

The Jesuits of Canada

The Society of Jesus was founded by Ignatius of Loyola, a Spanish nobleman, in 1534. Wounded while defending Pampluna against the French in 1521, Ignatius retired to convalesce in his castle of Loyola. There his confinement forced him to think of more serious things than the military glory which had hitherto filled his mind. On his recovery, he decided to devote himself to God's service. After some years of study and preparation, he founded with a few companions the religious order to which he gave the name "Society of Jesus", and the motto *Ad maiorem Dei gloriam* (To the greater glory of God). The order spread rapidly throughout Europe, and from its earliest years devoted itself to foreign missions. Before the first Jesuits landed in Canada in 1611, the great apostle, St. Francis Xavier, had traversed vast tracts of India and had preached the Gospel in Japan; other Jesuit missionaries had entered Ethiopia, had penetrated to the court of the Great Mogul, and had founded the Reductions in Paraguay.

It was in keeping with the missionary zeal of the order that Fathers Biard and Masse should have sailed for New France as early as 1611. They landed in Port Royal to preach the gospel to the Indians living near the bay of Fundy. But the opposition of Biencourt, the acting-governor of Port Royal, and the attack on the mission and capture of the missionaries by Argall, an English raider from Virginia, put an early end to the mission. In 1625 the Jesuits returned to Canada, this time in answer to an appeal from the Recollet friars, who were not numerous enough to cope with the difficulties of the Indian missions. Fathers Masse, Brébeuf, and Charles Lalemant landed at Quebec, and began work among the Montagnais of that region. As soon as it was possible, Brébeuf set out for Huronia, that part of Ontario which stretches north to the Georgian bay between lake Simcoe and the Nottawasaga river. Except for occasional trips to Quebec and his enforced absence from the country for a few years after Quebec had fallen to the English in 1629, Brébeuf remained in Huronia till his death in 1648. Among others who joined him there were Ragueneau, LeMoyne, Jogues, who was put to death by the Mohawks in 1646 in what is now New York state, and Brébeuf's companion in martyrdom, Jérôme Lalemant. In spite of the suspicions of the Hurons, who blamed all their misfortunes on the missionaries, and despite the horrors of living the life of the savages, the missionaries persevered in their work of evangelization. They established their headquarters on the river Wye near the present town of Midland, building a small fort which they called Fort Ste. Marie, the ruins of which still exist. They had hoped that this centre would be the beginning of a series of Reductions such as their brethren had founded in Paraguay, but the Iroquois, who had long been threatening Huronia, invaded the country in 1648, destroyed the missions and frustrated the hopes of the missionaries. Brébeuf and Lalemant were put to death after hideous tortures, and Father Daniel was slain and thrown into his burning chapel. The Jesuits, finding their flock dispersed, moved Fort Ste. Marie to Christian island, about twenty miles distant. This new centre, strongly fortified against Iroquois attacks, was intended to serve the Petun nation; but the following year (1649) the Iroquois again raided the settlements. Father Garnier was shot and tomahawked as he

was giving absolution to his dying neophytes, and Father Chabanel was slain by an apostate Huron. Disease and famine added to the misery of the Hurons; and to preserve the remnants of the nation, the priests were forced to abandon their island fortress and to return to Quebec . The Huron mission was ended.

In the meantime, the Jesuits were consolidating their work in Quebec. A college was founded there in 1635, and the missionaries began to go further afield along the banks of the St. Lawrence to Three Rivers and Montreal , where churches were built and centres of spiritual activity founded. Abortive attempts to reach Hudson 's bay were finally crowned with success when Father Albanel reached its shores in 1670. But the enmity of the English and the hatchet of the assassin made the continuance of the mission impossible. In 1642 Father Jogues, while returning to Quebec from Fort Ste. Marie, was captured by Iroquois and taken to the Mohawk country. There he was tortured for a year, till the Dutch at Fort Orange enabled him to escape to Europe. He soon returned to Canada, and finding the Mohawks willing to be the allies of the French, he set out from Quebec to establish a mission amongst them. After a short visit he returned again; but the temper of the Mohawks had changed. They seized Jogues and his companion, La Lande, tortured them for some months, and finally slew them. It was some years before the Jesuits could gain any converts among the warlike and fickle Iroquois, and then only at the constant risk of their lives.

As time went on, the Jesuits pushed their mission outposts further and further west. In 1660 they began the evangelization of the Ottawa, a term covering the numerous tribes lying in the region west of lake Huron to the Mississippi and north of the Ohio river. The most famous missionary was Father Marquette, who set out with the explorer Jolliet to discover if the Mississippi was. a passage to the Pacific and so to the Far East. They went down the Mississippi as far as its confluence with the Arkansas before returning. Marquette died on the way home, but not before he had preached the gospel to many friendly tribes along the route. From their headquarters in Sault Ste. Marie, the missionaries continued the work Marquette had begun.

In the eighteenth century the Jesuits turned their eyes to the far West, and in 1731 Father Mesaiger in company with La Vérendrye and a small party crossed lake Superior, went up the Kaministikwia river, made a portage till they reached the Rainy river, and so on to the lake of the Woods, where Fort St. Charles was built. Father Aulneau, who had replaced Father Mesaiger, was slain a few years later by a band of Sioux warriors while on his way east for provisions. Later Father Coquart went as far as the shores of lake Winnipeg. All these missions were carried on under the greatest difficulties, for besides the immorality and the indifference, if not the utter .hostility, of the Indians themselves, there was the greed of the fur-traders and government officials, who cared little enough for the welfare of the Indians, provided they could buy their furs for cheap brandy and make a fortune for themselves.

In the midst of their labours, the missionaries still found time to write that mass of material on the history, condition, and character of the natives, which is known as the Jesuit *Relations*. These were letters written to Superiors in Europe, not necessarily (though they often were) intended for publication. They were begun by Father Biard in 1616, and continued more or less regularly till 1672. In the following year, to prevent further disputes over the Malabar rites, Clement X forbade the publication of books concerning the missions without the consent of Propaganda. Parkman says of the *Relations* that the closest examination had left him in no doubt that "the *Relations* hold a high place as authentic and trustworthy documents". He praises the Jesuits of the seventeenth century for having used their unrivalled opportunities of studying Indian superstitions "in a spirit of faithful inquiry, accumulating facts and leaving theory to their successors". Thwaites is no less emphatic: "The authors of the journals which formed the basis of the *Relations* were for the most part men of trained intellect, acute observers, and practised in the art of keeping records of their experiences. The Jesuits performed a great service to mankind in publishing their annals, which are for the historian, geographer, and ethnologist, among our first and best authorities." Indeed, men who had to write under such appalling conditions as faced these missionaries could have no motive for telling anything but the truth. Thus Father Bressani writes to the Father General: "I do not know if your Paternity will recognize the handwriting of one whom you once knew very well. The letter is soiled and ill-written, because the writer has only one finger of his right hand left entire, and cannot prevent the blood from his wounds, which are still open, from staining the paper. His ink is gunpowder mixed with water, and his table is the earth."

Even if the English after the conquest in 1760 had not forbidden the Jesuits to recruit new subjects, the suppression of the Society of Jesus by Clement XIV in 1773 would have meant the death-blow to the Jesuit missions in Canada. As it was, the long line of missionaries came to a close with the death of Father Casot in 1800.

The Society of Jesus was restored in 1814 by Pius VII. In 1842 Mgr. Bourget, the bishop of Montreal, requested that some Jesuits be sent to work in his diocese. Once more the Jesuits set sail from France. Six priests arrived in Montreal, and were given the parish of Laprairie, on the south bank of the St. Lawrence opposite the city, by the parish priest Father Power, who was leaving to become first bishop of Toronto. In a few years the Jesuits moved to Montreal, where they opened St. Mary's College. Their subsequent history is a record, in the main uneventful, of slow and steady progress. The lack of English subjects amongst them hampered their growth in Upper Canada. Thus two or three invitations to open a college in Toronto had to be refused; an attempt to man Regiopolis College in Kingston lasted only a year (1849). Other priests arrived on the Canadian Mission, Polish, Austrian, Swiss, French; but their numbers were small for the size of the vast territory they covered. Parishes and schools were founded in Chatham, Sandwich, and Guelph; and from these centres the priests went out to minister to the Catholics in the surrounding districts, going as far north as Georgian bay. The country was still a missionary one; but as time went on and more parishes were

erected, the Jesuits ceded the parish work in great part to the secular clergy and continued their missionary work further north and west. The Indian missions were re-established, and to date extend from Georgian bay to James bay on the north and along lake Superior to the west.

Bishop Power died in 1847. The Pope appointed as his successor in the see of Toronto a Jesuit working on the Canadian Mission, Father Larkin, a former classmate of Cardinal Wiseman in England. The brief of nomination had been given him, but the bishop-elect begged to be freed from the responsibility of the office, and Pius IX acceded to his request.

After many years of debate, Honoré Mercier, prime minister of Quebec and a former pupil of the Jesuits in Montreal, succeeded in passing through the provincial legislature in 1888 the famous Jesuits Estates Bill, which partly indemnified the Society for the properties confiscated by the British Crown after the cession of Canada. The Jesuits received a part only of the \$400,000 voted, the rest being divided between Laval University, the Catholic bishops, and the Protestant Board of Education.

The Society of Jesus is composed of "Provinces", named after the countries where the members of each Province live. In 1924 the Province of Canada was divided into the Provinces of Upper and Lower Canada, the former working among the English-speaking Catholics of the Dominion, the latter among the French Catholics. The Lower Canada Province, the more numerous, has three colleges in Montreal, besides two houses of study for its own members, colleges in Quebec, Gaspé, Sudbury, St. Boniface, and Edmonton. It serves the Iroquois mission at Caughnawaga, and has an extensive mission in China. The Upper Canada Province has colleges in Montreal (Loyola), Kingston (Regiopolis), Winnipeg, and Regina, as well as the Indian missions in Ontario and parishes in Port Arthur, Winnipeg, and Vancouver. It also has charge of the shrine of the Jesuit martyrs near old Fort Ste. Marie, which is visited every summer by 100,000 pilgrims from Canada and the United States. Its novitiate at Guelph was raided during the war by military police. The raid resulted in a Royal Commission, which completely exonerated the Jesuits from the charge of harbouring "slackers". Both Provinces are actively engaged in phases of social welfare work, in preaching popular missions and giving closed retreats to the laity. They number to date 926 members, of which 333 are priests, 431 scholastics or students for the priesthood, and 162 lay-brothers.

See R. G. Thwaites (ed.), *The Jesuit Relations and allied documents* (73 vols., Cleveland, 1896-1901), C. Martin, *Relations des jésuites* (Quebec, 1859), G. M. Shea, *History of Catholic missions among the Indians* (New York, 1855), C. de Rochemonteix, *Les Jésuites et la Nouvelle France* (Paris, 1895), F. Parkman, *The Jesuits in North America* (Boston, 1868), T. G. Marquis, *The Jesuit missions* (Toronto, 1915), and R. Lecompte, *Les jésuites du Canada au dix-neuvième siècle* (Montreal, 1920).

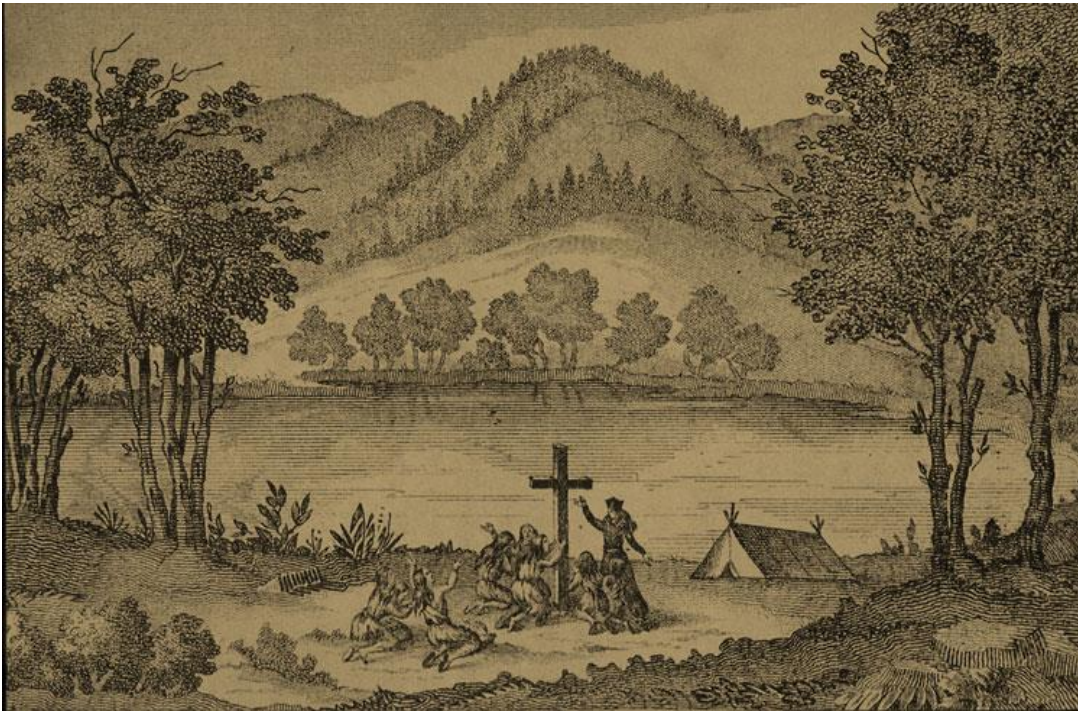
Source : W. Stewart WALLACE, ed., *The Encyclopedia of Canada*, Vol. III, Toronto, University Associates of Canada, 1948, 396p., pp. 297-301.

History of the Jesuits in English Canada

Seventy-one years after the approval of the Society of Jesus by Pope Paul III in 1540 and 55 years after the death of its founder, Ignatius Loyola, the first Jesuits, the Frenchmen Pierre Biard and Ennemond Massé, set foot in what is now Canada, at Port Royal, May 22, 1611. "It is according to our divine calling," Loyola had written, "to travel to various places and to live in any part of the world where there is hope of God's greater service and the help of souls," and in Canada these "Blackrobes," as they soon came to be called, immediately began to reach out to the indigenous peoples in the vast new land. They went first to the Micmacs, next to the Montagnais, then to the Algonquins. They followed the wanderers. They made their way into the forests, along the waterways, across the portages and through the woods.

By 1745, Gabriel Druillettes had preached to the tribes along the Atlantic coast, Charles Albanel had gone to those along Hudson Bay, while Claude Allouez, Jean-Pierre Aulneau, and Godefroy Coquart, scouring three thousand miles along the Great Lakes and on to the prairies as far as Lake Winnipeg, had made contact with some 23 nations of differing languages and customs. Most famously, Jacques Marquette had discovered the great waterway that would bring Christianity into the lives of thousands more in the heart of the continent.

The best-known of the early Jesuit Missions is the heroic failure of St. Jean de Brébeuf and his companions in Huronia. They had hoped to establish a Church there that would be at once fully Catholic and fully Huron. At Ste-Marie, in 1639, they built "a house of prayer and a home of peace," a community where white and aboriginal people were to dwell together in harmony, where the rites and traditions of both Europeans and Hurons could be strengthened and enriched by the values of the Gospel. But their plans got caught up in tribal warfare, in the intrigues of the French and English courts, in the politics of the fur and brandy trades. They were destroyed by those they most wanted to serve. Eight have been canonized: Jean de Brébeuf, Isaac Jogues, Gabriel Lalement, Antoine Daniel, Charles Garnier, Noel Chabanel, Réne Goupil, and Jean de la Lande; and many others, including their native friends Joseph Chiwatenhwa and Kateri Tekakwitha, continue to inspire missionaries down to the present day.



By 1635, the Jesuits had also established at Quebec the celebrated boys' school in which they would teach for some 140 years. Their cours classique would become a model for many other Catholic colleges, and eventually the Collège des Jésuites would evolve into Laval University, the oldest institution of higher learning in North America. By 1760, three-hundred and thirty Jesuits had come. Their effort in New France, both in missionary activity and in education, is unmatched. But like the whole of the grande épopée, it was doomed. After the British Conquest, they were not allowed to accept novices. They died out. The last was Jean-Joseph Casot, who had come in 1757 and who died at Quebec, March 16, 1800.

For a brief time in 1805 and again in 1811 there was serious question of English Jesuits coming to Halifax, where Edmund Burke, the Vicar-General of Bishop Joseph-Octave Plessis of Quebec, wished them to open a college. He even forwarded passage money for two priests to travel from London. In 1806 Bishop Plessis himself wrote to Pope Pius VII and to the Jesuit Superior General in Russia, Thaddeus Brzozowski, begging that Jesuits be sent from England not only for Halifax but to work among the aboriginal people in Upper Canada as well. The General was very anxious to help. He committed four men, two from Russia and two from England, but the war in Europe and the dangers of travel made their mission impossible.

When the Jesuits did return to Canada, in 1842, it was at the request of Bishop Ignace Bourget of Montreal and, like their predecessors two centuries earlier, they came from France. A year later they were invited to Toronto by the new bishop there, Michael Power, who had meanwhile left them in charge of his parish in Laprairie. They went to Sandwich, Canada West, then to Manitoulin Island in Lake Huron. And again like their predecessors they spread rapidly. In fact, their story began to unfold very much as did that of the Catholic Church in this country. They incorporated and grew strong in

French Canada, travelled to the indigenous peoples, and followed the large numbers of Catholic immigrants who settled in Upper Canada and later on the Western prairie. Some worked only with the Indians, some only with the whites, but the largest number, especially in the nineteenth century, served both.

At first, as in the old days, there was a college. This time it was in Montreal -- Collège Ste-Marie in 1848, out of which would grow, eventually, three others: Loyola College in 1896, St-Ignace in 1927 and Jean-de-Brébeuf in 1928. Later, after frustrating attempts at Sandwich and Charlottetown, there would be others, colleges and high schools, at St-Boniface, Sudbury, Edmonton, Regina, Kingston, Winnipeg, Halifax, St. John's, Toronto.... Again there would be missions: first on Walpole Island in 1844, then along the north shores of Georgian Bay and Lake Superior; at Wikwemikong in 1844, at Sault Ste. Marie in 1846, and in the region around Thunder Bay in 1848.

In most of these ministries the Jesuits were neither the first nor the only ones to serve. In education the Sulpicians and the Basilians were often there in greater numbers, and in many instances the Jesuits acted in close cooperation with Diocesan clergy and with congregations of religious women: the Congregation of Notre Dame, the Daughters of the Heart of Mary, the Grey Nuns, the Religious of the Sacred Heart, the School Sisters of Notre Dame, the Sisters of Christ the King, the Sisters of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary, the Sisters of Loretto, the Sisters of Our Lady of the Missions, the Sisters of Saint Anne, the Sisters of Saint Joseph, the Sisters of Saint Martha of Charlottetown, the Sisters of Service, and the Ursulines. Among the aboriginal people, the Oblates of Mary Immaculate were often there before and, more often still, did much more. The Jesuits nonetheless left their stamp.

Many of the new Jesuits worked in English from the beginning. They were French for the most part, although before the 1880s when the majority of some 200 would be Canadian-born for the first time, they came also from Austria and Germany, Ireland and Switzerland, from Belgium, from Poland, and from the United States. But, especially at first, most became bilingual, and many worked almost exclusively in English Canada. An Irishman, Francis Dealy, was among the founders of Collège Ste-Marie in 1848, and the first novice to enter the Order in Montreal, Auguste Régnier, spent most of his Jesuit life working in English. By 1900, more than one-third of the 290 Canadian Jesuits were working in English, and among them were parish priests and preachers, Brothers, educators, missionaries, and scholars.

When the Jesuits first arrived back in Canada -- at Laprairie, Canada East, May 31, 1842 -- they were part of a French Mission eventually administered from the United States. They remained part of this "New York-Canada Mission" until 1879, despite having to bear the accusation -- by Sir George Cartier, among others -- of being "annexationists." In 1879 they were attached to England, and then in 1887 became an Independent Mission when Pierre Hamel, who spent most of his life working in English, became Superior. In 1907, they were numerous and prosperous enough to constitute the independent Province of Canada, charged with six parishes, four colleges, and some twenty mission

stations. By then they also controlled their own long formation program. They owned their own novitiate, Maison St-Joseph, built in 1853 at Sault-au-Récollet, Montreal, for the programs in spirituality and classics that constituted the first four years of training, as well as the final year of a Jesuit priest's formation.

From out of "the Sault" in 1913 would be founded St. Stanislaus Novitiate, at Guelph, Ontario, for the Anglophone novices. The Canadian Jesuits also owned since 1884 the large Collège de l'Immaculée-Conception, Montreal, for the traditional courses in philosophy and theology which every Jesuit student had to follow. Out of it would grow eventually, in 1930, the English-speaking Jesuit Seminary, Regis College, Toronto, for the students in philosophy, and in 1943 for the theologians. But already by 1924 the number of men and ministries had almost doubled, the mission stations were up to thirty in number, the parishes totalled nine, and the colleges six. In that year the Province of Canada was divided in two along linguistic lines, with some 130 English-speaking members grouped together in the Vice-Province of Upper Canada, while 428 French-Canadians constituted the Province of Lower Canada. By the early 1960s Jesuit numbers had grown to some 470 in Upper Canada and over 800 in Lower Canada. As well, Jesuit institutions stretched from St. John's to Vancouver.

Jesuits

The Society of Jesus was founded in Paris in 1534 by Saint Ignatius Loyola, a Spanish soldier who underwent a profound religious experience while recovering from serious wounds.



Sainte-Marie Among the Hurons

Sainte-Marie Among the Hurons: construction of the Jesuit mission, which was dedicated to the Virgin Mary, began in 1639 (courtesy Sainte-Marie Among the Hurons Historical Site).



Martyrdom of the Jesuits

This composite view of the torture and death of the blackrobes of Huronia (Gabriel Lalemant left and Jean de Brébeuf right) in 1649 was one of the most powerful images distributed of the New World, not least for its value as propaganda (courtesy Library and Archives Canada).



Jesuit College

A view of the cathedral, Jesuit College and Recollect Friars Church (Québec), circa 1761, watercolour by Richard Short. It was the first classical college (courtesy Library and Archives Canada/C-354).

The Society of Jesus was founded in Paris in 1534 by Saint Ignatius Loyola, a Spanish soldier who underwent a profound religious experience while recovering from serious wounds. Loyola called the society "The Company of Jesus" to indicate its military spirit. The order was authorized in September 1540 to ordain its members. The name "Jesuits" (meaning those who too frequently use or appropriate the name of Jesus) was used against the order as a term of reproach but in time was accepted by its members.

The Jesuit Mission

Spurred by the inspirational writings of their founder and unswerving in their obedience to the papacy, the Jesuits quickly became known as the schoolmasters of Europe - teaching not only the tenets of the Catholic faith but also subjects as varied as the Latin classics and dancing.

The Jesuits' mission was to teach people "the way into heaven" and they declared themselves "ready to die for the honour of ...our good Lord and for the salvation of these poor people." In the New World, their goal was to bring lost souls to Christianity and they were willing to endure hardships and to shed their blood to succeed.

The First Jesuits Arrive in New France

The Jesuits first came to New France as missionaries in 1611. Pierre Biard and Enemond Massé arrived at Port-Royal on 22 May 1611. Massé was driven out of Acadia by the English but was among the first group of Jesuits who arrived at Québec in June 1625. With him were Charles Lalemant, Jean de Brébeuf and two lay brothers.

Brébeuf spent many years among the Huron, learning their language and culture and building a number of missions that initially met with little success in converting the First Nations to Christianity. Brébeuf was convinced that he had been chosen by God and had a vision that he would die a violent death in His name. On 16 March 1649 the Iroquois, who were in the process of destroying the Huron nation, captured Brébeuf and Gabriel Lalemant. The two Jesuits were carried off to Saint-Ignace, where they suffered one of the most atrocious martyrdoms in the annals of Christianity.

The Jesuit Accomplishment

The Jesuits were linguists, explorers and ethnographers. They learned Aboriginal languages and customs, developed dictionaries and grammars, translated and preserved much of the history and traditions in their documents. The most famous of these documents are the *Jesuit relations*, which include details of their missions and activities and both the successes and failures of the Jesuits in their attempts to convert Indigenous peoples (see *Ste Marie Among the Hurons*).

On 21 July 1773 the papal brief *Dominus ac Redemptor* suppressed the Society of Jesus throughout the world. Bishop of Québec Jean-Olivier Briand in 1774 refused to put the order into effect, however. The Jesuits kept their name and religious habit in Québec, and retained possession of their property. Since Britain refused to allow the Jesuits and Récollets to recruit new members and would not allow French priests to come to Canada, the numbers reduced as members of the order died. The last Canadian Jesuit, Father Jean-Joseph Casot, died at Québec in 1800. Pope Pius VII reconstituted the order in 1814, and by 1842 Jesuits had reappeared in Québec.

A significant part of the Jesuits' earliest evangelical work involved education and the founding of parishes, schools and post-secondary institutions throughout Canada. The Jesuit seminary in Québec (Séminaire de Québec) was established in 1663. The institution comprised the Grand Séminaire that educated men for the priesthood and the evangelical ministries, and the Petit Séminaire (1668) that was originally established for the education of students in New France who planned to attend the seminary. The Collège des Jésuites evolved into Université Laval. In 1848, Loyola College at Collège Ste-Marie in Montréal was founded as an English-language program of the Jesuit Society and in 1896 Loyola College became a distinct institution.

Today, the Jesuit Society is the largest men's religious order in the Roman Catholic Church. In 2011 there were approximately 20 000 Jesuits worldwide with about 500 Canadian members divided equally between English and French in two juridical regions. Canadian Jesuits support the evangelical work of missions around the world.

In 2009, the Jesuit Archive in Canada opened in Montréal. The archive documents the history of the Jesuits in Canada since 1611. The motto of the Jesuits is *Ad Majorem Dei Gloriam*, "for the greater glory of God."