



# Key Moments in St. Peter's History

*A series of historical highlights from the first 200 years of St. Peter – Libertytown.*

## Father Francis Maleve

Born in Russia on December 1, 1780, Francis Maleve entered the Society of Jesus in 1804. As a novice he was the first Jesuit from the area known as White Russia, now eastern Belarus, to be sent to the United States. After arriving in Georgetown, he worked hard to master English but struggled with the language during some of his earliest sermons.

Fr. Maleve would be assigned to Frederick in 1811 succeeding Fr. John Dubois. In reality a Frederick pastor had a very large area to shepherd, all of western Maryland and part of northern Virginia. There were by that time two Catholic churches in northern Frederick County in addition to Mount St. Mary's. Still, Fr. Maleve would travel from Frederick to make sick calls as far as Martinsburg (then part of Virginia, now West Virginia). After taking his final vows in June 1815, he undertook the construction of St. Joseph's Church on Carrollton Manor on land donated by Charles Carroll, the only Catholic signer of the Declaration of Independence. That church was completed in 1820.

In 1821, the indefatigable Fr. Maleve received permission from his Jesuit Superiors and the Archdiocese of Baltimore to accept the donation of land offered by Richard Coale for a church in Libertytown. By this time, Fr. Maleve had been in Frederick County more than a decade. He had seen the number of Catholics grow considerably in the area and had initiated the construction of additional churches to serve his expanding flock. He had started discussions about a church for Libertytown with America's first bishop and archbishop, John Carroll, before Carroll passed away in 1815.<sup>1</sup> Building began in 1821 once the funds were finally raised. As work progressed on the construction of the first St. Peter's church, in September 1822 Fr. Maleve became ill with bilious fever. As his condition worsened, Fr. Charles Neale, the Superior of the Jesuit Mission in Georgetown, dispatched Fr. John McElroy to Frederick to assist Fr. Maleve in his final days. Fr. McElroy arrived to find Fr. Maleve in grave condition and he administered Last Rites.



*Figure 1 Fr. Maleve*

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<sup>1</sup> 18N10, Francis Maleve to Ambrose Marechal, 10 October 1817, Abp. Ambrose Marechal Papers, Archives of the Archdiocese of Baltimore, Associated Archives at St. Mary's Seminary & University, Baltimore, MD.

Fr. Maleve died on October 3, 1822 and Fr. McElroy said his funeral Mass. While awaiting a successor to arrive from Georgetown, Fr. McElroy was informed that he would fill that role.

*Image:* No known image of Fr. Maleve exists. Artist's depiction of Fr. Maleve within a mural at St. Joseph-On-Carrollton Manor, Buckeystown by Yemi Fagbohun. Courtesy of St. Joseph-On-Carrollton Manor.