

A Bit of Viatorian History #2

Brother Charles Saulin, C.S.V. (1821-1912)



Because of the catastrophic floods of 1840 in the Lyonese region, the Clerics of Saint Viator experienced serious financial difficulties. Father Querbes was forced to ask half of the men in formation to leave for lack of funds. One young man that the founder asked to remain in the congregation was Charles Saulin.(1)

Charles was born July 4, 1821 in Achun, a small village in Nievre.(2) He was the youngest of four children. Because of an accident, he suffered a severe spinal cord injury and his physical growth was stunted. But, Charles excelled in his studies and he won many awards for academic excellence. At the age of 18, Charles entered the postulancy of the Clerics of Saint Viator and on September 18, 1840 he began his novitiate year in Vourles with Father Querbes and Novice Master

Brother Pierre Liauthaud.

After his first profession Brother Saulin was assigned to open a public school in Ricamarie, Loire, which, by the end of the first year, enrolled 300 students. Charles continued his ministry of elementary education in several other schools until the year 1851. In addition to his work in the school, Brother Saulin began a labor school in the village of Fourchambault teaching adult laborers in the afternoons after a full day with the children.

Brother Saulin became a close friend of Father Querbes whom he described as a man who “had a heart of gold...generous...extremely welcoming, doing, like an apostle, everything for everyone. No one could know him and not love and appreciate him.”(3) Brother Saulin also composed the first *Prayer to Saint Viator* which was used for over one hundred years by Viatorians and Viatorian students.

But most significant for the Province of Chicago is that this man, who had himself served as Novice Master in Vourles, was sent to the Province of Chicago in 1887 to work in formation and fund-raising. At that time the novitiate was located at Belmont and Crawford in Chicago. Because Father Cyrille Fournier, the provincial and novice master, was also pastor of Saint Viator parish, which was located on the same property, Brother Saulin was charged with the formation of the juniors and the novices. He also served on the provincial council while in Chicago. Brother Saulin returned to France in 1893 where he served on the general council until 1900. He died August 29, 1912 after 74 years as a Viatorian.

One cannot help but appreciate the fact that a man who knew Father Querbes well was so influential in the early days of our province. Brother Saulin influenced many of the early confreres including one of his novices — Father Thomas J. McCormack, C.S.V., who died July 30, 1962, at the age of 102.

(1). Three others who remained were: Brothers Antoine Thibaudier, Alexander McDonald and William Shepherd, all of whom were part of the Saint Louis Mission (1841-1847). Brother Thibaudier then became a founder of the new mission at L'Industrie, Canada (1847). Brothers McDonald and Shepherd taught Brother Saulin English. See Chapter 11 of Robert Bonnafous' *Louis Querbes and the Catechists of Saint Viator*.

(2). The best source of information on Charles Saulin, C.S.V. is: Clerics of Saint Viator, *Annuaire*, No. 21 (1912), 129-150. In Saulin's file in the Province of Chicago archives is a summary of the article in English prepared by Father Bernard Mulvaney, C.S.V.

(3). José Antonio Lezama et al., *Testimonios sobre el P. Luis Querbes: Escritos por Algunos de sus Contemporáneos* (Provincia de España, Clérigos de San Viator), 111-112.