

There was no stone on the side of the river where the church was to be built. There was plenty of stone on the other side, but the river was deep, swift, treacherous, and two miles wide. Only in the case of a hard freeze, which was rare, would the ice be strong enough to serve as a bridge for the stone wagons to travel upon it. The year 1879 was a crucial year for the building of the new church because the people had determined to finish it within that year. The success of the project was based on the hope of a hard freeze. The ice had to be thick enough to carry the heavy horse-drawn sleds loaded with the necessary stones and other materials. But exceptionally mild weather set in and all their hopes were threatened with disappointment. March had arrived and the first signs of Spring began to appear. At this point Father Desilets changed his promise (mentioned above) into a vow to be fulfilled if the weather would change and bring about the freezing of the river. He also promised that he would preserve the original tiny chapel and dedicate it to the most Holy Rosary.

The facts of the situation have all been carefully recorded by the people involved. Just after Father Desilets made his vow, a fierce cold-wave set in, and the river began to freeze over. A group of men worked night and day with buckets, dipping water out of the river and throwing it upon the now freezing crust. This was very dangerous work, especially in the darkness of night – and they had two miles of river to span with their ice bridge. On March 19, 1879, the Feast of St. Joseph, the bridge was completed and considered safe to use. One hundred and fifty horse-drawn sleighs worked feverishly crossing back and forth on the “Rosary Bridge,” as they called it. The last load of the necessary building material was hardly safe on dry land, when all of a sudden a thunderous crash was heard, and the “Rosary Bridge” began whirling away in pieces downstream.

With hearts full of joy and gratitude, the people, under the direction of Father Desilets, built their new church. They remodeled the old chapel and gave witness to many wondrous miracles. They built up a place for pilgrimages, and they established the Glory of God in the hearts and minds of the many millions who have visited this Shrine of Our Lady of the Rosary at Cap de la Madeleine. □

It was on Sunday, October 10, 2004, the day before the Feast of the Motherhood of the Blessed Mother, that the Monks of Christ the King Abbey solemnly crowned the statue of Our Lady of the Cape. She was crowned with a crown that was crafted by one of the monks of the Abbey.