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## THE APPOINTMENT OF BISHOP DUBUIS: A CRUX FOR CASTANEDA

by Franklin C. Williams, Jr.

In *Our Catholic Heritage in Texas*, Carlos E. Castaneda stated concerning the Right Reverend Claude Marie Dubuis, CM, the second Bishop of Galveston: "There has been much confusion over the date of his formal appointment, when he left Texas, and how he happened to be in France at that time" (VII, p. 123, n. 34). He cites the following authorities in support:

- 1) Sister Mary Carmelita Glennon, "History of the Diocese of Galveston, 1847-1874," thesis, University of Texas, 1943, page 153;
- 2) L'Abbe J.P., *Vie de Monseigneur Dubuis*, pages 142-146; and
- 3) Laurence J. FitzSimon (sic), "The History of the Catholic Church in the Area of the Diocese of San Antonio while Under the Jurisdiction of the Bishops of Galveston, 1840-1874" (unpublished copy in Catholic Archives in Texas), page 14.<sup>1</sup>

The difficulties of Castaneda and the others in this matter resolve themselves into three questions. The first of these in the present order of discussion about Bishop Dubuis should be "when he left Texas." In answering this question we come to the second, which is "how he happened to be in France at this time." We may then proceed to the most puzzling of the three, "the date of his formal appointment."

Claude Dubuis, a Vincentian priest for two years, came from France to Texas at the invitation of his fellow countryman, Bishop John M. Odin, CM, the Vicar Apostolic of Texas, in December 1846. In 1850 Bishop Odin, now bishop of Galveston, sent Father Dubuis to France to recuperate from his missionary labors in Castroville and to recruit other missionaries for Texas. Dubuis returned aboard *The Queen of the Sea* in 1851 and became vicar general of the Diocese of Galveston and pastor of San Fernando Cathedral in San Antonio.<sup>2</sup>

After ten years in this position Dubuis went to New Orleans in June 1861 to revive his health. He planned to return to France at a future date to recruit missionaries for the Texas missions. About this time Odin was promoted to archbishop of New Orleans. This position made the bishop of Galveston, the office he had just vacated, one of his suffragans. On the previous May 14 he put the Reverend Louis Chambadut in temporary charge of the Galveston diocese. As archbishop he recommended Fathers Chambadut, Dubuis, and Peter Parisot, OMI, as candidates for bishop of Galveston. He based his judgement on the ability of these priests to speak English and Spanish and to know the privation and hardships of the area.<sup>3</sup>

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Father Dubuis and Archbishop Odin were from the Lyons area in France and members of the Congregation of the Mission, or Vincentian order. Dubuis had come to Texas at the invitation of Odin and now, as a candidate for bishop, would continue to have Odin as his superior as long as he remained there. It was crucial for Dubuis to discuss his future in Texas with Odin, for as vicar general, or administrative deputy, he would be promoted or work under one of the other two candidates for bishop. As his mentor and superior, the advice and counsel of Odin would be vital for Dubuis.

Thus the answer to the question of when Dubuis left Texas is very much tied to the decision of Pope Pius IX regarding who would be bishop of Galveston. Pius sent no reply as archbishop and candidate waited in New Orleans. The pope, in filling the vacancy, would take into consideration the recommendation of the archbishop concerning his suffragan. But the date of the decision was unknown at the time.

Odin had not yet made a final choice. His own career as vice prefect apostolic of Texas (1840-1841), as vicar apostolic of Texas (1841-1847), and as bishop of Galveston (1847-1861) made the selection process more difficult. Two circumstances pressed the suit of Dubuis and delayed his departure for France. The first was the letter of the Reverend J.A. Faure, the acting pastor left by Father Dubuis in San Antonio. Father Faure wrote Odin in August 1861 that he personally preferred Dubuis, but some Irish-Americans showed a preference for Father Chambadut.<sup>4</sup> This letter may have influenced the archbishop, together with the continuing presence of Dubuis. The second circumstance was the outbreak of the Civil War and the federal blockade of New Orleans.

Action was now imperative. Both Odin and Dubuis remained French citizens and war conditions made ecclesiastical administration more difficult. Odin decided to leave for Europe. Still in New Orleans in early 1862, Dubuis wrote his Texas colleagues he would leave for France, probably on April 15.<sup>5</sup> He would run the blockade while he still could. The evidence of the Dubuis letter comes as close as possible to answering Castaneda's first question of when Dubuis left Texas.

Attempting to answer the first question, we come to the second, how Dubuis happened to be in France at this time. It seems probable that Odin and Dubuis left New Orleans for France together.<sup>6</sup> The Lyons area was home, Ambierle for Odin and Coutouvre for Dubuis. Here the decision on the Galveston appointment would come.

After the attempt to answer the first two questions, we now come to the third, the date of Bishop Dubuis's formal appointment. Castaneda accepts October 22, 1862, for the issuance of the bull of appointment by Pope Pius IX. His basis is a copy of the register of the Grand Seminary of Lyons showing the act of consecration of Bishop Dubuis taking place on November 23, 1862. This copy with the supposed date of October 22

is in the Catholic Archives of Texas.<sup>7</sup>

Although Castaneda saw the register copy that gave October 22, 1862, as the date of Dubuis's bull of appointment, he does not state or indicate he saw the original document. He does state that Odin informed Dubuis at Lyons of Dubuis's formal appointment as bishop of Galveston.<sup>8</sup>

Monsignor Alexander C. Wangler, in *Archdiocese of San Antonio 1874-1974*, fixes the "date of the notification" as October 15, 1862.<sup>9</sup> Robert C. Giles, in *Changing Times: The Story of the Diocese of Galveston in Commemoration of its Founding*, says: "While in France he [Dubuis] received the news that he had been chosen second bishop of Galveston to succeed Bishop Odin, who had been promoted to the archbishopric of New Orleans. This was October 21, 1862."<sup>10</sup>

We can now resolve the third question. Even if the bull of appointment was dated October 22, its existence was known as early as October 15, 1862, and Dubuis received notification on October 21. The Grand Seminary of Lyons register entry probably was recorded later than the actual appointment, as it shows Bishop Dubuis's act of consecration on November 23, 1862. It would not be the first entry concerning the date of another document subject to the memory of its registrar. Further, the Vatican often allows the candidate's notification to precede the formal announcement. It seems most likely that the actual date of Bishop Dubuis's appointment was October 15, 1862, with his notification coming six days later.

In a chapel of the Grand Seminary at Lyons, where Bishop Dubuis studied and heard the call to Texas, he was consecrated by Archbishop Odin of New Orleans on November 23, 1862. His co-consecrators were Archbishop Armand Francois Marie, Count de Charbonnel, the former bishop of Toronto, Canada, and Bishop Jean Paul Lyonnet of Valence. The new bishop's mother was present, as were twelve seminarians who agreed to journey to Texas. One of them, subdeacon John Anthony Forest, became third bishop of San Antonio, and another seminarian, Thomas Heslin, became fifth bishop of Natchez (now Jackson), Mississippi.<sup>11</sup>

#### NOTES

<sup>7</sup>Paul J. Foik, CSC, James P. Gibbons, CSC, and William H. Oberste, eds., *The Church in Texas Since Independence*, by Carlos E. Castaneda (Austin, 1958), p. 123, n. 34, vol. VII of *Our Catholic Heritage in Texas, 1519-1936. Supplement 1936-1950*, hereafter referred to as *OCHIT*.

<sup>8</sup>Robert C. Giles, *Changing Times: The Story of the Diocese of Galveston Houston in Commemoration of its Founding*, John L. Fos, ed., (Dallas, 1972), p. 25.

<sup>9</sup>*OCHIT*, VII, pp. 122-123.

<sup>10</sup>J.A. Faure, letter to John M. Odin, CM, August 6, 1861, Catholic Archives of Texas, Austin, quoted in *OCHIT*, VII, p. 123.

<sup>11</sup>*OCHIT*, VII, p. 123.

<sup>12</sup>*OCHIT*, VII, p. 123.

<sup>7</sup>*OCHIT*, VII, p. 123, n. 34.

<sup>8</sup>*OCHIT*, VII, p. 123.

<sup>9</sup>Alexander C. Wranglen, *Archdiocese of San Antonio, 1874-1974* (N.p., Newsfoto Year-books for Francis J. Furey, 1974), p. 13.

<sup>10</sup>Giles, p. 25.

<sup>11</sup>*OCHIT*, VII, pp. 123-124, 478.