university amalgamation dispute, and the Mass wine distribution incident in 1933. In fact, the faculty at St. Francis Xavier had voted in 1937 to grant Angus L. an honorary degree but Morrison vetoed the idea.⁸ The St. Francis Xavier faculty, having been overruled by Morrison, agreed that the custom of granting honorary degrees at the university would be suspended until the Bishop would allow an honorary to Angus L. In 1946, Morrison relented, due mainly to outside pressure put on him by members of the St. Francis Xavier community. For Angus L's alma mater to deny him again the honor which other schools had already bestowed upon him would lead to a public outcry. One prominent alumnus, Alex Johnston, summed up what many in the Xavieran community were feeling,

The thought has been occurring to me for a long time that it would be a gracious thing for the college to recognize the service rendered by Angus L., both in the Federal and in the Provincial fields. Indeed there are those

⁸ Rev. D.J. MacDonald to Justice W.F. Carroll, March 18, 1938, President MacDonald Papers, RG 5/10/525, STFXUA.

who are wondering why this has not been done. Dalhousie and Queens have both honored him with degrees and it does seem to me that it would be most appropriate that Antigonish should do likewise. I think I know one of the difficulties standing in the path, but I hoped that time would surmount that difficulty.⁹

Morrison gave in not only because of this pressure but also because of the great probability that news of the feud would otherwise reach the public. This would have a devastating effect in the image of the two men and would hurt the Church in the area. What is perhaps most important about this situation is the degree of control which Morrison had lost in his final years. Many of the Diocesan priests had sympathy for Angus L. Many were not even priests when the feud between the Archbishop and the Premier began. Writing to Angus L in 1946, St. Francis Xavier University President Rev. Patrick J. Nicholson expressed his embarrassment to the Premier that the University had not yet honored him: "We all feel that amends are being made before it is too, late for neglect that is difficult to explain."¹⁰ This kind of comment from the school's president would never have been uttered only a few years before. Certainly the old rector, Rev. H.P. MacPherson, would never have broken ranks with his bishop on such an issue. President Nicholson, who had been appointed as

⁹ Alex Johnson to Rev. Michael Gillis, March 22, 1946, F. 4 Series 3 Sub 1, Folder 4, BMP, ADA.

¹⁰ Rev. P.J Nicholson to Angus L MacDonald, April 17, 1946, RG 5/11/8209, President Nicholson Papers STFXUA.

president in September of 1944, clearly believed that it was time for new leadership in Antigonish. Having difficulties with a stubborn Morrison frustrated the College president. Writing after Morrison's death, Nicholson commented, "We of the college can feel gratified over the fact that we know Bishop MacDonald's heart is completely with us. This is not intended as a criticism of Bishop Morrison who was such an outstanding benefactor, nevertheless I think it is not unfair to state that he never completely accepted our point of view."¹¹ This was another blow to Morrison's ability to hold on to control of his diocese. His authority was declining and he recognized that this was, in reality, the beginning of the end.

By the winter of 1947, Morrison finally decided to give Bishop MacDonald more responsibilities, although in small increments. The spring of 1947 saw another disturbance in the coalfields of Cape Breton, although Morrison did not have the energy needed to stay on top of matters. It was in this instance that he was forced to look to Bishop MacDonald for some help.¹² Morrison's gave a great deal of time, as ever, to reading and studying. He had spent his years in Antigonish battling communism in the industrial areas and

¹¹ Rev. P.J Nicholson to Alex Johnson, February 3, 1950, RG 5/11/6218, PNP, STFXUA.

¹² Morrison suggested that the priests of Cape Breton get together to discuss the recent strike. Morrison wrote a letter to them, explaining that he was calling the meeting some difficulty, since he felt that younger men were better able to undertake responsibilities than he. Morrison suggested that the Church consider three groups, the workmen, their employers, and the general public. On the spiritual side they were to make an appeal to the Almighty God but on the material side, "What were they to do?" Meeting of the pastors of twelve mining parishes, March 13, 1947, Fonds 4, Series 3, Sub 1, Folder 5, BMP, ADA.

continued to do so even after the war. He was concerned about the presence of the Soviet Union in Eastern Europe and asked the people to pray for the conversion of Russia. He believed that these new “powers of darkness” had become more and more aggressive in their attacks on Christianity. Morrison believed that the only way to fight this new evil was for Catholics to give a greater devotion to God. One way to do this, in Morrison’s opinion, was to increase the devotion to the most Holy Eucharist both privately and publicly. Thus in the summer of 1947 a Eucharistic Congress was held at Tracadie in Antigonish County. The bishop expected everyone to come out and pray for the oppressed people of the world.¹³ Morrison managed to attend and impressed the crowds with his energy. Some were so impressed with the stamina of the Archbishop that his very presence caused them to cry and “shake their heads in amazement.”¹⁴ Morrison’s will power was tested in December of 1947, when, out for a walk, he slipped on a piece of ice and fractured his shoulder blade. He spent a number of weeks in the hospital recovering. He complained to his brother Vincent that the fall took place at a busy time of year and that his correspondence had piled up as he found it painful to use a typewriter. He managed to write many of his letters over the next few weeks using only one hand.

¹³ Morrison Circular, June 9, 1947, letter#29934, BMP, ADA.

¹⁴ Peter Nearing, *He Loved the Church*, p. 70.

While Morrison was worried about his work, other bishops across Canada continued to press the Archbishop to retire. The ringleader continued to be Archbishop John Hugh MacDonald, who wrote in 1948,

It would be a great satisfaction to your many friends if you were relieved of the worries and the burdens of the episcopate for some years before the final summons came. There is something intriguing about dying in the harness, but this always happens so long as one is engaged in the Lord's service. And now that He permitted this accident, with slower convalescence than people expected from your constant attention to duty, they sincerely hope you will take some leisure, which you always denied yourself, and leave the work to Bishop MacDonald, while continuing, of course, to be the Archbishop of Antigonish.¹⁵

While such statements flattered Morrison, he was unsure where to go or what to do. If he resigned his office he would feel the need to leave the Bishop's residence and retire somewhere. However, his greatest fear was to be a burden on someone and as long as he lived in his own house he would not have to worry that he was an inconvenience to anyone. He refused to think of resignation and continued to act as administrator of the Diocese. Ultimately,

¹⁵ Peter Nearing, *He Loved the Church*, p. 63.

however, he never fully recovered from the fall. Although he still made public appearances, the end was in sight.¹⁶

The difficulty of Morrison's position was that he was slowing down in a time of great change for the Diocese. The post-war boom was having a tremendous effect on diocesan institutions and on none more so than St. Francis Xavier. Due to a better economy and an influx of veterans, the enrollment at the university almost doubled between 1945 and 1950. Besides the obvious physical expansion that would be needed, St. Francis Xavier faced a shortage of qualified academics. President Nicholson had believed that the university needed higher standards of teaching if it was going to be able to grow.¹⁷ The university's financial plight made it difficult to hire lay staff, and thus it required more academic priests. Those lay persons who did teach at the school had to deal with low salaries, eight month contracts and little security of tenure.¹⁸ Although the President and the faculty knew that something had to be done, they had great difficulty trying to get Morrison to act. In September of 1948 the faculty of the university sent Morrison a letter complaining that it was falling behind other institutions in regards to teaching ability and that some of the priest-professors must be sent away for post-graduate training. Their letter

¹⁶ Morrison amazingly was still able to have days when his physical stamina was strong. In June of 1948 he traveled to PEI and preached the sermon at the solemn mass in honor of Rev. James Reardon's Golden Jubilee. Morrison had preached the sermon at Rev. Reardon's first mass in St. Dunstan's Cathedral, fifty years before.

¹⁷ James Cameron, *For the People*, p. 271.

¹⁸ James Cameron, *For the People*, p. 272.

was permeated with frustration at their repeated attempts to get Morrison to understand the problem. They urged Morrison to send more priests,

While awaiting a reply, our executive staff has found it impossible to plan a fall program. Opening day is now less than a week away, and three extra-diocesan priest-students, who were of great assistance, having withdrawn, the problem of finding even laymen to supervise the halls was becoming desperate.¹⁹

Morrison did supply the university with three new priests but the issue made it even more evident that he was no longer in a position to effectively administer his diocese.

In August 1949, Morrison's longtime housekeeper and friend, Vera Campbell, died in hospital in Charlottetown; she had been with Morrison since 1907, when he was a parish priest in Vernon River. The life of any priest could be lonely but Morrison seemed to suffer from that affliction more than most. His relationship with Vera Campbell was very strong and was based on a great level of mutual trust and admiration. There is no doubt that the two had a great deal of affection for one another, especially after she made the decision to leave the island and join him in Antigonish. Writing from the Charlottetown hospital during Vera's illness, the sister in charge wrote to Morrison, "Vera has asked for you so often and has wondered how you are getting along. No doubt she

¹⁹ St. F.X. Faculty to Morrison, September 13, 1948, Fonds 4, Series 3, Sub 1, Folder 8.

gets lonely for the friends she knew so well.”²⁰ When Vera died, Morrison could not contain his grief. Writing to Vera’s brother in Primrose, Prince Edward Island, he expressed his sorrow,

I cannot fully tell you how much I miss Vera. She had been my housekeeper for so long a time, and I had such confidence in her integrity and loyalty, that I always felt at ease when absent that everything would be looked after with the utmost care and responsibility.

I trust she is happy in Heaven but I shall miss her very much.²¹

This was as close as Morrison could come to an expression of love for another person. The relationship between the Archbishop and Vera Campbell was very important in both their lives. They were in a relationship that was platonic but was nevertheless caring and life-long. They shared their lives together and knew each other better than anyone else. She served for many years as his only companion.

During in the winter of 1949, Morrison made plans to make his Ad Limina visit to Rome. This move surprised almost everybody and it is hard to tell whether he was serious or not. Although he did not make the visit, he wanted to prove to people that he was not going to slow down or go away, this

²⁰ Sister Stella Marie to Morrison, August 25, 1949, F. 4, Series 3, Sub 1, Folder 10, BMP, ADA.

²¹ Morrison to Alex Campbell, September 21, 1949, letter#30782, BMP, ADA.

certainly made the point.²² In November 1949 Morrison celebrated sixty years in the priesthood. Tributes poured in from around the diocese and the country. Many realized that this would be their last opportunity to praise the Archbishop. A celebration was held in the new university auditorium. Bishop John R. MacDonald praised Morrison for his long years of service with these words,

It is my privilege tonight to draw attention to an important anniversary in the life of his grace, Archbishop Morrison. On November 1, he completed sixty years in the holy priesthood. During thirty-seven of which he has been the Bishop of Antigonish, respect and reverence for the priesthood characterize Catholic people everywhere. They realize that priests are chosen by God from among men and are ordained for men in the things that appertain to God. They appreciate the high qualities of soul required of the priesthood and the onerous duties imposed by this sacred office. The appreciation is greatly enhanced for the plenitude of the priesthood and for the office of Bishop. It is in expression of this appreciation that we pay tribute tonight to Archbishop Morrison. Your Grace, we extend to you our congratulations and best wishes on your sixtieth anniversary and we ask you to accept this gift

²² Morrison never actually booked passage for Rome but he did make inquiries into accommodations.

from the Cathedral Parish as a pledge of loyalty to you as our chief
pastor of the Diocese.²³

St. Ninian's Parish presented Morrison with a cheque for five thousand dollars, which he promptly returned, unwilling to burden the parish with such a debt.²⁴ Even at the end Morrison would not allow any of his parishes knowingly to incur debt.

In December, Morrison entered St. Martha's hospital.²⁵ His days were lonely and, although he had many visitors, he could not help feel the loss each time one of his fellow priests passed on. On 27 December 1949, Msgr. H.P. MacPherson died, and in February of 1950, Rev. Michael MacAdam followed. Morrison's friend Bishop Francis Wall of Dublin had died in 1947, and Morrison was now the last of the group of young men who had been ordained at the Propaganda College in 1889. On 17 January 1950, Bishop John R. MacDonald officially took control of Antigonish as Apostolic administrator.²⁶

²³ Peter Nearing, *He Loved the Church*, p.70.

²⁴ Morrison wrote to Bishop MacDonald, "While fully appreciating this kind gesture, I do not feel quite comfortable in the thought of thus burdening St. Ninian's Parish to this financial extent, and so I think the best use I can make of this cheque is to return it to the Parish fund, and I hope my doing so will not be taken amiss on your part. I am therefore enclosing herewith this said cheque for this purpose." Morrison to Bishop John R. MacDonald, November 29, 1949, letter#30802, BMP, ADA.

²⁵ Morrison knew that when he entered the hospital he would not return. He was very relaxed and when the taxi arrived to take him to St. Martha's. He asked them to wait a few minutes telling them, "I want to know what happened to the three bears." He was reading a catechetical magazine for children. Peter Nearing, *He Loved the Church*, p.71.

²⁶ Morrison's last official act was the blessing of the bell in the newest church in the diocese, St. James in Gardner Mines. Bishop John R. MacDonald's first circular letter to his priests read, "Due to the Archbishop's state of health, the Holy See has appointed me Apostolic Administrator.

MacDonald's appointment was received warmly in Antigonish as most priests were of the opinion, "Lets see what he can do."²⁷ Rev. M.A. MacAdam, himself not in the best of physical health, wrote to John R;

I am sorry to learn of the Archbishop's continued illness. Now that an Administrator has become necessary, your hands are freer and for this all your priests are pleased.²⁸

Archbishop Morrison was now out of the picture and remained confined to a hospital bed while others took control of the diocese.

These days were difficult for the Archbishop and making matters worse was his dislike of his hospital room which he had found noisy and generally unpleasant. On one visit by Bishop MacDonald, Morrison asked MacDonald if he would be good enough to get him out of the hospital and into a room at Bethany with the Marthas.²⁹ There, feeling much more comfortable, Morrison

His Grace continues as Bishop, without the burden of administration. I beg the assistance of your prayers that I may worthily discharge my new duties."

²⁷ Peter Nearing, *He Loved the Church*, p.72. Bishop John R. MacDonald immediately changed the image of the Bishop of Antigonish. One of his first acts was to move out of the old Bishop's residence and into a more luxurious house on Main Street.

²⁸ Peter Nearing, *He Loved the Church*, p.71.

²⁹ After Morrison's death, Bishop John R. MacDonald praised the Martha's for giving such wonderful care to the Archbishop. This is a part of what he wrote to them, "The words of commendation are many for the generous reception of the late Archbishop Morrison by you and your sisters at Bethany. All of the good things that were done for him so willingly made for his happiness during his last days before entering heaven." Bishop John R. MacDonald to Sister's of St. Martha, April 22, 1950, Fonds 4, Series 7, Subs 1, Folder 7.

spent the last three months of his life, and just after noon on a spring day, the 13th of April 1950, he died at the age of eight-nine.³⁰

Morrison's death shocked the Canadian Catholic community, not because it was unexpected but rather because it was so hard to believe he was gone. He had become not only the Catholic face of Antigonish but of the Maritimes as well. The telegrams of condolence poured into the Bishop's residence. One came from the Vatican; "Holy Father, Sad occasion, death beloved Archbishop, extends clergy, religious, faithful, diocese paternal sympathy lovingly in Apostolic Benediction pledge, Divine consolation in bereavement."³¹ They came from young priests such as Rev. Edward Purcell, who wrote, "Although his death was expected it will be the occasion of much sorrow. He has been the Bishop of Antigonish longer than I have lived."³² They came from Antigonish colleagues and Morrison's former institutions, such as St. Dunstan's University. Finally, they came from the Catholic hierarchy of Canada. Archbishop Alfred Sinnott, a former student at St. Dunstan's, wrote, "Deeply grieved at the passing of my good friend Archbishop Morrison. His

³⁰ Morrison's condition had worsened over the final weeks. However, at about 9:30 A.M on the day of his death he lapsed into a coma, and just after Rev. P.J. Nicholson administered the last rites, he passed away. Morrison's body was transferred from Bethany to St. Ninian's Cathedral where it was to lie in state. Morrison was survived by Rev. Vincent Morrison and another brother Allan as well as numerous nieces and nephews.

³¹ Vatican to Bishop John R MacDonald, April 18, 1950,, F. 4, Series 7, Sub 1, Folder 7, BMP, ADA.

³² Rev. Edward Purcell to Bishop John R MacDonald, April 17, 1950, F. 4, Series 7, Sub 1, Folder 7, BMP, ADA.

life was an inspiration and example to all who knew him.”³³ However, as much as people expressed their sorrow at Morrison’s death, they also looked forward to a fresh start in Antigonish. Thankful for the work of Morrison, many were now excited that Bishop John R MacDonald would be able to take the diocese in the direction that he saw best. The Archbishop of St. Boniface wrote, “The loss of Archbishop Morrison is also a gain for the Diocese of Antigonish for they have a younger Bishop.”³⁴ Many in Antigonish shared this feeling.

All the major Canadian newspapers and media outlets covered Morrison’s funeral. It took place on 18 April 1950 and was a major Catholic event. Antigonish was virtually shut down from ten in the morning until noon, when the funeral was officially over. Schools were closed and large crowds unable to get entrance into the stone Cathedral, waited outside to catch a glimpse of the Bishop’s coffin. The Cathedral was draped in mourning and loudspeakers were set up outside so that the hundreds not able to get access could listen to the service. The celebrant of the service was fellow islander and Archbishop of Toronto, Cardinal James C. McGuigan. Four Archbishops, nine Bishops and hundreds of priests were present. Rev. P. J. Nicholson and

³³ Archbishop Sinnott to Bishop John R. MacDonald, April 17, 1950, F. 4, Series 7, Sub 1, Folder 7, BMP, ADA.

³⁴ Archbishop of St. Boniface to Bishop John R. MacDonald, April 14, 1950, F. 4, Series 7, Sub 1, Folder 7, BMP, ADA.

Morrison's brother Vincent assisted Cardinal McGuigan.³⁵ What was also significant, however, was who was not there. Premier Angus L. MacDonald, who had a lifelong feud with the Archbishop, wired that he could not attend due to work commitments.³⁶ Even in death the Morrison-MacDonald feud did not end. The service had a little of everything; a eulogy from Archbishop John Hugh MacDonald, and it even included a priest who had attended Morrison's installation in 1912. Delivering his eulogy, Archbishop John Hugh MacDonald made comments on Morrison that have been frequently ignored by those who have studied this period of history.

The growth of the diocese during his Episcopate must not be overlooked, with its many new parishes, new churches and schools, new hospitals and convents, as well as other charitable institutions. These developments are often the result of various forces; and yet within his own diocese, because they need his approval, the Bishop is the one mainly responsible for them. There may be times when Bishops seem to

³⁵ Rev. Vincent Morrison would soon follow his older stepbrother to the grave. In October 1950, Vincent was killed in a automobile accident on Kingston road in Scarborough, just about a mile from St. Francis Xavier seminary where he was visiting. Rev. Vincent Morrison or "Mo" as he was called was at the time serving as Pastor of Christ the Good Sheppard in Lincoln Park, Detroit Michigan. Rev. Morrison was buried in Mary Queen of Angels cemetery located on the grounds of St. Augustine's Seminary in Scarborough, Ontario.

³⁶ Premier Angus L MacDonald telegraphed Bishop John R. MacDonald, "I regret exceedingly that duties in Legislature tonight and tomorrow will prevent my attending funeral of Archbishop Morrison. I have asked Mr. Colin Chisholm, M.L.A. to represent me at ceremonies. Please accept my sincere sympathy in loss Diocese has sustained and my best wishes for your own successful administration of affairs in Antigonish." Angus L. MacDonald to Bishop John R. MacDonald, April 18, 1950 F. 4, Series 7, Sub 1, Folder 7, BMP, ADA.

hinder development, but viewing things from above, they are able to see all sides of the problem concerned better than most other people, and by their prudent judgment may sometimes save situations which otherwise might end in failure.³⁷

MacDonald went further and praised Morrison for the extension department. He claimed that Morrison needed a great amount of courage and vision in order to implement this work. In later years, nevertheless, this contribution by Morrison was largely ignored and forgotten. After the funeral, Morrison's casket, accompanied by a Knights of Columbus honor guard, was taken from the Cathedral to St. Ninian's Cemetery on the hill overlooking the University and the town in which he had lived for thirty-eight years. Here he was laid to rest beside his predecessor, Bishop John Cameron. The major newspapers all gave credit to Morrison's work in Antigonish and paid tribute to the work of the Extension Department. This was especially true of local papers such as the *Sydney Post-Record*, which wrote,

The extensive development of the diocese under his careful and able administration, the continued progress of St. Francis Xavier University and the part he played in founding and bringing to its present position of

³⁷ *The Casket*, April 20, 1950.

world wide note what is known as The Antigonish Movement is now a matter of history.³⁸

Morrison's estate was considerable; in total it was valued at \$94,993.87. He left it all to four institutions within the diocese. He gave one quarter to the Sisters of St. Martha at Bethany in Antigonish. He gave one quarter to St. Martha's hospital, hoping that the Sisters would use the money on the chapel that was intended for the new wing of the hospital under construction. The last two quarters went to Mount Saint Bernard College and St. Francis Xavier University.

Antigonish was now going to have to move on without the man who had guided the diocese for thirty-eight years. He was the last of his generation of priests and bishops and in many ways he represented a changing of the guard. Morrison was the last of the authoritarian bishops and a new more relaxed approach was soon to be taken up by the Catholic bishops of the country. His influence on the diocese was great and his memory remained in the diocese for many years after his death. Regardless of one's opinion of him, he made his mark on Antigonish and contributed to its achievements.

³⁸ *The Sydney Post-Record*, April 19, 1950.

Conclusion

James Morrison is arguably the most important bishop in the history of the Diocese of Antigonish. Not only was he the longest serving bishop, but, he was also responsible for implementing and maintaining the diocese's most famous movement. It is clear that as the bishop he was a partner and not an adversary of the progressive elements of his diocese.

He had the challenge in 1912 to assume responsibilities for a diocese that was going through a great deal of social and economic change. He came from a rural background and was immediately given the task of coping with large numbers of immigrants into the industrial areas of his new diocese. Each new Catholic community brought with it their own customs. These same immigrants faced terrible living and working conditions which resulted in many of them turning towards radical labour unions. The Catholic Church lost a substantial amount of its influence in the industrial areas during this period. *Rerum Novarum* gave Morrison very little guidance but he struggled to salvage what power he could.

There is no doubt that Morrison would have preferred a nice quiet diocese. He would have preferred to have had a rural diocese with a large conformist population; however, he did try to cope with what he was given. He was not a man who wanted fame or approval and preferred to stay out of national Catholic affairs. However, when his hand was forced due to what he

believed were injustices towards Catholics he was never afraid to act. He played a national role in protecting the rights of Catholic chaplains during the Great War and lobbied the provincial government over Catholic schools on many occasions.

Everything that Morrison did was not a success. His policy towards the problems in the industrial districts of his diocese was ineffective, but to be fair there was little that could be done. He did his best to try and stop the growth of radical labour politics in his diocese but he was hampered by the Church's great loss of influence. There can be no doubt that he supported the actions of those progressive priests who were looking to help the economically distressed areas of the diocese. Morrison did not hinder the process but rather was an active participant in it. As bishop, he was ultimately responsible for the overall health of the diocese and in this position he was called upon to make decisions that were not always popular. His relationship with Rev. James Tompkins is a good example of this. They had in fact acted together on many occasions and were especially close during the takeover of *The Casket* in 1919. Sending Tompkins to Canso in 1922 was, in Morrison's view, the prudent thing to do as he felt that the loss of the University would damage the diocese. This was not the end of the relationship between these two men. By 1929 they had resumed a more cordial relationship and their correspondence picked up. The correspondence that remains shows two men who were remarkably closer in

politics than was thought. Morrison was never on the far left in politics, but yet neither were his priests. Morrison disliked the idea of a welfare state and hoped that the church might be able to alleviate the economic distress of the laity while at the same time strengthening the influence of the church. He was prodded into accepting many of the ideas of his priests and Rev. Moses Coady commented that Morrison had been “scared into action” in 1928. He may not have attacked the social and economic problems of his diocese as aggressively as Rev. Tompkins or Rev. Coady, but when they were able to convince him of the merits of their ideas, he came on board and participated as best he could. His concern with debt was ultimately the bottom line in every decision that he made and this sometimes meant that he had to be the one to make unpopular decisions.

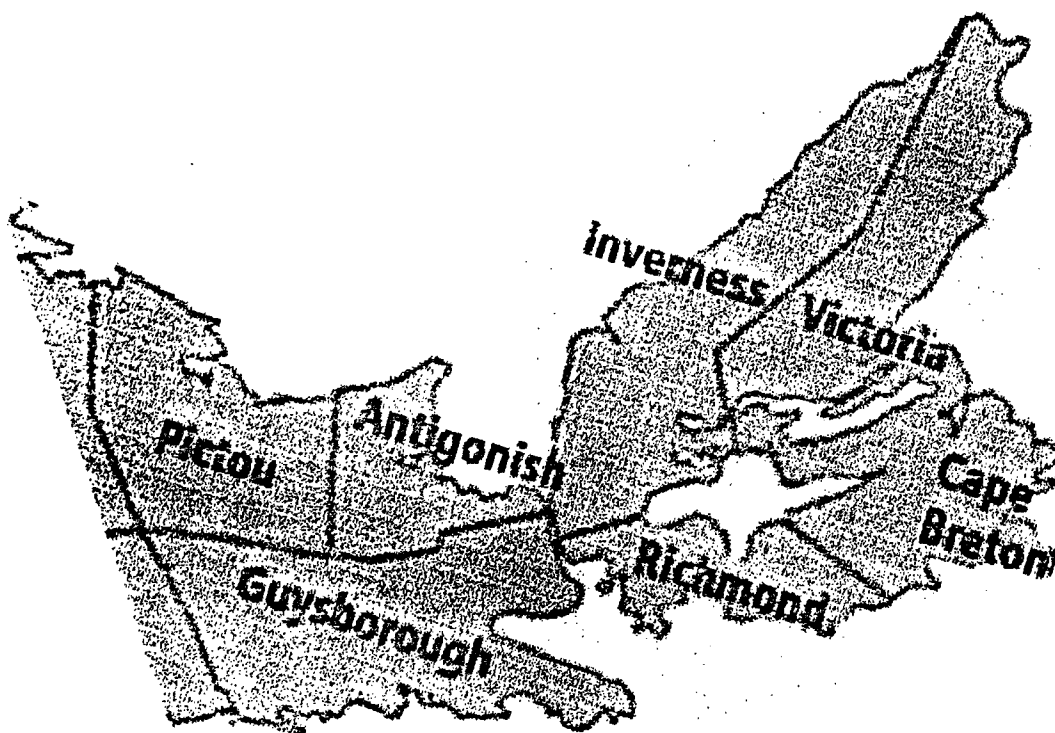
It can never be argued that James Morrison was beloved. Morrison’s reserved nature did not allow much room for friendships within his diocese. Some of his priests outright loathed him. He had a great belief in the hierarchy of the Church and accordingly he expected that his priests follow it. He was a strict disciplinarian and he did not tolerate any acts of rebellion or impiety among his priests. This sternness could be misconceived as conservatism but it was necessary in order to keep the diocese in order. The Diocese of Antigonish traveled down a difficult but ultimately thriving path while Morrison was at its helm. The issues that the diocese faced might have overwhelmed other men,

certainly any bishop that did not keep a strict eye on finances might have placed the diocese in a difficult financial situation. If this had been the case, and if the diocese did not have the prudent and cautious eye of Morrison at the helm, it is conceivable that nothing in the way of economic progress would have been possible.

Overall it is foolish to ignore the career of James Morrison. As the most influential Catholic in Eastern Nova Scotia, he was connected with every aspect of Church life and politics. As the bishop he was ultimately responsible for the actions of his priests. Many of the tendencies of the priests of Antigonish, such as their refusal to get involved in party politics, came as a direct result of the policies of the bishop. The tendency to construct Morrison as the villain is too simplistic. Morrison did not deal with each issue in a uniform manner. Each situation was carefully thought out, sometimes at great length. As a contributor to the Antigonish movement, the actions of Morrison are testimonials to the fact that the movement was more closely connected to the hierarchy of the Catholic Church than previously believed. Morrison's motives in implementing the movement make it difficult to continue to argue that the actions of the priests in this period are an exemplar of a more liberal Maritimes. The men who worked to build the new social movement in the diocese were Catholic priests and attempting to separate them from this role through invented hostility with their bishop is flawed. Most of the more progressive priests worked hand

in hand with their bishop and most of the goals of the Antigonish Movement were shared and implemented by the church as a whole.

Appendix A



Map of the Diocese of Antigonish in Nova Scotia

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