The comparative youth of our diocese is greatly emphasized by the venerable character of our older parishes: 160 years for our Cathedral parish, much more than that for St. Martinville, established in 1765, and St. Landry in Opelousas, established in 1776. The sacramental life of our area, of course, is much older than any of these older established parishes, but we have let the 225th anniversary of the first recorded religious ministrations slip by without any external celebration.

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Just where the first religious acts took place cannot be exactly stated but it would seem that the Post des Opelousas was in closer range than the Post des Attakapas to the missionaries' home base, St. Francis in Pointe Coupee on the Mississippi.

First records There is evidence of a marriage ceremony and other religious acts at the plantation of Sieur Courtaul in Opelousas region from June 5 to July 12, 1756, and the first recorded baptism for St. Martinville is noted the same year. These were performed by the same priest who is associated also with occasional visits to Natchitoches.

There were no churches or chapel in the areas so the records were kept permanently in the record books at Pointe Coupe. As each missionary returned to this headquarters he brought with him the "feuilles volantes," or records of baptisms, etc. on single slips of paper.

The Lord only knows how many of these could have been lost in transit! Then they were transcribed into the registers. It was only years afterward that they were again copied to become part of the permanent records of the churches of St. Martin or St. Landry. The identity of the priest performing these ceremonies is given as P. Didier (P. for père? or P. for Pierre?). He signed himself "Didier, prêtre," or "Didier prêtre," a usual symbol for a secular priest rather than a member of a religious order.

However, the Capuchin fathers were in charge of the mission headquarters at Pointe Coupee, and it seems unlikely at that point in history that a secular priest would have been a member of a missionary team consisting almost entirely of religious. Beyond these few conjectures, we have nothing certain about this, our first priest in the area.

Pere Didier again Some 35 years later the name Didier arose again in our area. Our first priest in the area.

By Father James Geraghty

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The correspondence in the archives of the Propaganda Fide. He was a Benedictine doing missionary work out of New Orleans and in the upper Louisiana region (Missouri).

He is chiefly remembered for a series of letters to Paris and Rome involving a petition either for a bishop, or at least special faculties for himself for the needs of the French settlers on the Scioto in Oyo (Ohio). By some legendarium Roger Baudier in his monumental "The Church in Louisiana" identifies the two Didiers as the same person.

Not related The identity of the two men who literally planted the seeds of faith in our area, but the lack of documentary evidence prevents any further exploration. The least we can do is to pray for the repose of his soul and thank him for starting us out on the right path to bloom and flourish, as we do.