

THE RICHARD REPORT

The Newsletter of the Fr. Gabriel Richard Guild

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GREETINGS FROM THE GUILD

Father Gabriel Richard, Pray for Us: Let All Know Your Story

Dear Friends,

Five years ago, Monsignor Charles Kosanke revealed a dream that was infectious: begin the canonization cause for Father Gabriel Richard, the first Michigan man who made our state what it is today.

So he founded the Father Gabriel Richard Guild with the main goal of gathering the stories and prayers that make it clear that this amazing man was indeed, a great saint.

Our first president, Joe Boggs, was clearly inspired by that call. He prayed for Father Richard's intercession and his prayers were answered. Joe recently "graduated" from his guild service to take on the higher calling of becoming a Catholic deacon.

So Monsignor asked me to succeed Joe Boggs and said he'd love to have the materials we need for canonization within five years. I love a deadline and a challenge so I'm all in. Can you help us?

Because Father Gabriel Richard's story is Our Story.

If Father Richard hadn't lived in Michigan when he did, I'm not sure if any of us would be here today. Detroit burned to the ground in 1805 and many wanted to give up but he inspired them to stay. Even American Protestants asked this mystical immigrant priest from France to preach to them.

And so he did, bringing together many different people: French, English, Native American and the founders of the new Americanism all were drawn to this holy man.

Seven years from now, September 13, 2032, will mark 200 years since Father Richard died fighting a pandemic that swept through Detroit. Over 64 years, he lived an amazing life that included the founding of most of our education system including the University of Michigan and two years in Congress that helped put our state on the map.

Michigan became a state just five years after his death and his funeral drew more than 2,500 mourners (greater than the population of Detroit at the time). He gave Detroit our motto, with the prophetic words of Detroit's history of rises, falls and returns. They are words forever associated with the Spirit of Detroit and her people:

We hope for better things; it will rise from the ashes.

We honor Father Richard every September (he is buried at the Basilica) and every year, we hold an art contest for children across the Archdiocese of Detroit (four Michigan schools are named after Father Richard). We are looking for every story – and every soul – touched that by this great and holy priest. Will you help us? Please sign up here: <https://ste-anne.org/father-gabriel-richard/father-gabriel-richard-guild/>

Peace,

Joe Serwach
President
Fr. Gabriel Richard Guild

Father Gabriel Richard's Arrival in Detroit: He Didn't Know English but Learned Fast

Based on excerpts from an article Father Paul M. Judson wrote for the American Catholic Historical Society in September 1926: SKETCH OF THE LIFE OF FATHER GABRIEL RICHARD 1767-1832

When Father Gabriel Richard came to Detroit, he was unable to speak English. This caused him no immediate inconvenience, as there were scarcely a dozen of his parishioners who spoke that language. However, he did not fail to see that it would greatly increase his usefulness, and he took up its study at once. Having once mastered that language, he used it almost entirely.

In person, Father Richard was tall and thin - his face though naturally pale was disfigured by a livid scar, extending the length of one cheek, the result of a wound received in making his escape from a mob during the French Revolution.

Immediately upon his arrival in Detroit, Father Richard "began his parochial administration with prudence and determination, his austere life, his zeal and his eloquence soon exerting a salutary influence in the reformation of existing abuses and the moral elevation and religious discipline of the wayward members of his Parish."

At the time of Father Richard's arrival, Detroit was merely a fortified military post, surrounded by a stockade, and having a population of about 2,000 souls. These, for the most part, were French Canadians.

Although at this time the largest city west of the Alleghenies, in extent Detroit comprised barely two acres of ground, or about six squares of what is at present the business section of the city. Roughly, this would include what is now the area between the river and Fort Street, with Cass Street on the west and Woodward Avenue on the east.

The houses were usually constructed of logs, clap-boarded together and but one story in height. Ste. Anne's Church, at this time the largest building in the settlement, was the fourth edifice of that name, having been built by Father Bocquet, a Recollect in 1754. The parochial jurisdiction of this "Mother Church of the Northwest" extended from River Raisin, near Lake Erie, along the American shore of the Strait of Detroit, around Lake Saint Clair and tributary streams, Lakes Huron and Michigan as far as the River Saint Joseph, on the Indiana border, including Green Bay and other parts of Wisconsin, the Georgian Bay and up the Saint Mary River to the mouth of Lake Superior. Thus it embraced the entire State of Michigan, parts of Wisconsin and all the island settlements on the lakes. In all this vast territory, however, the entire population was not more than 6,000, not including the Native Americans.

The only settlements that were predominantly white were Detroit, River Raisin - afterwards Frenchtown - Mackinac and a few of the river colonies. Some idea of the condition of this territory may be gathered from the fact that there was not a hamlet or a farm in the entire region five miles from the boundary.

Judge Campbell speaking of Father Richard's advent to Detroit and his position in the community, said, "His tall sepulchral figure was familiar to everyone in the long period during which he filled his sacred mission. He was not only a man of eloquent learning, but of excellent common sense, and a very public-spirited citizen. He encouraged education in every way, not only by organizing and patronizing schools for the immediate training of his people, but by favoring all other proper schemes for general intelligence. . . . His acquaintance was prized among Protestants as well as among Catholics. His quaint humor as well as his shrewd sense, in no way weakened by his imperfect pronunciation of English, are pleasantly remembered by all who had the good fortune to know him."

Join the Guild

The purpose of the Fr. Gabriel Richard Guild is to:

- keep alive the inspiring memory of Fr. Richard;
- bring knowledge of his exemplary life to others;
- archive information about his life and work;
- provide prayer, support, and office services to the Cause.

Membership is just \$10 per year.

Visit ste-anne.org to join.

Please tell a friend.

Student Winners To Be Honored Sunday, September 28

How to bring to life and venerate a holy man who died nearly 200 years ago? You ask young artists to bring his work back to life.

For the past three years, students throughout Michigan have learned about Father Gabriel Richard sharing his story through beautiful art.

Winners of the 2025 Father Gabriel Richard Guild art contest will be honored after the Sunday, September 28 noon Mass at the Basilica of Sainte Anne de Détroit.

Over the first three years of the contest (2023 through 2025) more than 600 students across the Archdiocese of Detroit have submitted entries which have all been digitized and archived.

To review the more than 600 art images of Father Gabriel Richard, visit: <https://shorturl.at/H4khs>



The Words of Fr. Richard

Fr. Richard Saw: 'No Religion' and 'Protestants... who would be easily led into the Church'

On January 24, 1796, Father Gabriel Richard was a missionary priest from France serving in Kaskaskia, Illinois, a small island in the Mississippi River, then the Western most frontier of the new United States of America.

He had only left his native France three and a half years earlier, so he spoke little English, but he saw opportunities to change hearts in this New World. He wrote to Bishop John Carroll, whose Baltimore diocese included all of the United States at that point:

"The people of this post are the worst of all Illinois. There is no religion among them, scarcely anyone attending Mass even on Sunday. Intemperance, idleness and debauchery reign supreme."

Of the congregation at Prairie du Rocher, the only other mission possessing a chapel, he wrote more favorably:

"I am tolerably well satisfied with my little village at Prairie du Rocher, although grave scandals are occasionally witnessed here. My chief consolation is derived from five or six English families who live ten or fifteen miles from this place. They are surrounded by others who are Protestants, but who would be easily led into the Church if I could speak the English language with greater facility."

Less than six months later, on July 1, 1796, the British would evacuate Detroit, ceding Michigan to the young USA, which meant Michigan was now part of Bishop Carroll's Diocese of Baltimore. He began moving priests around.

A parishioner of Father Richard's in Illinois, who would later follow him to Detroit, concluded, "he supplied himself in this distant and neglected field with all the zeal and prudence which characterize the true missionary, and he had the happiness of seeing his actual labors crowned with success."

Father Richard would eventually arrive in in Detroit on June 3, 1798, the Feast of Corpus Christi and serve for the rest of his life. He was 30 when he arrived in Detroit and served Ste. Anne parish until his death in 1832 at age 64.



*A View of Detroit, July 25 1794," by Lt. Edmund Henn
Burton Historical Collection, Detroit Public Library*

NOVENA TO SAINTE ANNE

JULY 17 - 26, 2025

NINE DAYS OF PRAYER AND MASS
CULMINATING IN THE CELEBRATION OF THE
FEAST OF STE. ANNE

STE-ANNE.ORG/EVENTS/NOVENA

Thursday, July 17 - Mass at 6:30 p.m.

- Celebration of African Culture - Fr. Francis Asomkase & Dcn. Michael Heard

Friday, July 18 - Mass at 6:30 p.m.

- Celebration of Latino Culture - Bishop Arturo Cepeda

Saturday, July 19 - Mass at 4 p.m.

- Celebration of Asian Culture - Fr. Tommy Ngo

Sunday, July 20 - Mass at 12 p.m.

- Celebration of Native American and French Cultures - Bishop Monforton
with a special celebration of the Alumni of Ste. Anne School

Monday, July 21 - Mass at 6:30 p.m.

- Celebration of Eastern European Culture - Bishop Fisher

Tuesday, July 22 - Mass at 6:30 p.m.

- Celebration of Albanian Culture - Fr. Fred Kalaj and Fr. Dino Cekrezi

Wednesday, July 23 - Mass at 6:30 p.m.

- Celebration of Western European Culture

Thursday, July 24 - Mass at 6:30 p.m.

- Celebration of Chaldean Culture - Bishop Kalabat

Friday, July 25 - Mass at 6:30 p.m.

- Celebration of Celtic Culture - Bishop Hanchon and Msgr. Tim Hogan

Saturday, July 26 - Mass at 3 p.m.

- Feast Day of Ste. Anne - Archbishop Weisenburger

In addition to the Masses above, there will be a 12 noon Mass every weekday.