

WELFARE AND CONVERSION: THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN AFRICAN
AMERICAN COMMUNITIES IN THE U.S. SOUTH, 1884-1939

A Dissertation

by

WILLIAM FRANCIS COLLOPY

Submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies of
Texas A&M University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

December 2011

Major Subject: History

Welfare and Conversion: The Catholic Church in African American Communities in the
U.S. South, 1884-1939

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ABSTRACT

Welfare and Conversion: The Catholic Church in African American Communities in the
U.S. South, 1884-1939. (December 2011)

William Francis Collopy, B.A., Iona College; M.L.A., University of St. Thomas

Chair of Advisory Committee: Dr. Harold C. Livesay

The dissertation argues that Catholicism's theology and sacramentalism constituted the foundation of a ministry that from Reconstruction through the 1930s extended the religion's reach in the U.S. beyond its historical loci of numerical strength and influence to African American communities in the South. The dissertation draws on decrees of the Council of Trent, papal encyclicals, pastoral letters, theological treatises, and Catholic interpretation of Judeo-Christian scripture to demonstrate that the Church's beliefs manifestly shaped its African American ministry.

The dissertation illuminates a missiology that employed uniquely Catholic sacral elements in a framework designed to assist the faithful in living a virtuous life and attaining salvation. Within the temporal sphere, education functioned as the centerpiece of the Church's missionary effort, and the dissertation demonstrates the capacity of Catholic educational initiatives to advance African Americans socially and spiritually. The study assesses the efficacy of different educational methodologies and concludes that the Church prescribed industrial education for both white and African American

students and, wherever and to the extent possible, simultaneously provided instruction in classical, non-vocational subjects.

The dissertation establishes the centrality of priests and religious sisters to the work of evangelization in its various forms. Focusing on three American orders of sisters, and four orders of priests with European roots, the study concludes that the efforts of these women and men had a salutary effect on the lives of African Americans in the South. While both priests and sisters served as spiritual guides and counselors, priests functioned mainly as ministers of the Church's sacred rights while the sisters crafted and managed the work of education.

Although the Church Universal received its direction from the Vatican, the dissertation argues that American bishops, faced with the realities of the Jim Crow South, demonstrated a lesser commitment to the African American apostolate than the Holy See decreed. The work of priests and sisters at the local level, on the other hand, more clearly reflected the course that Rome expected the American Church to follow.

DEDICATION

In 1941, the Josephite Press in Baltimore published Father John T. Gillard's *Colored Catholics in the United States: An Investigation of Catholic Activity in Behalf of the Negroes in the United States and a Survey of the Present Condition of the Colored Missions*. Gillard dedicated his work, which countless students of the African American apostolate have referenced over the years, as follows:

“This book is reverently dedicated to the priests and Sisters of yesteryear – many now sleeping in nameless graves in forgotten cemeteries in the Southland, many still straining to the yoke – who espoused the cause of the Negro when his friends were few and to do so meant many and great sacrifices.”

I can do no better than to echo Father Gillard's thoughtful, loving dedication.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my committee for their guidance and support as I conducted research and produced the dissertation, as well as the other members of the History Department faculty at Texas A&M University who encouraged and inspired me throughout my course of study.

I also want to extend my gratitude to the kind and helpful staffs of: The American Catholic History Research Center and University Archives at Catholic University of America; Mullen Library at Catholic University of America; Archives of the University of Notre Dame; Passionist Fathers Archives; Associated Archives of St. Mary's Seminary and University; Archives of the Society of the Divine Word; Archives of the Sisters of the Holy Family; Reginald F. Lewis Museum of Maryland African American History and Culture; Archives of the Congregation of the Holy Spirit (Spiritans); Archives of the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament; and Archives of the Society of St. Joseph of the Sacred Heart.

Lastly, I would like to express my sincere appreciation to the Cushwa Center for the Study of American Catholicism for generously providing a travel grant that made part of my research possible.

NOMENCLATURE

AASM	Associated Archives of St. Mary's Seminary and University
ACUA	Archives of the Catholic University of America
ACP	Passionist Fathers Archives
ACSSp	Archives of the Congregation of the Holy Spirit
ASHF	Archives of the Sisters of the Holy Family
ASSJ	Archives of St. Joseph's Society of the Sacred Heart
ASVD	Archives of the Society of the Divine Word
AUND	Archives of the University of Notre Dame

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

On September 1, 1926, the Ku Klux Klan kidnapped a white Roman Catholic priest in Princess Anne County, Virginia. The victim of the crime, Father Vincent Warren, pastored St. Joseph's Church in Norfolk, a parish with an almost exclusively African American congregation.¹ Under Warren's leadership, St. Joseph's had encouraged its parishioners' efforts to improve their place in society in a locale where many in the majority white population hardly characterized the social advancement of African Americans as a positive development. As Warren might have foreseen, he and St. Joseph's attracted the attention, suspicion, and animosity of local Klansmen who saw kidnapping the priest as an appropriate response to his violation of what they considered the natural order of things. Although Warren's kidnappers ultimately released him relatively unharmed, they sent a strong reminder to local residents, both white and African American, of the social boundaries between the races – boundaries of which the Klan had appointed itself the arbiter – and a warning that no one who crossed those boundaries could expect to do so with impunity.

Father Warren's ordeal constitutes but a fragment in the far larger story of the Catholic Church's involvement with African Americans in the American South. This dissertation neither summarizes that larger story nor focuses on a single event – such as

This dissertation follows the style of *The Chicago Manual of Style*, 16th Edition.

¹ J. Douglas Smith, *Managing White Supremacy: Race, Politics and Citizenship in Jim Crow Virginia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 144.

Father Warren's kidnapping. It examines whether the Catholic Church's work in African American communities from the mid-1860s to just before America's entry into World War II fairly reflected Catholicism's beliefs and professions. While acknowledging that different levels of commitment to the African American apostolate existed within the Church's manifestly hierarchical structure, the dissertation posits a prevailing – though not unfailing – consistency between Catholic principle and action, concluding that in the United States, the Catholic Church labored among African Americans explicitly to promote their spiritual and material welfare, a mission that emblemized the doctrines and directives issuing from the Church's supreme temporal authority in Rome.²

Connectedly, I seek to fill part of the gap in the historiography of American Catholicism. Randall M. Miller contends that much work in the field has disproportionately emphasized cities, white people, and the North, at the expense of rural areas, people of color, and the South. Miller concedes, however, that southern Catholicism attracted less study than southern Protestantism because Catholics represented a distinct social minority outside the prevailing religious sphere. Mitigating his criticism of the historiography, Miller acknowledges that the scarcity of archival sources compounded the inherently difficult task of analyzing southern Catholicism. He concludes that students of southern Protestantism – many of them spurred to academic investigation by their own evangelical Protestant roots – had seemingly claimed the study of Southern religion as their exclusive province.³ Miller's twice-blessed critique

² Thus when I use the term “the Church,” I refer to its dominant though not universal beliefs and practices.

³ Randall M. Miller, introduction to Randall M. Miller and Jon L. Wakelyn, eds., *Catholics in the Old South: Essays on Church and Culture* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1983), 1-4.

of the historiography demonstrates its own balance while simultaneously identifying *imbalance* as the conspicuous shortcoming of Catholic historiography. Since Miller's 1983 assessment, however, more recent works have expanded Catholic historiography. John McGreevy's 1996 *Parish Boundaries: The Catholic Encounter with Race in the Twentieth Century Urban North*, for example, though sited in a biracial, northern, urban setting – precisely the formula that Miller characterized as overworked – provides a penetrating view of relations between whites and African Americans within a broader *American Catholic* context, a context neither exclusively northern nor exclusively urban.⁴ In my dissertation I employ Catholicism's catholicity to backdrop the Church's labors among African Americans in both rural areas and urban centers of the South, thereby expanding the current, deficient contextual dimensions.

Geographically, the region of interest lies between 29°N and 39°N in a broad swath extending approximately southwestwardly from Delaware to the western border of Louisiana. Consisting of former slave states Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Kentucky, Tennessee, Alabama, Mississippi, Arkansas and Louisiana, plus the District of Columbia, the region does not equate politically to the “South” in the same sense that the latter term customarily denotes the confederation of states that seceded from the Union in 1860-1861. The region possessed an unmistakably southern character and was home during the period of this study to a decided majority of the nation's African American population – 83.1 percent in 1870 and 63.6 percent in 1940. In those same years, African Americans comprised 37.4

⁴ John McGreevy, *Parish Boundaries: The Catholic Encounter with Race in the Twentieth-Century Urban North* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996).

percent and 28.1 percent, respectively, of the region's population, an aggregate of which whites and African Americans represented the only statistically meaningful segments. Despite the declining percentages between 1870 and 1940, at the end of the period African Americans still constituted more than one in four of the region's inhabitants.⁵

My study begins in 1866, a salient year in the history of the Catholic Church in the United States, a year when the Church's hierarchy came together in the Second Plenary Council of Baltimore to discuss ecclesiastical matters of critical import. The term "plenary" derives from the Latin adjective *plenarius*, meaning full, which denotes that the convening authority had summoned all the bishops in a region – in the case instant, the United States – to attend.⁶ Significantly, the bishops considered the Church's responsibility for evangelizing and ministering to the roughly four million African Americans whose social and political status the Union victory in the Civil War had changed forever. The period concludes three-quarters of a century later in 1939, the year Pope Pius XII (1939-1958)⁷ issued the encyclical *Sertum Laetitiae*, "On the One Hundred and Fiftieth Anniversary of the Establishment of the Hierarchy in the United States." *Sertum Laetitiae* offered a retrospective précis of the American Church⁸ from

⁵ U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *Negro Population, 1790-1915* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1918; reprint, New York: Arno Press, 1968), 31-45; U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *Statistical Abstract of the United States, 1942* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1942), 11-17.

⁶ Charles B. Herbermann et al., eds., *The Catholic Encyclopedia: An International Work of Reference on the Constitution, Doctrine, Discipline, and History of the Catholic Church* (New York: Robert Appleton, 1911), 12: 164-165.

⁷ Catholic tradition is for newly elected popes to choose the name under which they will serve, resulting in repeated uses of certain names differentiated only by Roman numerals. In the interest of chronological clarity, the writer appends the pontifical term to each pope's name on its first appearance in a chapter.

⁸ The term *American Church* is used herein to refer to the part of the Roman Catholic Church extant in the United States of America in the period of the current study. The last paragraph of this chapter further explains this distinction.

1789 when the papal brief *Ex hac apostolicae* established the first diocese in Baltimore and appointed John Carroll its bishop.⁹ As the year 1939 had significance for the Church in the United States, so, too, did it for the nation itself. War had broken out in Europe and while the U.S. had not yet engaged in hostilities, the American position in the dispute came more clearly into focus with each passing day.

When the U.S. entered the war, the ensuing ordeal precipitated vast changes in the nation and its people. In fact, Americans' wartime experience, both at home and in the theaters of conflict, irreversibly altered their worldview. The nation that emerged from the war in 1945 differed perceptibly from the one that entered it four years earlier. For African Americans in particular, the postwar period quickly became a time when the issue of equal rights for all citizens found new voice and the protocol of race relations clamored for redefinition. Notwithstanding the dissertation's chronological bounds, its final chapter postulates that American Catholic policies and practices of the 1866-1939 period foreshadowed the Church's posture within the civil rights controversies that captured national and global attention in the second half of the twentieth century.

Chapter II contains a fundamental exposition of certain dogmatic elements of the Catholic faith essential to examining the Church's decisions and actions. To undertake such an examination without a rudimentary grasp of the centrality of the Mass to Catholic life, of the unique nature of the Catholic priesthood, and of the Church's interpretation of scripture as an agenda for social action approximates an inquiry into what animated Thomas Jefferson and his colonial confreres without first becoming

⁹ Thomas T. McAvoy, *A History of the Catholic Church in the United States* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1969), 58.

familiar with the philosophy of the Enlightenment. Thus Chapter II does not involve an effort to validate Catholic belief, but rather to present it as the principal factor that motivated Catholics' interactions with African Americans. The dissertation's argument roots, then, not in the logical plausibility of Catholic dogma but in its capacity to inspire the faith's adherents to action and direct the subsequent course of their actions.

Chapter III explores the Catholic Church in America, emphasizing the ecclesiological congruities and incongruities elemental to its ethos. The American Church, though strikingly similar in myriad ways to its European progenitor, exhibited even from its earliest days a propensity for independent thought and action. Although it overstates the case to characterize the American Church's perception of, and attitude toward, papal authority as recalcitrant, Chapter III demonstrates that the American Church, when viewed as a subsystem within the larger societal organism of the Church Universal, exhibited many of the selfsame features that Edward Shils ascribes to similarly positioned secular subsystems within their respective larger societies. The American Church fits Shils's functional definition of such a subsystem: "[it] comprises a network of organizations which are connected, with varying degrees of affirmation, through a common authority, overlapping personnel, personal relationships, contracts, perceived identities of interest, a sense of affinity within a transcendent whole, and a territorial location possessing symbolic value."¹⁰ Just as the American Church demonstrates consonance with Shils's definition of social subsystems, so too does it exemplify his theorem on lateral and vertical separation:

¹⁰ Edward Shils, *Center and Periphery: Essays in Macrosociology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975), 4.

As we move from the center of society, the center in which authority is possessed, to the hinterland or the periphery, over which authority is exercised, attachment to the central value system becomes attenuated. . . . The lower one goes in the hierarchy, or the further one moves territorially from the locus of authority, . . . the less one appreciates authority. Likewise, the further one moves from [the center], . . . the less affirmative is the attitude towards reigning authority, and the less intense is that affirmation which does exist.

Active rejection of the central value system is, of course, not the sole alternative to its affirmation. Much more widespread, in the course of history and in any particular society, is an intermittent, partial, and attenuated affirmation of the central value system.¹¹

America's geographical separation from Rome had a dimension beyond the obvious one measureable in miles. The American Church, while echoing the sentiments of Rome, made decisions at the diocesan, parish, and mission level propelled as much by pragmatism as by precept. Chapter III traces the establishment and growth of the American Church, accentuating the consistency of its pronouncements and practices with those of its hierarchical superior in Rome. Chapter III recognizes, however, that although the American Church clearly remained allegiant to the central value system of Holy Mother Church, its affirmation of central authority proved as intermittent, partial, and attenuated as Shils's model predicts.

The Catholic Church in America occupied concurrent positions within its parent institution and among the host of severally denominated churches throughout the South. As Chapter IV shows, Catholicism had a minimal presence in the region during most of the nineteenth century, given that Protestant churches – especially those of the Methodist and Baptist denominations – had taken root there well before the Civil War. In the antebellum period Protestant churches existed principally to meet the spiritual needs of

¹¹ Shils, *Center and Periphery*, 10.

white people, but they often opened their doors to all, including slaves whose owners permitted or required them to attend religious services. Following the war, free African Americans regarded church membership as a symbol of progress in their quest to become part of the broader social order that for generations had excluded them.

When intransigent white populations refused to accept them as social equals, however, African Americans adopted an alternate strategy, to create a social order of their own. Though for a time they continued worshipping in white churches, they eventually broke away from inhospitable white congregations and formed congregations of their own, frequently under the pastorship of ministers of their own race. As African Americans established institutional forms to underpin the new social order they were fashioning, they embraced their churches as places where people of their color, background, and circumstance could come together in community and thereby develop a unique identity. Protestantism flourished among African Americans in most of the region while Catholicism remained irrelevant except in parts of Maryland and Louisiana. For reasons explained in Chapter IV, the American Catholic Church continued for some time as a predominantly white, northern, Irish-dominated institution, invisible for all practical purposes to the South's whites and African Americans.

The Second Plenary Council of Baltimore in 1866 had taken the first, diffident steps toward correcting this situation, although a candid acknowledgment of how little the Church had done on behalf of African Americans – and a commitment to immediate corrective action – did not emerge until the Third Plenary Council in 1884. There the Catholic hierarchy recognized the need to craft a strategy that both advantaged African

Americans and yielded ancillary benefits to the Church, foremost among them the accession of new members and a concomitant increase in Catholicism's influence among a people and within a region largely ignorant of its dogma and ministry. Chapter V examines the development of that strategy, a process that confirmed the prelates' unwavering devotion to humankind's spiritual salvation, a goal they believed attainable through the willing embrace, and attentive practice, of the Catholic faith. They also demonstrated their commitment to Catholicism's centuries-old heritage of educating the faithful in culture, morals, and the practical arts. Within this spiritual-temporal decisional context, Church leaders concluded that education, heretofore withheld from African Americans by custom or ordinance, had the capacity to dismantle the barriers that barred them from full participation in American citizenship.

At approximately the same time that the prelates considered the issue of educating African Americans, a secular debate raged over what form of education most meaningfully contributed to securing blacks' place in society. One side argued in favor of industrial education, the other for literary, or classical, education. "All education is good," Tuskegee Institute founder Booker T. Washington wrote, "but assuredly that is the best which enables a man to fit in most readily with the conditions of life in which he finds himself."¹² Harvard-educated W.E.B. Du Bois advocated from the other side on behalf of literary curricula, insisting that industrial education prevented African Americans – in particular, the most intelligent and talented among them – from reaching

¹² Booker T. Washington, "Afro-American Education," in *The New Negro: Readings on Race, Representation, and African American Culture, 1892-1938*, ed. Henry Louis Gates, Jr. and Gene Andrew Jarrett (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 33-36.

their full potential. Catholic bishops, mindful that the Church cherished the fruits of intellectual inquiry but also maintained a steadfast affection for the temporal and spiritual benefits that issued from honest toil, chose to consider industrial and literary education as complementary. Consequently, their ideas about educating African Americans, which Chapter V illuminates, reflect a melding of forms that manifested itself in Catholic educational programs through the mid-twentieth century.

Chapter VI introduces the men and women who labored in the African American apostolate, many of them volunteers, others assigned by their superiors. The American bishops who committed their Church to a more energetic ministry among African Americans underestimated its unique challenges, chief among them a shortage of priests to labor in the “harvest field.”¹³ During the closing decades of the nineteenth century, the Church in the United States deployed growing numbers of priests to northern industrial centers where the promise of a better life had attracted waves of predominantly Catholic immigrants. American bishops judged that shepherding the numerous faithful of their mainly northern dioceses took precedence over a southern missionary effort among African Americans, a people separated from the American Church’s center of gravity not simply by geography, but by race, religion, and culture. This judgment simultaneously diluted the prelates’ commitment to the African American apostolate and confirmed the Church’s northern, urban character.¹⁴ As new parishes blossomed and congregations expanded, the need for priests grew proportionately. Believing their diocesan priests

¹³ Luke 10:2, “The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.”

¹⁴ John Tracy Ellis, *American Catholicism*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1956), 101.

barely able to meet the needs of existing parishes, American bishops looked to European religious orders to dispatch priests and brothers to the African American mission field. Chapter VI examines the work of four of the religious orders that sent their men to the African American apostolate: the Society of St. Joseph, which traced its origins to England; the Society of the Divine Word, founded in Germany; the Passionist Fathers who originated in Italy; and France's Holy Ghost Fathers. Each of these orders took a distinctive approach to the work; all earned a measure of approbation; none eluded occasional failure and the criticism that attended it.

Regardless of geographical assignment, parish priests performed myriad liturgical and administrative duties and routinely taught catechesis in parish schools. The job of educating children, however, fell principally to the Church's women religious. Chapter VI introduces them – properly positioned in rank with the priests – and argues that the sisters, though disqualified by gender from ordination to the priesthood, clearly constituted the backbone of Catholic elementary education and made an invaluable contribution to the Church's African American ministry. These religiously devout women came together in community to make what they perceived as God's work on earth their own. For many of them, the education of children, particularly the disadvantaged, fit comfortably within their definition of God's work. The desire of some congregations to serve the neediest people prompted them to look to the South, a region where the rural population, especially its African American segment, suffered the worst

poverty in the United States.¹⁵ Chapter VI assesses the contribution that three women's religious orders made to educating black children in the South: the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament, the Sisters of the Holy Family, and the Oblate Sisters of Providence. While the work chosen by the Sisters of the Holy Family and Oblate Sisters of Providence differentiated them from the majority of women's religious orders, these two congregations further distinguished themselves by opening Catholic religious life to women of color.

Though the work of all these women merits examination in its own right, the environment they worked in adds an element to their story absent from the men's experience. Like the men, the nuns devoted themselves to people forsaken by larger society, but they also had to contend with the disquietude that attended membership in a male-dominated Church during a time and in locales where perceptions of women's public roles contrasted markedly with the sisters' anomalous lifestyle. To their credit, they persevered in their task.

A knowledgeable, vocal, and oftentimes querulous African American Catholic laity played a role in the Church's commanding triumphs and conspicuous failures. African American lay women and men complemented the priests and religious who labored among them, both in their response to the Church's salvific and ministerial endeavors and in their passionate espousal of their own agenda. Some of the harshest criticism leveled at the Church in America emanated from these women and men, and the goals and strategies they advocated often made those of the Church appear tepid by

¹⁵ Peter A. Colcanis, "The Wizard of Tuskegee in Economic Context," in *Booker T. Washington and Black Progress*, ed. W. Fitzhugh Brundage (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2003), 90.

comparison. The Catholic African American laity chastised the Church on three principal counts: reluctance to open the doors of Catholic colleges and universities to African American students; a fainthearted stance on social justice; and denying African American men the singular nobility that derived from ordination to the priesthood. At a series of lay congresses that convened in the waning years of the nineteenth century, African American Catholics voiced their concerns and proposed remediation. One delegate to the congresses in particular, *American Catholic Tribune* Editor Daniel A. Rudd, rose to prominence for his lucid insight into the issues that most concerned African Americans, and his courage in taking the Church to task over them. Sections of Chapters V and VI demonstrate that the problems illuminated by Rudd and his backers lingered well into the next century.

The Church embarked upon its campaign to evangelize and minister to African Americans fully expecting to encounter opposition at different levels. In fact, resistance to the Church's presence and programs developed almost immediately and showed remarkable persistence, a circumstance to which Father Warren's 1926 kidnapping offers emphatic testimony. Even though most obstacles that confronted the Church had less potential for violence than the Warren incident, the current study presents instances of threats and anti-Catholic vitriol. Most took the form of flagrant verbal assaults – some by public officials and Protestant clergy – against Catholic doctrine and motives. The most pervasive and formidable hurdle the Church faced, however, was the racist sentiment that infected not only a blatantly bigoted element within white society but the otherwise seemingly good and fair people who perceived African Americans' pedigree

as inferior to their own. Racism persisted as the Church's habitual adversary, one whose most pernicious tendrils clung to some of the very lay, religious, and ordained Church members whose station demanded they combat it. I argue that by 1939 the American Church, though not yet having purged its people and institutions of every vestige of racism, had reduced it to where it lacked the sinew to stay the Church's efforts to bring African Americans into full Church membership and contribute meaningfully to their social advancement.

The dissertation's final chapter fixes the record of the Church's African American ministry within a range anchored at one end by consistent observance of Catholicism's tenets and at the other by a heedlessness of them borne less of malice than of human deficiency. Chapter VII considers the effect that Christian forgiveness had on this behavioral spectrum and the extent to which it alternately advanced and hampered the Church's agenda. For while centuries of experience had familiarized the Church with the consequences of human imperfection, it had also given rise to a conviction that failure had equal capacity to ignite hope or instill despair. The Roman Pontiff, after all, exercised spiritual authority that the Church believed descended from the apostle Peter, a man who, when questioned by bystanders after Jesus' arrest, notoriously denied even knowing him, a lapse for which Jesus famously forgave him.¹⁶ To judge the Church's African American ministry solely on its collective record, moreover, fails to weigh the contributions that individuals and small groups made to African Americans' lot. Cyprian Davis observes that although Catholic efforts to evangelize African Americans brought

¹⁶ Matthew 26:74, "Then he started to curse and to swear with an oath, 'I do not know the man!'"

but fragmentary glory to the institutional Church, certain individuals, by their actions, remind us that “Catholicism is the history of a people, and neither prelates nor priests nor councils tell the whole story.”¹⁷ In that vein, this dissertation highlights some of the priests, religious, lay persons, and members of the Church’s hierarchy whose accomplishments gleam amidst the tarnish. They provided the example for their successors who staked out a corner of the moral high ground during the civil rights maelstrom in the decades following World War II.

Three short notes on form require mention: First, I have capitalized the first letter in *Church* when it functions as an abbreviated form of *Roman Catholic Church*. By so doing, I do not imply any hierarchy among Christian churches. Second, although *America* and *American* designate a Western Hemispheric land mass comprised of multiple sovereign nations, I have generally employed both terms to refer to the United States of America; its people and institutions; and events within its borders and environs. The terms’ use in this narrower sense derives from common usage and the superior clarity of the adjectival and possessive forms of *America* vice *United States*. Third, regardless of the convention at different chronological points within the dissertation’s period of study, I refer to the people at the center of this study as *African American*, *people of color*, or *black*, employing the terms *Afro-American* and *Negro* principally to maintain either periodicity or the integrity of direct and indirect quotations.

¹⁷ Cyprian Davis, *The History of Black Catholics in the United States* (New York: Crossroad, 1998), 136.

CHAPTER II

TENETS OF CATHOLICISM: A BASIS FOR SOCIAL ACTION

Writers of historical monographs and dissertations typically and perhaps necessarily assume that readers have a modicum of familiarity with their topic and the historiography that adjoins it.¹ Within such an assumption, however, lurks the potential for miscomprehension if, as in the current study, the causality of events derives principally from a cultural intangible like religious faith. Accordingly, this chapter makes no assumptions about readers' conversance with Catholicism's beliefs. Instead it contextualizes those beliefs as a phenomenon of cultural history and establishes their connection to the Catholic Church's African American ministry.

The period of study begins with the Third Plenary Council that met in Baltimore November 9, through December 7, 1884² and ends with the 1939 encyclical of Pope Pius XII (1939-1958)³ "On the One Hundred and Fiftieth Anniversary of the Establishment of the Hierarchy in the United States." To spare the reader the sensation of engaging the narrative *in media res*, however, requires at least a cursory examination of certain doctrinal topics as well as a review of salient ecclesiastical pronouncements made before

¹ Gordon Wood, "In Defense of Academic History Writing," *Perspectives on History* 48, no. 4 (2010): 19-20.

² *Memorial Volume: A History of the Third Plenary Council of Baltimore, November 9-December 7, 1884* (Baltimore: Baltimore Publishing, 1885), 46.

³ Catholic tradition is for newly elected popes to choose the name under which they will serve, resulting in repeated uses of certain names differentiated only by Roman numerals. In the interest of chronological clarity, the writer appends the pontifical term to each pope's name on its first appearance in a chapter.

and after the Third Plenary Council, the most pertinent of which issued from the Council of Trent, the Holy See in Rome, and conclaves of the American Catholic hierarchy.

The spiritual bonds between African American Catholics and their Church differed markedly from those that bound non-Catholic African Americans to their respective Protestant churches. Although Catholicism and Protestantism shared some common scriptural footings, this does not suggest a uniform interpretation of scripture among all Christian denominations. Catholicism and Protestantism held divergent views on a broad spectrum of dogmatic matters, most prominently with regard to liturgical ritual and the proper role of churches as interpreters of scripture. In fact, Catholics stand apart from other Christians precisely because of religious practices that derive from a specifically Catholic interpretation of scripture.

To understand the Catholic Church's African American ministry demands more than a grasp of how Catholic social action reflected its scriptural underpinnings. It requires examining core Catholic doctrine as manifested in the religion's sacred elements and in the canonical roles that men and women played within the Church. "A civilization expresses itself by the beliefs and the acts of the men who make it up. To analyze a civilization, therefore, it is necessary to examine and evaluate current beliefs as well as to pass judgment on the actions which flow from and are motivated by these ideals."⁴ Any effort to understand Catholic ideals leads to consideration of the 1885 catechism that the American Church published to reflect positions adopted by the Third

⁴ James H. Ryan, introduction to *The Encyclicals of Pius XI*, trans. James H. Ryan (St. Louis: B. Herder, 1927), xxiv-xxv.

Plenary Council.⁵ The catechism's value to the laity rested in its utility as a source of simple, concise explanations of the rudiments of the Catholic faith. Although the Church had for centuries produced and been home to some of the greatest scholars of their respective times, the quotidian interaction between Church and faithful generally occurred at a far more elementary intellectual level. Employing a question-answer format, the catechism presents the Church's positions on a broad range of issues related to faith and morals. The catechism's succinctness gave it broad appeal among active and prospective Catholics of whom only a minute number were likely to prefer tackling Thomas Aquinas' far lengthier *Summa Theologica*.⁶ When Catholic priests and religious arrived in the South to minister to African Americans, they carried with them the 1885 catechism, or one based on it.

Two questions in the catechism's first section – “Lesson First: On the End of Man” – illuminate the Church's priorities, an important consideration when viewed in the context of the direction that the Church's African American ministry took:

- Q. Of which must we take more care, our soul or our body?
 A. We must take more care of our soul than of our body.
 Q. Why must we take more care of our soul than of our body?

⁵ Sister Mary Charles Bryce states in her doctoral dissertation titled “The Influence of the Catechism of the Third Plenary Council of Baltimore on Widely Used Elementary Religion Text Books from its Composition in 1885 to its 1941 Revision,” Catholic University of America 1971, that *A Catechism of Christian Doctrine: Prepared and Enjoined by Order of the Third Plenary Council of Baltimore* was first published in 1885, having received the imprimatur of Cardinal James Gibbons, Archbishop of Baltimore, in April of that year. The catechism was published within six months of the Third Plenary Council's December 1884 adjournment. For purposes of the current study, the author used an original edition of the catechism published in 1866 by Benziger Brothers of New York.

⁶ Aquinas, a Dominican monk and saint of the Catholic Church, wrote the *Summa Theologica* in the late thirteenth century. Aquinas intended his voluminous work to explain the totality of Christian theology. Despite its length, the *Summa*'s language is considered accessible to average people.

- A. We must take more care of our soul than of our body, because in losing our soul we lose God and everlasting happiness.⁷

The supersimplicity and certitude of the answers to these questions make clear that while Catholic missionary initiatives had discernible practical objectives – for example, the economic advancement of impoverished segments of society – their *raison d'être* remained the spiritual salvation of the people to whom the Church ministered. Catholic thinking in the matter merited specific mention in an encyclical of Pope Pius X (1903-1914): “And so too are all they seriously mistaken who, occupying themselves with the welfare of the people . . . seek to promote above all else the material well-being of the body and of life, but are utterly silent about their spiritual welfare and the very serious duties which their profession as Christians enjoins upon them.”⁸ Therefore, the missionaries whom the Church commissioned to evangelize African Americans sought first to rescue them from the darkness of sin and second to improve their social lot. To do otherwise would have ignored Pius X’s instruction.

Although, as illustrated above, the catechism performed an essential educational function for Catholics, the Bible plainly contained the religion’s scriptural footings. To the Catholic way of thinking, however, the Bible did not stand alone; other theological writings and ecclesiastical pronouncements, many in the form of papal encyclicals and pastoral letters, constituted equally authoritative sources for connecting individual and communal ethics with their scriptural antecedents. The Catholic hierarchy routinely used

⁷ *A Catechism of Christian Doctrine: Prepared and Enjoined by Order of the Third Plenary Council of Baltimore* (New York: Benziger Brothers, 1886), 10.

⁸ Pope Pius X, Rome, 12 March 1904, *Iucunda Sanem Illum Laetissimum*, encyclical “On Pope Gregory the Great,” in Claudia Carlen, comp., *The Papal Encyclicals*, vol. 3, 1903-1939 (Wilmington, NC: McGrath, 1981), 25.

encyclicals and pastorals to communicate with the faithful, a tradition dating back to the Apostle Paul's first-century Christian Era (C.E.) letters to the geographically dispersed Church of his time. Following Paul's example, popes wrote letters to communicate with the bishops and the faithful, a practice that became more common during the eighteenth and subsequent centuries.⁹

The popes published encyclicals to express their views on problems in the Church and in the larger world, and provide the faithful with the means to confront them.¹⁰ Similarly, on a national level, bishops issued pastoral letters to resolve matters of local import to the Church and society. Signally, the thirteen American pastorals issued between 1792 and 1919 played a sufficiently important part in the history of the American Catholic Church to earn the appellation "the living constitution of the Church in this country."¹¹ Encyclicals and pastorals both reinforced, among other subjects: the Church's sacramentalism; the central place of the mass in Catholic life; the unique and transcendent character of the Catholic priesthood; and, most significantly for the current study, the Church's complex role in society. What follows, then, does not argue for the plausibility of Catholic religious belief as expressed in scripture, encyclicals, and pastorals, but for their capacity to inspire Catholics to emulative behavior and action.

Papal encyclicals and pastoral letters routinely invoked scripture to legitimize their motive and instruction. Accordingly, the question of scriptural authority commands prompt address, including anticipative acknowledgment that over the centuries the

⁹ Claudia Carlen, comp., *The Papal Encyclicals*, vol. 1, 1740-1878 (Wilmington, NC: McGrath, 1981), xvii.

¹⁰ James H. Ryan, trans., *The Encyclicals of Pius XI* (St. Louis: B. Herder, 1927), xxi.

¹¹ Peter Guilday, introduction to *The National Pastorals of the American Hierarchy, 1792-1919*, ed. Peter Guilday (Washington: National Catholic Welfare Council, 1923), x.

Bible's authority has not gone unchallenged. Serious critics of the Bible, though rarely inclined to fault its moral lessons, have pointed to its contradictions and inconsistencies as proof that it could not have been inspired by a being purported to possess perfect intelligence. Thomas Paine famously argued in *The Age of Reason* that imperfections inevitably arose within the biblical chronicle due to changes in language, incorrect translations, and deliberate fabrication. Paine contended that most New Testament authors lived decades after the events they reported and therefore relied not on their own witness but on second- or third-hand accounts. Over time, Paine's latter contention garnered a measure of acquiescence from biblical exegetes who nevertheless argued that it did not perforce render those accounts false. As to the Bible's purpose, Paine argued that the natural world gave ample witness to God's existence, and that divine beneficence toward humankind provided a sufficient and irrefutable example of God's expectations of humans, particularly with regard to their behavior toward one another.¹² To Paine's thinking, these observable truths rendered the Bible at best superfluous and at worst erroneous.

As the title of Paine's treatise suggests, he drew upon human reason to craft his rejection of the Bible. The Bible's proponents, on the other hand, considered reason by itself grossly inadequate to the task of comprehending the Bible; they held that scripture became comprehensible to humans only when they approached it through reason *and* faith. Ironically, while the faithful argued for the Bible's *a priori* authority, the book's

¹² Thomas Paine, *The Age of Reason: Being an Investigation of True and Fabulous Theology* (Boston: Thomas Hall, 1794; reprint, New York: Gramercy, 1993), 65. Citations refer to the reprint edition.

authority ineluctably issued in part from their own choice to believe what it said. In the eyes of biblical literalists in particular, Paine's arguments against the Bible's historical accuracy and its source of inspiration did little to diminish the book's authority.

Nevertheless, neither Paine's nor the literalists' position can be dismissed offhandedly, causing there to arise – for the purpose of the current study – the need to place the Bible along a continuum between Paine at one extreme and the literalists at the other. One way to accomplish this is to classify the Bible as *mythology*, although this invites immediate and strong objection from the literalist position. However, use of the term *mythology*, as applied here to the Bible's narrative of humankind's relationship with God, does not presume to characterize biblical accounts as fallacious, but to connote their having an indeterminable basis in fact. This very conceit prompted Andrew Greeley¹³ to observe, “To say that Jesus is a religious myth or symbol . . . is not to deny him reality. . . . Quite the contrary, it is the very core of the myth of Jesus that his life and message were real historical phenomena.”¹⁴

The efficacy of the mythological form within Christianity and elsewhere derives from humans' proclivity to inquire about themselves, their existence, and the state of being that surrounds them, “for all men stand in need of the gods.”¹⁵ Although the estimable facility of language enables humans to compose the big questions, the answers to those questions require articulation of such profound concepts – for example, the will of God – that they frustrate circumscription by human words and not infrequently by

¹³ Andrew Greeley (1928-) is a Roman Catholic priest, sociologist and author; he is a professor of Sociology at the University of Arizona and a Research Associate at the University of Chicago's National Opinion Research Center.

¹⁴ Andrew Greeley, *The Jesus Myth* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1971), 13.

¹⁵ Homer, *Odyssey*, trans. Samuel H. Butcher and Andrew Lang (New York: Macmillan, 1905), 27.

human thought and imagination. The mythological form overcomes this linguistic deficiency by employing illustrative expression to expose truths that defy conventional definition. Consistent with this, Greeley posits five elements within religious tradition: *symbols* that help to explain life; *rituals* that animate symbols at significant points in believers' lives; *community* that practices and perpetuates symbols and rituals; *heritage* that lends itself to intergenerational transmission of the tradition; and *differentiation* that separates those born into one heritage from those born into another or none at all.¹⁶ Melding Greeley's five elements of religious tradition with the mythological paradigm yields an amalgam with properties common to almost all religious belief systems.

Mythology presents comprehensible storylines that, for many inquirers, satisfactorily answer ontological questions. The biblical narrative, therefore, finds itself in compatible environs within this mythological schema. The Old and New Testaments constitute the scriptural tradition of Christianity, a mythology that weaves its way from the primordality of Genesis to the eschatological imagery of Revelation. Because Christians accepted Jesus of Nazareth as the fulfillment of God's messianic promise to the children of Israel, they connected New Testament accounts of Jesus' life with earlier events in the Old Testament. For example, according to the New Testament Book of Luke, when Jesus announced his purpose for being on earth, the words he used came verbatim from the Old Testament book of Isaiah, itself a book of decidedly prophetic

¹⁶ Andrew M. Greeley, *The Catholic Myth: The Behavior and Beliefs of American Catholics* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1990), 27.

character.¹⁷ Making connections between the New and Old Testaments lent continuity to the biblical myth and allowed Christians to apply the lessons of the entire Bible to their ministries, a practice that – as shown elsewhere in the current study – manifested itself consistently in Catholic missionary work among African Americans.

Some expositors of the biblical myth, in a mistaken effort to emphasize the originality of Jesus' message of love and forgiveness, differentiated between a God of *forgiveness* in the New Testament and God of *justice* in the Old. This simplistic distinction fails to acknowledge that both books speak about the same God – one who, by believers' own definition, does not change. A closer reading of the Old and New Testaments reveals that they exhibit obvious consistency and seriality. For example when Jesus preached on love, something he did repeatedly, he echoed a similar teaching from the Old Testament book of Leviticus.¹⁸ Furthermore, throughout his public ministry, Jesus routinely invoked Old Testament passages to demonstrate God's approbation both of him and of the "good news" he preached.¹⁹ The recurring New Testament theme of God's love for humanity and the coincident requirement that people mirror this love in their treatment of one another provided the impetus for Christians to undertake evangelical ministries among people outside their socioreligious sphere.

Although some Catholic exegetes espouse a less literal interpretation of scripture than their Protestant counterparts, biblical mythology unarguably serves as

¹⁷ Luke 4:18-19 and Isaiah 61:1-2, Revised Standard Version, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent Me to proclaim freedom to captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set free the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."

¹⁸ Leviticus 19:18 RSV, "Love your neighbor as yourself. . . ."

¹⁹ Luke 8:1 RSV, "Soon afterwards He was traveling from one town and village to another, preaching and telling the good news of the kingdom of God."

Catholicism's historical narrative and an essential guide for Christian living. Joseph Campbell²⁰ wrote: "Now, one of the great advantages of being brought up a Roman Catholic is that you're taught to take myth seriously and to let it operate on your life, and to live in terms of these mythic motifs."²¹ Campbell dissects the mythical model and uncovers four prevalent functions: a mystical function that engenders awe in humans at the wonder of the universe and themselves; an expository function that explains the universe's configuration in unscientific language that allows its mystery to persist; a sociological function that supports and validates a particular social order; and a pedagogical function that teaches humans how to live.²² The four functions that Campbell ascribes to mythology complement and imitate Greeley's five elements of religious tradition.

For Campbell, the social orientation of the Bible centers on a condemnation of nature, a characteristic that differentiates biblical mythology from mythologies that typically trace their roots to Eastern traditions. For example, according to the Genesis account of Adam and Eve's sin, their fall from grace corrupted nature and the larger world. Non-biblical myths, on the other hand, form a distinctly different judgment of the God-humankind relationship. As Campbell explains it, their assessment of the relationship between nature and humanity leads non-biblical myths to posit a spiritual connectivity wherein the divinity manifests itself in nature, that is, "the spirit is the

²⁰ Joseph Campbell Foundation, "About Joseph Campbell," <http://www.jcf.org/new/index.php>. Joseph Campbell (1904-1987) lectured and wrote on comparative mythology and comparative religion for more than a half-century; he taught at Sarah Lawrence College from 1934 to 1972.

²¹ Joseph Campbell with Bill Moyers, *The Power of Myth*, ed. Betty Sue Flowers (New York: Doubleday, 1988), 10.

²² Campbell, *Power of Myth*, 31.

revelation of the divinity . . . inherent in nature.”²³ Christian religions, despite divergent interpretations of other parts of their common mythology, uniformly accept humankind’s separation from God as a consequence of Adam and Eve’s fall.

Biblical authors clearly understood humans’ propensity to go astray or fall short of the mark. Time and again they wrote of humans as a species rife with imperfection, and no one can accuse them of reticence in presenting them that way. In Genesis, the Bible’s first book, the authors barely got into the third of fifty chapters before providing an account of how the first humans incurred God’s disfavor. The story illuminated Adam and Eve’s weakness in the face of temptation – this despite their enjoying a paradisaical life in Eden, a mythical land where the creator of the universe might show up unannounced at any given moment.²⁴ According to the myth, Adam and Eve ate fruit from a tree that God had declared off limits to them. In punishment for their transgression, God banished Adam and Eve from Eden and condemned them and – more ominously – their descendants for all time to a mortal life replete with struggle and suffering.

The Catholic catechism’s treatment of this important theological principle exhibits the book’s characteristic straightforwardness. (N.B. Because I introduced the catechism’s question-answer format earlier, further quotations from the catechism provide only the answers, a method that should not impede clarity as the catechism’s answers typically repeat the corpus of the question.) The catechism states: “The chief blessings intended for Adam and Eve, had they remained faithful to God, were a

²³ Campbell, *Power of Myth*, 23, 99.

²⁴ Genesis 3:8 Revised Standard Version, “Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden at the time of the evening breeze. . . .”

constant state of happiness in this life and everlasting glory in the next.” The catechism depicts the consequences of Adam and Eve’s sin this way: “Adam and Eve on account of their sin lost innocence and holiness, and were doomed to sickness and death.”²⁵ As if the punishment that God imposed on Adam and Eve were not enough, Christians further concluded that every child who came into the world bore the stain of Adam’s “original sin.” The Council of Trent, demonstrating the Church’s firm belief in this notion of original sin, declared anathema any person who disputed that the consequences of Adam’s sin did not convey to his descendents.²⁶

A significant shift in the tenor of the biblical narrative around the time of Adam and Eve’s expulsion from the Garden of Eden merits mention here. Although to this point the narrative focused on both Adam and Eve, it afterward assumed an obvious male-centeredness. Adam and his male lineage took center stage while women took on secondary roles. From this point forward – with infrequent but admittedly conspicuous exceptions – the Bible emphasizes male figures and speaks of women principally in the context of childbearing and motherhood. This male-focused character of the biblical myth influenced the attitudes and behaviors of the men and women who embraced the teachings of Judaism and Christianity. Within Roman Catholicism, it figured prominently in the form of the religion’s priesthood and, by extension, the Catholic *modus operandi* for ministry.

²⁵ *Catechism of Christian Doctrine*, 15.

²⁶ H.J. Schroeder, trans., “Decree Concerning Original Sin,” in *Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent* (St. Louis: Herder, 1941; reprint, Rockford: Tan Books, 1978), 21-23. Citations refer to the reprint edition.

Given the circumstances of humankind's fall as presented in the biblical account, it appears unlikely that Adam took to being in the limelight. In fact, Genesis says that when God confronted Adam about eating the forbidden fruit, he tried to place the blame on Eve.²⁷ Despite Adam's futile attempt at mitigation, the mythology's male-centeredness caused humankind's first sin to become more closely associated with Adam than with Eve. When, over the ensuing millennia, Adam's descendents read accounts of his sin, they easily understood the lesson it contained. That transparency notwithstanding, Adam remained beyond the intellectual grasp of the average human. Adam was, after all, the *first* man, a creature who owed his existence not to a union of mortals but to the immediate creative power of God. In addition, prior to his unarguably colossal blunder, Adam had lived in a place that other humans had seen only in their dreams. In the minds of other mortals Adam appeared appreciably larger than life. Jesus, on the other hand, the man born for the express purpose of making recompense for Adam's sin, arrived on earth the same way other mortals did, and until he began his public ministry, remained quite unremarkable.

New Testament writers established an explicit relationship between Jesus and Adam, as attested to as early as the Apostle Paul's first-century letter to the faithful in Corinth.²⁸ This connection between Jesus and Adam became firmly fixed in Christian doctrine. Protestant and Catholic theologians agreed that the cleavage Adam provoked between God and humankind required nothing less than the compensatory sacrifice of

²⁷ Genesis 3:12 RSV, "Then the man replied, 'The woman you gave to be with me – she gave me some fruit from the tree and I ate.'"

²⁸ 1 Corinthians 15:21 RSV, "For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead also comes through a man."

God's own son Jesus to bridge it. One Catholic theologian has argued, "It is Christ our Lord who once and for all offered himself to God the Father and by his death on the altar of the cross accomplished on Calvary an everlasting redemption."²⁹ Pope Pius XI (1922-1939), describing the effects that Adam and Jesus had on the human circumstance, wrote: "man . . . fallen from his original estate, but redeemed by Christ and restored to the supernatural condition of [an] adopted son of God. . . ."³⁰ In similar vein, the 1833 pastoral of the American bishops had reminded the faithful, "You are all aware that as in the first Adam we all fell, so in the second Adam (Jesus Christ) we must be redeemed. . . ."³¹ This myth of humankind-fallen-humankind-redeemed appealed to widely ranged people who sought a lightening of their earthly burden, if only by the promise of a better life after this one.

Despite the confident tone that pervades statements about Adam's sin and Jesus' role in atoning for it, even today theologians and exegetes struggle precisely to define Jesus and the ramifications that his life and teaching had for believers and non-believers alike. Crafting that definition, of course, lies far beyond the scope of this writing and the present writer's ability. However, a particular element within Catholicism's interpretation of Jesus' death on the cross requires mention: on Calvary, Jesus served as both presiding priest and sacrificial offering.³² As will become apparent in later

²⁹ James B. Collins, *The Mass as Sacrifice: Theological Reflections on the Sacrificial Elements of the Mass* (New York: Society of St. Paul, 2008), 59.

³⁰ Pius XI, Rome, 31 December 1929, *Rappresentanti in Terra*, encyclical "On Christian Education of Youth," in *Five Great Encyclicals* (New York: Paulist Press, 1939), 54.

³¹ Peter Guilday, ed., "The Pastoral Letter of 1833," in *The National Pastorals of the American Hierarchy, 1792-1919* (Washington: National Catholic Welfare Council, 1923), 63.

³² Martin C. D'Arcy, "Christ, Priest and Redeemer," in *The Teaching of the Catholic Church: A Summary of Catholic Doctrine*, vol. 1, ed. George D. Smith (New York: Macmillan, 1949).

commentary on the mass and the priesthood, this element of the Roman Catholic canon influenced the structure and function of the Church and conditioned the manner of the Church's ministry to African Americans in the South.

The moment of Jesus' sacrifice notwithstanding, Christianity's mythology held that humankind's redemption remained vulnerable to subversion by evil. The previously cited encyclical of Pius XI contains this: "There remain therefore, in human nature the effects of original sin, the chief of which are weakness of will and disorderly inclinations."³³ Despite the pope's gloomy assessment of human nature, Christian dogma maintained that a place in heaven remained within reach of the faithful if they but followed Jesus' instruction to live a life that imitated his own.³⁴

While Jesus was in the company of his disciples, he tasked them with carrying on the work he had begun.³⁵ This assignment compelled them and their successors to undertake altruistic, socially beneficent, and evangelistic ministries that included not only preaching the good news but relieving human suffering.

Historically the social work of the Catholic Church is all to be traced back to the teachings of her Divine Founder and to His example. Catholic social history therefore, takes its beginning directly with Jesus Christ, and so continues unbroken in its tradition to the present day. Various as those traditions must be applied to different times, their principles have remained unchangingly the same through all the centuries.³⁶

³³ Pius XI, Rome, 31 December 1929, *Rappresentanti in Terra*, encyclical "On Christian Education of Youth," in *Five Great Encyclicals* (New York: Paulist Press, 1939), 54.

³⁴ Luke 9:23-24 Revised Standard Version, "If anyone wants to come with Me, he must deny himself, take up his cross daily, and follow Me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life because of Me will save it."

³⁵ Matthew 28:19-20 RSV, "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, . . . teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you."

³⁶ Joseph C. Husslein, "The Church's Social Work through the Ages," *Catholic Historical Review* 8, no. 1 (1928): 81.

Catholics did not, however, access the teachings and example of the Church's "divine founder" through scripture alone. They relied on uniquely Catholic interpretations of scripture that came to them through Church tradition, papal encyclicals, and pastoral letters. The term *tradition* as used here does not imply mere human custom; it refers purposively to the Church's teaching on scripture. The catechism summarizes this notion thusly: "We shall know the things which we are to believe from the Catholic Church, through which God speaks to us."³⁷ A more recent Catholic theologian expanded on this concept by stating, "These, then, are the two sources of divine revelation: Tradition preserved by the living and infallible teaching authority of the Church, and Scripture, the inspired word of God."³⁸ Significant in all this is the Church's reliance on "extra-scriptural" sources to define its ministry and differentiate it from the ministries of other Christian denominations.

To grasp what inspired the Catholic Church – an institution dominated by white, European, and European-descended men – to initiate a ministry among African Americans necessitates recognizing the uniquely Catholic beliefs that inspired such a ministry. Within the popes' encyclicals and bishops' pastoral letters pulsed a creed that defined the Church's work and the means to accomplish it. For Protestants, however, this selfsame creed perpetuated the spiritual rift that had given rise to the Protestant Reformation. Although Protestant and Catholic missionary endeavors had strikingly similar temporal and spiritual objectives, the two branches of Christianity differed

³⁷ *Catechism of Christian Doctrine*, 10.

³⁸ George D. Smith, "Faith and Revealed Truth," in *The Teaching of the Catholic Church: A Summary of Catholic Doctrine*, vol. 1, ed. George D. Smith (New York: Macmillan, 1949), 31.

widely in their understanding of the concatenation of God, scripture, church, and believer.

When Catholic missionaries arrived in the South in the late nineteenth century, they found a region where the Protestant methodology for studying scripture had already gained wide currency. Although the dogma that Catholic missionaries brought to African Americans in the region contained the essence of Christian biblical belief, it also had a complicatedness that made it seem alien to those encountering it for the first time. Protestants could confidently testify that God revealed himself and his truths entirely through the Bible and that the book functioned as the teacher *per se*. For Protestants, all teaching external to the book performed merely a commentarial function. During the Great Awakenings that occurred in the United States during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, evangelical preachers had reinforced this notion as they professed a more egalitarian interpretation of humankind's relationship with God. Nathan O. Hatch has characterized this new approach as *populist* because the term "suggest[ed] leadership that is deliberate in championing the interests of common people against professional expertise and elite institutions."³⁹ Within such a populist construct, moral and religious discernment became as much the province of the faithful as of professional clergymen. This did not, however, deter the clergy from aligning with the faithful in embracing a doctrine that entrusted both groups with responsibility for their own salvation.

Protestants responded enthusiastically to the idea of determining their own place in eternity rather than having it decided for them by a repressive orthodoxy. Charles

³⁹ Nathan O. Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 244-245.

Grandison Finney typified mid-nineteenth-century evangelical clergymen who endorsed this wider salvific path. In lengthy essays and sermons liberally laced with scriptural references, Finney taught a theology that commended an intimate relationship between believers and their God. He portrayed the acceptance of Jesus' "yoke"⁴⁰ as a means to genuine Christian liberty.⁴¹ Finney's equating Christian discipleship to a spiritual unburdening did not, however, conflict with Catholic interpretation of the same New Testament message. Catholics and Protestants frequently found common ground in their scriptural interpretations, but Catholics disagreed with Finney – and with Protestantism in general – over the proper role of the Church and its clergy in leading souls to salvation. This disagreement preceded Finney's ministry by more than three hundred years, dating back to the sixteenth-century Protestant Reformation.

At that time, disagreement festered between Western European Catholics and their Church over ecclesiological and theological issues. This disagreement, coupled with the faithful's most recent and radical efforts to reform a Church riddled by scandal and abuses of power, culminated in the Reformation. The Church, responding to the threat that the Reformation posed to its authority, summoned a high-level council for the express purpose of denouncing the Reformation's perceived errors. "[C]onsidering that our predecessors . . . often in the greatest dangers of the Christian commonwealth had recourse to ecumenical councils and general assemblies of bishops as the best and most

⁴⁰ Matthew 11:28-30 RSV, "Come to me all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

⁴¹ Charles G. Finney, "Christ's Yoke Is Easy," *Oberlin Evangelist*, January 2, 1861, <http://www.gospeltruth.net>.

suitable remedy, we also decided to hold a general council.”⁴² In 1545 the Church fathers met in the Austrian Tyrol in what became known as the Council of Trent (or Tridentine Council). From 1545 to 1564, a period that spanned the pontificates of five popes, a series of conciliar sessions issued pronouncements on a broad range of topics that effectively codified Roman Catholic doctrine and distinguished it for all time from the belief systems of the new Christian denominations then sprouting up among reform-minded, separatist Catholics. In the centuries that followed, the Council’s doctrinal proclamations repeatedly found voice in encyclicals and pastoral letters that disseminated the Tridentine canon beyond the realm of theologians to within reach of the faithful. These same encyclicals and pastorals measurably influenced the Church’s global ministry, including its ministerial initiatives in the American South. There the Church’s efforts to secure spiritual salvation and social justice for African Americans reflected a continuity between Christian myth, the Tridentine canon, encyclicals and pastorals, and the unpretentious ministry of the priests and religious who labored among a people abandoned by most Americans.

Catholic doctrine held that God’s revelation to humankind flowed through the teaching of his earthly community – the Church – which had responsibility for sanctifying humanity. The Church met its responsibility not only through scripture but through liturgy, sacramentalism, and the teaching of the bishops, most notably the Bishop of Rome. The Council of Trent attested to the validity of the gospel as preached first by Jesus and later by the Apostles, confirming it as “the source at once of all saving

⁴² Paul III, 22 May 1542, “Bull of the Convocation of the Holy Ecumenical Council of Trent,” in *Canons and Decrees*, 2.

truth and rules of conduct.” The Council expanded on this, however, stating that “these truths and rules are contained in the written books and in the unwritten traditions, which, received by the Apostles from the mouth of Christ Himself or from the Apostles themselves, . . . have come down to us. . . .”⁴³ Noteworthy in this pronouncement is the Council’s reference to *unwritten traditions*, a term that expanded the basis for doctrinal affirmation beyond scripture alone.

Three centuries later, American bishops endorsed this precept in their 1884 Pastoral Letter, reminding the faithful that when Christ commissioned the Apostles to teach humankind everything he had taught them, he never specifically instructed them to write anything down; the Apostles therefore taught by word of mouth. However, when they experienced what they perceived as divine inspiration, they sometimes did write, and the New Testament letters of Peter, James, and Paul provide some of the more prominent examples of this. On this subject the bishops’ 1884 pastoral commented: “What they wrote and what they delivered by oral instruction are equally God’s Word. And this two-fold Word, written and unwritten, is the Deposit of divine truth. . . .”⁴⁴

The pastorals of the eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth centuries exhibit remarkable consistency with the teachings of the Tridentine Council. Though the Catholic Church demonstrated an obvious willingness to expand the definition of God’s word as contained in the Bible, it remained loath to loosen its monopoly on interpretation. The Reformation had made the biblical myth more accessible to the Protestant faithful, whereas the Council of Trent, in a demonstration of its reactionary

⁴³ H.J. Schroeder, trans., “Decree Concerning the Canonical Scriptures,” in *Canons and Decrees*, 17-18.

⁴⁴ Guilday, ed., “The Pastoral Letter of 1884,” in *National Pastorals*, 231.

character and purpose, had acted to maintain Church authority over scripture by restricting Catholics' interpretational license: "[N]o one relying on his own judgment shall, in matters of faith and morals pertaining to the edification of Christian doctrine . . . presume to interpret them contrary to that sense which holy mother Church, to whom it belongs to judge of their true sense and interpretation, has held and holds. . . ."⁴⁵

Although the Church fathers acknowledged the divine character of the Bible's content as the logical concomitance of its writers' divine inspiration, they believed preeminently that God worked *through his Church*. The Catholic Church therefore considered the Bible a book handed to believers not directly by God but by God *through his Church*, and, in consequence of that, subject to the Church's interpretation. Pope Benedict XV (1914-1922) expressed the Church's position this way: "[T]he Sacred Books – written as they were under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit – have God for their Author, and as such were delivered to the Church."⁴⁶

A mid-twentieth-century theologian who compared the Catholic and Protestant points of view on the Bible observed: "Over the Book stands the Church, while according to the [Protestant] Reform conception, over the Church stands the book."⁴⁷ Consistent with the concept of Church preeminence over scripture, the American Pastoral Letter of 1829 instructed the clergy: "Seek then . . . to learn what . . . our Holy Mother the Church has held and preserved as genuine interpretation of those passages

⁴⁵ H.J. Schroeder, trans., "Decree Concerning the Edition and Use of the Sacred Books," in *Canons and Decrees*, 18-19.

⁴⁶ Benedict XV, Rome, 15 September 1920, *Spiritus Paraclitus*, encyclical "On Saint Jerome," in Claudia Carlen, comp., *The Papal Encyclicals*, vol. 3, 1903-1939 (Wilmington, NC: McGrath, 1981), 179.

⁴⁷ Gustave Weigel, introduction to *The Papal Encyclicals in Their Historical Context*, ed. Anne Fremantle (New York: P. Putnam's Sons, 1956), 10-11.

which so many of the learned and unlearned and unstable wrest to their own perdition.”⁴⁸

Ninety years later, America’s bishops again demonstrated their steadfastness in the matter when, in their 1919 pastoral, they invoked the words of the Apostle Peter⁴⁹ to buttress their own admonition to the faithful: “To the Church which is taught all truth by the Holy Spirit, Christ entrusted the whole deposit of divine revelation. . . . [W]ith true reverence for the Bible and solicitude for the spiritual welfare of its readers [the Church] has guarded both it and them against the dangers of false interpretation.”⁵⁰

Despite the differing positions of Protestants and Catholics on scriptural matters, both groups accepted Jesus’ message as the good news, a logical *ex post facto* conclusion given the positive response the message elicited from those who heard it. Jesus’ message contained much to commend it to proselytes, not least being God’s loving forgiveness for those who strayed from the path of righteousness. Jesus presented this truth most famously in his parable of the prodigal son, wherein a young man who squandered his inheritance later recognized his foolishness and returned home to a forgiving father.⁵¹ Jesus also stressed that just as God – and he – loved humanity, so too should his followers love one another.⁵² America’s bishops affirmed Jesus’ admonition on loving others in their 1846 pastoral letter to the faithful, writing: “For all the law is

⁴⁸ Guilday, ed., “The Pastoral Letter to the Clergy of 1829,” in *National Pastorals*, 45-46.

⁴⁹ 2 Peter 2:20-21 RSV, “First of all, you should know this: no prophecy of Scripture comes from one’s own interpretation, because no prophecy every came by the will of man; instead, moved by the Holy Spirit, men spoke from God.”

⁵⁰ Raphael M. Huber, ed., “Pastoral Letter of 1919,” in *Our Bishops Speak: National Pastorals and Annual Statements of the Hierarchy of the United States, 1919-1951* (Milwaukee: Bruce Publishing, 1952), 9.

⁵¹ Luke 15: 11-32 RSV.

⁵² John 13: 34-35 RSV, “I give you a new commandment: love one another. Just as I have loved you, you must love one another.”

fulfilled in one word; Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.”⁵³ This theme served continuously as a rallying cry for Christian ministries, certainly not least among them the Catholic Church’s African American ministry.

Although both Catholic and Protestant missionaries labored in the South for the purpose of improving the social and economic status of African Americans, they had as their paramount objective securing African Americans’ spiritual salvation through the good news of Jesus Christ. Missionaries of the two denominations took similar approaches to accomplishing their temporal objectives, but the theologies they preached reflected their different scriptural exegeses. For example, whereas both Catholics and Protestants considered education the keystone of a better and more useful earthly existence, they diverged over the issue of scriptural interpretation. In particular, Catholicism’s comprehension of the Bible dictated a spiritual life that hinged less on scripture itself than on the sacral elements that the Church forged from its distinctive interpretation of New Testament accounts of Jesus’ ministry.

The Church’s sacramentalism perceptibly shaped its ministry in the American South just as it had throughout history elsewhere in the world. Catholic missionaries brought with them ecclesiastical practices whose complexity far exceeded those of prevailing Protestant conventions. For prospective converts to comprehend the set of religious beliefs that the Catholic Church presented to them required an elementary understanding of the Church’s sacred rites and the significance that the Church and the faithful ascribed to them. Catholic dogma maintained that irrespective of believers’

⁵³ Guilday, ed., “The Pastoral Letter of 1846,” in *National Pastorals*, 166.

familiarity with scripture, the Church's seven sacraments afforded them the means to a virtuous life and a place in heaven. Commenting on the sacraments in the sixteenth century, the Council of Trent stated, "If anyone says that the sacraments of the New Law are not necessary for salvation but are superfluous, . . . let him be anathema."⁵⁴ As the 1885 catechism later demonstrated, the Church unreservedly placed the sacraments at the center of Jesus' ministry: "The means instituted by our Lord to enable men at all times to share in the fruits of the Redemption are the Church and the Sacraments."⁵⁵ The catechism defined a sacrament as "[a]n outward sign instituted by Christ to give grace."⁵⁶ Nearly a half-century before the catechism's publication, the American bishops had foreshadowed its exposition of sacramental efficacy in their 1837 pastoral letter: "Now it is by means of his sacraments that [Jesus] has provided in the ordinary communication of . . . grace for the various modes of our regeneration and sanctification."⁵⁷ Both the catechism and the 1837 pastoral explained the sacraments in a way likely to satisfy the theological inquiries of most Catholics and prospective converts, and missionaries found the catechism useful in explaining Catholicism's tenets to an often poorly educated laity. In the Southern United States, where African Americans' education and literacy typically lagged even the deficient levels of whites, missionaries faced an especially difficult task.

Given the Church's avidity for institutional homogeneity, the sacraments' centrality to Catholicism extended overtly to Catholic missionary endeavors.

⁵⁴ H.J. Schroeder, trans., "Canons on the Sacraments in General," in *Canons and Decrees*, 52.

⁵⁵ *Catechism of Christian Doctrine*, 28.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 32.

⁵⁷ Guilday, ed., "The Pastoral Letter of 1837," in *National Pastorals*, 105.

Accordingly, the next section of the current study introduces Catholicism's sacramental rites in the context of the Church's evangelical missionary ministries. It illustrates a trans-centurial continuity of interpretation that extends from New Testament events through the sixteenth-century Tridentine canons, and ultimately through the papal encyclicals, pastoral letters, and catechism lessons of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Because the Reformation had contested the Church's interpretation of scripture as it applied to the institution and administration of the sacraments, the Council of Trent rendered detailed pronouncements that fixed the sacraments' origins in scripture and codified Catholic dogma pertaining to their meaning and application. Two of the seven sacraments – Holy Eucharist and Holy Orders – receive more attention here than the others, first, because of the degree of theological complexity that attends them, and second, because they shaped the Church's African American ministry in ways that differentiated it markedly from the ministries of other Christian denominations.

According to Catholic doctrine, the Eucharist constituted nothing less than a miracle that occurred each time a priest offered mass; closely conjoined, Holy Orders produced the priests to whom it fell to perform that miracle. Because the other five sacraments – Baptism, Penance, Confirmation, Matrimony, and Extreme Unction – lend themselves to more facile explanation, this section first examines those five and concludes with an exposition of Holy Eucharist and Holy Orders.

Baptism gave people who became Christians their first sacramental experience. Even though ritualistic washing had existed in the Judaic tradition long before it became an element of Christianity, New Testament writers nevertheless provided a specific

scriptural basis for Christianity's Baptismal ritual. They recorded that John the Baptist, a contemporary (and likely a cousin) of Jesus,⁵⁸ preached a message of repentance and baptized penitents in the Jordan River. Before Jesus began his public ministry, according to these writers, he went first to the Jordan to receive John's Baptism.⁵⁹ Jews of that time were already acquainted with the Old Testament story of Adam's sin and its effects on them. Those who opted to follow Jesus came to accept ceremonial ablution as a way to wash away Adam's sin, especially after Jesus made the ritual a requirement for salvation.⁶⁰ Consistent with Andrew Greeley's contention that "a religion attracts loyalty and devotion from its members in proportion to the thickness of the differentiation,"⁶¹ Baptism, like other rites of initiation, clearly operated as a symbol by which Christians defined and differentiated themselves, a process that took on more than simply religious elements. For example, in the fifteenth century, a time when the Church looked benignly on Christian Europeans' enslaving non-Christians whom they considered savages, Baptism functioned as a determinant of socio-economic status. In 1435 Pope Eugene IV (1431-1447) found it necessary to admonish European Catholics against enslaving the baptized black inhabitants of the Canary Islands. He imposed excommunication on "one

⁵⁸ According to Luke's gospel, when an angel announced to Mary that she would be the mother of Jesus, he also told Mary that her relative Elizabeth was pregnant; Elizabeth's son grew to be John the Baptist. Luke 1:36 RSV, "And consider your relative Elizabeth, even she has conceived a son in her old age."

⁵⁹ Mark 1:4-5 RSV, "John came baptizing in the wilderness and preaching a Baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. The whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem were flocking to him, and they were baptized by him in the Jordan River as they confessed their sins." Matthew 3:13 RSV, "Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan to be baptized by him."

⁶⁰ John 3:5 RSV, "Unless someone is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God."

⁶¹ Andrew M. Greeley, *The Catholic Myth: The Behavior and Beliefs of American Catholics* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1990), 30-31.

and all who attempt to capture, sell, or subject to slavery, baptized residents of the Canary Islands, or those who are freely seeking Baptism.”⁶²

In the New Testament, Jesus instructed his disciples to teach and to baptize wherever they traveled.⁶³ Christians accepted this instruction as the basis for their Church’s evangelistic character and their belief in the ablutionary and designative faculties of Baptism. The Council of Trent affirmed Baptism’s salvific necessity, declaring, “If anyone says that Baptism is optional, that is, not necessary for salvation, let him be anathema.”⁶⁴ In 1829 the American bishops’ pastoral letter to the laity evinced the Church’s belief in Baptism’s power to effect a spiritual cleansing and forge its recipients into vessels worthy of receiving further graces. In a passage instructing parents to see to their children’s religious education, the bishops urged them to undertake the process early in a child’s life “whilst the mind is yet pure and docile, and their Baptismal innocence uncontaminated.”⁶⁵ This idea of a pure and receptive mind as a result of Baptism manifested itself repeatedly in the work of missionaries who strove to nurture the tenets of the faith in the young. The 1885 catechism proved useful in this regard, characterizing Baptism as “necessary to salvation,” and defining it as “a Sacrament which cleanses us from original sin, makes us Christians, children of God,

⁶² Eugene IV, 13 January 1435, *Sicut Dudum*, encyclical “Against the Enslaving of Black Natives from the Canary Islands,” <http://www.papalencyclicals.net>.

⁶³ Matthew 28:18-20 RSV, “All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

⁶⁴ H.J. Schroeder, trans., “Canons on Baptism,” in *Canons and Decrees*, 53.

⁶⁵ Hugh J. Nolan, ed., “The Pastoral Letter to the Laity of 1829,” in *Pastoral Letters of the American Hierarchy, 1792-1970* (Huntington, IN: Our Sunday Visitor, 1971), 25.

and heirs of heaven.”⁶⁶ In the twentieth century, Pope Pius XI attested to Baptism’s efficacy when he wrote that men enter Christ’s kingdom “by faith and by Baptism, which, though an external rite, signifies and produces an interior regeneration.”⁶⁷ In the mind of Catholic missionaries, Baptism, whether administered to an infant or an adult, signaled the beginning of a new spiritual life.

The Church presumed that persons seeking Baptism – whether adult proselytes or infants presented by others – bore the stain of original sin. Because the Church equated this to a state of spiritual death, it taught that Baptism effected a spiritual rebirth. Nevertheless, baptized persons, assuming they had the capacity to differentiate between right and wrong, could, by sinning, impose a spiritual death sentence upon themselves. The Church drew on the Old Testament’s Ten Commandments to compile a list of sins it considered serious enough to cause a sinner’s spiritual demise. Ever considerate of humanity’s imperfections, however, the Church provided a sacramental remedy by which sinners could extricate themselves from the clutches of sin and regain God’s favor. The Church gave the name “Penance” to this sacrament by which prodigal sons and daughters could return to spiritual life.⁶⁸ The Council of Trent declared, “[God] has a remedy of life even to those who may after Baptism have delivered themselves up to the servitude of sin and the power of the devil, namely, the sacrament of Penance, by

⁶⁶ *Catechism of Christian Doctrine*, 35.

⁶⁷ Pius XI, Rome, 11 December 1925, *Quas Primas*, encyclical “On the Feast of Christ the King,” <http://www.papalencyclicals.net>.

⁶⁸ In the parable of the prodigal son, the father, overjoyed at his son’s return exclaims, “Then bring the fattened calf and slaughter it, and let us celebrate with a feast, because this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found!” (Luke 15: 23-24 RSV).

which the benefit of Christ's death is applied to those who have fallen after Baptism."⁶⁹ Because both Baptism and Penance revitalized persons whom the Church considered spiritually dead, they were classified as the "Sacraments of the Dead." Conversely, the other five sacraments constituted the "Sacraments of the Living" because the Church presumed their recipients to be free from serious sin and therefore spiritually alive.⁷⁰

The name "Penance" befitted the sacrament because it required sinners to perform penitential acts to atone to God and to injured parties for sins committed. The confessor – the priest or bishop who heard the confession – imposed the sinner's penance. At times in the Church's history confessors required those guilty of committing scandalous acts to perform self-mortifying public penance. More often though, the penance required the penitent to perform certain spiritual acts such as "Prayer, Fasting, Almsgiving . . . and the patient suffering of the ills of life."⁷¹ The Church readily found justification for the sacrament of Penance in the New Testament's recurring theme of forgiveness. Two events that gave conspicuous witness to the significance of forgiveness within the biblical myth involve Jesus and Peter – the latter acknowledged by most exegetes as the *primus inter pares* of the Twelve Apostles. The first event, as reported in John's gospel, occurred after Jesus' arrest when Peter, though he had accompanied Jesus from the earliest days of his ministry, denied knowing him.⁷² The second event, again

⁶⁹ H.J. Schroeder, trans., "The Necessity and Institution of the Sacrament of Penance," in *Canons and Decrees*, 88.

⁷⁰ C.C. Martindale, "The Sacramental System," in *The Teaching of the Catholic Church: A Summary of Catholic Doctrine*, vol. 2, ed. George D. Smith (New York: Macmillan, 1949), 733-766.

⁷¹ *Catechism of Christian Doctrine*, 49.

⁷² John 18:25 RSV, "Now Simon Peter was standing and warming himself. They said to him, 'You aren't one of His disciples too, are you?' He denied it and said, 'I am not!'"

reported by John, took place after Jesus had risen. At that time Peter professed his love for Jesus who, in highly symbolic language, forgave him for his earlier denial.⁷³

Biblical accounts of Jesus' life and ministry record a number of instances when Jesus himself forgave sins, an action that attracted the suspicion and ultimately the hostility of Jewish authorities.⁷⁴ Because Jews believed that only God could forgive sins, they considered Jesus' claim to that power blasphemous. The Church pointed to other scriptural events, however, to bolster its contention that Jesus intended his disciples and their successors to possess similar authority. Matthew's gospel relates Peter's receiving the power to forgive sins,⁷⁵ while John's gospel records the event of Jesus' conferring that authority on all the Apostles.⁷⁶ The Council of Trent specifically refuted the Reformation's position that all of the faithful received the power to forgive sins, insisting that Jesus' intended only priests and bishops to have that authority.⁷⁷

Although Baptism and Penance, as the sacraments of the dead, had as their primary purpose the removal of sin, they also acted to restore and rejuvenate recipients. The previously cited catechism definition of a sacrament attributed this same capability to all the sacraments when it said that Christ instituted them to give grace. The Church commonly used the term "grace" to connote conferment of supernatural vitality on the

⁷³ John 21:15 RSV, "When they had eaten breakfast, Jesus asked Simon Peter, 'Simon, son of John, do you love Me more than these?' 'Yes, Lord,' he said to Him, 'You know that I love You.' 'Feed my lambs,' He told him."

⁷⁴ Luke 5:20-21 RSV, "Seeing their faith He said, 'Friend, your sins are forgiven you.' Then the scribes and the Pharisees began to reason: 'Who is this man who speaks blasphemies? Who can forgive sin but God alone?'"

⁷⁵ Matthew 16:19 RSV, "I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth is already bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth is already loosed in heaven."

⁷⁶ John 20:22-23 RSV, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained."

⁷⁷ H.J. Schroeder, trans., "The Minister of this Sacrament and Absolution," in *Canons and Decrees*, 95.

faithful or simply to suggest a spiritual vibrant disposition. The sacrament of Confirmation provides a helpful example of the concept of grace and the spiritual effects that the Church and believers attributed to it. According to the Christian mythology, Jesus promised his disciples that after he left the earth he would send them a spirit to fortify them.⁷⁸ Fulfillment of this promise on the day of Pentecost caused the notion of spiritual reinforcement to gain traction.

Newly invigorated by the Holy Spirit, the early disciples deduced that all baptized persons could similarly benefit from an infusion of this spiritual force.⁷⁹ The Tridentine Council had little to say about the Sacrament of Confirmation except to affirm its sacramentality. Responding specifically to the Reformation's challenge to the sacrament's validity, the council decreed, "If anyone says that the Confirmation of those baptized is an empty ceremony and not a true and proper sacrament . . . let him be anathema."⁸⁰ In 1907, Pope Pius X (1903-1914) defended the early Church's practice of infusing the faithful with the Holy Spirit. He argued for the sacrament's foundation in scripture, declaring as erroneous any statement suggesting that "[t]here is nothing to prove that the rite of the Sacrament of Confirmation was employed by the Apostles."⁸¹

The 1885 catechism defined Confirmation as a "Sacrament through which we receive the Holy Ghost to make us strong and perfect Christians and soldiers of Jesus

⁷⁸ John 14:16-17 RSV, "And I will ask the Father and He will give you another Counselor to be with you forever. He is the Spirit of truth. The world is unable to receive Him because it doesn't see Him or know Him. But you do know Him, because He remains with you and will be in you."

⁷⁹ Acts 8:14-17 RSV, "When the apostles who were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had welcomed God's message, they sent Peter and John to them. After they went down there, they prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Spirit. For He had not yet come down on any of them; they had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Peter and John laid their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit."

⁸⁰ H.J. Schroeder, trans., "Canons on Confirmation," in *Canons and Decrees*, 54.

⁸¹ Pope Pius X, Rome, 3 July 1907, *Lamentabili Sane*, encyclical "Syllabus Condemning the Errors of the Modernists," <http://www.papalencyclicals.net>.

Christ.” (38)⁸² Expanding on this, the catechism stated that through Confirmation, confirmands committed to “openly profess and practice [their] faith, never be ashamed of it, and rather die than deny it.”⁸³ While the ritual of Confirmation afforded the faithful an opportunity to profess their faith anew, it simultaneously provided missionaries a means to strengthen the ties that bound baptized persons to the Church. To the missionaries’ thinking, the faithful benefited from attachment to the Church because it provided them a spiritual safe haven in the face of life’s trials and temptations. Pope Leo XIII expressed the Church’s concern over Christians’ need to guard their faith: “The greatest of all misfortunes is never to have known Jesus Christ; yet such a state is free from the sin of obstinacy and ingratitude. But first to have known Him, and afterwards to deny or forget Him, is a crime so foul and so insane that it seems impossible for any man to be guilty of it.”⁸⁴ Confirmation strengthened the faithful against any such inclination to “deny or forget” Jesus. The sacrament accomplished this through the confirmands’ public profession of faith and the spiritual fortification (grace) that they received through the Holy Ghost. Through confirmation, African American proselytes fortified their conversional experience and forged another attachment to the faith.

The Catholic sacrament of Matrimony occupies a significant place both in the broader history of Catholicism and in the history of the Church’s African American ministry. Masters denied their slaves the privilege of Christian marriage which fostered a tradition of unions created without benefit of sacramental sanction. According to John’s

⁸² *Catechism of Christian Doctrine*, 38.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 39.

⁸⁴ Leo XIII, Rome, 1 November 1900, *Tametsi Futura Prospicientibus*, encyclical “On Jesus Christ the Redeemer,” in Claudia Carlen, comp., *The Papal Encyclicals*, vol. 2, 1878-1903 (Wilmington, NC: McGrath, 1981), 472.

gospel, the first public act of Jesus' ministry occurred at a wedding in Cana where Jesus changed water to wine.⁸⁵ Some exegetes have concluded that Jesus' decision to perform his first miracle at a wedding indicated the importance he ascribed to the marriage ritual. Regardless of whether this exegetical conclusion makes a persuasive argument, over the centuries the Church unquestionably emphasized the value of a marriage blessed by God through his Church. When Catholic missionaries ventured into the American South, they found it particularly troubling that the conjugal relationship of many African American couples lacked the benefit of even civil, much less ecclesiastical, sanction.

The Church's belief in the sacredness of marriage traces to long before John's New Testament account of the wedding feast at Cana, in fact, all the way back to the Old Testament's first book.⁸⁶ The circumstances of Adam and Eve's union as related in Genesis made it difficult to imagine that it did not incur God's favor. Eons later and consistent with a belief in the sacredness of the union between a woman and a man, the Council of Trent affirmed the sacramental character of contemporary Christian marriage by stating that "the grace which was to perfect that natural love, and confirm that indissoluble union, and sanctify the persons married, Christ Himself, the instructor and perfecter of the venerable sacraments, merited for us by His passion."⁸⁷ Later, Leo XIII considered Christian marriage important enough to devote an encyclical specifically to the subject. Leo wrote: "Christ our Lord raised marriage to the dignity of a sacrament;

⁸⁵ John 2:11 RSV, "Jesus performed this first sign in Cana of Galilee. He displayed His glory, and His disciples believed in Him."

⁸⁶ Genesis 2:24 RSV, "This is why a man leaves his father and mother and bonds with his wife, and they become one flesh."

⁸⁷ H.J. Schroeder, trans., "Doctrine of the Sacrament of Matrimony," in *Canons and Decrees*, 180.

that to husband and wife, guarded and strengthened by the heavenly grace which His merits gained for them, He gave power to attain holiness in the married state. . . .”⁸⁸

American bishops spoke on the subject of Christian marriage in their pastoral letters of 1840, 1866, 1884, and 1919. In 1884 the prelates declared that Christian marriage formed the basis of the Christian home, and they affirmed its sacramental character, writing, “So great is the importance of marriage to the temporal and eternal welfare of mankind that . . . it was raised by Our Divine Lord to the dignity of a sacrament of the Christian Religion.”⁸⁹ The catechism, ever the source of concise, elementary explanations of Catholic beliefs, provided a functional definition of Matrimony as “the Sacrament which unites a Christian man and woman in lawful marriage.” It expanded the definition by advancing the Church’s rationale for prohibiting marriages between Catholics and non-Catholics, explaining that “such marriages generally lead to indifference, loss of faith, and to the neglect of the religious education of the children.”⁹⁰ Given that the Church unceasingly promoted the sanctity of the marital union and the benefits that issued from a Christian family life, it followed that the Church’s missionaries would vigorously endorse sacramental matrimony.

The sacraments discussed to this point – Baptism, Penance, Confirmation, and Matrimony – neatly fit Andrew Greeley’s template for a religion’s symbolic and ritualistic elements. So, too, does the sacrament of Extreme Unction. This peculiarly named sacrament of the living prescribes the anointing of sick or dying persons with blessed

⁸⁸ Leo XIII, 10 February 1880, *Arcanum*, encyclical “On Christian Marriage,” in Claudia Carlen, comp., *The Papal Encyclicals*, vol. 2, 1878-1903 (Wilmington, NC: McGrath, 1981), 31.

⁸⁹ Nolan, ed., “The Pastoral Letter of 1884,” in *Pastoral Letters of the American Hierarchy, 1792-1970*, 175.

⁹⁰ *Catechism of Christian Doctrine*, 62-64.

chrism. Extreme Unction bears a similarity to Baptism, Confirmation, and Holy Orders in that all of these sacraments involve some form of anointing with blessed oils to accomplish their purpose. The Church contends that Extreme Unction merited sacramental status based on specific scriptural references. In Mark's gospel, the Twelve Apostles anointed sick people with oil, and in a New Testament letter to the faithful, James instructed them to summon the elders to pray over and anoint the sick as a way to induce physical and spiritual healing.⁹¹

The Council of Trent declared that Christ unambiguously intended the ritual of Extreme Unction to be a sacrament of the New Law. The council believed that Extreme Unction conveyed these benefits: it strengthened a sick person's soul by instilling confidence in God's mercy; it helped the sick person bear the misery and pain of illness; and it fortified the sick person against the temptations of the devil.⁹² Echoing the council's teaching, the catechism defined Extreme Unction as "the Sacrament which, through the anointing and prayer of the priest, gives health and strength to the soul, and sometimes to the body, when we are in danger of death from sickness."⁹³ Because few things induce greater fear and sadness in humans than the serious illness or imminent death of a loved one, the presence of a priest administering the sacrament often provided great comfort to the family and friends of the sufferer. In the African American missions,

⁹¹ Mark 6:12-13 RSV, "So they went out and preached that people should repent. And they were driving out demons, anointing many sick people with oil, and healing." James 5:14-15 RSV, "Is anyone among you sick? He should call for the elders of the church, and they should pray over him after anointing him with olive oil in the name of the Lord, The prayer of faith will save the sick person, and the Lord will raise him up; and if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven."

⁹² H.J. Schroeder, trans., "The Institution of the Sacrament of Extreme Unction" and "The Effect of this Sacrament," in *Canons and Decrees*, 99-100.

⁹³ *Catechism of Christian Doctrine*, 59.

priests related countless instances of going to the side of parishioners at all hours to administer what people commonly referred to as the “last sacrament.”

In the eyes of the Church, each sacramental experience bestowed special blessings on the recipients in the form of “Sacramental grace . . . a special help which God gives, to attain the end for which He instituted each Sacrament.”⁹⁴ Simultaneously, receipt of the sacraments afforded Catholics an opportunity to affirm their commitment to the faith. The customary sequence for Catholics to receive the sacraments began with Baptism and ended with Extreme Unction. Catholics baptized as infants typically did not have their next sacramental experience until they reached “the age of reason,” usually six to eight years old. At that age, because they were presumed to know the difference between right and wrong, they confessed their sins to a priest in the sacrament of Penance. By confessing their sins they placed themselves in the proper spiritual disposition to receive the Eucharist (Holy Communion) between eight and twelve years of age, depending on local custom. They might receive the sacrament of Confirmation very shortly after their first communion, or two to three years later. When Catholics reached adulthood, if they chose to marry, they did so in the sacrament of Matrimony. Adult males who chose to remain unmarried had one additional sacramental option, to enter the priesthood through the sacrament of Holy Orders. The Catholic Church espoused an unmistakably “cradle to grave” sacramental formula.

The sacrament of Holy Orders – more to the point, the priesthood in which it played an integral part – probably aroused more outside curiosity and criticism than any

⁹⁴ Ibid., 34.

other element of the Roman Catholic canon with the possible exception of the Eucharist. Despite this, the Church stood firm in its interpretation of both the character and the function of its priesthood. And with good reason, because Catholicism's conversionary proposition made no sense without conceding the essentiality of the mass and sacraments and, connectedly, of the priests and bishops who alone possessed the Church's sanction to officiate them. Both priests and bishops could celebrate the sacrament of the Eucharist as well as administer Baptism, Penance, Matrimony, and Extreme Unction; only bishops, however, had authority to administer Confirmation and Holy Orders. Priests and bishops came to their authority through Holy Orders which the catechism defined as the "Sacrament by which bishops [and] priests . . . are ordained and receive the power and grace to perform their sacred duties."⁹⁵ As to the expected attitude of Catholics toward their clergy, the catechism advised "look[ing] upon the priests of the Church as the messengers of God and the dispensers of His mysteries."⁹⁶ While the catechism's exposition introduced a set of basic beliefs about the priesthood, it barely hinted at the complexity of the Church's doctrinal position.

The Church, both as an institution and a people, considered priests to be men apart, whose virtuous lives merited imitation.⁹⁷ The Tridentine Council decreed that their example should lead others to piety, "For since they are observed to be raised from the things of this world to a higher position, others fix their eyes upon them . . . and derive

⁹⁵ *Catechism of Christian Doctrine*, 61.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 61.

⁹⁷ Hebrews 5:1 RSV, "For every high priest taken from me is appointed in service to God for the people, to offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins."

from them what they are to imitate.”⁹⁸ In an 1829 pastoral addressed specifically to the clergy, American bishops provided the following guidance on the subject of the priestly life: “Raised to the Levitical rank . . . it was committed to us to bear and watch the tabernacle in the holy attire of virtue, proclaiming the precepts of the Gospel whilst we ourselves were models of their observance. . . .”⁹⁹ In 1903, the first year of his papacy, Pius X exhorted the entire Church to seek perfection by emulating Christ, but he called on priests in particular to live lives that bore the unmistakable image of Christ.¹⁰⁰ Though centuries apart in their pronouncements, the Council of Trent, American bishops, and Pius X all emphasized the exigency of priests’ conducting themselves in a manner that mirrored the gospel. In equating the priestly station to “Levitical rank,” the bishops reminded priests that their priesthood had its origins in the Old Testament where, in the book of Exodus, God commissioned Levi’s descendent Aaron to perform the priestly functions – including the rites of sacrifice – on behalf of the Children of Israel.¹⁰¹ Later, the book of Deuteronomy reported that when Moses instructed the Israelites just prior to their entry into the Promised Land, he reminded them of the Levitical priesthood and its duties.¹⁰² Because of their unique responsibilities, Hebrew priests of the Old Law occupied a place in society separate from all others, a characteristic that persisted in the priesthood of the New Law. The Tridentine fathers

⁹⁸ H.J. Schroeder, trans., “Decree Concerning the Life and Conduct of Clerics,” in *Canons and Decrees*, 152.

⁹⁹ Guilday, ed., “The Pastoral Letter to the Clergy of 1829,” in *National Pastorals*, 48.

¹⁰⁰ Pius X, Rome, 4 October 1903, *E Supremi*, encyclical “On The Restoration of All Things in Christ,” in Claudia Carlen, comp., *The Papal Encyclicals*, vol. 3, 1903-1939 (Wilmington, NC: McGrath, 1981), 8-9.

¹⁰¹ Exodus 28:1 RSV, “Have your brother Aaron, with his sons, come to you from the Israelites to serve me as priest.”

¹⁰² Deuteronomy 21:5 RSV, “Then the priests, the sons of Levi, will come forward, for the Lord your God has chosen them to serve Him and pronounce blessings in the Lord’s name. . . .”

wrote, “Sacrifice and priesthood are by the ordinance of God so united that both have existed in every law. Since . . . the Catholic Church has received from the institution of Christ the holy, visible sacrifice of the Eucharist, it must be confessed that there is in that Church a new, visible and external priesthood. . . .”¹⁰³ The Church therefore taught that when the priests of the New Testament performed sacred rituals, they continued a tradition begun by their Old Testament Hebrew predecessors.¹⁰⁴ This did not suggest, however, that sacramental efficacy derived from the priests’ own virtue. To the contrary, as American bishops pointedly reminded the clergy in their pastoral letter, the sacraments received their power to confer grace on the faithful from God.¹⁰⁵

Despite the deep respect that Jews and Christians had for their respective priesthoods, the office and its scriptural origins did not completely escape controversy. Both Jewish and Christian exegetes engaged in intra- and inter-faith differences of opinion over biblical substantiation for the priesthood. A major point of contention stemmed from the Genesis account of a priest named Melchizedek who, as a non-Levite, seemingly had no legitimate claim to the title.¹⁰⁶ Further, the appearance of a priest in the Bible’s first book clearly contradicted biblical chronology because it preceded the establishment of the Levitical priesthood in Exodus. Exegetes of Bible-based religions eventually resolved the matter to their own and their faithful’s satisfaction, though a critic like Thomas Paine would likely take issue with their apologia. A definitive

¹⁰³ H.J. Schroeder, trans., “The Institution of the Priesthood of the New Law,” in *Canons and Decrees*, 160.

¹⁰⁴ 2 Chronicles 11:16 RSV, “Those from every tribe of Israel who had determined in their hearts to seek the Lord their God followed the Levites to Jerusalem to sacrifice to the Lord God of their ancestors.”

¹⁰⁵ Guilday, ed., “The Pastoral Letter to the Clergy of 1829,” in *National Pastorals*, 48.

¹⁰⁶ Genesis 14:18 RSV, “Then Melchizedek, king of Salem, brought out bread and wine; he was a priest to God Most High.”

resolution of the controversy lies far outside the purview of the current study, but Melchizedek nevertheless requires mention. According to Catholic doctrine, Melchizedek's priesthood prefigured the extra-Levitical priesthood that Jesus established under the New Law, a priesthood that he bequeathed to generations of priests who came after him. Christians did not, however, rely solely on Melchizedek's appearance in Genesis to make the connection between his priesthood and the priesthood of Christ. They interpreted a subsequent mention of Melchizedek in the Old Testament book of Psalms as prophesying Christ's priesthood.¹⁰⁷ Lastly, as proof of the psalm's prophetic intent, Christians cited Paul's New Testament letter to the Hebrews in which he explicitly linked Christ's priesthood to Melchizedek's.¹⁰⁸

Demonstrating its reverence for the priestly office, the Catholic Church incorporated an excerpt from the biblical arguments for the priesthood's authenticity into its liturgy for celebratory events like ordinations and episcopal visitations: "*Tu es sacerdos in aeternum secundum ordinem Melchizedek.*"¹⁰⁹ Among the Christian religions, none placed its clergy on a higher pedestal than did the Church of Rome. Leo XII promulgated an instruction evincing this: "[T]he priest is another Christ, and . . . the priesthood . . . merits to be numbered among the orders of heaven; because it is given to them to administer things that are wholly celestial and upon them is conferred a power that God has not trusted even to the angels."¹¹⁰ The power that Leo XIII wrote about was

¹⁰⁷ Psalms 110:4 RSV, "Forever, You are a priest like Melchizedek."

¹⁰⁸ Hebrews 5:9-10 RSV, "After He [Jesus] was perfected, He became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey Him, and He was declared by God a high priest 'in the order of Melchizedek.'"

¹⁰⁹ "Thou art a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek."

¹¹⁰ Leo XIII, Rome, 8 December 1902, *Fin Dal Principio*, encyclical "On Education of the Clergy," in Claudia Carlen, comp., *The Papal Encyclicals*, vol. 2, 1878-1903 (Wilmington, NC: McGrath, 1981), 512.

the power to administer the sacraments instituted by Christ, especially the Eucharistic sacrament in the mass. Christ's institution of the Eucharist necessitated the priesthood, an office of unique spiritual power in consequence of its relationship to the Eucharist.¹¹¹

Popes and theologians aside, a simple poem, far more likely to find its way into a Catholic home or even a Catholic schoolroom, exemplified the veneration the Church expected the faithful to show toward the priest and his liturgical faculty. The poem's simple lines illustrate, as well as can any biblical passage, papal encyclical or pastoral letter, a truism extant within Catholicism, that Catholics grasped the nature of the priesthood most clearly when they beheld it in the context of the mass. Two of that poem's stanzas read:

At the altar each day we behold them,
 And the Hands of a king on his throne
 Are not equal to them in their greatness,
 Their dignity stands all alone.

For there in the stillness of morning
 Ere the sun has emerged from the East,
 There God rests between the pure fingers
 Of the beautiful hands of a priest!¹¹²

Significant to the purpose of the current study, the priesthood's inseparability from the mass adjoined the mass's inseparability from the Catholic missionary effort. Like Protestant missionaries, Catholic missionaries brought the salvific message of the Gospel to African Americans, but the Catholic interpretation of that message uniquely manifested itself in the mass.

¹¹¹ William Stang, *Pastoral Theology*, 3rd ed. (New York: Benziger Brothers, 1903), 113.

¹¹² *The Beautiful Hands of Priest*, author unknown; from a devotional card the present writer received in the early 1950s. The images and verses on devotional cards were meant to edify the faithful, in this case by inspiring reverence for the priesthood and promoting priestly vocations among young Catholic men.

The Eucharist, inextricably linked to the priesthood, constituted not only Catholicism's liturgical core but, in the eyes of prospective converts and the religion's detractors, its most abstruse doctrinal element. Because the mass embodied the most sacred, profound, and perplexing of Catholicism's beliefs, the Church's teaching, whether from a pulpit or in a classroom, frequently centered on the mass or a closely related topic. Moreover, when priests and bishops preached to their own ordained and consecrated brethren, they often chose the mass as their subject. Attendees at the Third Plenary Council of Baltimore in 1884 heard one such sermon by Little Rock, Arkansas Bishop Edward Fitzgerald. His was among a series of sermons delivered by some of the most eloquent Catholic orators of the time. Born in Limerick, Ireland in 1833, Fitzgerald came out to America with his parents in 1849 and began his studies for the priesthood shortly after his arrival. Ordained a priest in 1857, Fitzgerald assumed the Little Rock episcopate in 1867 at the age of thirty-three.¹¹³ When tapped to deliver one of the conciliar sermons, he infused his message with oratorical passion and penetrating theological insight into the singular intendment of the mass.

Of Christ, the Life of His Church, ever present with her in the sacraments, but more especially in the Sacrifice of the Eucharist, which is the Heart of Catholic worship and action, I shall offer you a brief consideration this morning; for, as the heart receives and again distributes the vital current throughout the bodily frame, so from the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, which is one with the cross, do we receive all grace and strength, and through it do we pay back to God that worship of adoration, praise, thanksgiving, prayer, and expiation which we owe to Him. The Mass, the highest act of our worship, is most sacred in the eyes of the Catholic for what it is in itself; and for the venerable ceremonies with which the Church has environed it as a gem in its setting. Even to the non-Catholic it will be a subject of great interest if he reflects that it is the public worship

¹¹³ *Memorial Volume*, 92.

of 400,000,000 of civilized people on the face of the globe today; and that for 1500 years it was the public worship of his forefathers, no less than ours.¹¹⁴

Fitzgerald positioned the mass at the center not only of Catholic worship, but of Catholic life as well. He bound the mass to the sacrifice of Calvary in a way that surpassed even the most intimate association – characterizing the two as one. He enumerated the mass’s operative capacities and reminded his listeners of the many people whose celebration of the mass attested to its efficacy. Lastly, Fitzgerald recalled that until the Reformation, all who followed Christ could claim the mass as their public proclamation of discipleship. Fitzgerald’s address underscored the mass’s obvious significance in the places where Catholicism was already in full flower; less obviously, he proclaimed its eminence where missionaries labored among the unconverted.

For Catholics, the mass – what American bishops called “the central act of Catholic worship”¹¹⁵ – unambiguously eclipsed quotidian human acts both in form and purpose. As the faithful strove to understand the mystical and miraculous elements of their sacred ritual, so, too, did their church strive to explain it. Over the centuries, however, the sheer volume of material published on the subject often impeded as much as abetted attempts by both clergy and laity to come to a deeper understanding of the mass. Intent on coaxing the mass’s quintessence out of the plethora of writing on the subject, Catholic priest Nikolaus Gehr produced *The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass; Dogmatically, Liturgically and Ascetically Explained*. First published in 1877, Gehr’s synthesis gained wide acceptance among Catholic intellectuals and educators for its

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 177-178.

¹¹⁵ Guilday, ed., “The Pastoral Letter of 1919,” in *National Pastorals*, 277.

explicative merit, a fact evinced by the publication of subsequent editions in multiple languages over the ensuing three decades. The volume has proven so durable, in fact, that English and German language editions remain in print in the twenty-first century. Gihl emphasized that the mass stood not only as Catholics' paramount liturgical act but as the foundation of Catholic secular life as well. Therefore, Gihl contended, "a more profound knowledge of the Mass is considered essential and most desirable for all the faithful, especially for the priest."¹¹⁶

Gihl drew on scripture and earlier Church teaching to bolster Catholicism's belief that every mass commemorated Jesus' death on Calvary, an event wherein Jesus had served at once as high priest and sacrificial victim. Consistent with the characterization of Jesus' death as a vicarious atonement for the sins of humankind, Gihl wrote, "The excess of divine love is truly shown in this, that . . . the only-begotten Son of God . . . died the most painful death of the Cross, in order to rescue us poor sinners from the abyss of misery and eternal damnation."¹¹⁷ Gihl's assertion gives rise to the question, if Jesus was priest and victim on Calvary and reprised those roles in the mass, what functions remained for the human priest and the faithful? In the twentieth century, one answer came from American Catholicism's foremost apologist, Fulton J. Sheen: "What happened there on the Cross that day is happening now in the Mass with this difference: on the Cross the Savior was alone; in the Mass He is with us. . . . He cannot renew Calvary in his *physical body*, but He can renew it in His *Mystical Body* – the

¹¹⁶ Nikolaus Gihl, *The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass; Dogmatically, Liturgically, and Ascetically Explained*, 2nd ed. (St. Louis, MO: Herder, 1903); originally published as *Das heilige Messopfer; dogmatik liturgisch und aetich erklärt*, 6th ed. (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 1897), 5.

¹¹⁷ Gihl, *Holy Sacrifice of the Mass*, 41.

Church. . . . When we assist in the Mass we are not just individuals of the earth or solitary units, but living parts of a great spiritual order in which the Infinite penetrates and enfolds the finite, the Eternal breaks into the temporal, and the Spiritual clothes itself in the garments of materiality.”¹¹⁸

Sheen’s explanation, and in particular his use of the term “mystical body,” intimates the unitary, integrated character of the Church, a concept Sheen surely did not claim as original to him. The scriptural basis for Christians’ conceptualization of their church as a mystical body resided in words attributed to Christ himself¹¹⁹ and in letters that Paul wrote to the Romans and Ephesians.¹²⁰ On the subject of this spiritual connectedness between Jesus and his Church, Leo XIII wrote: “[T]he Son of God decreed that the Church should be His mystical body . . . in which and through which He renders men partakers of holiness and of eternal salvation.”¹²¹ Pius X explained the eternal relationship between Jesus and the Church in a 1904 encyclical: “He [Christ] had a physical body like that of any other man; and again as Savior of the human family, he had a spiritual and mystical body, the society, namely, of those who believe in Christ.”¹²² A little more than three decades later, Pius XI echoed his predecessors when

¹¹⁸ Fulton J. Sheen, *Calvary and the Mass* (New York: P.J. Kennedy and Sons, 1936), 63-64.

¹¹⁹ John 17:20-21 RSV, “I pray not only for these, but also for those who believe in me through their message. May they all be one, as You, Father are in Me and I am in You. May they also be one in Us, so the world may believe you sent me.”

¹²⁰ Romans 12:4-5 RSV, “Now as we have many parts in one body, and all the parts do not have the same function, in the same way we who are many are one body in Christ and individually members of one another.” Ephesians 4:4-6 RSV, “There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope at your calling; one Lord, one faith, one Baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all.”

¹²¹ Leo XIII, Rome, 29 June 1896, *Satis Cognitum*, encyclical “On the Unity of the Church,” <http://www.papalencyclicals.net>.

¹²² Pius X, Rome, 2 February 1904, *Ad Diem Illum Laetissimum*, encyclical “On the Immaculate Conception,” <http://www.papalencyclicals.net>.

he described the concept of the mystical body as a “beautiful doctrine that shows us the Person of the Word-made-Flesh in union with all His brethren.”¹²³

This doctrine of a relationship between Jesus and the faithful – that is, between the Church’s true head and the Church’s mystical body – manifested itself most prominently in the mass. Catholics believed that the Eucharistic element of the mass commemorated Jesus’ death on Good Friday. Unable, however, to reproduce the physical act of offering the sacrificial victim, they employed a symbolic ritual that Jesus instituted the night before he died.¹²⁴ The catechism explained that the reenactment of that ritual caused the body and blood of Jesus Christ to occur on the altar “under the appearances of bread and wine,” thereby making the sacrificial offerings of the Cross and of the mass one and the same.¹²⁵ Whereas the catechism sought to explain these difficult concepts in the most basic of terms, Nikolaus Gehr wrote for theologians; therefore his explanation, though elegantly concise, does add a layer of complexity to the discussion. “The Sacrifice of the Cross is the original source of all grace; for from the Sacrifice of the Cross all the blessings of redemption proceed and all the means of grace draw their virtue and efficacy. Now, in the Sacrifice of the Mass the inexhaustible source

¹²³ Pius XI, Rome, 20 December 1935, *Ad Catholici Sacerdotii*, encyclical “On the Catholic Priesthood,” <http://www.papalencyclicals.net>.

¹²⁴ 1 Corinthians 11:23:26 RSV, “[O]n the night when He was betrayed, the Lord Jesus took bread, gave thanks, broke it, and said, ‘This is My body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of Me.’ In the same way He also took the cup after supper, and said ‘This cup is the new covenant in My blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.’ For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until He comes.”

¹²⁵ *Catechism of Christian Doctrine*, 52, 58.

of grace and salvation of the Sacrifice of the Cross is transferred from the past to the present, from a distance it is brought nearest to us.”¹²⁶

In this chapter I have presented a summary of the Catholic Church’s sacramentalism, a system of beliefs whose importance lies – for the purpose of the current study – in the fact that it constituted the context in which the priests and religious who worked in the African American apostolate understood their mission. No less important, this same belief system contextualized two realities: African American Catholics’ participation in the life of their Church; and the encounters that non-Catholics – both black and white – had with Catholicism on various levels. Figuratively speaking, the Church ventured into the South holding aloft a banner that proclaimed the cause of social justice for African Americans, in particular, expansion of educational opportunities. Its foremost banner, though, bore the Greek letters chi and rho superimposed to form a Christogram, and the inscription “*In hoc signo vinces.*”¹²⁷ Christian legend held that prior to a fourth-century battle, the emperor Constantine had a religious vision and afterward went on to win a major victory under the aegis of this symbol and motto. The men and women engaged in the African American ministry knew this story well and they embraced it. They believed they had come to the mission fields armed with the teachings of Christ’s one true Church, ready to wage a spiritual battle on behalf of millions of African American souls. Their strategy and tactics, they were certain, derived from a dogma in which they had total confidence, one they believed had proven its vigor and its legitimacy over nearly nineteen centuries.

¹²⁶ Gühr, *Holy Sacrifice of the Mass*, 201.

¹²⁷ “In this sign you will conquer.”

CHAPTER III

THE AMERICAN CATHOLIC CHURCH, 1492-1884

The preceding chapter explained the fundamental beliefs of Catholicism and their faculty for motivating the Church to craft a broad social agenda that included evangelizing African Americans. The current chapter summarizes the course the American Catholic Church followed from the religion's introduction in the Americas to the national ecclesiastical conference four centuries later that marked the true beginning of the Church's African American ministry. It sketches the institutional framework of the Church and its ministry and highlights the complexity of decision-making conditioned on the one hand by local conditions and on the other by an authoritarian, hierarchical bureaucracy. The chapter explains the significance of early events in Baltimore and New Orleans, two locations that played pivotal roles in both the development of American Catholicism and the Church's engagement with African Americans. It outlines the phenomenal growth that the Church underwent, largely the result of European immigration, and lastly, it corroborates a widespread anti-Catholic sentiment evident during the colonial period and persistent into the term of the current study.

Although the Third Plenary Council of 1884 provides a rational starting point for a study of the African American ministry, it did not mark the Church's debut on the capacious American stage. Fifteenth-Century European explorers introduced their Catholic faith to the New World and by 1884 Catholics had come to feel relatively at

home in America. Over the period, the American Church experienced only intermittent cause to consider its Euro-centric character any more extraneous to the American mainstream than other European-derived social, political, economic, and cultural institutions.

Despite this growing sense of belonging, external social change wrought by events of the 1860s through 1890s markedly affected the Church's intercourse with both white and African American society. Slavery's abolition and passage of the thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth Constitutional amendments combined to alter the social and political status of African Americans, an alteration that in turn gave rise to the Catholic Church-African American reciprocity that contextualizes the current study. Twice during these decades American bishops met in plenary session to craft policies to meet the needs of America's growing Catholic population and, subsidiarily, minister to freed black people. Within the same period, Pope Leo XIII (1878-1903)¹ promulgated encyclicals in 1880 and 1895 that addressed, respectively, the general topic of missions and the specific topic of African American missions.² Although sufficient historical evidence exists to confirm all these events, it facilitates the task of discerning the Church's motives and methods to ask how the Church found itself in America in the first place, and in the second, to what purpose it sought to evangelize African Americans.

¹ Catholic tradition is for newly elected popes to choose the name under which they will serve, resulting in repeated uses of certain names differentiated only by Roman numerals. In the interest of chronological clarity, the writer appends the pontifical term to each pope's name on its first appearance in a chapter.

² Leo XIII, Rome, 4 December 1880, *Sancta Dei Civitas*, encyclical "On Mission Societies;" Leo XIII, Rome, 6 January 1895, *Longinqua Oceani*, encyclical "On Catholicism in the United States," <http://www.papalencyclicals.net>.

As explained in Chapter II, Catholicism's evangelistic ethos derived from Christ's command to spread the gospel. Adherents of other Christian denominations acted similarly, a phenomenon attributable to monotheistic religions' inherent sense of duty to missionize.³ As to the Church's missionizing presence in the Americas, some versions of the Catholic historical narrative – noteworthy among them John Russell's 1884 essay in *The Memorial Volume: A History of the Third Plenary Council of Baltimore* – trace the Church's arrival in the Western Hemisphere to the eleventh century. Russell contends that Irish missionaries, who earlier had Christianized Norse settlements in Iceland, ventured as far as modern-day eastern Canada and New England in their quest to spread the faith.⁴

Regardless of whether the Church itself chose to argue for the existence of earlier missionary settlements in North America or acquiesced to the Columbian-based narrative's more credible account of Christianity's instatement in the New World, historians can identify in either version the expression of Catholicism's proselytical character. Russell's essay, despite its argument for a Church presence in North America as early as the eleventh century, plainly acknowledged the role that Columbus and the missionaries who followed in his wake played in spreading the faith: “[E]very vessel that left the ports of Spain brought with it to America one or more of those intrepid missionaries who were born for the higher things than ordinary men, and who braved . . .

³ Rodney Stark, *One True God: Historical Consequences of Monotheism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 35.

⁴ John A. Russell, “The Catholic Church in the United States,” in *The Memorial Volume: A History of the Third Plenary Council of Baltimore, November 9-December 7, 1884* (Baltimore: Baltimore Publishing, 1885), 9-11. Scant physical evidence exists to support any such missionary visits.

trials and tortures . . . in behalf of the cause of Christ.”⁵ Twentieth-century historian John Tracy Ellis notes that Charles and Mary Beard, who characterized Spanish imperial operations as “predatory,”⁶ nonetheless acknowledged that “[t]he heroic deeds of Catholic missionaries, daring for religion’s sake torture and death, bore witness to a new force in the making of world dominion.”⁷

The same year that Columbus arrived in the Western Hemisphere, Pope Alexander VI (1492-1503) assumed the Chair of Peter. Alexander, despite a papacy dishonored by his proclivity to nepotism and siring bastard children, shared the Christian’s enthusiasm for spreading the faith and welcomed the discovery of new lands as a momentous evangelical opportunity. The new pope lauded Columbus in *Inter caetera*, a 1493 bull addressed to Spain’s Ferdinand and Isabella. While heaping praise on the monarchs for supporting New World exploration, he also admonished them regarding their duty “to lead the peoples dwelling in those islands and countries to embrace the Christian religion.” Alexander expressed hope that “the Christian religion be exalted and be everywhere increased and spread . . . and that barbarous nations be overthrown and brought to the faith itself.”⁸ The pope’s characterization of non-Christian lands and people as “barbarous” emblemized his and the wider Church’s belief that unconverted people manifested a deficiency that went beyond their spurious spiritual beliefs to their very humanity. The enduring legacy of that assessment had significance for the African American apostolate four centuries after *Inter caetera*, when

⁵ Russell, “Catholic Church in the United States,” 11.

⁶ John Tracy Ellis, *American Catholicism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1955), 17.

⁷ Charles A. Beard and Mary R. Beard, *The Rise of American Civilization*, vol. 1, *The Agricultural Era* (New York: Macmillan, 1927), 9.

⁸ Alexander VI, 4 May 1493, *Inter Caetera*, papal bull, <http://www.papalencyclicals.net>.

missionaries went into the South encumbered by denigratory inferences about their prospective converts.

This characterization of non-Christians persisted from 1492 to 1884 and beyond. Protestants (including African American converts and those born into non-Catholic Christian sects) presented a special case because they embraced forms of Christianity outside communion with Rome and in consequence had no claim on the universality that Catholicism considered its unique province. Neither did Protestantism preserve the sacramental rites – in particular, the mass – that stood at the center of Catholic faith.⁹ The Church of Rome encouraged reunification of its separated brethren under Peter’s successor, viewing indivisibility as a characteristic that Christ intended for the Church he founded.¹⁰ The American Catholic Church maintained that only through accepting Catholicism could African Americans properly liberate themselves from sin and attain the level of cultural advancement accessible to the Catholic faithful.

The inclination of American missionaries to sustain such a notion derived in part from the way the global Church had for centuries viewed people living outside the faith. While Alexander VI used conspicuously condescending language to refer to the unconverted, even Leo XIII, whose centuries-subsequent papacy historians associate with a Church clearly moving in the direction of inclusivity, praised the “holy enterprise” of missionary work for the benefits it bequeathed “to those who are called out of the filth of vice and the shadow of death; and who, being made partakers of

⁹ James O’Connor, “The Catholicity of the Church,” transcribed sermon in *Memorial Volume*, 217; John Hennessy, “The Sanctity of the Church,” transcribed sermon in *Memorial Volume*, 239.

¹⁰ Leo XIII, 20 June 1894, *Praeclara Gratulationis Publicae*, encyclical “The Reunion of Christendom,” <http://www.papalencyclicals.net>.

eternal life, are also brought out of barbarism and a state of savage manners into the fullness of civilized life.”¹¹ Both Alexander’s and Leo’s words leave little doubt as to their estimate of people who did not adhere to Catholicism’s beliefs. Their words do express, however, the conviction that the unconverted stood to reap spiritual and temporal benefits by embracing what the pontiffs considered to be the one true faith. This bifurcated mentality pervaded the Catholicism that the Spanish brought to the Americas and, successively, the Catholicism that over time put down roots in American soil. It spawned an evangelical effort that, while shamefully heavy-handed in its earliest years, evolved into something that more closely reflected the principles of charity and human compassion that underpinned Christian faith. Evidence of that evolution appeared with increasing frequency in the Catholic hierarchy’s evangelical pronouncements over the years and ultimately manifested itself in the Church’s African American ministry.

Leo XIII’s papacy marked the beginning of the 1878-1958 “Leonine period” that included the pontificates of Leo and his four successors.¹² The Leonine period also – to borrow from the lexicon of the artillerist – “bracketed” the current study’s *terminus a quo* (1884) and *terminus ad quem* (1939). During the Leonine period, the tone and content of papal encyclicals reflected a shift in the Church’s evangelical effort from one narrowly focused on ends – the salvific benefit of conversion – to one that simultaneously commended means – the efficacy of social ministry as a vehicle to effect

¹¹ Leo XIII, 4 December 1880, *Sancta Dei Civitas*, encyclical “On Mission Societies,” <http://www.papalencyclicals.net>.

¹² Michael J. Schuck, *That They Be One: The Social Teaching of the Papal Encyclicals, 1740-1989* (Washington: Georgetown University Press, 1991), 45.

conversion.¹³ The Leonine-period Church did not, of course, hold a monopoly on this strain of thought and action. American Protestant reformers as well as secular Progressives employed similar ideas and methods to ameliorate the ills fomented by rapid industrialization and urbanization. Although secular social programs did not seek the religious conversion of their beneficiaries, they strove to foster moral uplift which, in the minds of many, had the same fundamental effect.

The Church's public pronouncements on social ministry reflected this more benevolent ideology. The words Pius XI (1922-1939) chose when he addressed the subject of missions in his 1926 *Rerum ecclesiae* contrasted sharply with the earlier language of Alexander and Leo:

Neither should the missionary ever forget how kind and loving Jesus always showed Himself to babes and little children. . . . [T]he missionaries that preach to the heathen know only too well how much good-will and real affection is gained for the Church by those who look after the health of the natives and care for their sick or who show a true love for their infants and children.¹⁴

Rerum ecclesiae gave voice to a lesson already apparent to the men and women laboring in the mission fields. They knew from experience that genuine concern for humanity's temporal welfare fostered an atmosphere of good will that conduced to acceptance of the conversionary message they preached. Pius XI's words merely confirmed that by 1926 Holy Mother Church had calculated the benefit inuring to missionary endeavors that incorporated energetic elements of social ministry. The pontiff's articulation of that

¹³ Schuck, *That They Be One*, 72.

¹⁴ Pius XI, 8 February 1926, *Rerum Ecclesiae*, encyclical "On Catholic Missions." <http://www.papalencyclicals.net>. The scriptural foundation of Pius XI's instruction is found in Mark 9:14 RSV, "Let the little children come to Me. Don't stop them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these."

ideal, however, served only to gild a lily already in full flower, the produce of missionaries' having employed for decades the very practices of which papal pronouncements represented but an abstraction.

By the time Catholic missionaries ventured into the American South in the late nineteenth century, the Church could look back on a four hundred-year presence in a vast region of North America that began as a jumble of European colonies and eventuated in a burgeoning, neoteric nation-state. Because France and Spain, both strongly Catholic, pursued empire in the Americas, the Church's presence and ministry in North America had been both immediate and continuous. The Church of early French and Spanish colonial settlements did little, however, to invest that ministry with a national character.¹⁵ Spanish missionaries established the faith among indigenous peoples in the Southwest and Florida but unfortunately for the natives who encountered these Iberian apostles of European culture, Spanish methods of evangelization betrayed more than a hint of the oppressive, mercenary character of Spain's other New World pursuits. Farther north, French members of the Society of Jesus (Jesuits) drew on their predecessor confreres' missionary experience in Asia to Christianize native inhabitants around the Great Lakes and in the St. Lawrence River valley. To the south, Catholicism prevailed under both French and Spanish flags as control of the lower Mississippi River valley and its port city of New Orleans passed from France to Spain and back to France. On the Atlantic coastline English Jesuits established a mission in Maryland as a base for evangelizing local natives. In a 1634 letter to their superior in Rome, these early Jesuit

¹⁵ John T. Creagh, *The Code of Canon Law and the Church in the United States* (Washington, D.C.: privately printed for the First Annual Meeting of the Hierarchy, 1919), Chapter 1, paragraphs 1-3.

missionaries related their first celebration of mass in the region. “This had never been done before in this part of the world. After we had completed the sacrifice, we took upon our shoulders a great cross . . . hewn out of a tree, and . . . we erected a trophy to Christ the Savior . . . with great emotion.”¹⁶

This event had great significance for the Maryland Jesuits because they believed that the mass represented much more than the mere repetition of a religious ritual. As explained in the preceding chapter, the efficacy of Catholicism’s missionary presence hinged on the mass, whose celebration brought Christ physically into union with his mystical body, the Church. This doctrine determined the form of Catholic evangelism. Its authority centered on the mass, and the mass required the officiation of the priest. Consistent with these beliefs, the Church’s efforts to evangelize African Americans two and one-half centuries after the Jesuits said that first mass in Maryland required foremostly the presence and service of priests to conduct the religion’s sacred rites.

A number of factors drove the American Church’s expansion in the nineteenth century. Until Catholics reproduced at rates sufficient to generate natural increases in their numbers, native conversions and a continuing stream of principally European immigrants accounted for the Church’s growth. One group of immigrant faithful, however, arrived not from Europe but from Saint Domingue, the French Caribbean colony that staggered through a blood-soaked revolution from 1791 to 1804. Throughout

¹⁶ Andrew White to General Superior, Society of Jesus, St. Mary’s City, April 1634, in *American Catholic History: A Documentary Reader*, eds. Mark Massa with Catherine Osborne (New York: New York University Press, 2008), 12-14.

this period and in its aftermath, tens of thousands of black, white, and mixed-race Saint Dominguan refugees emigrated to the U.S. and other circum-Caribbean safe havens.¹⁷

Refugees making for U.S. ports hoped that American businessmen would recall with fondness the profitable – though at times illicit – trade they had carried on for years with Saint Domingue. In a larger sense, though, Saint Dominguans hoped that Americans, who themselves had only recently thrown off the European yoke, would identify with their plight and provide succor. Americans did not disappoint; they responded generously to the refugees’ needs by providing monetary and material assistance to sustain them until they could establish themselves in the U.S. or return to Saint Domingue.¹⁸ Private citizens’ donations satisfied only a fraction of the need, however, and making up the shortfall compelled cities, states, and ultimately the U.S. government to allocate funds to meet the short term needs of the new arrivals.¹⁹ Disbursing federal monies for Saint Dominguan humanitarian relief aroused the latest iteration of the ongoing American argument over the national government’s proper role, but the current study leaves examination of that intestine controversy to others.

Saint Dominguan newcomers exhibited a homogeneity that derived not only from their common refugee status and geographic point of origin but also – germane to the current study – their shared Catholic faith. Their common characteristics notwithstanding, the refugees differed markedly from one another in social rank and skin

¹⁷ Ashli White, *Encountering Revolution: Haiti and the Making of the Early Republic* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010), 2.

¹⁸ Walter C. Hartridge, “The Refugees from the Island of St. Domingo in Maryland,” *Maryland Historical Magazine* 96, no. 4 (2001), 479; Ashli White, *Encountering Revolution*, 5.

¹⁹ Frances S. Childs, *French Refugee Life in the United States, 1790-1800: An American Chapter of the French Revolution* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1940), 85-90.

color. Social ranking in pre-revolutionary Saint Dominique followed a descending class line from white elites (*grands blancs*) to enslaved blacks. These extremes bookended a third, bipartite range that included non-elite whites (*petits blancs*) and free people of color (*gens de couleur*), the latter group exhibiting variations in complexion that evinced generations of interracial marriage. Given the societal chasm that separated free from bond in Saint Domingue, both the *gens de couleur* and *petits blancs* had far more in common with white elites than with slaves.²⁰ A century later in the South, Catholic missionaries encountered a nearly identical social hierarchy determined rigidly by race and subtly by skin shade. Regardless of Saint Dominguan refugees' social rank or racial classification, all had fled the island to escape a violent conflict born of civil war and revolution. Events in the French colony coerced an emigration that had the unforeseen consequence of causing the population of the United States, especially in some locales, to become at once more French, more Catholic, and more African-descended, all of which factored into the Church's later missionary work among African Americans.

The Catholic faith the refugees professed – albeit nominally in many cases – came of France's having shamelessly sponsored Catholicism in its colonies, a policy that in Saint Domingue also countenanced suppressing Huguenots and expelling Jews.²¹ The *Code Noir* that Louis XIV signed in 1685 specified that “all slaves that shall be in our islands shall be baptized and instructed in the Roman, Catholic, and Apostolic Faith.”²²

²⁰ White, *Encountering Revolution*, 3-4. Alfred N. Hunt, *Haiti's Influence on Antebellum America: Slumbering Volcano in the Caribbean* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1988), 13-14.

²¹ George Breathett, “Catholicism and the Code Noir in Haiti,” *Journal of Negro History* 73, no. 1/4 (1988): 4-5, 7.

²² “The Code Noir (The Black Code), 1685,” *Édit du Roi, Touchant la Police des Isles de l'Amérique Française* (Paris, 1687), 28-58, <http://chnm.gmu.edu/revolution/d/335/>.

Unfortunately for Saint Dominguan slaves, plantation masters generally paid closer heed to the *Code Noir*'s injunction to baptize them than to treat them humanely, a glaring reality that stoked discontent and eventually revolutionary passion. The *Code Noir* nevertheless remained putatively in effect up to the onset of the revolution and accounted for the almost unanimous profession of Catholicism by both free persons of color and slaves. The depth of slaves' commitment to the faith, however, remained problematic. The high slave mortality rate in Saint Domingue necessitated continuing replenishment of the slave population with fresh stock from Africa. Newly arrived Africans clove to elements of their traditional religious beliefs and practices, a survival mechanism that diluted the Christianity their masters imposed on them.²³ The persistence of that dilution manifested itself a century and more later in the religious beliefs of some of the African American Catholics missionaries encountered in the U.S. South, especially in and around seaport cities.

On July 10, 1793 people living in the vicinity of Baltimore's harbor looked out and saw twenty-two ships at anchor, each carrying refugees from Saint Domingue. Within two weeks, the count of arriving ships climbed to fifty-three and of disembarked refugees to "one thousand whites and five hundred mulattoes and Negroes."²⁴ While the adage "any port in a storm" fit the refugees' situation, the presence of an established Catholic community in Baltimore caused the Saint Dominguans to judge the city an

²³ Theodore Lothrop Stoddard, *The French Revolution in San Domingo* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1914; reprint, Westport: Negro Universities Press, 1970), 50-57. Citations refer to the reprint edition.

²⁴ Walter C. Hartridge, "The Refugees from the Island of St. Domingo in Maryland," *Maryland Historical Magazine* 96, no. 4 (2001), 475-477.

especially attractive destination.²⁵ The Catholicism Saint Domingans brought with them bore the tarnish of generations of indifference and lax application in the French colony.²⁶ This circumstance precludes ascribing gratuitous cachet to the religious affinity between the refugees and Catholic Baltimoreans. On balance, though, neither group practiced the faith in full conformity with Rome's contemporary standards of orthodoxy.

Because Baltimore could not absorb all the refugees who fled Saint Domingue, ships put into Atlantic ports from Boston to Savannah.²⁷ The arrival of San Dominguan refugees in the 1790s doubled the number of Catholics in Baltimore, while in other American port cities, Irish, English and German Catholics similarly found themselves sharing church pews with their French-speaking, multiracial coreligionists.²⁸ The Gulf Coast also received an influx of Saint Dominguan refugees that affected the everyday life and character of the region, nowhere more so than Louisiana and its principal city New Orleans. According to one account, New Orleans's population grew from forty-four hundred in 1791 to eight thousand in 1797 largely due to the influx of refugees from Saint Domingue. The same study contends that Saint Dominguan refugees who arrived from Cuba between May and August 1809 nearly doubled the number of French-speaking residents of New Orleans.²⁹

Considering that the Saint Dominguan revolution gave birth to the new Haitian nation in 1804, why did refugees continue to arrive in New Orleans as late as 1809, and why from Cuba? That they did witnesses to the continued complexity of the international

²⁵ Hunt, *Haiti's Influence on Antebellum America*, 45.

²⁶ Stoddard, *French Revolution in San Domingo*, 22-24.

²⁷ White, *Encountering Revolution*, 11-12.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 29, 96.

²⁹ Hunt, *Haiti's Influence on Antebellum America*, 42, 47.

situation in the period. In 1803, as the revolution in Saint Domingue entered an especially violent stage, refugees once again fled the island. Some settled in the nearby Spanish colony of Cuba where in the course of a few years they reestablished communities, businesses, and sugar plantations that imitated what they had abandoned in Saint Domingue. The amicable arrangement between Saint Domingans and their Cuban hosts proved temporary, however. When France declared war on Spain in 1808, Spain summarily expelled the refugees from Cuba.³⁰ Newly displaced, many followed the example of earlier Saint Dominguan refugees and set sail for U.S. ports. An especially large number of refugees entered the U.S. through New Orleans, “[a]ttracted to Louisiana by its language, climate, and type of agriculture.”³¹

Like their predecessors, these latest refugees mirrored French Caribbean colonial society: white elites, black slaves, *petits blancs*, and *gens de couleur*. One group of about nine thousand included twenty-seven hundred whites, thirty-one hundred free people of color, and thirty-two hundred slaves.³² Many among this latest wave of Saint Dominguan refugees foresaw, as had their compatriots who preceded them, their new situation as temporary, a perception shared by their American hosts. As the situation in Saint Domingue deteriorated, however, prospects for repatriation diminished.

³⁰ Hunt, *Haiti's Influence on Antebellum America*, 42, 47; Albert Raboteau, “Death of the Gods,” in *African American Religious Thought, An Anthology*, ed. Cornel West and Eddie S. Glaude, Jr. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003), 266.

³¹ Paul Lachance, “The Foreign French,” in *Creole New Orleans: Race and Americanization*, ed. Arnold R. Hirsch and Joseph Logsdon (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1992), 105.

³² Paul Lachance, “Repercussions of the Haitian Revolution in Louisiana,” in *The Impact of the Haitian Revolution in the Atlantic World*, ed. David P. Geggus (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2001), 213.

Eventually, returning home became impossible for whites and at best impractical for most mixed-race and black people.

Once in the United States, refugees formed discrete communities that varied according to their race, class, and where they chose to settle. Because slaves had an ascertainable market value, the likelihood of Saint Dominguan slave owners' settling in the South increased in proportion to the number of slaves they owned. For example, of the previously cited cohort of nine thousand refugees who arrived in New Orleans, two-thirds were people of color, split approximately evenly between enslaved and free. By comparison, only about ten percent of five thousand Saint Domingans who entered the U.S. through Philadelphia claimed African ancestry.³³ In the seaboard cities of the Northeast, refugee groups relinquished their distinguishing characteristics relatively quickly due to a greater propensity to assimilate into the local social structure or move away within a generation or two from their immediate port of entry.³⁴ An example of this assimilative process appeared in Philadelphia where “[u]nlike their Protestant counterparts, Catholics recognized people of African ancestry as members of the Church. . . . The refugees were welcomed by the three Catholic churches in the city, St. Joseph’s, St. Mary’s, and Holy Trinity, all near to where the French were living.”³⁵ Refugees, did not, however, receive this kind of reception everywhere. Instead they encountered an American societal structure with marked regional variations.

³³ David P. Geggus, introduction to *The Impact of the Haitian Revolution in the Atlantic World*, ed. David P. Geggus (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2001), xiv.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Susan Branson and Leslie Patrick, “Étrangers dans un Pays Étrange: Saint Dominguan Refugees of Color in Philadelphia,” in Geggus, ed., *The Impact of the Haitian Revolution in the Atlantic World* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2001), 202.

Each region of the country had a protocol for separation of the races, none more clearly defined or strictly enforced than in the South. This complicated the situation for the refugees, especially for free people of color. The actions of South Carolina Governor William Moultrie provide a striking example of this. Concerned that the refugees might have among them certain “characters . . . which are dangerous to the welfare and peace of the state,” Moultrie took the bold step of “ordering all free [N]egroes and people of color who have arrived from Saint Domingo, or who have arrived within 12 months from any other place, to depart from this state within ten days from the date hereof.”³⁶ The governor used expulsion with grim efficiency to pinch off any potential increase in the number of free people of color that might result from Saint Dominguan immigration. This does not suggest that Saint Dominguan refugees never violated societal norms that their hosts expected of them. In South Carolina, for example, refugees turned the Church of St. Mary of the Annunciation, a parish founded by Irish Catholics, into “a pocket of Gallic resistance in English-speaking Charleston.”³⁷

The black and mixed-race Catholic immigrants who arrived in Baltimore, New Orleans, and elsewhere in the South prefigured a segment of the population engaged by the Church’s African American ministry in the decades that followed. As explained in Chapter VI, priests who expected to enter the Southern mission fields to evangelize and minister to the non-Catholic and unchurched inhabitants of rural areas instead had to accept assignment by local bishops to urban parishes with established African American

³⁶ “State of South Carolina. By His Excellency William Moultrie, governor and commander in chief in and over the state aforesaid: A Proclamation,” *State Gazette of South Carolina* (Charlestown, SC), October 29, 1793. *America’s Historical Newspapers*. <http://infoweb.newsbank.com/iwsearchsearch/we/HistArchive/>

³⁷ Nathalie Dessens, *From Saint Domingue to New Orleans: Migration and Influences* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2007), 68.

congregations. Many of these urban parishioners traced their heritage to refugees who fled Haiti around the time of its war for independence. Though missionary priests welcomed black parish work in population centers, they remained concerned over the countless souls, mostly in rural areas, who either had never heard Christianity's redemptive message or had heard a Protestant version of it that would not ensure their salvation. Of cities within the geographic range of the current study, New Orleans and Baltimore had the most discernible Catholic cast. Both cities became hubs of missionary activity and, more significantly, birthplaces of religious orders of men and women dedicated to the service of African Americans. As discussed in more detail in Chapter VI, two of these women's religious orders – the Sisters of the Holy Family (New Orleans) and the Oblate Sisters of Providence (Baltimore) – had in common their traceable links to Saint Dominguan immigration and their purpose of securing for women of color an opportunity to serve the cause of Christ.

Saint Dominguans were not the only refugees arriving on America's doorstep in the late eighteenth century. Simultaneously, white French citizens fleeing the revolution in *l'Hexagone* entered the U.S. through many of the same ports. The years 1793 to 1798 saw “thousands upon thousands of Frenchmen crowding into the American seaboard towns.”³⁸ The combined influx of immigrants from Saint Domingue and France expanded American port cities' Francophonic and Catholic elements, remnants of which survived for decades to greet Catholic missionaries when they journeyed southward to evangelize African Americans. The French Revolution also had the unintended

³⁸ Childs, *French Refugee Lives*, 10.

consequence of benefiting the clergy-deprived American Church, as Catholic priests fled their French homeland for the safer environs of the U.S. Reflecting on these events a century and a half later, Pope Pius XII (1939-1958) wrote, “Numbers of priests, forced to flee to your shores from lands where persecution raged, brought welcome aid to Bishop Carroll and by their active collaboration in the sacred ministry sowed the precious seed which ripened to an abundant harvest of virtues.”³⁹ Pius XII’s mention of Bishop Carroll referred to Baltimore’s Bishop John Carroll, whom Pius VI (1775-1799) had elevated to the bishopric in 1789.

As much as any other single event, Carroll’s appointment as Bishop of Baltimore determined the character and the direction of the American Church. In 1789 Pius VI acknowledged America’s need for a bishop in *Ex hac apostolicae*:

Wherefore, it having reached our ears that in the flourishing commonwealth of the Thirteen American States many faithful Christians united in communion with the Chair of Peter . . . earnestly desire that a Bishop may be appointed over them . . . to feed them more largely with the food of salutary doctrine. . . . We willingly embraced this opportunity which the grace of Almighty God has afforded us to provide those distant regions with the comfort and ministry of a Catholic Bishop.⁴⁰

In an unmistakable allusion to Vatican authority vis-à-vis the Church’s globally dispersed branches, Pius VI used *Ex hac apostolicae* to remind the American Church of the inviolate union between it and the Holy See. American Catholics, on the other hand,

³⁹ Pope Pius XII, Rome, 1 November 1939, *Sertum Laetitiae*, encyclical “On the Hundred and Fiftieth Anniversary of the Establishment of the Hierarchy in the United States,” in Claudia Carlen, comp., *The Papal Encyclicals*, vol. 4, 1939-1958 (Wilmington, NC: McGrath, 1981), 24.

⁴⁰ “The Brief *Ex Hac Apostolicae* of Pope Pius VI Erecting the Diocese of Baltimore and Appointing John Carroll as the First Bishop, November 6, 1789,” in *Documents of American Catholic History*, ed. John Tracy Ellis, vol. 1, 164-165. Citations refer to the reprint edition; Pope Pius VI, Rome, 6 November 1789, papal bull, in John Gilmary Shea, *History of the Catholic Church in the United States*, vol. 2, *Life and Times of the Most Reverend John Carroll, Bishop and First Archbishop of Baltimore, 1763-1815* (New York: John G. Shea, 1888), 337-343.

found something more pertinent within *Ex hac apostolicae*: that Rome recognized the vitality and growth potential of the Church in the U.S. and deemed it worthy of its own bishop. Accordingly, Pius VI designated Baltimore as the young nation's first episcopal see and named John Carroll bishop and pastor of its cathedral church.⁴¹ Carroll had the distinction of being the first American-born bishop as well as the first bishop to preside over the first Catholic bishopric in the United States. He served as Baltimore's bishop – and from 1808 its Archbishop – until his death in 1815. Literally and figuratively Carroll functioned as chief architect of the American Church. At the time of his death, he had molded the American Church into the hierarchical order of government common to all the rest of the world, had solved problems that seemed insurmountable in 1790, and laid deep and strong foundations for future construction.⁴² When Catholic prelates met in plenary council in 1866 and 1884, Carroll's influence on the American Church, particularly with regard to episcopal authority, remained much in evidence. As discussed in Chapter IV, the primacy of bishops in their respective dioceses had the effect of provoking inconsistencies in both the objectives and methods of evangelizing African Americans.

In selecting John Carroll, Pius VI had chosen America's best qualified and most highly regarded churchman to serve as its first bishop. Born in Maryland in 1736, Carroll received his early education in Europe under the Jesuits. He went on to study for the Jesuit priesthood, received Holy Orders in 1761, and began his clerical career

⁴¹ Thomas W. Spalding, *The Premier See: A History of the Archdiocese of Baltimore, 1789-1989* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989), 21.

⁴² Peter Guilday, *The Life and Times of John England First Bishop of Charleston, 1786-1842*, vol. 1 (New York: America Press, 1927), 2.

teaching in Europe. Shortly before the American Revolution, Carroll returned to Maryland where his cousin Charles Carroll of Carrollton had risen to social and political prominence. The latter Carroll represented Maryland at the Continental Congress in 1776 where he signed the Declaration of Independence, the only Catholic to hold that distinction.⁴³

Like Charles Carroll, Father John Carroll took a keen interest in the worsening situation between England and her North American colonies. His proximity to events – which included a congenial acquaintanceship with Benjamin Franklin stemming from his participation with Franklin, Samuel Chase and Charles Carroll in a 1776 diplomatic mission to Canada⁴⁴ – endowed him with an uncommon grasp of the nation’s trenchantly republican polity. As a result, in the period before his episcopal appointment, John Carroll took the position that the uniquely American socio-political character enjoined the American Church to shy from unreasonable influence by Rome or the tradition-bound European Church. To Carroll’s thinking, the Holy See needed to tread carefully in directing the Church in America. Due in part to his Maryland roots, Carroll understood better than most the Church’s position within the still evolving American context, a position directly resulting from Maryland’s history as the most Catholic of all Britain’s North American colonies.

Catholicism’s century and a half-long presence in Maryland had comprised the core of the religion’s pre-Revolutionary history in British North America. Defining

⁴³ Spalding, *Premier See*, 8-10.

⁴⁴ Bradley, J. Birzer, *American Cicero: The Life of Charles Carroll* (Wilmington: Intercollegiate Studies Institute, 2010), 105-109, 174-175.

Maryland's unique role invites reference to the center-periphery concept and its variations that prove useful in explaining global empire.⁴⁵ When gauged by measures of numerosity and doctrinal fidelity, Maryland at the time fit the definition of a Catholic colonial center, while other places in British North America, in combination, constituted a variegated frontier. Despite its more solidly founded Catholicism, colonial Maryland faced its own unique set of challenges. Whereas French and Spanish New World colonies benefited from both papal and monarchical approbation, Maryland received only the former and, in lieu of the latter, had to content itself with the tepid forbearance of English rulers. Further, French and Spanish colonial Catholicism operated as an extension – albeit an oftentimes anomalous one – of the selfsame Church that thrived at the imperial center, whereas the Catholic Church in Maryland persevered *despite* local and imperial politics and their respective ecclesiastical alignments. In the period from the colony's 1634 inception to the American Revolution, the situation for Marylanders professing Catholicism deteriorated to the point that they constituted a persecuted minority beset by economic, political, and social sanctions.⁴⁶

This circumstance belied the colony's early history. In 1632 England's Charles I granted George Calvert, a Catholic and the first Lord Baltimore, a proprietary charter to establish an English colony in the Chesapeake region. Calvert died before the charter's formal issuance and it fell to his son Cecil to found the New World colony his father had conceived, a place where Catholics could live without fear of religious persecution.

⁴⁵ Amy Turner Bushnell and Jack P. Green, "Peripheries, Centers, and the Construction of Early Modern American Empires," in *Negotiated Empires: Centers and Peripheries in the Americas, 1500-1820*, eds. Christine Daniels and Michael V. Kennedy (New York: Routledge, 2002), 3-7.

⁴⁶ Birzer, *American Cicero*, 16, 42.

Neither George nor Cecil Calvert envisioned Maryland as a colony for Catholics alone, but as a place where Catholics and members of other faiths could live together peaceably.⁴⁷ In his pre-embarkation instructions, Cecil Calvert commanded his Catholic colonists: “[T]reat the Protestants with as much mildness and favor as Justice will permit . . . [on] land as well as at sea.”⁴⁸ Accordant with the elder Calvert’s intentions, the colony Cecil Calvert established granted full religious liberty to all inhabitants. Having a Catholic colonial proprietor did, of course, work to Catholicism’s advantage in Maryland. For example, the Jesuit missionaries mentioned earlier owed their presence in the colony to Cecil Calvert’s exercise of prerogative under the charter.⁴⁹

Despite the Calverts’ grand hopes, religious freedom in Maryland proved short-lived even though formally ordained in the colony’s 1649 Act Concerning Religion. The Act stated that “no person . . . professing to believe in Jesus Christ, shall from henceforth be any ways troubled, molested or discountenanced for or in respect of his or her religion nor in the free exercise thereof.”⁵⁰ When the new colony proved unable to attract enough Catholic residents to ensure its economic viability, Protestant settlers stepped in to fill the void. Compared to twenty-five percent of the population in 1641, Catholics constituted only nine percent by 1708.⁵¹ Concurrent with this population shift, Protestants in nearby Virginia objected with increasing stridency to the perceived

⁴⁷ Ellis, *American Catholicism*, 22-23.

⁴⁸ “Baron Baltimore’s Instructions to His Colonists” in *Documents of American Catholic History*, ed. Ellis, vol. 1, 98.

⁴⁹ Theodore Maynard, *The Story of American Catholicism* (New York: Macmillan, 1942), 62-66.

⁵⁰ “Maryland’s Act of Religious Toleration, April 21, 1649” in *Documents of American Catholic History*, ed. Ellis, vol. 1, 112-114.

⁵¹ Bret E. Carroll, *The Routledge Historical Atlas of Religion in America* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 53.

papist character of their neighbor colony. The situation in Maryland confirmed that “[a]nti-Catholic prejudice [had] clearly survived the Atlantic crossing.”⁵²

In 1654 – while Lord Protector Oliver Cromwell ruled England – Maryland’s Protestant-controlled assembly stripped Catholics of their right to practice their religion in public.⁵³ In 1689 it prohibited Catholics’ participation in civil or military matters, and in 1692 fully disbarred Catholics.⁵⁴ These events epitomized a period when Maryland’s Catholics, despite living in a colony founded on the specific principle of religious tolerance, were subjected to restrictions that mirrored concurrent penal laws in England. Remarkably, and fortunately for Catholics in Maryland, the colonial government exercised somewhat less assiduity in the enforcement of its ordinances than the crown did its own penal laws in England.⁵⁵ To the relief of Maryland’s Catholics, as the American Revolution approached, Protestants shifted their attention away from their differences with the Catholic Church and focused instead on their grievances with England. “Throughout 1774, as extralegal institutions, especially the so-called Maryland Conventions, assumed legislative and constitutional leadership over the province, earlier anti-Catholic legislation and province-wide basis eroded quickly.”⁵⁶ After the thirteen colonies secured their independence, the new nation’s policy of religious freedom

⁵² Carla Gardina Pestana, *The English Atlantic in the Age of Revolution, 1640-1661* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), 151.

⁵³ “Disfranchisement of Catholics in Maryland, October 20, 1654” in *Documents of American Catholic History*, ed. Ellis, vol. 1, 114-115.

⁵⁴ Birzer, *American Cicero*, 16.

⁵⁵ “Persecution of the Maryland Catholics” in *Documents of American Catholic History*, ed. Ellis, vol. 1, 115; Spalding, *Premier See*, 5.

⁵⁶ Birzer, *American Cicero*, 83.

granted all religions *de jure* equal footing. However, a palpable anti-Catholic sentiment outlived the heady days of newly gained independence and lately won freedoms.

The new republic and the American Church traveled parallel and oftentimes intersecting paths as they went about the task of defining themselves. “The great fact of national independence forced several churches to recast their forms of government, and the occupation of men’s minds with problems of national organization could not fail to stir them to improvements in their religious organization.”⁵⁷ Prior to the Revolution the Catholic Bishop of London, in his collateral role as Vicar-Apostolic for the American missionary territory, had jurisdiction over the Church in Britain’s North American colonies. The Holy See conferred the title vicar-apostolic on (usually European-based) bishops who, in addition to the responsibilities of their regular ecclesiastical office, had authority over a foreign missionary region that lacked its own Church hierarchy.⁵⁸ Neither London’s bishop nor English colonial Catholics found this arrangement satisfactory, and when the colonists prevailed in their Revolution, all parties recognized that the time to alter it had come.⁵⁹ Despite their eagerness to have the sacramental services of a bishop, American Catholics remained concerned that their Protestant countrymen would perceive the presence of a Vatican-appointed seignior both a contradiction to the American egalitarian ideal and an intrusion of foreign authority.

These concerns were neither new nor exclusive to Catholics, as evinced by the 1773 letter of Ferdinand Farmer, a Jesuit assigned to Philadelphia. Farmer expressed to a

⁵⁷ J. Franklin Jameson, *The American Revolution Considered as a Social Movement* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1926), 149-150.

⁵⁸ Herbermann et al., 15: 401.

⁵⁹ Maynard, *Story of American Catholicism*, 162; Joseph W. Ruane, *The Beginnings of the Society of St. Sulpice in the United States, 1791-1829* (Washington: Catholic University of America), 12-13.

colleague his distress over the lack of a bishop to administer the sacrament of Confirmation, but he tempered his complaint by observing that Anglican Church leaders, equally fearful of harsh criticism from dissident Protestant elements, saw little wisdom in having a bishop visit or reside in the colonies.⁶⁰ To Farmer, the time for an American Catholic bishop had not yet arrived. Plainly, the notion of high ecclesiastical office-holders, whether Catholic or Anglican, reeked of popishness to the Protestant population – much of it Greatly-Awakened – that constituted the religious majority in Britain’s North American colonies and the descendant American nation-state. A century afterward when the Catholic Church struggled to establish itself in the South, white Protestants persisted in their suspicion and criticism of both the Church’s hierarchical structure and its theological and bureaucratic attachment to Rome.

Although colonial- and early national-era American Catholics and their small band of clergymen harbored concerns about sending the wrong signal to their non-Catholic compatriots, they nevertheless recognized the need to correct the sacramental and administrative deficiencies in their Church. With the Revolution over, Carroll found himself in the middle of a growing controversy over appointment of a bishop for the American Church. Procedurally, the matter fell within the purview of the Sacred Congregation *de Propaganda Fide*, the department of the pontifical administration charged with spreading Catholicism and regulating ecclesiastical affairs in non-Catholic countries.⁶¹ Carroll, concerned that Rome would seek to exert inordinate

⁶⁰ Ferdinand Farmer to Bernard Well, Philadelphia, 22 April 1773, in *American Catholic History: A Documentary Reader*, eds. Mark Massa with Catherine Osborne (New York: New York University Press, 2008), 26-28.

⁶¹ Herbermann et al., 12: 456.

influence on the American Church, wrote to a Jesuit colleague in England, “But this you may be assured of, that no authority derived from the Propaganda will ever be admitted here; that the Catholic clergy and laity here know that the only connection that they ought to have with Rome is to acknowledge the pope as the spiritual head of the Church.”⁶² An ocean away, *Propaganda Fide* – itself no stranger to the intricacies of political diplomacy – effected what it considered a workable, if temporary, solution. In 1784 Rome invested Carroll with the title of Prefect-Apostolic with duties as “Superior of the Mission in the thirteen United States.”⁶³ Prefects-apostolic oversaw the administrative affairs of mission territories and had certain extraordinary faculties such as absolving censures.⁶⁴ Significantly, designating Carroll a prefect-apostolic fell short of elevating him to bishop. Bishops had the responsibility to teach, sanctify and govern the faithful; the last of these, governance (or, jurisdiction), differentiated the bishop from the priest.⁶⁵ Significant to the situation in the American Church, bishops occupied the first level in the Catholic hierarchy with authority to confer the sacrament of Holy Orders, that is, to make priests.

Carroll’s appointment came in a letter from the Prefect of *Propaganda Fide* Cardinal Lorenzo Antonelli. Antonelli acknowledged the delicacy of the situation – as well as his familiarity with Carroll’s political connections – when he stated that the priest’s appointment would “please and gratify many members of that [American]

⁶² John Carroll to Charles Plowden, Maryland, 10 April 1784, in Spalding, *Premier See*, 10.

⁶³ Jay P. Dolan, *The American Catholic Experience: A History from Colonial Times to the Present* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1985), 105.

⁶⁴ Herbermann et al., 12: 386.

⁶⁵ William Henn, *The Honor of My Brothers: A Short History of the Relation between the Pope and the Bishops* (New York: Crossroad, 2000), 145-146.

republic, and especially Mr. Franklin, the eminent individual who represents the same republic at the court of the Most Christian King [of France].” Antonelli instructed Carroll to function as a “pastor,” a designation derived unaltered from the Latin word for “shepherd.”⁶⁶ Unfortunately for Carroll, Rome did not invest the new American shepherd with authority to ordain priests, a distinct handicap given the expanding Catholic flock and the lack of priests to tend it. Antonelli assured Carroll of the temporary nature of the arrangement, but he quickly negated any comfort Carroll might have derived from that assurance when he added that the pope intended, when the time seemed right, to appoint another vicar-apostolic to preside over the American Church.⁶⁷ Because the Holy See classified the U.S. as a missionary region – a classification it retained, incidentally, until 1908 when Pope Pius X (1903-1914) conferred full canonical status on the American Church, elevating it to equal rank with the older European Churches⁶⁸ – Rome considered the appointment of a vicar-apostolic the logical solution to the problem of episcopal governance. To Carroll, however, Rome’s plan to install a vicar-apostolic over the American Church seemed to exacerbate the problem rather than solve it, given the aura of foreign patronage that attended such an arrangement.⁶⁹ Moreover, Carroll and his American Church had a penchant for autonomy, a characteristic that endured throughout the nineteenth century and into the twentieth. Like

⁶⁶ Lorenzo Cardinal Antonelli to John Carroll, Rome, 9 June 1784, in *Documents of American Catholic History*, ed. Ellis, vol. 1, 142-144.

⁶⁷ Lorenzo Cardinal Antonelli to John Carroll, Rome, 9 June 1784, in “John Carroll Is Appointed Superior of the American Missions, June 9, 1784” in *Documents of American Catholic History*, ed. Ellis, vol. 1, 142-144.

⁶⁸ Peter Guilday, ed., “The Pastoral Letter of 1919,” in *The National Pastorals of the American Hierarchy, 1792-1919* (Washington: National Catholic Welfare Council, 1923), 269-270.

⁶⁹ Jay P. Dolan, *The American Catholic Experience: A History from Colonial Times to the Present* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1985), 104.

other members of the Society of Jesus, Carroll had a lingering mistrust of papal politics resulting from the papal suppression of the Jesuits from 1773 to 1805 in the U.S. and to 1814 elsewhere in the world.⁷⁰ On balance however, and giving evidence to the political contention endemic to ecclesiastical bureaucracy, after Rome elevated Carroll to the episcopacy in 1789, the newly preconized bishop found it prudent to bridle the American Church's independent streak somewhat and acquiesce to a *modus vivendi* that more closely approximated the European model.⁷¹ When Carroll was in London in 1790 to receive his episcopal consecration, he wrote Pius VI to express his fealty: "I would never, at any time, fail in obedience and docility to the Holy See. . . . I shall spare no endeavor that all committed to my care, whether people or pastors, may be actuated by the same feelings that animate me towards the Holy See."⁷²

Carroll's protestation of obeisance notwithstanding, as late as the Plenary Councils of 1866 and 1884, Rome's perception of the American Church and the latter's perception of itself differed in the matter of centralized versus distributed governance. This difference remained a point of contention between the Holy See and the American Church, as well as between individual members of religious communities. For example, by the early decades of the nineteenth century, America's Jesuits generally fell into two categories: "native" Jesuits, raised either in the U.S. or the British Isles, and "continental" Jesuits, brought up on the European mainland. Native Jesuits emphasized

⁷⁰ Spalding, *Premier See*, 62-65; Thomas Murphy, *Jesuit Slaveholding in Maryland, 1717-1838* (New York: Routledge, 2001), 63-64.

⁷¹ Jay P. Dolan, *The American Catholic Experience: A History from Colonial Times to the Present* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1985), 111-112.

⁷² John Carroll to Pope Pius VI, London, 27 September 1790, in Shea, *History of the Catholic Church*, vol. 2, 366-367.

individual liberty and the principles contained in the Constitution and Bill of Rights; they argued for the salutary effect of incorporating republican ideals into ecclesiastical governance. The continental Jesuits, on the other hand, “were representative of Europe’s *ancien regime*, . . . [were] skeptical of American culture, wanted to see Catholics maintain a critical distance from republican ideals, and felt that the Church should continue the authoritarian structure of government it had developed during the Counter-Reformation.”⁷³ In the years that followed, this kind of discord surfaced repeatedly as the American Church struggled to establish itself, grow, and minister to a diverse national population. In the matter of evangelizing African Americans, dissonance existed both between the American Church and Rome, and between the geographic jurisdictions that comprised the American Church.

While the Holy See remained determined to impose uniformity upon the Church Universal, its globally dispersed components encountered unrelenting pressure to adapt to local political and societal conditions. This reality contradicted the perceptions of the *mélange* of Church critics and supporters alike who found it convenient to impute a monolithic essence to Catholicism. The divergent methodologies that American bishops ultimately employed in ministering to African Americans, for example, reflected the persistence of an independent disposition traceable back to the seventeenth century when Jesuit missionaries, separated from the support and control of their European superiors, labored individually and in small groups among their countrymen and native peoples in New France, Maryland, and the Mississippi valley. This new American Church differed

⁷³ Thomas Murphy, *Jesuit Slaveholding in Maryland, 1717-1838* (New York: Routledge, 2001) 165.

markedly from its European antecedents. In America, local sentiment played a more discernible and effectual role in defining individual Catholic behavior and shaping parishes and dioceses.

Antonelli's letter giving Carroll responsibility for the U.S. mission also directed the new prefect-apostolic to report on the condition of the American Church. Carroll's March 1785 response to *Propaganda Fide*, based on input from the twenty-four priests in the country at the time (nineteen in Maryland and five in Pennsylvania),⁷⁴ provided a quantitative and qualitative assessment of the Church's condition. Carroll's approximation of the number of Catholics in the country included: 15,800 in Maryland (3,800 of them enslaved Negroes); 7,000 in Pennsylvania; 200 in Virginia; and 1,500 in New York. Regarding the region to the south extending from the Mississippi River to the Atlantic Coast, Carroll reported that "this tract of country contains, I hear, many Catholics, formerly Canadians, who speak French, and I fear that they are destitute of priests."⁷⁵ Although Carroll correctly identified the descendents of French-speaking Catholics expelled from eastern Canada by the British around mid-century, he made no mention that the territory also contained Catholics whose religious affiliation stemmed from Spain's and France's colonization of the region. At the time of his letter Carroll could not have known that Louisiana would become part of the United States in 1803; neither could he have known that it would fall to him to assume temporary ecclesiastical

⁷⁴ John Carroll to Lorenzo Cardinal Antonelli, Baltimore, 1 March 1785, in "The First American Report to Propaganda on Catholicism in the United States, March 1, 1785" in *Documents of American Catholic History*, ed. Ellis, vol. 1, 149.

⁷⁵ John Carroll to Lorenzo Cardinal Antonelli, Baltimore, 1 March 1785, in "The First American Report to Propaganda on Catholicism in the United States, March 1, 1785" in *Documents of American Catholic History*, ed. Ellis, vol. 1, 148)

authority over the region's fifteen thousand French- and Spanish-descended Catholics, further straining his meager resources.⁷⁶

Colonial Louisiana had a complex political history. France surrendered the colony to Spain in 1763 but regained control of it under terms of the Third Treaty of San Ildefonso in October 1800. Less than three years later (April 1803), France “cede[d] to the United States . . . for ever and in full Sovereignty the said territory with all its rights and appurtenances.”⁷⁷ In December 1803 Louisiana officially became a U.S. territory, an event with both geopolitical and Afro-Catholic implications. As discussed earlier, the emigration of Catholics from Saint Domingue resulted from the Haitian Revolution, and “[i]t was, after all, the Haitian Revolution that motivated Napoléon’s sudden willingness to part with Louisiana.”⁷⁸ Charles H. Long endorses this interpretation, arguing that “the revolt of Toussaint Louverture in Santo Domingo and the dashing of the hopes of Napoléon for a French empire in North America thus led to the Louisiana Purchase.”⁷⁹ Thus an area the Church had designated a diocese in 1793 while under Spanish control now came under the ecclesiastical purview of Bishop John Carroll as Apostolic Administrator and “the only Catholic bishop under the American flag, which was soon to be raised in Louisiana.”⁸⁰ Only days after Louisiana’s transfer to the U.S., the

⁷⁶ Ellis, *American Catholicism*, 77.

⁷⁷ Hunter Miller, ed., *Treaties and Other International Acts of the United States of America*, vol. 2, *Documents 1-40: 1776-1818* (Washington : Government Printing Office, 1931), http://www.avalon.law.yale.edu/19th_century/louis1.asp.

⁷⁸ Paul Christopher Johnson, “Vodou Purchase: The Louisiana Purchase in the Caribbean World,” in *New Territories, New Perspectives: The Religious Impact of the Louisiana Purchase*, ed. Richard J. Callahan, Jr. (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2008), 150.

⁷⁹ Charles H. Long, “New Orleans as an American City: Origins, Exchanges, Materialities, and Religion” in *New Territories, New Perspectives: The Religious Impact of the Louisiana Purchase*, ed. Richard J. Callahan, Jr. (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2008), 222.

⁸⁰ Shea, *History of the Catholic Church*, vol. 2, 582.

diocesan administrator for Louisiana, Father Thomas Hassett, wrote to Bishop Carroll to report on the state of ecclesiastical affairs in Louisiana. Hassett related that the province contained twenty-one (religious, not civil) parishes, the majority without priests, as most clerics had opted to depart with the Spanish years earlier. As for the four priests who remained in Louisiana under subsequent French rule, Hassett wondered whether Carroll could rely on them to persevere under the newly established polity. Although the priest made only oblique reference to it in his letter, the Church in Louisiana suffered both internal and external political strife, much of it the product of a protracted rivalry that simmered between France and Spain. Hassett expressed his sincere desire to continue to be of service but admitted that poor health would likely necessitate his relocating to a better climate.⁸¹ In summary, the letter contained little that might cause the Bishop of Baltimore to look forward eagerly to his new responsibility. Moreover, Hassett's assessment of his own health proved prescient; the priest died about four months after his letter to Carroll.⁸²

Although the Holy See gave Bishop Carroll unequivocal authority over an ecclesiastical jurisdiction now greatly expanded by the acquisition of Louisiana, authority did not, in this instance, equate to control. Carroll understood this problem only too well. Between 1802 and 1807 he wrote to *Propaganda Fide* no fewer than five times to request an increase in the number of dioceses in the American Church.⁸³

Carroll's petitions to Rome confirmed that the work had grown beyond the capabilities

⁸¹ Thomas Hassett to John Carroll, New Orleans, 23 December 1803, in Shea, *History of the Catholic Church*, vol. 2, 582-584.

⁸² Shea, *History of the Catholic Church*, vol. 2, 585.

⁸³ Victor O'Daniel, "Concanen's Election to the See of New York, 1808-1810" *Catholic Historical Review* 2, no. 1 (1916):19.

and energies of one man. The Holy See, on its part, grasped the enormous potential of the new American nation and, correspondingly, the need for a robust Catholic presence within it. Pope Pius VII (1800-1829) understood that Carroll could not “properly direct a flock increasing at points so far removed from each other,” and as a corrective “hastened to give an increase of new pastors, to obviate the difficulty of distance.”⁸⁴ On 8 April 1808, the pope issued two bulls: *Pontificii Muneris* and *Ex Debito Pastoralis Officii*, the first elevating Baltimore to an archbishopric, an ecclesiastical province, and a metropolitan church⁸⁵, and the second erecting Boston, New York, Philadelphia, and Bardstown, Kentucky as suffragan episcopal sees.⁸⁶ Bardstown’s designation as a bishopric contemporaneously with more populous and seemingly more important locales like Boston, New York, and Philadelphia, stemmed from the westward migration of Catholics and the presence of a French-Catholic remnant that occupied parts of the “Old Northwest.” The town of Bardstown itself had only a handful of Catholic residents, but the surrounding creek-side communities within Nelson and Washington counties owed their existence to the Maryland-born Catholics who settled them.⁸⁷

While the American Church could look with satisfaction on its expansion since the Revolution, it continued to grapple with the problem of providing enough priests to serve the growing number of American Catholics. When Carroll made his first report to *Propaganda Fide* in 1785, he expressed concern that many Catholics found the regular

⁸⁴ Shea, *History of the Catholic Church*, vol. 2, 621.

⁸⁵ “Metropolitan” as a descriptor refers to the principal city of an ecclesiastical province, in this case, Baltimore. It also denotes the ecclesiastical official (typically an archbishop) who governs the province.

⁸⁶ “Documents on the Election of the First Bishop of New York” *Catholic Historical Review* 2, no. 1 (1916):74. “Suffragan” dioceses are subordinate to the archdiocese as their bishops are subordinate to the bishop of the archdiocese, the metropolitan.

⁸⁷ Thomas W. Spalding, “Bardstown, Kentucky,” *U.S. Catholic Historian* 18, no.4 (Fall 2000), 46.

practice of the faith nearly impossible due to the shortage of priests and the great distances that separated the faithful from one another.⁸⁸ In his 1792 pastoral letter to the faithful he again raised the issue, acknowledging the “inconvenience and disadvantage” that Catholics had suffered due to the unavailability of priests to minister to them. He expressed hope that Christian education – a subject he broached earlier in the same letter – would prepare the minds of young men to “receive and cherish a call from God to an ecclesiastical state.” Conspicuous within Carroll’s exposition of the need for priests was his specification that priests “be formed amongst ourselves; that is, of men . . . acquainted with the tempers, manners, and government of the people, to whom they are to dispense the ministry of salvation.”⁸⁹ While Chapter VI examines this notion of a “native clergy” in greater detail, two points merit mention here. First, the pastoral letter of 1792 illuminates the fact that Carroll’s immersion in the American milieu in the two decades following his return from Europe provided him with singular insight into the American character. Second and relatedly, Carroll understood that both believers and nonbelievers ascribed greater probity – and therefore credibility – to clergymen who, in their estimation, identified with them, their culture, and their life situation. The proliferation of ethnic parishes as a byproduct of mushrooming immigration in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries emphatically confirmed this reality. In the same period, for reasons explained in Chapter VI, the American Church found it nearly

⁸⁸ John Carroll to Lorenzo Cardinal Antonelli, Baltimore, 1 March 1785, in “The First American Report to Propaganda on Catholicism in the United States, March 1, 1785” in *Documents of American Catholic History*, ed. Ellis, vol. 1, 149.

⁸⁹ Guilday, ed., “Bishop Carroll’s Pastoral Letter of 1792,” in *National Pastorals*, 5.

impossible to produce African American priests to serve Catholics and prospective converts of their race.

Despite Carroll's hope of someday having a legion of American priests, pragmatism dictated that for the time being he solicit aid from places blessed with a surplus. His pressing need did not, however, prompt him to relax the standards for men who would tend the American flock. He had earlier voiced this sentiment in his 1785 report to *Propaganda Fide* when he wrote, "I am convinced that the Catholic faith will suffer less harm, if for a short time there is no priest at all in a place, than if living as we do among fellow citizens of another religion, we admit to the discharge of the sacred ministry . . . incautious and imprudent priests."⁹⁰ Carroll reinforced his point about the quality of the clergy by reminding *Propaganda Fide* that American Catholics lived amidst a predominately Protestant population that closely scrutinized Catholic actions and behavior.

By 1798 Carroll looked to Ireland in his quest to fill the priestly ranks, but to his great disappointment he received no relief from that bastion of Catholicism and traditional foundry of priests. The Irish Church, largely as a result of English interference in its affairs, did not have a seminary of its own but relied instead on seminaries on the continent to train large numbers of its young men for the priesthood. This fruitful arrangement ceased when "the French Revolution . . . swept away the colleges in different parts of Europe which had been hives for keeping up the Irish

⁹⁰ John Carroll to Propaganda Fide, Baltimore, 1 March 1785, in *American Catholic History: A Documentary Reader*, eds. Mark Massa with Catherine Osborne (New York: New York University Press, 2008), 28-30.

Clergy.”⁹¹ In the course of all these difficulties, however, some things did work to Carroll’s and the American Church’s advantage, especially the coming to the U.S. of ordained Frenchmen in search of a mission.

As noted earlier, Pius XII’s *Sertum Laetitiae* celebrated the “welcome aid” that Bishop Carroll received from French priests displaced by the Revolution that raged in their homeland. Between 1791 and 1799, twenty-four priests arrived in the United States, six of whom eventually rose to episcopal rank in their adopted nation.⁹² That such a high percentage of these priests attained the bishop’s miter attests to the pressing need for men to lead an organization whose geographic expansion in the decades after the Revolution closely approximated that of the American nation. More than one Catholic historian has recorded the measureable contribution that French priests made to buttressing the young American Church. That notwithstanding, because Catholic History, like other histories, succumbs to the peculiar eye and pen of its composer, some writers have noted the difficulty French clergymen experienced adjusting to American culture. This did not negate their virtue, intent, or accomplishments, but it did create situations that impeded their effectiveness and, in a larger sense, amplified the negative mindset of the Church’s opponents. The clerics’ experience with republicanism in France had horrified them and, barely “acquainted with our language, the genius of our institutions and the temper of our people, they often gave vent to sayings that were magnified and distorted by the enemies of the Church.”⁹³ This kind of cultural

⁹¹ Shea, *History of the Catholic Church*, vol. 2, 457.

⁹² Childs, *French Refugee Life*, 39-40, 199.

⁹³ Hugh P. McElrone, “The Councils of Baltimore,” in *Memorial Volume*, 33.

disconnect, compounded by ethnic distinctions and regional differentia, gave American Catholicism a kaleidoscopic character that in later years – though it fostered spirited discourse – served to hinder rather than advance the Church’s African American ministry.

Fortunately for Carroll and the American Church, a number of the French priests who arrived in America belonged to the Society of St. Sulpice, a society devoted to forming young men for the diocesan priesthood.⁹⁴ More familiarly known as the Sulpicians, the society traced its charism⁹⁵ to John James Olier who founded it in 1642, inculcating it with “a methodology for spirituality, for community life, and for pedagogy.”⁹⁶ The Sulpicians earned a reputation in Europe for bringing structure and marrow to the process of priestly formation, repudiating in many ecclesiastical jurisdictions educational regimens too long individuated by inconsistency and superficiality.

In an instance of particular fortuity for the American Church, while Carroll was in England to receive his episcopal consecration in 1790, he met Sulpician Abbé Charles-Francois Nagot. Nagot informed the new American bishop that the Sulpicians wished to establish a seminary in Baltimore at their own expense. Because the French Revolution and the concomitant Civil Constitution of the Clergy created an intolerable situation for the Catholic clergy, the Sulpicians looked outward from France for other

⁹⁴ Ruane, *Beginnings of Society of St. Sulpice*, 5-11.

⁹⁵ The charism of a religious congregation refers to the spiritual orientation that animates it, gives it a particular character, and defines its mission.

⁹⁶ Christopher J. Kauffman, *Tradition and Transformation in Catholic Culture: The Priests of Saint Sulpice in the United States from 1791 to the Present* (New York: Macmillan, 1988), 9-10.

places to serve.⁹⁷ On the far side of an ever-narrowing Atlantic Ocean lay the United States, the grateful recipient of France's financial and military aid during the American Revolution. The Sulpicians saw a current opportunity to provide spiritual aid by alleviating the problem of too few priests for the country's expanding Catholic population. Carroll, for his part, understood that a Sulpician seminary in Baltimore would facilitate the recruitment of laborers for the American vineyard from among the nation's current and future generations of young men. The first small band of four Sulpician fathers and five seminarians arrived in Baltimore 10 July 1791; by October the same year, they had opened St. Mary's Seminary, the first American institution dedicated to preparing aspirants for priestly ordination.⁹⁸

On 29 March 1792, three more Sulpician priests and two seminarians arrived in Baltimore. This group included Father Benoit Joseph Flaget and seminarian Stephen Badin, both of whom later played significant roles in the Church's growth in the West. The need for priests continued so critical that Bishop Carroll could hardly afford the luxury of the Sulpicians' devoting themselves solely to St. Mary's Seminary. Shortly after Flaget arrived in the U.S., for example, Carroll assigned him to a mission in Vincennes in present-day Indiana, marking the beginning of Flaget's distinguished career in the American Church. After remaining in Vincennes for three years, he held teaching and administrative assignments at Georgetown College and St. Mary's College in Baltimore, the latter an institution the Sulpicians founded and operated separately from St. Mary's Seminary. Although elevated to the Bardstown bishopric in 1808, Flaget

⁹⁷ Spalding, *The Premier See*, 22; Kauffman, *Tradition and Transformation*, 39-40.

⁹⁸ Kauffman, *Tradition and Transformation*, 42.

at first avoided accepting the honor for fear it would force him to relinquish membership in the Sulpicians. The Society's rules did not permit its members to accept elevated ecclesiastical office, but Flaget's superiors granted him a dispensation. He arrived in Bardstown in 1811 and in 1815 made his first report to Rome. In it Flaget wrote that Kentucky had ten priests and nineteen churches, mostly log cabins. When Flaget passed away in 1850, the number of priests had risen to fifty-five and the number of churches to forty-six.⁹⁹ The practical realities of the western region – responsibility for a vast territory with few priests to cover it – forced bishops and priests to adopt a *modus operandi* that carried through to later missionary efforts, including, relevantly, the African American ministry. Priests on the western frontier cared for the known Catholics first and, whenever possible, brought the Church's ministry to their non-Catholic neighbors. While always remaining hopeful of making conversions, early bishops of necessity focused their resources on the faithful.¹⁰⁰

In 1793 Bishop Carroll conferred Holy Orders on seminarian Stephen Badin, distinguishing him as the first priest ordained in the United States. Badin's first assignment took him to the western frontier, in this case to Kentucky, where he arrived in November 1793.¹⁰¹ “[B]y the end of 1793 nine Sulpicians were engaged in seminary work, secular education, and parish frontier ministries scattered throughout Carroll's

⁹⁹ Kauffman, *Tradition and Transformation*, 85-91; John Gilmary Shea, *History of the Catholic in the United States*, vol. 3, *From the Division of the Diocese of Baltimore, 1808, and Death of Archbishop Carroll, 1815, to the Fifth Provincial Council of Baltimore, 1843* (New York: John G. Shea, 1890), 264-270.

¹⁰⁰ Thomas T. McAvoy, *The Catholic Church in Indiana, 1789-1834* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1940; reprint, New York: AMS Press, 1967), 123. Citations refer to the reprint edition.

¹⁰¹ “Father Badin's Description of the Church on the Kentucky Frontier, April 11. 1796,” in *Documents of American Catholic History*, ed. Ellis, vol. 1, 179.

vast diocese. Although few in number, they nevertheless represented over one-fifth of the clergy in the infant diocese.”¹⁰² The shortage of priests imposed a particularly heavy burden on those working in the West. In the spring of 1796, Badin wrote to implore Bishop Carroll to send additional priests to Kentucky. “Probably there is not in all your diocese as large congregations as are those in Kentucky, and they are increasing from day to day; there is not a Catholic here that does not bitterly lament at finding himself deprived of those means of salvation that were to be had in Maryland.”¹⁰³ It deserves mention that events on the western frontier did not occur in a vacuum, somehow immune to ecclesiastical politics. James Hennesey reports, for example, that it took a resolution from Rome to convince Québec’s Bishop Pierre Gibault that the entire U.S. fell within Baltimore’s jurisdiction, and no part of it in his. In the aftermath, “Carroll was finally able to regularize church life in the borderlands of the diocese by sending a trio of refugee French Sulpician priests to take over the western missions.”¹⁰⁴

In his 1792 pastoral letter, Bishop Carroll expressed gratitude to the Sulpicians, referring to them as “learned and exemplary clergymen, devoted by choice, and formed by experience to the important function of training young Ecclesiastics to all the duties of the ministry.”¹⁰⁵ The deep gratitude that the American hierarchy felt to the Society of St. Sulpice survived Carroll. As late as 1932 Catholic historian Peter Guilday dedicated one of his works to the Sulpicians, “who began the work of higher clerical education in

¹⁰² Kauffman, *Tradition and Transformation*, 44-45.

¹⁰³ Stephen Theodore Badin to John Carroll, Washington County Kentucky, 11 April 1796, in *Documents of American Catholic History*, ed. Ellis, vol. 1, 180.

¹⁰⁴ James Hennesey, *American Catholics: A History of the Roman Catholic Community in the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981), 82.

¹⁰⁵ Guilday, ed., “The Pastoral Letter of 1792,” in *National Pastorals*, 5.

the United States . . . and who have assisted our prelates in the work of all the Councils from 1829 to 1884. To [them] . . . this is another unforgettable debt of honor due them from the Church in our country.”¹⁰⁶ When Carroll acknowledged the Sulpicians’ work in his 1792 pastoral, he eagerly and candidly solicited the faithful’s financial support of their work: “I cannot forbear recommending their undertaking to your patronage.”¹⁰⁷ In making a plea for financial support, Carroll continued a practice that dated to the earliest days of the Church. Matters of finance routinely found their way into the Church’s discourse, both internal and external, formal and informal. The problem of limited resources constantly afflicted all sectors of the Church’s ministry, a reality that later became painfully evident to the men and women committed to the African American apostolate.

When, in 1808, the solitary Baltimore diocese became an archdiocese with widely dispersed suffragan dioceses, the constituent elements of the American Church exhibited wide ethnic, cultural, and geographic diversity. They also differed to varying degrees in the circumstances that led to their episcopal status. Maryland Catholics could point to their forebears’ holding the 1632 charter that established their colony, while New York’s and Boston’s Catholicism happened principally because later immigrants brought the religion with them from Europe. Philadelphia’s Catholics – also immigrants and descendants of immigrants – had the advantage of colonial Pennsylvania’s relatively benevolent disposition toward all religions. In Kentucky, Catholicism gained a foothold

¹⁰⁶ Peter Guilday, *A History of the Councils of Baltimore, 1791-1884* (New York: Macmillan, 1932; reprint, New York: Arno Press, 1969), viii. Citations refer to the reprint edition.

¹⁰⁷ Guilday, ed., “The Pastoral Letter of 1792,” in *National Pastorals*, 5.

when Catholics from Pennsylvania and Maryland joined other post-Revolutionary Americans migrating westward for land and opportunity. Farthest south, the momentous territorial acquisition of 1803 forced Louisiana Catholics' formal association with the see of Baltimore in 1805.

Up to this point Chapter III has focused on U.S. Catholicism's foundation and early growth through 1808, the point at which the Holy See elevated Baltimore to metropolitan rank and presiding prelate John Carroll to archbishop. The remainder of the chapter sketches the American Church's path to the Third Plenary Council in 1884. To do this in measured fashion, it uses three sets of milestones: organizational realignments within the study's geographic area, national meetings of the hierarchy, and public pronouncements as delivered through pastoral letters.

Maps depicting U.S. diocesan boundaries in the nineteenth century had a short service life because the nation's geographic expansion necessitated the creation of new dioceses, while the Church divided existing dioceses to improve administration and ministry. New episcopal sees included: Richmond (1820), Charleston (1820), Mobile (1829), Natchez (1837), Little Rock (1843) and Natchitoches (1853). In 1850, the Holy See elevated New Orleans to archdiocesan status with suffragan dioceses in Mobile, Natchez and Little Rock.¹⁰⁸ Diocesan realignments did not occur without objection from one quarter or another. A shortage of priests, lack of funding, and ethnic tensions all combined to cause dissent within the Catholic communities affected by boundary

¹⁰⁸ Owen B. Corrigan, "Episcopal Succession in the United States," *Catholic Historical Review* 2, no. 2 (July 1916), 127-136.

changes. The laity found its voice as American Catholics drew on their experience with democracy to call for an expanded role in ecclesiastical decisions.

Of all the diocesan realignments, none caused greater controversy than the July 1820 erection of the dioceses of Richmond and Charleston. Pope Pius VII, on the advice of *Propaganda Fide*, created the two new dioceses from territory within the jurisdiction of the archiepiscopal see of Baltimore. To the new diocese of Richmond the pope appointed Patrick Kelly, then president of an Irish seminary. To Charleston – a diocese encompassing all of South Carolina, North Carolina and Georgia – he appointed Kelly’s compatriot John England, an Irish parish priest. These appointments lent weight to the argument of many American Catholics that their Church was moving away from its French influence and becoming increasingly an institution dominated by Irishmen. The Holy See erected the two new dioceses without the full concurrence of Baltimore’s third archbishop, French Sulpician Ambrose Maréchal.¹⁰⁹ The dialogue between Maréchal and the region’s lay Catholics over the assignment of priests had grown so contentious that a group of Virginia Catholics – and later Maréchal himself – attempted to draw Thomas Jefferson into the dispute. Jefferson declined, not wanting to become involved in a religious controversy.¹¹⁰ When the newly consecrated Bishop Patrick Kelly arrived in Baltimore en route to Richmond, Archbishop Maréchal issued a formal letter to Kelly protesting establishment of the Richmond see. “But to assure the tranquility of our [Maréchal’s] conscience, we hereby distinctly declare to your Lordship [Kelly] that we

¹⁰⁹ Thomas T. McAvoy, *A History of the Catholic Church in the United States* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1965), 102-108.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 83; Hennesey, *American Catholics*, 98-100.

in no wise give or yield our assent positively to this most unfortunate action of the Sacred Congregation de Propaganda Fide.”¹¹¹ The Holy See’s decision to erect Richmond and Charleston reflected the central-versus-local control antagonism that simmered between the American Church and Rome, as well as between regions within the American Church. This dissonance continued for the remainder of the century and for decades into the next, as became evident later in the opinions and actions of different camps with regard to the African American ministry.

During this period of diocesan realignments, Church leaders met in formal assemblies, a practice that had its beginning with the early Church fathers.¹¹² By the end of the fourth century, meetings on a broadly termed “national” level had become an accepted part of the structure of the Western Church.¹¹³ The meetings took different forms: When priests came together at the behest of their diocesan bishop, they met in a synod; bishops of a province convening under the authority of their archbishop met in a provincial council; and bishops and archbishops of several provinces met in plenary (national) council under a senior bishop or archbishop commissioned by the pope to act as its president.¹¹⁴ The plenary council yielded eminence only to the ecumenical council, the papal convocation of all the world’s bishops.¹¹⁵ During the period of the current study, a single ecumenical council, the First Vatican Council of 1869-1870, met in Rome.

¹¹¹ Ambrose Maréchal to Patrick Kelly, Baltimore, 18 January 1821, in Shea, *History of the Catholic Church*, vol. 3, 80.

¹¹² Meetings of elders and leaders dated back to biblical times: Deuteronomy 29:10 RSV, “All of you are standing today before the Lord your God – your leaders, tribes, elders, officials, all the men of Israel;” Acts 15:5 RSV, “Then the apostles and the elders assembled to consider the matter.”

¹¹³ Brian E. Daley, “Structures of Charity: Bishops’ Gatherings and the See of Rome in the Early Church,” in *Episcopal Conferences: Historical, Canonical, and Theological Studies*, ed. Thomas J. Reese (Washington: Georgetown University Press), 30.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 341-342.

¹¹⁵ Herbermann et al., 4: 424.

Although forty-eight American bishops and archbishops attended, the council's deliberations and decisions held no particular relevance for the African American ministry¹¹⁶. However, this did not signal Vatican ignorance of the U.S. situation as much as it did the Holy See's preoccupation with momentous matters of doctrine, theological error, and papal infallibility. In fact, papal communications to the American Church made it plain that Rome recognized the gravity of changes taking place in the U.S. as a result of slavery's demise.¹¹⁷

The earliest meetings of the American clergy consisted of general chapters of priest-representatives from the Northern, Middle, and Southern districts of the loosely organized American Church. Synods brought America's Catholic clergy together under Bishop Carroll as an integrated whole and marked "the real formation of American Catholicism, the fusion of Catholic principles with American circumstances."¹¹⁸ Synodal legislation became "the cornerstone of the edifice erected by [the Church's] prelates during the century which followed down to 1884."¹¹⁹

In his May 1792 pastoral, Carroll wrote on Christian education for children; scrupulous reception of the sacraments; financial support of parishes, clergy and missions; and the newly established Georgetown College where, Carroll contended, a religious education would cultivate "a great increase of piety, the necessary consequence

¹¹⁶ James Hennesey, "The Baltimore Council of 1866: An American Syllabus," *Records of the American Catholic Historical Society* 76, no. 3 (June 1965): 158.

¹¹⁷ See, for example, the instruction of Prefect of *Propaganda Fide* Cardinal Alessandro Barnabò's 1866 instruction in advance of the Second Plenary Council, quoted elsewhere in the current study.

¹¹⁸ McAvoy, *History of the Catholic Church*, 69.

¹¹⁹ Guilday, *History of the Councils of Baltimore*, 62-63.

of a careful instruction in the principles of faith and Christian morality.”¹²⁰ Carroll’s belief in the value of Catholic education echoed down through the next two centuries as the Church made education a centerpiece of both its ministry to the faithful and its evangelical outreach. Chapter V details how the Church’s commitment to education manifested itself in the African American ministry. The 1792 pastoral bore only Carroll’s signature, significant because the steadily increasing number of signatories to subsequent pastorals gave witness to the Church’s growth to 1884.

In the period between the diocesan synod of 1791 and the First Provincial Council of 1829, just one other high-level meeting occurred, begotten by opportunity. In 1810, Archbishop Carroll consecrated bishops for three of the four suffragan dioceses erected in 1808. Benoit Flaget (Bardstown), John Cheverus (Boston), and Michael Egan (Philadelphia) received the bishop’s miter in Baltimore in late autumn 1810 and remained in that city for a time to confer with Carroll. Their deliberations produced a number of formal agreements that complemented the synodal legislation of 1791. Taken together, the 1810 agreements and the synodal acts of 1791 constituted the earliest code of canon law in the American Church. Five prelates signed the agreements: Carroll, his coadjutor Leonard Neale, and the three newly consecrated suffragan bishops.¹²¹

The period after Carroll’s death in 1815 saw nearly unmanageable growth in the Church, internecine strife between Baltimore and its suffragan sees, and domestic and international political unrest. These combined to cause a hiatus in general meetings of the Church’s hierarchy that lasted until the First Provincial Council of 1829. As a result,

¹²⁰ Guilday, ed., “Bishop Carroll’s Pastoral Letter of 1792,” in *National Pastorals*, 4.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 16.

in a clear contravention of the Church's principle of indivisibility, dioceses developed distinctive procedures for confronting their regionally unique sets of contingencies.

Alarmed by this trend, Charleston's Bishop John England encouraged a convocation of the American hierarchy, a stance that years later prompted a Catholic journal to declare that "the Church in this country owes to Bishop England the celebration of Provincial Councils, which have given form and consistency to the hierarchy and order to her internal economy."¹²²

The First Provincial Council met in Baltimore in 1829 with Baltimore's Archbishop James Whitfield presiding. When Bishop John England received notification of it, he wrote Whitfield suggesting topics for the agenda. England's demonstration of support for the coming council aside, the Charleston bishop insinuated that attempting too much in a short period of time could prove detrimental. "[U]pon a principle of prudence I think our decisions at first should be made as few as possible, for it is easier to supply at a future period what might be wanting than to retract what would have been once done."¹²³ The political delicacy of this first meeting illustrated the conundrum facing the American Church: how to foster unity and uniformity without denying bishops the authority of their office. Regardless, the hierarchy came together in the First Provincial Council and wrestled with important issues. "The very calling of this first council reflected a newfound awareness that Catholicism in the young American nation

¹²² Orestes Brownson, "Bishop England's Works," *Brownson's Quarterly Review*, April 1850, <http://www.orestesbrownson.com/182.html>, quoted in Guilday, *Life and Times of John England*, vol. 1, 502.

¹²³ John England to James Whitfield, Charleston, 26 December 1828, in Peter Guilday, *The Life and Times of John England, First Bishop of Charleston*, vol. 2 (New York: America Press, 1927), 117.

had to face challenges unknown in Europe.”¹²⁴ Among the more than thirty decrees the council passed, a number had relevance for the African American apostolate in later years. In particular, the council confirmed bishops’ authority over non-diocesan priests – that is, members of religious orders – assigned within their dioceses. Significant at the time, this became more so in later years when priests from religious orders, avowed to obedience to their religious superior and allegiant to their order’s particular charism, ventured into mission regions within dioceses where the presiding bishop’s agenda superseded their own. Also of significance to the shaping of the African American ministry, in particular education’s role in it, the First Provincial Council advocated the establishment of Catholic parochial schools.¹²⁵

Six provincial councils followed in 1837, 1840, 1843, 1846, and 1849.¹²⁶ The work of the second council found its best expression in its pastoral letter, likely the work of John England.¹²⁷ The bishops urged lay Catholics to encourage priestly vocations to meet the needs of the country’s expanding Catholic population at a time when bishops knew they could not rely much longer on Europe to supply them with priests.¹²⁸ The chronic lack of priests – in 1829 and in the decades following – limited bishops’ ability to meet the demands of their growing Church. That growth plus expansion into new mission fields compounded the problem, a fact repeatedly driven home in later years to those engaged in the African American ministry. The pastoral letter published by the

¹²⁴ “The First Council of Baltimore, 1829,” in *American Catholic History: A Documentary Reader*, eds. Mark Massa with Catherine Osborne (New York: New York University Press, 2008), 36.

¹²⁵ Guilday, *History of the Councils of Baltimore*, 90-94.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 81.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 110.

¹²⁸ Guilday, ed., “The Pastoral Letter of 1833,” in *National Pastorals*, 65-75.

Third Provincial Council of 1837, like its 1833 predecessor, called attention to the priest shortage. It repeated John Carroll's call for a national clergy and encouraged the faithful to finance the construction and operation of seminaries. The 1837 letter also denounced the censure that the Church continued to suffer from hostile and often influential elements within Protestant society. Because Protestants routinely questioned Catholics' patriotism, the pastoral stated unequivocally that Catholics' religious beliefs did not annul their allegiance to the nation.¹²⁹

The Fourth Provincial Council assembled in Baltimore in 1840 with a national election looming. The bishops took the opportunity to comment on "the sacred obligation of the ballot," instructing the faithful to eschew bribes or other forms of influence, and reminding them of their responsibility to society and to God "for the honest, independent, and fearless exercise of [their] franchise."¹³⁰ The American Church wanted all the country's people to see it as a bastion of good citizenship. The next council, the Fifth Provincial Council of May 1843, earned the distinction of considering fewer matters of ecclesiastical import than any council that preceded it. Peter Guilday, who meticulously studied the councils, has argued that the 1843 council's pastoral letter to the laity – brief, by the standard of earlier pastorals – made it "apparent that nothing of an exceptional nature in the matter of national ecclesiastical jurisdiction demanded the attention of the prelates."¹³¹ Guilday's assessment notwithstanding, one section of the 1843 pastoral letter does stand out when seen in the context of the current study. It calls

¹²⁹ Guilday, *History of the Councils of Baltimore*, 116-117.

¹³⁰ Peter Guilday, ed., "The Pastoral Letter of 1840," in *National Pastorals*, 124-125, 135, 142-143.

¹³¹ Guilday, *History of the Councils of Baltimore*, 135.

attention to a missionary effort by U.S.-based Jesuits among black people – in Africa. It praises their dedication “to the salvation of the colored emigrants from the United States in [Liberia] and the natives of Western Africa.”¹³² Immediately following this, the bishops stressed the importance of similar charity at home but made no specific mention of people of color in the United States. In Guilday’s estimation, the 1843 council did not hold its place as the least significant of the provincial councils for long; its successor in 1846 captured that distinction. Guilday concluded that the triviality of the latter’s decrees made it “appear that the Council of 1846 was hardly necessary.”¹³³

The last of the provincial councils in 1849 focused on organizational and jurisdictional matters, as reflected in the pastoral letter that followed. A period of only three years separated the adjournment of this final provincial council from the first ecclesiastical conference that merited the classification “national” in both name and character. The First Plenary Council convened in May 1852 under the superintendence of Baltimore’s scholarly Archbishop Francis Patrick Kenrick, whom the Holy See had designated its Apostolic Delegate. The American Church at the time comprised six archdioceses, twenty-five dioceses, four vicariates-apostolic, 1,411 churches, 681 mission stations, and nearly two million members.¹³⁴ In evidence of the Church’s progress toward establishing a native clergy, twenty-eight theological seminaries enrolled three hundred and thirty-one men in various stages of formation for the priesthood.¹³⁵ With the Baltimore province no longer coterminous with the American

¹³² Guilday, ed., “The Pastoral Letter of 1843,” in *National Pastorals, 1792-1919*, 158.

¹³³ Guilday, *History of the Councils of Baltimore*, 150.

¹³⁴ Ellis, *American Catholicism*, 80.

¹³⁵ Guilday, *History of the Councils of Baltimore*, 171.

nation – St. Louis, Oregon, New York, Cincinnati, and New Orleans had by this time attained provincial status – American bishops welcomed a national assembly that had authority to pass decrees of national jurisdiction.¹³⁶

On the administrative and doctrinal level, the First Plenary Council consolidated the legislation passed in all the assemblies that preceded it. The council's work represented "the most important step so far made by the hierarchy for complete uniformity of Church life in the United States."¹³⁷ In the temporal realm, the bishops acknowledged the plight of countless Catholic poor and near-poor, especially among the immigrant population. "Not only have we to erect and maintain the Church, the seminary, and the schoolhouse, but we have to found hospitals, establish orphanages, and provide for every want of suffering humanity, which religion forbids us to neglect."¹³⁸ Despite the resolve expressed in this statement, the bishops lacked the human and material resources to meet their lofty goals in every instance of need, a situation that continued when the Church broadened the scope of its ministries to include African Americans. Especially relevant to the current study, neither in their decrees nor in their pastoral letter did the prelates articulate a stance on slavery, a conspicuous oddity examined in Chapter IV. The American hierarchy saw the Church's interests best served by not taking a position on the single most divisive issue of the time.

¹³⁶ "The Progress of the Church in the United States, from the First Provincial Council to the Third Plenary Council of Baltimore," *American Catholic Quarterly Review* 9, no. 35 (July 1884), 489. http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?url_ver=Z39.88-2004&res_dat=xri:pio-us:&rft_dat=xri:pio:article:5119-1884-009-00-000025.

¹³⁷ Guilday, *History of the Councils of Baltimore*, 178.

¹³⁸ Guilday, ed., "The Pastoral Letter of 1852," in *National Pastorals*, 187.

Archbishop Kenrick died in July 1863 and after ten month's of deliberation over the best man for this important position, the Holy See named Martin John Spalding to succeed Kenrick. A product of the Urban College of Propaganda in Rome, Spalding fit the Vatican's requirement for a man who understood the Holy See's positions on governing the Church Universal. "Unlike Carroll and the Sulpicians who followed him, . . . [Spalding] was thoroughly Roman, ultramontane in his basic theology, and undeviating in his application of the discipline promoted by the Holy See."¹³⁹ Based on these qualifications, the Vatican had good reason to consider the American-born Spalding "their man." Once consecrated, Spalding wrote *Propaganda Fide* to recommend convening the previously postponed Second Plenary Council. The agenda he proposed reflected a belief in the need to revisit many of the topics that had occupied previous councils, principally because the Church and the nation had undergone so many changes in the years since the First Plenary Council in 1852.

Clearly intent on expanding beyond past conference agendas, Spalding encouraged that "some well thought out and well planned measures be undertaken to provide for the moral and religious betterment of the former slaves."¹⁴⁰ In letters to fellow bishops, he expressed concern for the future of the Negroes and argued that the end of slavery had caused "four million of these unfortunates [to be] thrown to our charity," thereby presenting the Church with "a golden opportunity for reaping a harvest

¹³⁹ Spalding, *The Premier See*, 177-180. *Ultramontane* connotes an ecclesiastical structure that supports the preeminence of papal authority.

¹⁴⁰ Edwardo J. Misch, "The American Bishops and the Negro from the Civil War to the Third Plenary Council of Baltimore, 1865-1884" (PhD dissertation, Pontifical Gregorian University, 1968), 17.

of souls, which neglected may not return.”¹⁴¹ The Holy See approved the council, and Prefect of *Propaganda Fide* Cardinal Alessandro Barnabò wrote in part:

Finally, it is the wish of the Sacred Congregation that the bishops of the United States . . . should consult together respecting some uniform method of providing for the salvation and Christian education of the emancipated blacks. This question has been brought up, and it is one, indeed, of the first necessity, and unless they speedily take action on it, and gather this great harvest into the Lord’s granary, this people will suffer irreparable injury from the wiles and cupidity of the enemy.”¹⁴²

The Holy See appointed Spalding as Apostolic Delegate to preside over the Second Plenary Council of Baltimore. Choosing Spalding over a “Roman president”¹⁴³ suggests that Barnabò understood the American Church’s aversion to Vatican obtrusion into what it considered internal matters. When the possibility had still remained that Barnabò might name a European to the post, St. Louis Bishop Peter Richard Kenrick, never a strong supporter of the centralization of ecclesiastical power in the papacy, wrote Spalding to say that he intended to advise Barnabò of “the inconveniences and probably evil consequences that would attend such a measure.”¹⁴⁴ Kenrick’s sentiment disagreed with the image of prelatic collegiality that the Church wanted to present to the world.

¹⁴¹ Martin John Spalding to John Timon, Baltimore, 23 August 1865, in Stephen L. Theobald, “Catholic Missionary Work among the Colored People of the United States,” *Records of the American Catholic Historical Society of Philadelphia*, 35 (December 1924), 342; Martin John Spalding to John McCloskey, Baltimore, 9 October 1865, in Misch, “The American Bishops and the Negro,” 20.

¹⁴² “The Catholic Plenary Council,” *The Sun*, Baltimore, MD, October 18, 1866, <http://proquest.umi.com>; *The Sun* reported this as a transcription of a translation from Latin by *The New York Tribune*.

¹⁴³ Thomas W. Spalding, *Martin John Spalding: American Churchman* (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1973), 198.

¹⁴⁴ Peter Richard Kendrick to Martin John Spalding, St. Louis, 06 October 1865, quoted in Thomas W. Spalding, *Martin John Spalding: American Churchman* (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1973), 198-199.

Seven archbishops, thirty-eight bishops, three abbots, and 120 theologians came together for the council.¹⁴⁵ Among his instructions to the assembled prelates, Spalding made specific mention of separate churches for the Negroes and the preparation of young Negro men for the priesthood.¹⁴⁶ The council convened with great fanfare and over its two-week course gave the nation and the world a view of what the American Church had become in the years since Pius VI appointed John Carroll its first bishop. “The sessions and decrees of the Second Plenary Council . . . highlighted the essential orthodoxy of the American Church . . . [and] the peculiar characteristics of that Church as it had developed in surroundings different from those of the Old World.”¹⁴⁷ In their deliberations, America’s bishops found common ground on a broad spectrum of theological issues, partly in reaction to the “Syllabus of Errors” that Pope Pius IX had published in 1864.¹⁴⁸ As with other councils, a number of decrees purposed to further internal discipline, establish geographic boundaries, and institute procedural uniformity. A first in the history of the American Church occurred when one of the Council’s decrees declared the Church’s commitment to the African American apostolate.¹⁴⁹ The decree “*De Nigrorum Salute Procuranda*” (“On Attending to the Salvation of Negroes”) sounded more like a recommendation, however, than a command to action. On a theological level, paragraph 484 reminded Catholics of all humankind’s equality in God’s eyes, “*Christus moriens in cruce . . . omnibus nullo excepto hominibus*

¹⁴⁵ Henesey, “Baltimore Council of 1866,” 166.

¹⁴⁶ Misch, “The American Bishops and the Negro,” 24.

¹⁴⁷ Henesey, “Baltimore Council of 1866,” 165.

¹⁴⁸ Henesey, *American Catholics*, 160.

¹⁴⁹ “Titulus X, Caput IV: De Nigrorum Salute Procuranda,” in *Concilii Plenarii Baltimorensis II, In Ecclesia Metropolitana Baltimorensi, A Die VII ad Diem XXI Octobris, A.D., MDCCCLXVI, Habiti, et a Sede Apostolica Recogniti, Decreta* (Baltimore: John Murphy, 1868), 243.

comparavit.” (“Christ’s death on the cross . . . was for all men, regarding them without exception as equals.”)¹⁵⁰ Despite this expression of decidedly Christian egalitarianism, paragraph 485 advocated construction of “*ecclesiae separatae*” (“separate churches”) for Negroes if the local bishop deemed it “practicable and expedient.”¹⁵¹

In proposing separate African American churches, the bishops implied an expectation that white Catholics would object to sharing their churches with people of color. Their rationale in reaching this conclusion derived from their experience not only with mixed-race congregations but with white Catholics of different national backgrounds. Even as far back as Carroll’s time, “the question of nationality arose, and some were found who no longer wished to worship beside their fellow-Catholics, but insisted on having a separate church and priest especially to themselves.”¹⁵² While the idea of separate churches for African Americans revealed the bishops’ thinking on the direction their new ministry would take, their notion as to where responsibility rested spoke volumes about it: “*Unde melius videtur si Ordinariorum zelo ac prudentiae discernendum relinquatur, quid in diversis locis in bonum Nigrorum sit agendum.*”¹⁵³ (“Hence it would seem better that the decision be left to the zeal and discretion of the ordinaries [bishops] in different places regarding what is best for the Negroes.”) In short, local bishops – who daily felt the influence of local society – retained authority over the form, content, and tempo of their respective dioceses’ ministry to African Americans.

¹⁵⁰ “Titulus X, Caput IV,” 244.

¹⁵¹ Ibid.; John Tracy Ellis, *The Life of James Cardinal Gibbons, Archbishop of Baltimore, 1834-1921*, vol. 1 (Westminster, MD: Christian Classics, 1987; reprint, Milwaukee: Bruce, 1952), 88-89. Citations refer to the reprint edition.

¹⁵² Shea, *History of the Catholic Church*, vol. 2, 418.

¹⁵³ “Titulus X, Caput IV” 244.

Reacting to this, the outspoken pastor of St. Joseph's Church in New York, Father Thomas Farrell, well-known for his public stands *against* slavery and *for* Christian treatment of African Americans, publicly criticized the council for its meager results. Farrell referred to its participants as "old fogies."¹⁵⁴ The timidity of the conciliar decree on the Negro ministry portended a commensurate absence of marrow in the pastoral letter. The pastoral did not even restate the substance of the decree; instead the bishops wistfully noted that the slaves' emancipation *en masse* without any preparation for freedom made the task of ministering to "so large a multitude, with their peculiar dispositions and habits" all the more difficult. The pastoral then exhorted both priests and laity to follow their bishops' guidance and "extend to [Negroes] that Christian education and moral restraint which they so much stand in need of."¹⁵⁵ A comparison of this statement to those of Cardinal Barnabò and Archbishop Spalding prior to the council lends weight to Shils' contention that increased lateral (geographic) and vertical (hierarchical) separation from a center (e.g. Rome) attenuates attachment to a central value system.

Bishops in the North believed – quite correctly, if one takes into account the geographic distribution of freed slaves – that the South had the greater need for a vigorous African American ministry. In consequence, Northern bishops considered it the responsibility of Southern bishops to raise money and find priests for a ministry principally centered in their jurisdictions.¹⁵⁶ Unfortunately, the South's poverty and

¹⁵⁴ Misch, "American Bishops and the Negro," 61-62.

¹⁵⁵ Guilday "The Pastoral Letter of 1866," in *National Pastorals*, 221.

¹⁵⁶ Misch, "American Bishops and the Negro," 46-47.

political upheaval after the war impeded the Church's recovery there just as it did the recovery of other institutions.¹⁵⁷ Summarizing the Church's response to the council's decree respecting the African American ministry, "dean of U.S. Catholic historians"¹⁵⁸ John Tracy Ellis asked rhetorically what the Church accomplished for emancipated slaves. "Relatively little," he concluded.¹⁵⁹

Compared to that day in 1792 when none but John Carroll's signature appeared on the first pastoral letter to U.S. Catholics, the 1866 pastoral bore forty-five signatures of archbishops, bishops, and vicars apostolic. This large number of Catholic prelates evinced the Church's prodigious growth in the nineteenth century. Although the Civil War interrupted that growth as it did countless other social trends, the restoration of peace occasioned a resumption of the immigration that fueled the Church's expansion in the antebellum period. Catholic newcomers from southern and eastern Europe, and a continuing flow of immigrants from traditional points of origin like Germany and Ireland, populated northern industrial centers. The new arrivals immediately became the Church's responsibility, severely taxing bishops' manpower and financial resources.¹⁶⁰ The Church in the North had little that it could spare for the generally impoverished Church in the South, a circumstance that continued during Reconstruction and in the final years leading up to the next major ecclesiastical convocation, the Third Plenary Council of Baltimore in 1884.

¹⁵⁷ John Gilmary Shea, *History of the Catholic Church in the United States*, vol. 4, *From the Fifth Provincial Council of Baltimore, 1843, to the Second Plenary Council of Baltimore, 1866* (New York: John G. Shea, 1892), 715-716.

¹⁵⁸ Bruce Lambert, "Msgr. John Tracy Ellis, 87, Dies: Dean of U.S. Catholic Historians," *New York Times*, October 17, 1992, 15, <http://proquest.umi.com>.

¹⁵⁹ Ellis, *American Catholicism*, 99.

¹⁶⁰ Ellis, *American Catholicism*, 101.

In November 1884, “fourteen archbishops, sixty bishops, five visiting bishops from Canada and Japan, seven abbots, one prefect apostolic, eleven monsignors, eighteen vicars general, twenty-three superiors of religious orders, twelve rectors of seminaries, and ninety theologians” convened in the Third Plenary Council of Baltimore.¹⁶¹ The Holy See, imitating its 1866 action, appointed an American, Baltimore’s Archbishop James Gibbons, to preside over the council. Calculations of the Church’s growth over the eighteen years separating the 1866 and 1884 councils included a doubling of the number of the hierarchy; an increase in the number of priests from three thousand to eight thousand, of churches from thirty-five hundred to eighty-five hundred, and of Catholics from 5.5 million to 8 million.”¹⁶² These figures, admittedly drawn from estimates, nevertheless betoken an institution experiencing growth at a rate rivaled only by the growth of the nation itself. The council outshone earlier councils not only in its statistics but in its movement away from its inwardly focused organizational era toward a deeper engagement in the profusion of current social issues.¹⁶³ A number of matters deliberated in earlier councils – particularly of an organizational and administrative nature – once again appeared on the agenda, this time on a scale commensurate with the expanded Church. The council passed decrees that constituted “a carefully planned codification of all the laws enacted since the Synod of 1791,” with the result that “the Council of 1884 [could] not be viewed as a separate and distinct

¹⁶¹ “The Third Plenary Council,” in *Memorial Volume*, 46. The number of clergy in attendance varies in different accounts of the council; the writer excerpted the figures here from the publication produced soonest after the event.

¹⁶² Hugh P. McElrone, “The Councils of Baltimore,” in *Memorial Volume*, 45.

¹⁶³ Hennesey, *American Catholics*, 181.

canonical legislative body.”¹⁶⁴ Besides its effect of codifying past dicta, the council devoted unprecedented attention to subjects that earlier convocations had discounted or ignored entirely. In particular, the council used both sermonic and decretal forms to train a spotlight on the African American apostolate.

Savannah’s Bishop William H. Gross of the Redemptorist Order delivered a sermon Friday, November 21 on ministering to the Negro. Gross took an oblique approach to his topic, citing the benefits that would inure to society from an uplift of the race. He spoke in terms of the bishops’ responsibility to “elevate [the Negroes] morally, make them honest men, chaste women, obedient, law-abiding citizens.” Gross argued for the essentiality of morality to a prosperous society, and defined the Church’s sacraments as “channels of grace” that induced men and women to lead moral lives.¹⁶⁵ The full text of the sermon appeared in the following day’s edition of the *Baltimore Sun*.¹⁶⁶ Gross’s theme received support from a subsequent sermon delivered on the council’s closing day by Peoria’s Bishop John Lancaster Spalding, nephew of the late Archbishop Martin John Spalding. Spalding intended his sermon, titled “The Work of the Council,” to summarize the council’s accomplishments over its nearly four weeks in session. Turning to the African American apostolate, Spalding appealed to his audience’s sense of mission, reminding them that “colored people . . . are our countrymen, our brethren, redeemed by the Blood of Christ, and if we can do aught to . . . lighten the weight of the wrongs by which they have so long been oppressed, . . . if we can point out some surer way to a

¹⁶⁴ Guilday, *History of the Councils of Baltimore*, 244.

¹⁶⁵ William H. Gross “The Missions for the Colored People,” transcribed sermon in *Memorial Volume*, 72.

¹⁶⁶ “The Plenary Council,” *Baltimore Sun*, November 22, 1884. <http://lib-ezproxy.tamu.edu:2048/login?url=http://search.proquest.com/docview/534773927>.

higher and better world, we shall thank God for the opportunity of so beneficent and holy a mission.”¹⁶⁷

The bishops’ directives on the subject reside in the council’s *Acta et Decreta* (Acts and Decrees) in a chapter titled “*De Cura Pastoralis pro Hominibus Nigris et Indis*,” (“Concerning the Treatment of Negroes and Indians”).¹⁶⁸ The bishops departed from the Second Plenary Council’s characterization of the African American apostolate as regional, elevating it – in company with the Church’s ministry to Indians – to a program of national stature. They created a commission to oversee the ministry and mandated an annual collection in all American parishes to fund its work. One journal, *The Catholic World*, reacted positively to the council’s initiatives calling them “a practical beginning of our missionary enterprise,” and exhorting every Catholic to “pray and . . . give generously of his means that we may soon see a large and steady stream of converts.”¹⁶⁹ Events of later years, as will become evident in subsequent chapters, disclosed a wide gap between the opinions expressed by *The Catholic World* and those of the broader Catholic laity.

The Pastoral Letter of the Third Plenary Council came off the press as the second longest in the history of the American Church. Treating as it did the 1884 council’s voluminous work, it provided, despite its length, only a précis of each topic. It spoke about the African American ministry in a section devoted broadly to home and foreign

¹⁶⁷ John Lancaster Spalding, “The Work of the Council,” transcribed sermon, in *Memorial Volume*, 253.

¹⁶⁸ “Titulus VII, Caput II: De Cura Pastoralis pro Hominibus Nigris et Indis,” in *Acta et Decreta, Concilii Plenarii Baltimorensis Tertii, A.D., MDCCCLXXXIV* (Baltimore: John Murphy, 1886), 133-136.

¹⁶⁹ “The National Catholic Council,” *The Catholic World: A Monthly Magazine of General Literature and Science*, 40, no. 239 (February 1885):712. <http://lib-ezproxy.tamu.edu:2048/login?url=http://search.proquest.com/docview/125568628>.

missions. It gave prominence, however, to two actions decreed by the council: the establishment of the Society for the Propagation of the Faith in all parishes; and commencement of an annual collection for foreign missions and missions among “our Indians and Negroes.”¹⁷⁰ The challenge remained for the Church to staff and finance the effort, but at least the bishops had gone on record in support of a ministry in which all of them now had a stake.

The end-product of this chapter is a portrait of the American Catholic Church as it emerged from the Third Plenary Council of Baltimore. For the portrait to have full efficacy required witnessing the aggregation over time of individual brush strokes, each of which on some level determined the American Church’s form and function. The next chapter examines how this Church – the subject of the portrait – effected a ministerial engagement with African-descended people in the United States.

¹⁷⁰ Peter Guilday, ed., “The Pastoral Letter of 1884,” in *National Pastorals*, 263.

CHAPTER IV

THE CHURCH AND AFRICAN AMERICANS

This chapter examines three topics: the Catholic Church's teaching on slavery; its encounter with slavery in the United States; and the American Church's pre- and post-emancipation engagement with African Americans. In the context of the national history, the Emancipation Proclamation and Thirteenth Constitutional Amendment provide a salient point of transition in the relationship between African Americans and the nation's various institutions, including the American Church. In the narrower context of Catholic history, despite the passage of over two centuries between the Church's earliest New World encounters with persons of African descent and its nineteenth-century plenary councils, the pre-conciliar thinking of some segments within the American Church did not change in the critical decades that followed the councils. Sentiments that had formed in the period when slavery shackled the majority of African-descended people living in America persisted – among Catholics as well as non-Catholics – after slaves received their freedom. This did not negate, but it unquestionably impeded, a robust Catholic ministry directed at African Americans.

Although the post-war plenary councils stood out as milestones in the Church's unfolding ministry to African Americans, the Second Plenary Council of 1866 relegated the matter to an extraordinary (supra-agenda) session on the Monday after the council

had officially adjourned.¹ The 1866 council's *acta et decreta* left it to individual bishops to determine what might be done on behalf of the Negroes.² Their recommendation that "provided for segregated churches where local conditions required them" proved a harbinger of things to come as the Church struggled to create a welcoming environment for black Catholics.³ By advancing these minimalist measures, the council's bishops ignored the instruction that Prefect of *Propaganda Fide* Cardinal Alessandro Barnabò had given them eight months earlier. Barnabò told the bishops that in developing "plans for procuring the salvation and Christian education of the emancipated Blacks . . . they [were] dealing with an issue . . . of absolutely the highest importance."⁴ Largely in consequence of the 1866 council's failure to articulate a course of action and require accountability, the years from 1866 to 1884 produced few noteworthy achievements in the African American apostolate. On a practical level, the bishops faced a significant resource problem: never during the nineteenth century did they have enough priests to meet the needs of the nation's Catholic population.⁵

The Third Plenary Council of 1884 rehashed issues that earlier councils had discussed to little effect.⁶ In defense of the assembled prelates, however, in 1884 just as

¹ Peter Guilday, *A History of the Councils of Baltimore, 1791-1884* (New York: Macmillan, 1932; reprint, New York: Arno Press, 1969), 217. Citations refer to the reprint edition.

² Edwardo J. Misch, "The American Bishops and the Negro from the Civil War to the Third Plenary Council of Baltimore, 1865-1884" (PhD dissertation, Pontifical Gregorian University, 1968), 54.

³ James Hennesey, "The Baltimore Council of 1866: An American Syllabus," *Records of the American Catholic Historical Society* 76, no. 3 (June 1965): 166.

⁴ Alessandro Cardinal Barnabò, Rome, 31 January 1866, "Instruction of the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith," in William J. Kelly, *Black Catholic Theology: A Sourcebook* (New York: McGraw Hill, 2000), 14-16.

⁵ Thomas T. McAvoy, *The Catholic Church in Indiana, 1789-1834* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1940; reprint, New York: AMS Press, 1967), 123. Citations refer to the reprint edition.

⁶ Oskar Köhler, "The American Way," in *The Church in the Industrial Age*, trans. Margit Resch, vol. 9 of *History of the Church*, ed. Hubert Jedin and John Dolan (New York: Crossroad, 1981), 156.

in 1866, many matters other than the African American ministry needed the bishops' attention. The 1884 conciliar decrees corresponded to the "titles" (topics) that the bishops deliberated: I-The Catholic Faith; II-Ecclesiastical Persons; III-Divine Worship; IV-The Sacraments; V-Clerical Education; VI-Education of Catholic Youth; VII-Christian Doctrine; VIII-Zeal for Souls; IX-Church Property; X-Ecclesiastical Trials; and XI-Christian Burial. Subtopics within Title VIII, Zeal for Souls, included the danger of secret societies and the contrasting virtue of Catholic societies; programs to meet the special needs of immigrant Catholics; and an organized effort to preserve and promote Catholicism among the "Colored People and Indians."⁷ Although the latter received greater consideration in 1884 than at any previous convocation, it suffered from being *unus multorum*, one among many.

The 1884 council did provide the forum wherein American bishops articulated their first *bona fide* commitment to the African American apostolate. In that regard, it unquestionably breathed more life into the African American ministry than had any prior convocation. But the bishops still did not have enough priests to launch an effective ministry, and they faced the additional challenge of convincing the nation's growing Catholic population to support their efforts at evangelizing African Americans. In fact, understanding American Catholicism and the Negro, like every other issue relating to the Church in these years, requires contextualizing it in the light of the spiraling Catholic immigration."⁸ Some of the bishops, like the Catholic immigrants who garnered their greater concern and affection, looked upon the freedmen as competition for the unskilled

⁷ Guilday, *History of the Councils of Baltimore*, 229-230, 241.

⁸ John Tracy Ellis, *American Catholicism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1956), 101.

jobs that offered the chance to move up a rung on the social ladder in post-Civil War America.⁹ Consequently, from 1884 through the early years of the new century, the African American ministry made only halting progress. The Church could boast of modest successes resulting almost entirely from the efforts of small groups of priests and religious whose work forms the core of Chapter VI.

Following the Civil War, the Church continued to experience difficulty reaching the South's dispersed African American population, though the situation had clearly improved compared to the antebellum period. Before passage of the Emancipation Proclamation and Thirteenth Amendment, the institution of slavery effectively isolated four million people of color from the Church's ministry. Savannah's Bishop William H. Gross illuminated the problem in his sermon at the Third Plenary Council, stating without equivocation "that so long as slavery existed the Catholic priest, as a general rule, had no opportunity of coming in contact with the colored people."¹⁰ In theory, then, slavery's demise should have removed the major impediment to the Church's African American ministry. It did not. The antebellum problem of too few priests to minister to a population dispersed over a vast territory persisted after the Civil War and degraded efforts to bring African Americans into closer contact with the Church.

The experience that Jesuits of the Maryland Province had with chattel slaves in the seventeenth through early nineteenth centuries provides a constructive baseline for examining the ambiguity that attended the American Church's engagement with slavery

⁹ Morris J. MacGregor, *The Emergence of a Black Catholic Community: St. Augustine's in Washington* (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1999), 48.

¹⁰ William H. Gross "The Missions for the Colored People," transcribed sermon in *The Memorial Volume: A History of the Third Plenary Council of Baltimore, November 9-December 7, 1884* (Baltimore: Baltimore Publishing, 1885), 74.

and, after its abolition, with free people of color. Before the Holy See established a formal ecclesiastical hierarchy in the United States in the late eighteenth century, Jesuit missionaries in the U.S. operated according to regulations similar to those that governed their society in other parts of the world. They modified these rules to meet the peculiarities of their American situation, particularly their isolation from Catholicism's European center. American Jesuits supported their work by the produce of agricultural "estates" which they received through grant, purchase, or gift, and, like other landowners of the period, they used slaves to work the land. As the nineteenth century began, Jesuits farmed about 12,000 acres in Maryland's southern counties and on its Eastern Shore, and another seventeen hundred acres in Pennsylvania. By the 1760s they owned slightly fewer than two hundred slaves, a number that by the 1830s grew to about three hundred.¹¹

Maryland Province Jesuits characterized their relationship with these "servants" – the term they preferred to use when referring to their slaves – as beneficent when compared to master-slave relationships they saw elsewhere. They conditioned this sanguine estimate on their attentiveness to the slaves' spiritual lives. Maryland's anti-Catholicism prevented colonial- and early national-era Jesuits from making appreciable evangelical inroads with slaves owned by Protestant masters. Even some Catholic planters hesitated to baptize their slaves or give them access to the sacraments for fear they would become recalcitrant. The Jesuits, on the other hand, made a point of

¹¹ Thomas Murphy, *Jesuit Slaveholding in Maryland, 1717-1838* (New York: Routledge, 2001), xiii-xv; Robert Emmet Curran, "Splendid Poverty": Jesuit Slaveholding in Maryland, 1805-1838," in *Catholics in the Old South: Essays on Church and Culture*, ed. Randall M. Miller and Jon L. Wakelyn, (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1983), 126, 141-142.

bringing their slaves into full participation in the faith and strove to honor their temporal obligations to them as well. In evidence of this, one Jesuit brother produced a list of duties that masters owed slaves, including: providing food, clothing, and shelter; permitting them to marry; instructing them in the performance of their Christian duties; and correcting bad behavior.¹² This Jesuit code hearkened back to earlier measures, Louisiana's *Code Noir* for example, that similarly sought to define the respective duties of masters and slaves.

Unfortunately for the Jesuits – and in particular for their slaves – the religious brothers who managed Jesuit farms demonstrated minimal competence in the agricultural arts. As a result, the condition of the farms and the slaves working them fell far short of the ideals that the Jesuits avowed. In 1819, when the society's European superior sent Irish Jesuit Peter Kenney to inspect the Maryland Province's farms, Kenney assessed them as badly managed, their crops of inferior quality, and their slaves in poor physical and moral condition.¹³ The high expense of feeding and clothing slaves and slave families, and of caring for the aged, sick and infirm, placed a burden on Jesuit personnel and finances “out of proportion to the productivity of [the slaves'] labor.”¹⁴ Adding to the problem, Georgetown College, established in 1792 as the first Jesuit college in the United States, relied on the estates for financial support and had slid deeply into debt.¹⁵ The Jesuits understood that the success of their American ministries

¹² Madeleine Hooke Rice, *American Catholic Opinion in the Slavery Controversy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1944), 27-29.

¹³ Curran, “‘Splendid Poverty,’” 129-130.

¹⁴ Rice, *American Catholic Opinion*, 51.

¹⁵ C. Walker Gollar, “Saint Louis University Slaves,” *Missouri Historical Review* 105, no. 3 (April 2011): 125-126.

hinged on a commercial enterprise spiraling ever deeper into unprofitability. That the enterprise employed slave labor presented another liability; it made the Jesuits and their ministerial efforts the targets of anti-slavery advocates who criticized them for contributing to slavery's perpetuation.

For decades the Jesuits struggled with this archetypal moral dilemma. Other Christian organizations did as well, for example, Presbyterian congregations in antebellum Virginia that owned slaves and rented them out to raise revenue. This practice increased Presbyterian congregants' economic commitment to slavery because of the financial benefit their church derived from it. Moreover, it made slavery more acceptable philosophically because parishioners assumed that the success God bestowed on their church's business enterprise implied his moral approbation of them and their church. While some Presbyterians unquestionably felt uncomfortable about church ownership of slaves, this did not deter them from defending the institution as "sanctioned by God as part of the natural, hierarchical order of human domestic relations."¹⁶ For the Jesuits, slave ownership similarly caused a continuing controversy about the morality of slavery, but economic pragmatism ultimately prevailed over other points of view. The problem moved closer to resolution for the Jesuits when, in the 1830s, two younger members of the society rose to positions of influence in the province. Thomas Mulledy and William McSherry, both educated in Rome, traced their roots to western Virginia where slavery, for practical economic reasons, had never taken hold to the extent it had in regions farther eastward. Mulledy and McSherry agreed that

¹⁶ Jennifer Oast, "'The Worst Kind of Slavery': Slave-Owning Presbyterian Churches in Prince Edward County, Virginia," *Journal of Southern History* 76, no. 4 (November 2010): 867-868.

the Jesuits needed to get out of farming and out of slave ownership.¹⁷ Under their influence, from 1835 through 1838 the Maryland Jesuits sold off – not manumitted – every slave they owned. They used the proceeds of these sales to retire Georgetown’s debt and repay money the province owed the Baltimore Archdiocese. In selling their slaves, the Jesuits acknowledged implicitly that their experiment in creating a model of “Christian slavery,” at least under prevailing conditions, had failed.¹⁸ They also signaled their province’s passage from a rural tradition to one anchored in the country’s growing urban centers. This latter shift in focus may have contained an element of racism as the Jesuits’ action stemmed from concern that working class whites exhibited too strong a proclivity to adopt the slothfulness, promiscuity, and intemperance that the Jesuits found so distressing in their slaves. They chose to direct their energies toward the whites because they felt whites had a higher potential for moral reform than blacks.¹⁹

The Jesuit experience with African Americans in bondage provides only one part of a foundation for understanding the Church’s late nineteenth-century ministry to free African Americans. Another foundational element exists in the experience of the larger Church Universal with slavery, an experience marked in one sense by consistency and in another by contradiction. This may seem odd given that the Church’s universal character – its catholicity – implied global uniformity of belief and action under the guidance of the Papal Magisterium, but as explained earlier in this study, immediate circumstance and human character engendered variations in the interpretation of the canon.

¹⁷ Curran, “‘Splendid Poverty,’” 137.

¹⁸ Curran, “‘Splendid Poverty,’” 141-146.

¹⁹ Murphy, *Jesuit Slaveholding*, 163.

As early as the decades immediately after Christ lived, bishops in different places and times applied their own interpretations to Church teaching, a fact as much in evidence in their approach to slavery as to myriad other matters. Belying the generalization that “Catholic moral doctrine considered the institution of slavery acceptable,”²⁰ by the nineteenth century, the Holy See had established a long record of defining enslavement of humans as a glaring contradiction to Christian principle. As far back as the thirteenth century, philosopher and theologian Thomas Aquinas had examined the moral implications of slavery and concluded that one human’s dominion over another did not constitute a *prima facie* evil because it derived from, and imitated, God’s providential concern for creation. Consistent with that conclusion, slavery could claim legitimacy only if practiced under conditions clearly consistent with the precepts of justice. Given that Aquinas adjudged contemporary medieval serfdom contrary to this standard, “he could not have failed to categorize the far more pernicious species of slavery based on race in the New World as . . . repugnant.”²¹ Aquinas made neither the definitive nor the final pronouncement on human slavery, as over the ensuing centuries the Holy See produced a series of instructions on the subject. Popes who issued these rulings meant them to apply not only to a solitary geo-political situation of the moment but also to the broader Church Universal. The Holy See repeatedly found itself – vis-à-vis the Church’s scattered dioceses – in the role of a stern but loving parent intent on correcting aberrant behavior without inciting the children to leave home.

²⁰ John T. Noonan, “Development in Moral Doctrine,” *Theological Studies* 54 (December 1993): 665. *Religion and Philosophy Collection*, <http://web.ebscohost.com/ehost/ebookviewer.ebook>.

²¹ Stephen F. Brett, *Slavery and the Catholic Tradition: Rights in the Balance* (New York: Peter Lang, 1994), 78.

In 1537, Pope Paul III (1534-1549) responded to reports of European colonizers' enslaving indigenous peoples in the Americas by promulgating *Sublimus Dei* which declared that "Indians and all other people who may later be discovered by Christians, are by no means to be deprived of their liberty or the possession of their property, even though they be outside the faith of Jesus Christ . . . nor should they be in any way enslaved."²² By attempting to safeguard people "outside the faith" in this way, Paul expanded on the protection against enslavement that Eugene IV (1431-1447) guaranteed exclusively to Christians a century earlier in his encyclical *Sicut Dudum*.²³ In the closing decade of the sixteenth century, Gregory XIV (1590-1591) published the bull *Cum Sicuti*, an endorsement of King Phillip II's prohibition against slavery in the Spanish colony of the Philippines. Gregory decreed, under penalty of excommunication, that anyone who held slaves must "set [them] completely free and in the future neither make nor retain slaves."²⁴ Pope Urban VIII (1623-1644) addressed slavery in *Commisum Nobis* in 1639, echoing the language and intent of Paul III's *Sublimus Dei* of 1537, and endorsing King Philip IV's edict prohibiting enslavement of New World Indians.²⁵

In 1686, the papal Congregation of the Holy Office, the defender of "Catholic teaching in matters of faith and morals,"²⁶ issued *Instruction 230* relating to the seizure of Africans for the purpose of enslaving them. This instruction ruled that unless the

²² Paul III, 29 May 1537, *Sublimus Dei*, papal bull "On the Enslavement and Evangelization of Indians," <http://www.papalencyclicals.net>. The literature sometimes refers to this bull as *Sublimus Deus* or *Sublimis Deus*.

²³ Eugene IV, 13 January 1435, *Sicut Dudum*, encyclical "Against the Enslaving of Black Natives from the Canary Islands," <http://www.papalencyclicals.net>.

²⁴ Gregory XIV, 18 April 1591, *Cum Sicuti*, papal bull, in Joel S. Panzer, *Popes and Slavery* (Staten Island: Society of St. Paul, 1996), 88.

²⁵ Joel S. Panzer, *The Popes and Slavery* (Staten Island: Society of St. Paul, 1996), 31-33.

²⁶ Ojetti, Benedetto, "The Roman Congregations" in *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. 13 (New York: Robert Appleton, 1912), <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/13136a.htm>.

Africans had engaged in harmful activities that justified characterizing them as “enemies of Christianity,” anyone who captured them by force or deceit, or sold or purchased Africans captured by such means, violated Catholic principle. *Instruction 230* further ruled that Catholics who possessed Africans under such circumstances had a moral obligation to free them.²⁷ The final pre-nineteenth-century instruction, *Immensa Pastorum*, appeared during the pontificate of Benedict XIV (1740-1758). Benedict began *Immensa Pastorum* by expressing his sadness that the instructions of his predecessors Paul III and Urban VIII had not had the desired effect of banishing slavery from Christian Lands; in the case instant, the Portuguese colony of Brazil. Under threat of excommunication, Benedict forbade enslaving indigenous peoples and he charged Christians with seeing to their spiritual and temporal welfare.²⁸

The series of papal pronouncements on slavery and the slave trade continued into the nineteenth century, the most significant being *In Supremo Apostolatus* of December 3, 1839, an apostolic letter promulgated by Gregory XVI (1831-1846). *In Supremo Apostolatus* decried the evil of slavery, castigating Christians “who, blinded by the desire of sordid gain . . . did not hesitate to reduce to slavery Indians, Negroes and other wretched peoples.” In the United States, the hierarchy focused less on those words than on a subsequent section in the bull that referred specifically to the slave trade and forbade “any Ecclesiastic or lay person from presuming to defend as permissible this traffic in Blacks.”²⁹ When American bishops opened the First Plenary Council in 1852,

²⁷ Panzer, *Popes and Slavery*, 35-36.

²⁸ Benedict XIV, 20 December 1741, *Immensa Pastorum*, papal bull, in Panzer, *Popes and Slavery*, 38-43.

²⁹ Gregory XVI, Rome, 3 December 1839, *In Supremo Apostolatus*, papal bull, “Condemning the Slave Trade,” <http://www.papalencyclicals.net>.

they fully understood the secular political rift in the United States. In the council “[w]ise men already knew that Henry Clay’s compromise measures of two years before had not permanently settled the slave issue,” and the bishops therefore concentrated on other matters during their ten days of meetings.³⁰ The interpretation the hierarchy chose to lend to *In Supremo Apostolatus*, evident in their decision to remain mute and neither condemn nor condone slavery in the 1852 council, marked them as “a body of American spiritual leaders who meant to bring to the disturbed condition of the times the one asset the country needed: peace and calm.”³¹

Despite slavery’s ebb in the Old World and its repeated censure by the Holy See, the New World’s emergent agricultural economy had stirred a potent wind that kept slavery’s sails billowed and bloodied. In the United States, where slavery played an indispensable part in plantation agriculture, the Church faced a particularly implacable contrariety. Disinclined to go against the grain of the South’s slave society and incur social, political, and economic invective on top of the theological disapprobation that the white Protestant majority routinely directed toward it, the American hierarchy adopted an accommodational posture. Although this conflicted with the ideal that the Holy See propounded, it offered a practical near-term solution, at least as far as the bishops could see. In deciding to tolerate slavery on the basis of political and economic necessity, the American Church, an institution professedly dedicated to the inherent dignity and brotherhood of humankind, imitated the decision of the American nation, an institution professedly pledged to humankind’s right to life and liberty.

³⁰ Ellis, *American Catholicism*, 79.

³¹ Guilday, *History of the Councils of Baltimore*, 169-170.

A number of American commentators who defended slavery, despite its obvious conflict with the free human condition that natural law prescribed, attributed its existence to humankind's fall from grace. In 1840, Charleston's Irish-born Bishop John England produced a series of essays on slavery, sending them as letters to U.S. Secretary of State John Forsyth and publishing them in the first American Catholic newspaper, Charleston's *U.S. Catholic Miscellany*. England had gained recognition as one of the great intellects in the American Church and "the first apologist of the Catholic Faith in [the] country."³² England drew on scripture and early Christian history to legitimize slavery, in one letter referencing Augustine, fifth-century bishop of Hippo, to support his contention that "the natural state of man in the day of his innocence was very different from that in which he is placed since his fall. . . . Slavery is . . . a consequence of sin."³³ England repeatedly emphasized the duty of masters to provide for their slaves' spiritual and material wellbeing, and he charged slaves with fulfilling their duty to God and furnishing their labor to their masters' benefit.³⁴ England's views harmonized with those of other American bishops whose concern centered not on the physical and social aspects of slaves' lives but on their moral and spiritual equality with free persons. This led England and supporters of his reasoning to argue for preserving the facets of slave life – religious education and freedom of religious practice – that derived from the

³² Peter Guilday, *The Life and Times of John England, First Bishop of Charleston, 1786-1842* (New York: America Press, 1927), 1:vii.

³³ John England to John Forsyth, Charleston, 7 October, 1840, in *Letters of the Late Bishop England to the Hon. John Forsyth on the Subject of Domestic Slavery* (Baltimore: Murphy, 1844; reprint, New York: Negro Universities Press, 1969), 23-24. Citations refer to the reprint edition.

³⁴ England to Forsyth, Charleston, 13 October, 1840, in *Letters of the Late Bishop England*, 25.

slave's human dignity.³⁵ England interpreted papal pronouncements on slavery in a way that supported his point of view, for example, judging *Cum Sicuti* a prohibition of the slave trade rather than of slavery itself. He found strength in numbers by arguing that similar interpretations of *Cum Sicuti* by other American bishops corroborated his own.³⁶

In his letters to Forsyth, England acknowledged the inherent evil of the slave trade and thereby demonstrated his alignment with multiple papal pronouncements on that subject. He nevertheless supported preserving slavery in his adopted land, despite that the institution had long passed the time when it ensured the human dignity of the slave and held the master to a standard of governance marked by the “tenderness, affection, and charity” that England ascribed to it.³⁷ England displayed the tendency of other defenders of slavery to view it as generally benign and only infrequently harsh. An 1857 letter of Chief Justice of the United States Roger B. Taney, the first Catholic to hold that office, echoes England's judgment.

Taney, a former slave owner and opponent of abolition, delivered the majority opinion in the Dred Scott case. He wrote about slaves and masters in a letter to Samuel Nott, a Congregationalist minister living in Wareham, Massachusetts: “They are in general kind on both sides. . . . [The slave's] life is usually cheerful and contented, and free from any distressing wants or anxiety. He is well taken care of in infancy, in sickness, and in old age. There are indeed exceptions – painful exceptions. But this will always be the case, where power combined with bad passions or a mercenary spirit is on

³⁵ Rice, *American Catholic Opinion*, 12.

³⁶ England to Forsyth, Charleston, 7 October, 1840, in *Letters of the Late Bishop England*, 19-20.

³⁷ England to Forsyth, Charleston, 21 October, 1840, in *Letters of the Late Bishop England*, 39.

one side, and weakness on the other.”³⁸ A few years later, Father Edward Purcell, editor of Cincinnati’s *Catholic Telegraph*, offered a distinctively different interpretation of the master-slave relationship, as seen from the Church’s position. In an editorial supporting Lincoln’s Emancipation Proclamation, Purcell said of the Church: “To say that she ever favored the [slavery] system is calumny. She proclaimed men’s fraternity with each other, and their equality before God, and therefore could not be the advocate of slavery.” Interestingly, other Catholic newspapers of the time, including Baltimore’s *Catholic Mirror* and New York’s *Metropolitan Record*, castigated Purcell as an abolitionist.³⁹

Despite different and often dichotomic interpretations of the Church’s teaching on slavery during the antebellum period and Civil War years, Catholics in both the North and South generally rejected immediate emancipation as a workable solution to the slavery problem.⁴⁰ Although the war did not divide the Catholic Church into northern and southern factions as it had the principal Protestant denominations, private communications as well as essays appearing in print reflected interpretations of events that bore the unmistakable influence of regional sentiment. For example, in an August 1861 letter to New York’s Archbishop John J. Hughes, Patrick N. Lynch, Archbishop of Charleston, complained that the North’s anti-slavery policy had left the South no option

³⁸ Roger B. Taney to Samuel Nott, White Sulphur Springs, 19 August 1857, in “Chief Taney’s Reflections on Slavery, August 19, 1857” in *Documents of American Catholic History*, ed. John Tracy Ellis, vol. 1, 1493-1865 (Chicago: Regnery, 1967; reprint, Wilmington: Glazier, 1987) 323-324. Citations refer to the reprint edition.

³⁹ Edward Purcell, “The Church and Slavery,” *Catholic Telegraph*, April 8, 1863, in *Documents of American Catholic History*, ed. Ellis, vol. 1, 378, 381.

⁴⁰ Stephen J. Ochs, *Desegregating the Altar: The Josephites and the Struggle for Black Priests, 1871-1960* (Baton rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1990), 32.

but to secede. Lynch accused the Yankees of “taking up anti-slavery, making it a religious dogma, and carrying it into politics.”⁴¹

In 1863 Louisville Bishop Martin John Spalding submitted to *Propaganda Fide* an essay of more than twenty pages explaining the American Church’s position on abolishing slavery. Spalding summarized the socio-political animosity that brought on the war, and characterized the war’s outbreak as largely a consequence of that animosity. He stated that the American Church had eschewed aligning itself with Northern abolitionists because only that group’s abhorrence of slavery exceeded its hostility toward the Church of Rome. Spalding turned no new ground with that assessment. Even southern commentators had alleged an abolitionist scheme to rid the country of Catholicism, a religion whose episcopal form of governance purportedly subordinated individual liberty. In 1857, a *De Bow’s Review* editorial argued that northern abolitionists considered their policy “not only a method to strike from the slave his fetters in the Southern States, but also the basis of a grand harmonious movement of combined Protestantism to expel Romanism from the Continent of America.”⁴² Spalding went on to explain that wholesale emancipation would not fix the problem because it would release former slaves into southern and northern societies that: considered Negroes undeserving of equal social status; denied them opportunities to advance themselves; and often subjected them to violence. Spalding argued that the problem of

⁴¹ Patrick N. Lynch to John J. Hughes, Charleston, 04 August 1861 in “Bishop Lynch Presents the South’s Case for Secession, August 4, 1861” in *Documents of American Catholic History*, ed. Ellis, vol. 1, 349-351.

⁴² “The Relative Political Status of the North and South,” *De Bow’s Review* 22, no. 2 (February 1857): 127-128, <http://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/moajrnl/browse.journals/debo.1857.html>.

slavery required a gradual solution that took into consideration prevailing local sensitivities.⁴³

In 1858, the year following Justice Taney's letter to Samuel Nott, Natchez Bishop William Henry Elder reported to the Society for the Propagation of the Faith on his diocese's efforts to minister to the slave population. Elder explained that the Natchez diocese consisted of the entire state of Mississippi, an area of forty-seven thousand square miles with a population of 606,526 that included 309,878 Negro slaves and 930 free Negroes.⁴⁴ While priests and bishops routinely relied on estimates and anecdotal information to compile statistics for their reports, Elder's population data agreed with the U.S. Bureau of the Census figures for 1850.⁴⁵ He estimated the number of Catholics in the diocese at ten thousand, but he believed many others – including Catholic slaves whose enumeration proved impossible – went uncounted. Lower South masters owned an undetermined number of Catholic slaves sold southward when their value as a commodity exceeded the value of their labor in the changing agricultural economy of the upper South. The Maryland Jesuits' sale of 272 slaves to two Louisiana owners in 1838 illustrates this phenomenon.⁴⁶ Priests occasionally encountered Catholic slaves in the towns and on the plantations of the lower South. When a priest arrived near Cedar Creek in the Natchez diocese, the Negroes from the neighboring plantations came to greet him.

⁴³ Martin John Spalding, "Dissertation on the American Civil War" in "Martin John Spalding's 'Dissertation on the American Civil War,'" ed. David Spalding, *Catholic Historical Review* 52, no. 1 (April 1966): 76-79.

⁴⁴ William Henry Elder to Society for the Propagation of the Faith, Natchez, 1858, in "Bishop Elder on the Apostolate to the Negro Slaves in Mississippi, 1858" in *Documents of American Catholic History*, ed. Ellis, vol. 1, 326-327.

⁴⁵ *Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census: Negro Population, 1790-1915* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1918; reprint, New York: Arno, 1968), 44. Citations refer to the reprint edition.

⁴⁶ Murphy, *Jesuit Slaveholding*, 203.

One woman, baptized and raised a Catholic in Maryland, had held on to her religion and remembered her prayers even though she had not seen a priest in twenty years.⁴⁷

Bishop Elder's gravest concern about ministering to slaves centered less on masters' denying priests access to their enslaved Negroes – in Elder's experience, some slaveholders did not object to their slaves' hearing a clergyman's salvific message because it inclined them to accept their enslavement and hope for freedom in the next life – than it did on the problem of too few priests to bring the Church's ministry to so widely dispersed an apostolate. He agonized in particular over his inability to assist the minority Catholic slaveholders in their duty to ensure that their bondmen learned about Catholicism and, once baptized, practiced their faith.⁴⁸ While some Catholic masters might allow a priest to minister to their slaves, the Church presumed that the majority of slaves owned by Protestant masters would remain beyond its reach. Only on occasion did a Protestant planter grant a Catholic priest access to his slaves, perhaps out of concern for their spiritual welfare or a belief that contact with the priest might moderate their behavior or encourage their industry. In the main, however, “southerners . . . were unsympathetic to Catholicism intellectually, and mistrustful of its influence upon its bondsmen.”⁴⁹ In the South, as elsewhere in the country, non-Catholics perceived Catholicism as a religion of “foreigners,” and, in fact, many of the European-born priests who ventured into the South had only a marginal command of the English language.

⁴⁷ John Gilmary Shea, *History of the Catholic Church in the United States*, vol. 4, *From the Fifth Provincial Council of Baltimore, 1843, to the Second Plenary Council of Baltimore, 1866* (New York: John G. Shea, 1890), 278.

⁴⁸ William Henry Elder to Society for the Propagation of the Faith, Natchez, 1858, in “Bishop Elder on the Apostolate to the Negro Slaves in Mississippi, 1858” in *Documents of American Catholic History*, ed. Ellis, vol. 1, 327.

⁴⁹ Rice, *American Catholic Opinion*, 59.

Catholics and potential converts alike gravitated away from these speakers of heavily accented English to Protestant ministers whose scriptural readings and homilies they could understand.⁵⁰

Planters did not, however, confine their distrust to Catholic evangelical initiatives and might just as readily resist the efforts of other denominations. Especially on larger plantations, owners had no assurance that an itinerant preacher – often a stranger – would not use the cover of preaching the gospel to plant rebellious ideas in the heads of slave congregations.⁵¹ This situation only worsened with the increase in abolitionists' calls for an end to slavery. Yet, Protestant denominations recorded some notable successes in the antebellum years, probably due to the wider acceptance of their theology among southern whites and the availability of preachers eager to take on the work. In 1837, for example, the Methodist Episcopal Church reported twenty-six missions committed to the service of plantation slaves: 10 in South Carolina; 6 in Georgia; 4 in Mississippi; 2 each in Alabama and Tennessee; and 1 each in Kentucky and Arkansas. By 1865, the Methodist Episcopal Church claimed to have more than three hundred of its missionaries preaching the gospel on the South's larger plantations.⁵² What benefit slaves derived from the various religious ministries remains problematic, a fact that casts some doubt on all religious denominations' reports of Christian outreach and fellowship. Whites – and this included the best-intentioned,

⁵⁰ Randall M. Miller, "The Failed Mission: The Catholic Church and Black Catholics in the Old South," in *Catholics in the Old South*, ed. Miller and Wakelyn, 153-155.

⁵¹ William P. Harrison, *The Gospel among the Slaves: A Short Account of Missionary Operations among the African Slaves of the Southern States* (Nashville: Publishing House of the Methodist Episcopal Church, 1893), 150.

⁵² Harrison, *Gospel among the Slaves*, 182, 298.

God-fearing whites – exercised complete control over the historical narrative. The possibility remains that white men preaching the gospel to white and black southerners assembled in the same antebellum church may “simply have reinforced the white supremacist regime . . . provid[ing] the standard rationalization for power – submission, obedience, [and] contentment with one’s lot in life.”⁵³

In his 1858 report on the Natchez diocese, Bishop Elder made no mention of the number of priests under his authority. Although Catholic almanacs and directories typically provided this kind of information, those of the period – especially the war years – had either spotty information or none at all on southern dioceses. An 1865 almanac, however, put the number of priests in the Natchez diocese that year at fifteen, a figure likely higher than Elder would have reported in 1858. The 1865 almanac also hints at efforts to bring the faith to the plantation, reporting, for example, that the priest from Immaculate Conception parish in Sulphur Springs, Mississippi made monthly visits to five plantations in Madison County; it says nothing, however, about the religious affiliation of the plantations’ masters or slaves.⁵⁴

The period spanning Bishop Elder’s 1858 report and the 1939 end-point of the current study witnessed a perpetuation of the dilemma that confronted Elder’s diocese and every other diocese in the South: too few priests to reach a rural, agricultural population of African Americans. “The Catholic Church . . . was urban while the bulk of

⁵³ Paul Harvey, *Freedom’s Coming: Religious Culture and the Shaping of the South from the Civil War through the Civil Rights Era* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005), 111.

⁵⁴ *Catholic Almanac and Ordo for the Year of Our Lord 1865* (New York: D.J. Sadlier, 1865), 206. Microform in collection of Mullen Library, Catholic University of America.

the Negro population was rural.”⁵⁵ This situation dictated the Church’s allocation of resources in the South; it necessitated establishing churches and schools either in cities and towns or, in the case of rural areas, close enough to scattered, outlying populations to attract parishioners to fill the pews and pupils to fill the schools. This situation persisted through and beyond the South’s momentous economic and racial reconfiguration that began with Reconstruction, heightened with the onset of the World War, and continued through 1939.

Following the Civil War, the dissonance that had earlier characterized the slavery discussion within the American Church manifested itself in differences of opinion about evangelizing African Americans. Just as the war forced the American nation to transform, so too did it force a transformation upon the American Church. The magnitude of the issue of evangelizing African Americans, as measured by the number of persons engaged or affected, requires at least a cursory analysis to establish some sense of perspective. Around the time of the Third Plenary Council, commentators estimated that the Catholic population of the United States had grown to more than eight million.⁵⁶ Using self-reported 1880 and 1890 population data for the Catholic dioceses within the region of the current study, and assuming an annual rate of increase equal to the average rate of increase for the full 1880-1890 period, the writer calculated the 1884 Catholic population in the region to be 812,546, or slightly more than 10 percent of eight

⁵⁵ John T. Gillard, *Colored Catholics in the United States: An Investigation of Catholic Activity in behalf of the Negroes in the United States and a Survey of the Present Condition of the Colored Missions* (Baltimore: Josephite Press, 1941), 41.

⁵⁶ Hugh P. McElrone, “The Councils of Baltimore,” in *Memorial Volume*, 45; “The Progress of the Church in the United States, from the First Provincial Council to the Third Plenary Council of Baltimore,” *American Catholic Quarterly Review* 9, no. 35 (July 1884), 495. http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?url_ver=Z39.88-2004&res_dat=xri:pio-us:&rft_dat=xri:pio:article:5119-1884-009-00-000025.

million American Catholics. The data does not uniformly distinguish between white Catholics and Catholics of color.⁵⁷

Using Bureau of the Census data for the same 1880-1890 period to calculate the percentage of Negroes residing in the region of study yields a result of 37 percent. This does not suggest that African Americans constituted 37 percent of the region's Catholic population; in fact, anecdotal information renders such a conclusion doubtful. Further connoting the low number of Catholic African Americans, Baltimore and Washington D.C. – two destination cities for African Americans migrating from the South after the Civil War – each had only one parish for colored Catholics by 1877.⁵⁸ Before and after the war, black Catholics and white Catholics represented an especially small percentage of the population in some areas. When Bishop (later, Cardinal) James Gibbons became Vicar Apostolic of North Carolina in 1868, a state whose population numbered slightly over one million, the most liberal estimate of the entire Catholic population placed their number at eight hundred.⁵⁹ The long-view of the data reveals that in the 1880s, just under 90 percent of American Catholics lived someplace other than in the area of study, a fact that influenced the formula the American Church used to allocate its resources.

The Catholic evangelization effort during Reconstruction met with little success for reasons already cited, but the freedmen clearly had a voice in the matter. They did not welcome the influence and instruction of men who differed from them markedly, and

⁵⁷ *Catholic Almanac and Ordo* (New York: Sadlier, 1880); *Catholic Directory, Almanac, and Clergy List* (Milwaukee: Hoffmann Brothers, 1890).

⁵⁸ Theodore Maynard, *The Story of American Catholicism* (New York Macmillan, 1942), 385; John Tracy Ellis, *The Life of James Cardinal Gibbons: Archbishop of Baltimore, 1834-1921* (Milwaukee: Bruce, 1952; reprint, Westminster, MD: Christian Classics, 1987), 1:72-77. Citations refer to the reprint edition.

⁵⁹ Ellis, *Life of James Cardinal Gibbons*, 1:397.

they preferred a more immediate access to, and a more emotional communion with God than Catholicism's priests and liturgy had to offer.⁶⁰ Conversely, two denominations with antebellum roots in the North, the African Methodist Episcopal Church and the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church, readily attracted Negroes who had grown up in or converted to Methodism, or had at some time received exposure to Methodist theology.⁶¹ Where possible, antebellum slaves and free people of color preferred their own churches, a preference they clearly demonstrated after the war by joining existing black separatist churches or starting new ones literally and figuratively from the ground up. "Black migration out of white-dominated churches, like black migration out of southern states, was an act of freedom."⁶² Their desire to sever ties with people unlike themselves resembled the actions of Irish, German, Polish, Italian, and other Catholic minorities elsewhere in the country. Catholic immigrant populations formed tight communities for self-protection and to thwart dilution of their language and culture by the dominant Protestant majority.⁶³ Although these white and African American social sub-groups both sought equality with broader American society, preserving their culture served to maintain and demonstrate their unique identity.

Reconstruction occurred during the period when Rome still classified the United States as a mission territory under the jurisdiction of the Sacred Congregation *de*

⁶⁰ E. Merton Coulter, *The South during Reconstruction, 1865-1877*, vol. 8 of *A History of the South*, ed. Wendell Holmes Stephenson and E. Merton Coulter (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1947), 338.

⁶¹ Coulter, *South during Reconstruction*, 338-339.

⁶² David L. Chappell, *A Stone of Hope: Prophetic Religion and the Death of Jim Crow* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 145.

⁶³ James G. Dauphine, *A Question of Inheritance: Religion, Education, and Louisiana's Cultural Boundary, 1880-1940* (Lafayette: University of Southwestern Louisiana, 1993), 83.

Propaganda Fide, an organizational arrangement that lasted, as noted earlier, until 1908. Girolamo Maria Gotti became Cardinal Prefect of *Propaganda Fide* in 1902 during the pontificate of Leo XIII (1878-1903); he remained in office through the pontificate of Leo's successor, Pius X (1903-1914), and into the early years of Benedict XV's pontificate (1914-1922). Gotti relinquished the office by death in 1916.⁶⁴ In January 1904, he wrote to the Vatican's Apostolic Delegate to the United States, Archbishop Diomedo Falconio to convey the Holy See's disquietude over the situation for African American Catholics. Though Pius X had serious concerns about the treatment of the colored faithful at the hands of broader American society, his greater anxiety arose from reports of poor treatment by their white coreligionists, clerical and lay.

This Sacred Congregation [has heard] that in some of the dioceses of the United States, the condition of the Catholic Negro, not only in respect to the other faithful, but also in respect to their pastors and bishops, is very humiliating and entirely different from that of the whites.

As the spirit of Christianity . . . proclaims the equality of all men before God, that equality which foments charity and tends to the increase of Religion by multiplying the numbers of conversions, I ask Your Excellency to call the attention of His Eminence Cardinal Gibbons to this matter, so that in their next meeting the Most Reverend Archbishops may take the necessary steps . . . that this diversity of treatment may be lessened and thus, little by little entirely removed.⁶⁵

Gotti's letter, though clear in its purpose, contained two subtleties that pertained to the role of *Propaganda Fide* and its expectations of the American Church. The Sacred Congregation, whose title expresses its *raison d'être* of propagating the faith, did not want white Catholics' negative racial attitudes to stifle the Church's expansion by

⁶⁴ Peter Guilday, "The Sacred Congregation de Propaganda Fide, 1622-1922," *Catholic Historical Review* 6 (1920/1921), 484.

⁶⁵ Girolamo Maria Gotti to Diomedo Falconio, Rome, 18 January 1904, Folder 101G1-101H9, item 101G6, AASM.

detering African Americans from converting. Secondly, Gotti did not order immediate elimination of the problem; he suggested a gradual approach to implementing a solution.

Rome understood that the U.S. had ended the nineteenth century with the wind at its back and so, too, had the American Church. Baltimore's James Cardinal Gibbons alluded to this and to the nation's penchant for independence back in 1887 when he delivered a speech in Rome. "Yes," Gibbons said, "our nation is strong, and her strength lies . . . in the affection of our people for their free institutions."⁶⁶ By century's end, the Holy See had to accept that just as the continually changing world order had rendered obsolete the authoritarian protocol it once used to manage its affairs in backyard European countries ruled by Catholic monarchs, so, too, did its intercourse with the American Church require a diplomatic rather than an autocratic protocol. Amidst all this, American bishops struggled to make their Church part of the American social fabric, an especially difficult task for an institution constrained by tradition and an often intransigent hierarchy. "Catholicism in the United States, itself culturally scarcely creative, tried to adapt to society as a whole."⁶⁷

When Falconio received Gotti's letter, both Falconio and the Vatican had already seen copies of *De Miserabile Conditione Catholicorum Nigrorum in America* (*The Miserable Condition of Black Catholics in America*), a forty-six page booklet published in Namur, Belgium in 1903. Father Joseph Anciaux, a Belgian-born member of the Society of St. Joseph of the Sacred Heart (Josephites) serving in the United States,

⁶⁶ "The Roman Sermon of the American Cardinal on Church and State in the United States, March 25, 1887," in *Documents of American Catholic History*, ed. John Tracy Ellis, vol. 2, 1493-1865 (Chicago: Regnery, 1967; reprint, Wilmington: Glazier, 1987) 463. Citations refer to the reprint edition.

⁶⁷ Köhler, "Position of Catholicism," 245.

authored the booklet in an effort to raise the Holy See's awareness of the distressing situation of Catholic Negroes in the United States.⁶⁸ Anciaux apparently appreciated the efficacy of a two-pronged attack and of handling delicate matters *sub rosa*. In addition to producing the booklet, he enlisted his Belgian priest-cousin Alfred Le Grand to make the Holy See aware of the American situation. Le Grand had spent six years in Rome and still had the ear of certain highly placed churchmen, including the Prefect of *Propaganda Fide*, Cardinal Gotti. Le Grand succeeded in skylining Anciaux's charges before his influential friends and, more importantly, Pius X, who met with Le Grand on two occasions to discuss the matter.⁶⁹

Anciaux contended that "nearly all priests (even the most pious) fear[ed] the reproach of white citizens so much that they scarcely dare[d] to make the slightest effort on behalf of blacks."⁷⁰ Although the Josephites had been laboring among African Americans in the South for more than thirty years when *De Miserabile Conditione Catholicorum Nigrorum* appeared, Anciaux believed that the Josephites, and others working in the apostolate, had achieved minimal results because the American Church had a negative attitude toward African Americans. He reserved his strongest criticism for the bishops, accusing them of failing "to defend and protect the rights of blacks, because they, like their priests, feared white backlash."⁷¹ The highly outspoken Belgian recommended the appointment of a prelate (preferably a European) with specific

⁶⁸ Cyprian Davis, *The History of Black Catholics in the United States* (New York: Crossroad, 1998), 195-196, 306-307.

⁶⁹ Henry J. Koren, *The Serpent and the Dove: A History of the Congregation of the Holy Ghost in the United States, 1745-1984* (Pittsburgh: Spiritus Press, 1985), 178-179.

⁷⁰ Davis, *History of Black Catholics*, 196.

⁷¹ Ochs, *Desegregating the Altar*, 138.

responsibility to oversee missionary work among blacks, an idea that American bishops had rejected in 1866 and again in 1884 as an infringement on their authority.⁷² Anciaux personified the frustration that others in the Church felt as the result of the inhospitality shown toward African Americans and the consequent paltry number of conversions.

Anciaux's unusual path to becoming a Josephite and the character of his service to the society, shed light on the unsettled state of relations between African American Catholics and their Church. Ferdinand Joseph Marie Ghilsain Anciaux, born in Namur, Belgium in 1858, received Holy Orders in 1884. He spent the first ten years of his priesthood as a parish vicar where his zeal for social work, particularly among the local Walloon minority, distinguished him as a priest with an ardent and uncommon commitment to the service of people on society's fringe. Anciaux's charity extended beyond his immediate locale to the foreign missions, and when he received a substantial inheritance following his mother's death, he contributed portions of it to missionary activities in Asia and Africa. Anciaux also developed an interest in the fertile U.S. mission fields, which had attracted a stream of Belgian missionaries during the nineteenth century. He exemplified the growing number of European priests and religious who shared an enthusiasm for the African American apostolate that so far had not infected their American confreres. Eager to learn more about the American missions, Anciaux made contact with John Williamsen, rector of the American College at Louvain, Belgium.⁷³

⁷² Édouard Brion, "A Defender of the Rights of Blacks in the United States: L'Abbe Joseph Anciaux, 1858-1931," trans. Fr. John F. Byrne, S.S.J., *Revue d'Histoire Ecclésiastique* 100, no. 1 (2005): 15-19. Citations refer to the translation. Archives of the Society of St. Joseph, hereinafter, ASSJ..

⁷³ Brion, "Defender of the Rights of Blacks," 3-5.

The American College provides an interesting example of the political wrangling endemic to the bureaucracy that so often impeded new ideas in the Church. As discussed elsewhere, the African American ministry frequently suffered the effects of similar bureaucratic complication. American bishops founded the American College in 1857 to prepare American and European men for service in the U.S. missionary field. The parent institution of the American College, the Catholic University of Louvain, dated back to the first quarter of the fifteenth century, when ecclesiastical educators considered it “second only to Paris as a seat of sacred and classical learning.”⁷⁴ The idea of establishing the American College at Louvain received the vigorous support of Bishop Martin John Spalding of Louisville who lobbied both publicly and privately in its behalf. Spalding met resistance from a number of U.S. bishops and Vatican power brokers, the latter of whom, for obvious reasons of control, preferred Rome as the site for any American seminary in Europe. Spalding, as bishop of a western U.S. diocese, felt the effects of the chronic priest shortage more than his eastern counterparts and therefore remained convinced of the seminary’s immediate practicality and its potential for supplying priests for service in America’s missions.⁷⁵ Time proved the Louisville Bishop (and later Archbishop of Baltimore) correct. In the fifty years following its founding in 1857, the American College at Louvain educated almost seven hundred priests for service in the American Church.⁷⁶ The seminary clearly fulfilled the prophecy of one

⁷⁴ John J. Keane, “The Catholic University of Louvain,” *Catholic World* 46, no. 274 (January 1888): 526, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/125566909/fulltextPDF/13133A5147EA2FFF87/12>.

⁷⁵ Thomas W. Spalding, *Martin John Spalding: American Churchman* (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1973), 66-78.

⁷⁶ “Father Kindekens Appeals for an American College at Louvain, November 5, 1856,” in *Documents of American Catholic History*, ed. Ellis, vol. 1, 315.

early supporter who said it would “serve as a nursery of properly educated and tried clergymen for our missions.”⁷⁷ Even bishops who had initially opposed the American College came to value the contribution it made to the growth of the American Church.

Anciaux’s plan to become a U.S. missionary elicited favorable responses from his bishop and the American College rector. With their endorsement and blessing, the priest set out for America. Although his precise itinerary remains indeterminate, in late 1895 or shortly thereafter he spent some time in Louisiana. By 1897 Anciaux had become engaged in missionary work among Native Americans and a small number of African Americans in the Oklahoma territory. He developed a particular interest in ministering to African Americans, an inclination that led to his association with Josephite Superior John R. Slattery. In September 1900, Anciaux, though not yet officially a Josephite, accepted a missionary assignment under the society’s auspices in the Richmond, Virginia diocese and established a successful mission church at Lynchburg in the south-central part of the state.⁷⁸

In summer 1902, Anciaux inserted himself into a controversy surrounding public statements that Slattery made in connection with the ordination of Father Henry Dorsey, the second African American ordained to the Josephite priesthood. Baltimore’s Cardinal Gibbons conferred Holy Orders on Dorsey in a cathedral ceremony on Saturday, June 21. The following morning, Dorsey celebrated his first mass in Baltimore’s St. Francis Xavier Church, with John Slattery delivering the homily. Slattery took advantage of the

⁷⁷ Peter Kindekens to Francis Patrick Kendrick, Detroit, 5 November 1856 in “Father Kindekens Appeals for an American College” in *Documents of American Catholic History*, ed. Ellis, vol. 1, 316.

⁷⁸ Édouard Brion, “Defender of the Rights of Blacks,” 5-9.

occasion to argue that the Church needed more colored priests if it expected to increase the number of Negro converts in the South. He chastised Catholics for their prejudice against Negroes, in particular for taking the position that colored men possessed neither the morality nor the strength of character that the priesthood required. Slattery pointed out that even though white European clerics fell into depravity in the tenth through fifteenth centuries, the Church did not stop ordaining white men to the priesthood. Had the Church done so, Slattery argued, “Catholicism would have been dead before Luther’s time.”⁷⁹

Slattery’s sermon elicited a heated response from Father William Starr of Baltimore’s Corpus Christi Church. Starr’s letter to Slattery, which the *Baltimore Sun* reprinted in full on July 25, suggested that Slattery’s “northern birth and training” disqualified him from understanding the genuine concern that Starr – and, by implication, other southerners – had for the Negro. Starr accused Slattery of engaging in hyperbole and giving Protestants further cause to attack the Church. He expressed concern that Slattery’s sermon would aggravate the ill will that some whites already felt toward Negroes, and he condemned the oration as “the most incendiary pronouncement which I can recall as coming from a Catholic priest.” Starr concluded that it would “convince the already restive and discontented blacks that they have very little to hope for at the hands of their white Catholic brethren.”⁸⁰

⁷⁹ “Negro as a Priest: Very Rev. J.R. Slattery Delivers Remarkable Sermon,” *Baltimore Sun*, June 23, 1902. <http://lib-ezproxy.tamu.edu:2048/login?url=http://search.proquest.com/docview/536537696>; Ochs, *Desegregating the Altar*, 123-124.

⁸⁰ “Rev. Mr. Starr Replies: Criticizes Rev. John R. Slattery’s Sermon on the Negroes,” *Baltimore Sun*, July 25, 1902. <http://lib-ezproxy.tamu.edu:2048/login?url=http://search.proquest.com/docview/536508373>.

Starr's harsh criticism of Slattery prompted a reaction from the *Baltimore Afro-American*. On August 2, the paper contained an editorial defending Slattery; it characterized him as a man who, as a true servant of Christ, dedicated his life to the colored race. Referring to Starr, the article derisively acknowledged his skill with the written word but, more pointedly, associated him with an aristocratic white element within the Church. The *Afro-American* asked the question which it believed Starr had left unanswered, "Why hasn't the Roman Catholic Church in this country proven its genuine catholicity by more largely influencing the life of the Negroes?"⁸¹ At this point in the exchange of words, Slattery had spoken, Starr had responded, and the *Afro-American* had thrown its editorial support behind Slattery. It remained only for Father Joseph Anciaux to become involved and bring the pot to full boil.

Anciaux wrote a letter with the title "Plain Facts for Fair Minds" which he allegedly intended only for the eyes of a few recipients inside the Church. His letter became public, however, and had the effect of further dividing the various parties to the conversation about the African American ministry. Anciaux's candor far outweighed his diplomacy. He stated that the American Church had come to accept separation of the races and to believe that little could be done for Negroes. He declared that other than the American Slattery and the Josephites, European priests had borne most of the burden of bringing the faith to African Americans. White American Catholics, Anciaux said, had shown little willingness to lend financial support to Negro missions. In perhaps his harshest criticism, Anciaux contended that a strain of anti-Negro sentiment tainted the

⁸¹ "Father Slattery and the Other Star," *Baltimore Afro-American*, August 2, 1902, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/530274600>.

American Church and had become the root cause of the Church's disinclination to ordain Negro priests.⁸²

It took little time for Anciaux's editorializing to attract the attention of men in high but sensitive office. Baltimore's Cardinal Gibbons found Father Anciaux's assertions especially troubling and Richmond's Bishop Augustine Van de Vyver, who had immediate authority over Anciaux, revoked the priest's faculties. Unable to celebrate mass or administer the sacraments in the Richmond diocese, Anciaux returned to his former mission in Oklahoma and the hospitality of a friendly bishop. After a short stay in Oklahoma Anciaux bounced from one Josephite parish to another, never remaining in one place for long. No longer able to function effectively due to ill health and occasional intemperance, Anciaux eventually returned to Europe where he lived on a small pension he received from the Josephites. The controversial priest spent his final years in his native Belgium where he died in 1931, still a Josephite.⁸³ The imbroglio that Anciaux fomented is instructive because it contains so many of the elements – idealism, prejudice, intrigue, pusillanimity, disillusionment, sacrifice, and courage – that defined the American Church's struggle to craft a strategy for advancing the welfare and conversion of the American Negro.

Equally instructive are the steps that the American hierarchy took in response to Cardinal Gotti's January 1904 letter to the U.S. Apostolic Delegate on the ill-treatment of Catholic Negroes. When America's archbishops convened in their annual meeting on April 14 of the same year, Gibbons presented Gotti's letter for their consideration. The

⁸² Édouard Brion, "Defender of the Rights of Blacks," 10-12.

⁸³ Édouard Brion, "Defender of the Rights of Blacks," 23-27.

assembled metropolitans decided that since the matter depended on “local circumstances,” Cardinal Gibbons should communicate the contents of Gotti’s letter to all U.S. bishops, “uniting the request of the Archbishops to that of the Sacred Congregation [*de Propaganda Fide*] that such an abuse, wherever it may be, should be corrected.”⁸⁴ Gibbons followed through on this, writing the bishops just over a week later. His letter of transmittal advised the bishops that the metropolitans had agreed that they (the metropolitans) “could in no way better comply with the instructions contained in the appended document [Gotti’s letter] than by submitting said document to the personal inspection of each individual bishop.”⁸⁵

The archbishops further agreed that, to date, the Church had done more to support missions among Indians than among Negroes. They constituted a committee comprised of Archbishops John J. Glennon (St. Louis), John Ireland (St. Paul), and Patrick J. Ryan (Philadelphia) to study the matter and report back the next time they met.⁸⁶ True to its charge, the committee made its report at the annual meeting May 4, 1905, Archbishop Ryan delivering it verbally to the assembled metropolitans. The committee recommended that the archbishops create a bureau to manage colored missions modeled after the one already in place for Indian missions. It further recommended establishment of a committee comprised of two northern bishops and

⁸⁴ “Minutes of the Annual Meeting of the Archbishops of the United States, 1904,” AASM, folder 101G1-101H9, item 101G2.

⁸⁵ James Gibbons to U.S. bishops, Baltimore, 22 April 1904. AASM, folder 101G1-101H9, item 101G6. Item 101G6 contains the Gibbons memorandum to the bishops (an excerpt of which appears above) and a transcription of Gotti’s letter to Falconio dated 18 January 1904.

⁸⁶ “Minutes of the Annual Meeting of the Archbishops of the United States, 1904,” AASM, folder 101G1-101H9, item 101G2; John Tracy Ellis, *The Life of James Cardinal Gibbons: Archbishop of Baltimore, 1834-1921* (Milwaukee: Bruce, 1952; reprint, Westminster, MD: Christian Classics, 1987), 2:401-403.

three southern bishops and chaired by Gibbons. One of this committee's first duties would be selecting a priest to preside over the new bureau for colored missions.⁸⁷ In approving all these recommendations, the archbishops demonstrated, if nothing else, a fondness for bureaucracy and an inclination to interpret Gotti's use of the phrase "little by little"⁸⁸ as signifying no particular need for haste in resolving the matters at hand.

Five years into the new century, powerful Catholic churchmen had made a series of decisions that contributed measurably to shaping the African American ministry. Ultimately, some of these decisions did as much to hamper that ministry as advance it. Events examined in Chapter VI demonstrate that the remarkable progress made by priests and religious in the mission fields often came as the result of local, individual initiative rather than strict compliance with the policies and directives of higher ecclesiastical authority.

⁸⁷ "Minutes of the Annual Meeting of the Archbishops of the United States, 1905," AASM, folder 1021G1-102H10, item 102H3.

⁸⁸ Girolamo Maria Gotti to Diomedede Falconio, Rome, 18 January 1904. AASM, folder 101G1-101H9, item 101G6.

CHAPTER V

EDUCATION IN THE AFRICAN AMERICAN APOSTOLATE

This chapter summarizes the Church's commitment to education and examines in closer detail how the broader debate over education affected the Church's decisions with regard to making education an essential element of its evangelical outreach to African Americans. Because the New Testament made repeated mention of Jesus in his role as a teacher, it followed that the Church considered teaching an essential missionary duty.¹ Despite the national character of pronouncements coming out of the plenary councils of 1866 and 1884, efforts to educate African Americans continued the pre-conciliar trend of transpiring at the local level, the result of individual or small-group initiatives.

This trend had begun in the previous century in areas with significant numbers of Catholic inhabitants. Ursuline Sisters from France, for example, likely started the first school for Negroes and Indians in New Orleans around 1728.² In another case, in 1796 Sulpician William DuBourg taught catechism to Baltimore's free black Saint Dominguan refugees, a program the Sulpicians institutionalized after DuBourg moved on to other assignments.³ In 1827, Father Vanlomen, pastor of Holy Trinity Church in the District of Columbia opened the first "seminary" for young women of color in

¹ Mark 6:2 RSV, "When the Sabbath came, He began to teach in the synagogue and many who heard Him were astonished."

² Mother M. Agatha, "Catholic Education and the Negro," in *Essays on Catholic Education in the United States*, ed. Roy J. DeFerrari (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1942; reprint, Freeport, NY: Books for Libraries Press, 1969), 501. Citations refer to the reprint edition.

³ Christopher J. Kauffman, *Tradition and Transformation in Catholic Culture: The Priests of St. Sulpice in the United States from 1791 to the Present* (New York: Macmillan, 1988), 46.

Georgetown.⁴ (Here the term “seminary” refers to a secondary school, often for young women rather than to an institution educating men for the priesthood.) In 1835, Bishop John England of Charleston opened a school for free Negroes, an act that invited harsh criticism from locals who interpreted any Church action in support of Negroes as an anti-slavery statement.⁵ Enrollment in England’s school rose quickly to sixty-three, of whom only twelve professed the Catholic faith. Political pressure and a shortage of teachers and funding forced England to close the school the following year.⁶

By 1860, Baltimore, the primary see of the Catholic Church in the United States, had only four schools for African American Children.⁷ The Civil War all but halted the modest progress that Catholics and Catholic organizations had made to 1861, after which educating African American children took a backseat to the problem of caring for orphans and displaced persons created by the war. Peter Guilday has argued that the first truly organized effort to reach out to African Americans after the Civil War did not begin until the Mill Hill Fathers arrived from England in 1871.⁸ These English priests, and others who followed them from France, Germany, and Italy, belonged to religious communities with a missionary charism; their men had signed on expressly to work with

⁴ “History of Schools for the Colored Population,” *Special Report of the Commissioner of Education on the Improvement of Public Schools in the District of Columbia, 1871* (Washington: Bureau of Education, 1871; reprint, New York: Arno Press, 1969), 205. Citations refer to the reprint edition which retains the original pagination.

⁵ Peter Guilday, *The Life and Times of John England, First Bishop of Charleston*, (New York: American Press, 1927), 2:151-156.

⁶ Harold A. Buetow, *Of Singular Benefit: The Story of Catholic Education in the United States* (New York: Macmillan, 1970), 95-96

⁷ Michael Francis Rouse (Brother Bede, C.F.X.), *A Study of the Development of Negro Education under Catholic Auspices in Maryland and the District of Columbia* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1935), 57.

⁸ John T. Gillard, *The Catholic Church and the American Negro* (Baltimore: St. Joseph’s Society Press, 1929; reprint, New York: Johnson Reprint, 1968), 39. Citations refer to the reprint edition.

people who differed from them in one or more characteristics, including religion, skin color, language, and place of habitation.

While the Church's early work among African Americans lacked real fervor, efforts to provide educational opportunities to whites – the racial group that contained the majority of Catholics – more closely reflected the Church's long-established commitment to education. Chapter III recounted that within three months of their July 1791 arrival in Baltimore, the first small contingent of Sulpician priests who set foot in the United States established St. Mary's Seminary. St. Mary's did not, however, claim eminence as the first U.S. Catholic institution of higher learning, as that distinction belonged to nearby Georgetown College, which Baltimore's Bishop John Carroll founded in 1789. Carroll indicated the importance he attributed to Georgetown when, in a letter to fellow Jesuit Charles Plowden, he referred to it as "our main sheet anchor for Religion."⁹ Georgetown and the Catholic colleges that came after it offered courses of study that had much in common with standard seminary curricula. Priests who served on Catholic college faculties inspired some of their young men to pursue the priesthood, making yet another small contribution to solving the priest shortage.¹⁰ Demographic data for Georgetown College, for example, shows that in one ten-year period – 1830 through 1839 – Georgetown graduated ten aspirants to the priesthood, the highest number for any ten-year antebellum period.¹¹ Typical of a time that imputed a higher priority to educating men than women, a Catholic college for women had to wait until 1896, when

⁹ John Carroll to Charles Plowden, Maryland, 23 October 1789, in Robert Emmett Curran, *The Bicentennial History of Georgetown University, 1789-1989*, vol. 1 (Washington: Georgetown University Press, 1993), 3.

¹⁰ Philip Gleason, "Working in a Tradition," *Catholic Historical Review* 107, no. 3 (July 2011): 451.

¹¹ Curran, *Bicentennial History of Georgetown*, 416.

Maryland Governor Lloyd Lowndes signed a charter authorizing the College of Notre Dame. The school conferred on graduates who “merit[ed] the distinction” bachelor’s, master’s, and PhD degrees. The first class of six women graduated June 14, 1899.¹²

By establishing St. Mary’s Seminary and Georgetown College soon after the new nation’s creation, the American Church signaled its commitment to Catholicism’s centuries-long tradition of uplifting – both spiritually and intellectually – not only those who professed the Catholic faith, but those whom the Church purposed to win to the faith. Table 5.1 shows that Georgetown’s student body contained significant numbers of Protestant students from the time it opened through the decade of the Third Plenary Council.

Table 5.1 Self-reported Georgetown students’ religion, 10-year periods

Religion	1790s		1830s		1840s		1850s		1870s		1880s	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Catholic	219	79.1	492	66.0	460	71.9	787	67.0	263	77.4	179	77.4
Protestant	58	20.9	251	33.6	177	27.7	385	32.8	75	22.1	43	22.1
Other	-	-	3	0.4	3	0.5	2	0.2	2	0.6	1	0.6

Source: Curran, *Bicentennial History of Georgetown University*, vol. 1, 408-426. <http://web.ebscohost.com/ehost/ebookviewer/ebook>.

Note: Table constructed from data in source. Some ten-year periods are not shown due to shorter periods in source.

Carroll and his contemporaries promoted Catholic education far afield of eastern population centers. In 1805, Father Stephen Badin, whom Carroll had sent westward after ordaining him in 1793, wrote to his bishop proposing the transfer of church lands in Kentucky to a group of Dominicans for the purpose of starting “an academy with a

¹² “The Charter of the First Catholic Women’s College in the United States, April 2, 1896” in *Documents of American Catholic History*, ed. John Tracy Ellis, vol. 2, 1866-1966 (Chicago: Regnery, 1967; reprint, Wilmington: Glazier, 1987) 530-531. Citations refer to the reprint edition.

moderate assistance from the Catholics of this State . . . to procure their own happiness, that of their children and their children's posterity.”¹³ Catholic churchmen's recognition of the frontier's need for the edifying influence of education, and their willingness to open their educational institutions to non-Catholic students, presaged the Church's use of the classroom decades later as an instrument of evangelization in the African American apostolate, when a significant percentage of black children attending Catholic schools in the South did not profess Catholicism.

A parochial school for descendents of white Catholic immigrants in the North differed from one for African American children in the South in obvious ways. In terms of their purpose, however, they shared the goal of preparing pupils both academically and spiritually to take their place in the world. The pastoral letters of the nineteenth century's three plenary councils stressed the importance of Christian education and the necessity of establishing Catholic schools.¹⁴ Within the same timeframe, the Sacred Congregation *de Propaganda Fide* published an instruction meant to buttress American bishops' efforts to bring clerics and lay Catholics to embrace the Catholic school as the only acceptable option for educating Catholic children. The instruction specified circumstances under which parents might enroll a child in a public school – most obviously, the unavailability of a proximate Catholic school – provided they took steps to ensure the child received Christian education and training through the parish church or at home. It further warned that parents who persisted in leaving their children in “schools

¹³ Stephen Theodore Badin to John Carroll, 15 May 1805, Bardstown, in “Some Letter of Fathers Badin and Nerinckx to Bishop Carroll,” in *Catholic Historical Review* 6, no. 1 (April 1920): 67.

¹⁴ Peter Guilday, ed., *The National Pastorals of the American Hierarchy, 1792-1919* (Washington: National Catholic Welfare Council, 1923), 189-191, 215-216, 243-247.

in which the ruin of their souls [was] inevitable,” risked being refused absolution, meaning they could not obtain forgiveness of their sins in confession or receive the Eucharist.¹⁵ The Sacred Congregation clearly viewed the matter of children’s Catholic education as essential to nurturing their faith. Many Catholics, in particular the urban poor, could not afford to ascribe the same gravity to it. The Third Plenary Council’s *Acta et Decreta*, to the relief of Catholic parents and their priests, softened somewhat the sacramental sanctions of *Propaganda Fide*’s 1875 instruction.¹⁶

In evidence of the American Church’s persistent efforts to expand the availability of Catholic education, a century after Carroll founded Georgetown College the American hierarchy called for a Catholic university on par with the great Catholic universities of Europe – such as the one at Louvain, Belgium. At the Third Plenary Council, Peoria’s Bishop John Lancaster Spalding, himself a product of the American College at Louvain and a nephew of Archbishop Martin John Spalding, singled out education as a characteristic that distinguished civilized people. Spalding posed this question to his audience, “What but education has placed in the hands of man the thousand natural forces which he holds as a charioteer his well-reined steeds, bidding the winds to carry him to distant lands, making steam his tireless, ever-ready slave, and commanding the lightning to speak his words to the ends of the earth?”¹⁷ Spalding’s

¹⁵ “Instruction of the Congregation *de Propaganda Fide* concerning Catholic Children Attending American Public Schools, November 24, 1875” in *Documents of American Catholic History*, ed. Ellis, vol. 2, 405-408.

¹⁶ James A. Burns, *The Growth and Development of the Catholic School System in the United States* (New York: Benziger, 1912; reprint, New York: Arno Press, 1969), 194. Citations refer to the reprint edition.

¹⁷ John Lancaster Spalding, “University Education Considered in its Bearings on the Higher Education of Priests,” transcribed sermon in *The Memorial Volume: A History of the Third Plenary Council of Baltimore, November 9-December 7, 1884* (Baltimore: Baltimore Publishing, 1885), 77.

aureate rhetoric aside, the pervasive glorification of education among the American hierarchy flowed downward to dioceses, parishes, and missions. It clearly shaped an African American ministry in which education played a central part, whether in one-room schoolhouses of the rural South or in New Orleans's all-black Xavier University. In their quest to improve American Catholic education, the bishops opened the Catholic University of America in 1889, facilitated in part by benefactress Mary G. Caldwell's seed donation of three hundred thousand dollars.¹⁸ In a classic example of editorial understatement, the *Baltimore Sun* reported that "her offer was accepted with grateful recognition of the generous act."¹⁹ Later, when the African American ministry grew, and with it the need for financial support, others who shared Miss Caldwell's philanthropic spirit donated generously to sustain the Church's work. The Drexel family of Philadelphia, about whom more later, clearly occupied a position of prominence within this category.

Three factors profoundly influenced the Church's decision to use education as the primary means to reach African Americans in the South: a deeply rooted belief, as explained here, in the efficacy of education; the impracticality, due to cost, of ministries centered on meeting other temporal needs such as food, clothing, shelter and health care; and practical experience gained from creating an educational system to serve Catholics in predominantly white regions of the northern United States. This does not suggest that

¹⁸ James Hennessey, *American Catholics: A History of the Roman Catholic Community in the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981), 187; Thomas T. McAvoy, *A History of the Catholic Church in the United States* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1969), 275.

¹⁹ "A Catholic University: Offer of \$300,000 for its Endowment Accepted by Plenary Council," *Baltimore Sun*, December 9, 1884, <http://lib-ezproxy.tamu.edu:2048/login?url=http://search.proquest.com/docview/534781948>.

the Church carried out its educational programs for African Americans to the total exclusion of other forms of temporal ministry. Chapter VI specifically references the case of Father Harold Purcell, for example, who provided health care to African Americans in Jim Crow Alabama. The Church's role as a health care provider merits further comment here if only to contrast it with Catholic educational initiatives.

In regions of the world lacking indigenous health-care competence or facilities (e.g. parts of Africa, Asia, and Latin America), missionaries of various religious denominations traditionally met some or all of the basic medical needs of poorer segments of the population. Compared to those areas, the U.S. presented a different medical care conundrum, one not of quality but availability. Although the caliber of U.S. medical care equaled or exceeded that of other industrialized nations, the Jim Crow South restricted African Americans' access to it. The high cost of constructing and maintaining facilities and the requirement for trained, skilled professionals restricted the Church to meeting only a fraction of African Americans' need for health care services. By comparison, educating children required relatively modest expenditures for facilities, personnel, equipment, and supplies. Parishes staffed their schools with meagerly paid religious sisters and brothers, who taught not to make a living but to answer God's call to service through the performance of what Kathleen Sprows Cummings has termed the "wageless work of paradise."²⁰ Education, then, not health care, emerged as the preeminent contribution that Catholic missionaries made toward improving the circumstances of African Americans in the South.

²⁰ Kathleen Sprows Cummings, *New Women of the Old Faith: Gender and American Catholicism in the Progressive Era* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 102.

The relevance to the African American apostolate of the Church's practical experience as an educator lay partly in the fact that the experience had not come without trials, missteps, and adjustments. The Church's broad-based system of schools for whites did not develop without struggle, nor did that system provide a template that the Church could simply overlay on black mission areas of the South. Before the Church undertook its highly visible – and, to many, unpopular – effort to educate African Americans, Catholics drew the ire of white non-Catholics who took exception to their controversial stands on education. The Church, in what appeared to many a demonstration of unmitigated gall, criticized public school systems, established its own educational network, and appealed for public funds to defray the cost of educating future contributors to the republic's prosperity. In places where Catholic children attended public schools, Bishops called for the school systems to insulate Catholic pupils from Protestant interpretations of Christian doctrine.

On the other side of the argument, segments of the white non-Catholic population that viewed Catholics as cabalistic and unpatriotic, considered the Catholic position on education as a further threat to domestic tranquility. In the middle of the nineteenth century, when nativist sentiment had reached its apex, Catholics' sense of injustice at the hands of public school administrators fanned the flames of the smoldering public debate. Matters came to an ugly head in more places than one. In Philadelphia, Bishop Francis Patrick Kenrick railed against the use of the Protestant Bible and the recitation of Protestant prayers in public schools, practices that, while offensive to Catholics, “did no

violence to Protestant belief and demanded no doctrinal sacrifice.”²¹ The Catholic community felt that education without morality had no value, while a morality based on religion had to rest on (Catholic) doctrinal beliefs.²² Kenrick insisted that schools excuse Catholic pupils from reciting Protestant prayers and allow them access to the Catholic edition of the Bible. His protests raised the ire of nativist factions, and despite his call for calm and reconciliation, three days of street riots, bloodshed, and arson followed.²³ In the aftermath both sides to the dispute accused the other of having fomented the violence. Reporting on the events of those three days, which included the torching of St. Augustine’s Catholic Church, the *Baltimore Sun* opined that the participants had disgraced Philadelphia and threatened America’s system of free republican institutions.²⁴ Americans took their religious ideology seriously when they sensed a threat to their rights.

When it appeared that similar disorder might break out in New York, the more militant Bishop John Hughes stationed armed guards to protect the diocese’s churches, warning city officials he would hold them responsible for any violence. A few years earlier Hughes had incurred the wrath of the New York Public School Society, an organization formed by Protestant churches to receive and disburse tax monies for education. Hughes criticized the society for violating the rights of Catholic children by

²¹ Daniel F. Reilly, *The School Controversy, 1891-1893* (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1944; reprint, New York: Arno Press, 1969), 8. Citations refer to the reprint edition.

²² Richard T. Ognibene, “Protestant and Catholic Views of Education, 1864-1900: National and Local Views Compared” (PhD dissertation, University of Rochester, 1973), 75, <http://lib-ezproxy.tamu.edu:2048/login?url=http://search.proquest.com/docview/302670539>.

²³ John Tracy Ellis, *American Catholicism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1956), 66.

²⁴ “The Philadelphia Riots,” *Baltimore Sun*, May 13, 1844, <http://lib-ezproxy.tamu.edu:2048/login?url=http://search.proquest.com/docview/533034048>.

requiring them to read from the King James Bible in the public schools. The political controversy that ensued resulted in passage of the Maclay Bill that cut off all funding for religious schools, including the Public School Society's subsidy. When the disturbance in Philadelphia flared, it looked as if simmering Protestant anger at Hughes might precipitate violence in New York, but Hughes's combative stance discouraged it.²⁵

The school debate persisted through the end of the nineteenth century, while inside the Church, competing camps could not agree on the proper approach to Catholic education. John Ireland, Archbishop of the St. Paul diocese, fueled the controversy in July 1890 when he accepted an invitation to address the National Education Association meeting in his see city. Ireland used the opportunity to propose a compromise solution that would meld the public and parochial school systems. The address caused an uproar that reached all the way to the Holy See, and Ireland had to write a letter to Archbishop Gibbons in Baltimore explaining what he had said and why he had said it.²⁶ In his letter, Ireland expressed regret that over the long course of the school controversy certain bishops and priests had become overly critical of the public school system. He cautioned that some of the faithful had grown weary of supporting Catholic parochial schools when their children could as easily attend public schools supported by their hard-earned tax dollars.²⁷ Both in his address and in his letter explaining it, Ireland did more to define the problem than craft a solution.

²⁵ Archbishop John Hughes Condemns the Public School Society of New York and New York Politicians, 1841," in *American Catholic History: A Documentary Reader*, eds. Mark Massa with Catherine Osborne (New York: New York University Press, 2008), 45-49; Ellis, *American Catholicism*, 66-67.

²⁶ "Archbishop Ireland Explains His Stand on Public and Parochial Schools, December 1890," in *Documents of American Catholic History*, ed. Ellis, vol. 2, 473.

²⁷ John Ireland to James Gibbons, December 1890, St. Paul, in Reilly, *School Controversy*, 237-241.

The protracted controversy did little to overcome the fundamental challenge of operating a parochial school system without state support.²⁸ It fell to the Church to resolve the matter for itself, which it did – albeit at great expense – through a system of schools that provided Catholic-based education from the elementary through collegiate level, all funded through tuition, parish and diocesan funding, and the gifts of generous benefactors. In 1880, 2,246 U.S. parochial schools had an enrollment of 405,234 pupils; by 1920, the number of schools had grown to 5,852 with 1,701,219 pupils enrolled.²⁹ Compared to the South, the North had a larger Catholic population and more abundant public funds, so the issue of state support for parochial schools created a bigger stir there. When Catholic missionaries opened schools for African Americans in the South, they had scarcely any expectation of securing public funding. Strained state coffers and hostility toward Catholics and African Americans rendered moot the question of receiving sufficient public monies to fully fund a system of schools.

The existence of public and parochial school systems in the United States witnessed to a national consensus on the value of an educated citizenry. When nineteenth-century constitutional amendments reclassified four million Negroes as free citizens, the definition of “citizenry” subsumed a segment of the national population to which law and tradition had previously denied education. Freedom for enslaved African Americans precipitated a new conversation about giving them access to this long-withheld right. It raised questions about the role of governments, institutions, and

²⁸ Hennesey, *American Catholics*, 109.

²⁹ Harold A. Buetow, *Of Singular Benefit: The Story of Catholic Education in the United States* (New York: Macmillan, 1970), 179.

individuals, and each of their rights and obligations within a reconfigured educational sphere. The course of action that the Catholic Church chose to pursue reflected a number of things: its experience in the field of education; its recognition of the difficulties that attended educating an uneducated people; and a prudent assessment of the social, political and economic realities of the period. Based on its understanding of the needs and aspirations of different types of students, the Church adapted its educational effort to current circumstances by developing a range of curricula. This eventuated in yet another controversy over the more effective form of education – industrial vice literary – to expedite African Americans’ advancement in society.³⁰ Chapter I introduced Booker T. Washington as the foremost proponent of the former, and W.E.B. Du Bois of the latter. Catholic educators demonstrated that they found merit in the ideas of both men by treating the two forms of education as complimentary.

To the Catholic way of thinking, vocational education sustained the Church’s long-held belief that work ennobled those who performed it. In the first century A.D., the prolific Christian epistolary author Paul admonished the neophyte church in Thessalonica, “Make it your ambition to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business and to work with your hands.” Such a course, Paul assured the Thessalonians, would earn them respect and keep them from becoming dependent on others.³¹ To the people of that time, Paul’s words presented a seeming contradiction as they commended manual labor to a society that considered physical work appropriate for slaves but degrading to free

³⁰ The literature frequently uses “industrial” interchangeably with “vocational,” and just as frequently uses “literary” interchangeably with “academic” and “classical.”

³¹ 1 Thessalonians 4:10-12 RSV.

persons. Nearly two millennia later, a similar but less sharply defined dichotomy arose among American educators as they struggled with the question of whether a vocational curriculum branded students as inferior to those educated in a literary curriculum.

By the time the nineteenth century neared its end, Catholicism – an unarguable devotee of the Pauline tradition – had long since confirmed the noble character of labor. The men and women who chose to devote their lives to the service of the Church understood this better than anyone. For them, work had an obvious practical value, but, thanks to the discernment of a sixth-century monk, it also provided a path to spiritual advancement.

The monk, Benedict of Nursia, had sought a solitary life in close communion with God, but when he attracted a following of similarly inclined men, he founded a religious community. He wrote a formal regimen, later known as the Benedictine rule, to guide the men’s lives. It interpreted work as a disciplinary force for human nature and “a means to goodness in life.”³² As a result of Benedict’s rule, “labor received a new consecration on the altars of monasticism.”³³ Over the ensuing centuries, religious orders of men and women adopted renditions of the Benedictine rule to govern their communities. Most required able members to perform manual labor, a requirement that virtually eliminated idle hands around seminaries, convents and other religious houses. Within such communities, manual labor served more than one purpose: it held down operating costs; it produced goods that generated revenue; it provided members with a

³² “St. Benedict of Nursia” in *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. 2 (New York: Robert Appleton, 1907), <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/02467b.htm>.

³³ Ignatius Esser, “Significant Chapters in Benedictine History,” *Catholic Rural Life Bulletin* 1 (November 1938): 21.

skill set they could use to instruct prospective converts; and it discouraged aspirants more interested in a free education than in a life of duty and self-sacrifice. One monk interpreted the Benedictine view of work this way: “[D]ignifying . . . manual labor is distinctively Christian. It is a fundamental trait of Christ’s revolution, which exalts the humble, deposes the proud, and erases the distinction between slave and free.”³⁴ Because priests and religious believed that work edified the worker, they endorsed the practice of teaching young men and women how to work, and where possible, to master a trade.

The onset of industrialization did not diminish the Catholic regard for work. In late 1852, Bishop Martin John Spalding traveled to Europe to recruit priests for his Louisville diocese. On a visit to Belgium, Spalding met Brother Theodore Ryken, superior of the Congregation of the Brothers of St. Francis Xavier (Xaverians), a teaching order founded in 1839 principally for service in the American missions. To Spalding’s great delight, Ryken agreed to send a colony of six brothers to Kentucky within a year, and even pay for their transportation. In addition to the good news that Spalding got from Ryken, two other events during his European trip had significance for the American Church. In Marseilles, Spalding visited an industrial school for orphans and delinquents under the care of the Congregation of the Priests of St. Peter. Impressed with their methods and results, he came away convinced of the salutary effect such an institution might have in his own diocese. In Belgium, Spalding spoke with Cardinal Engelbert Sterckx of Malines about establishing an American missionary college at Louvain. (Chapter IV noted the extent to which Louvain-trained men eventually

³⁴ Rembert Sorg, *Towards a Benedictine Theology of Manual Labor* (Lisle, IL: Benedictine Orient, 1949), 99.

augmented America's priestly ranks.) Spalding returned to Louisville in June 1853 after a nearly eight-month absence, but feeling that the trip's accomplishments had made it worth his time. The first of the Xaverian brothers Ryken had promised arrived in 1854. Spalding assigned them to teach at two Catholic schools in his diocese, both swelling as a result of continued immigration.³⁵

The arrival of the Xaverian brothers had an indirect but telling effect on the African American ministry. Their model for education in the trades influenced the curricula of a number of institutions established in later years to educate young African American boys and girls. In Belgium, the Xaverians had developed proficiency in carpentry, tailoring and shoemaking in the expectation of a ministry among Native Americans. They believed that teaching these skills to Native Americans would help them (Native Americans) become economically self-sufficient and therefore more receptive to the brothers' proselytic message.³⁶ The ministry the Xaverians envisioned among Native Americans never came to fruition. They responded instead to a need caused by the influx of Irish and German Catholic into the United States. As explained in Chapter IV, the 1884 pastoral letter articulated the bishops' acceptance of responsibility for a ministry to Native Americans and African Americans, but their actions indicated that they judged the need to educate the children of Catholic immigrants more immediate. They felt obligated to deny American Protestantism any

³⁵ Thomas W. Spalding, *Martin John Spalding: American Churchman* (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1973), 63-64, 66-67; John Lancaster Spalding, *The Life of the Most Rev. M.J. Spalding, D.D., Archbishop of Baltimore* (New York: Catholic Publication Society), 171.

³⁶ Brother Julian, C.F.X., *Men and Deeds: The Xaverian Brothers in America*, (New York: MacMillan, 1930), 5-9.

chance of vitiating Catholic children's loyalty to the faith. The Xaverians' U.S. mission, then, began not on Indian reservations in the West, but in Louisville, Kentucky.

Martin John Spalding relinquished his episcopacy in Louisville when he succeeded Francis Patrick Kenrick as Archbishop of Baltimore July 31, 1864.³⁷ Spalding at the time harbored a particular concern about the loss to the Church of young Catholics, in particular boys whom poverty had separated from their families. American bishops shared Spalding's concern and gave it voice in the pastoral letter that followed the Second Plenary Council: "It is a melancholy fact . . . that a very large proportion of the idle and vicious youth of our principal cities are the children of Catholic parents. . . . The only remedy . . . is to provide Catholic protectories or industrial schools, to which such children may be sent."³⁸ Spalding believed that a network of Catholic-sponsored industrial schools like the one he had seen in Marseilles would keep these youngsters from winding up on the streets or in the custody of institutions that had no interest in nurturing their Catholic faith.³⁹ He committed to bringing this idea to reality by founding an industrial school for boys on a one hundred-acre tract that Mrs. Emily Mactavish donated to the archdiocese. He modeled Baltimore's St. Mary's Industrial School after the new Catholic Protectory in New York, "a combination of orphanage, reformatory, and trade school."⁴⁰ Spalding persuaded a group of Xaverians to leave Louisville and take charge of the new institution in Baltimore.

³⁷ Thomas W. Spalding, *Martin John Spalding*, 156.

³⁸ Guilday, ed., "The Pastoral Letter of 1866," in *National Pastorals*, 216.

³⁹ John O'Grady, *Catholic Charities in the United States: History and Problems* (Washington: National Conference for Catholic Charities, 1930; reprint, New York: Arno, 1971), 117-118. Citations refer to the reprint edition.

⁴⁰ Thomas W. Spalding, *Martin John Spalding*, 178.

The Xaverians Spalding recruited to run St. Mary's drew on their own classical education as well as their training in the manual arts to develop a curriculum that eventually included both literary subjects and instruction in carpentry, printing, shoe repair and other trades.⁴¹ From the outset, Spalding insisted that the school's curriculum include primary instruction in "reading, writing, arithmetic, grammar, and geography."⁴² The trustees sought to imbue in the students yet a third element of education, one that surmounted both manual skills and academics. "We aim also to train their hearts to virtue, and thus to form, and sometimes to reform their morals, and to ground them in those virtues which will make them good citizens, by first making them good Christians."⁴³

St. Mary's expanded its academic courses over the years to reflect America's evolving society and economy. In 1922, the brothers started a high school department which by 1928 offered a full four-year curriculum. Although St. Mary's set out to save Catholic boys from losing their faith, non-Catholic boys found a home there as well. On a practical level, the school received a *per capita* subsidy for boys committed to St. Mary's by the courts. The religions of 662 boys in residence in 1937 were: 505 Catholic, 155 Protestant, 2 Jewish.⁴⁴ The Xaverians did everything possible to make St. Mary's

⁴¹ *CFX World: Jubilee Edition, 1854-2004* (Louisville: Publishers Printing, 2004) 9-23.

⁴² Cyril M. Witte, "A History of St. Mary's Industrial School for Boys of the City of Baltimore, 1866-1950" (PhD dissertation, University of Notre Dame, 1956), 194, <http://lib-ezproxy.tamu.edu.2048/login?url=http://search.proquest.com/docview/89220171>. Witte cites Spalding's letter of instruction to Brother Vincent dated 27 April, 1866.

⁴³ *Annual Report of the Board of Trustees of St. Mary's Industrial School for Boys, of the City of Baltimore, made to His Excellency the Governor, the Legislature of the State of Maryland, the First Council of Baltimore, and the Patrons of the Institution, December 29, 1868* (Baltimore: Printing Department, St. Mary's Industrial School, 1869), 6, CCFX 111, AUND.

⁴⁴ *Report of a Study of St. Mary's Industrial School for Boys, Baltimore, Maryland, made by the Child Welfare League of America, Incorporated, 1937*. 13, 17. CCFX 114, 114/02, AUND.

self-sufficient through the school's agricultural and manufacturing enterprises. As St. Mary's and schools modeled after it learned, however, the output of industrial-school shops faced stiff competition from goods produced by companies that enjoyed product recognition, economies of scale, and well established customer relationships.⁴⁵ On a positive note, the Xaverians at St. Mary's managed to hold down operating costs by performing repairs and maintenance themselves, ably assisted by students schooled in the applicable trades.⁴⁶ Despite cost-cutting measures and product revenues, Catholic industrial schools always depended to some degree on charitable contributions. While neither the Church nor the laity considered industrial schools a panacea, they accepted that the schools met a glaring need for some form of institution to rescue children. The establishment of Catholic industrial schools in Philadelphia, San Francisco, St. Louis and St. Paul in the twenty-year period from 1870 to 1890 evinced Church leaders' confidence in the model.⁴⁷

St. Mary's received no specific directive to accept African Americans, and an 1899 article in the *Baltimore Afro-American* – more than thirty year's after the school's founding – indicated the school had not done so to that time. The *Afro-American* piece lamented “a ‘color-line’ which operate[d] as an effectual bar to prevent poor and unfortunate colored boys from receiving the wholesome and uplifting influences which such an institution furnishes.”⁴⁸ That St. Mary's Industrial School did not admit needy children of color provides an example of the Church's inattention to the African

⁴⁵ O'Grady, *Catholic Charities*, 119-120.

⁴⁶ Witte, “History of St. Mary's Industrial School,” 271.

⁴⁷ O'Grady, *Catholic Charities*, 117, 122.

⁴⁸ Untitled article, *Baltimore Afro-American*, January 28, 1899, <http://lib-ezproxy.tamu.edu:2048/login?url=http://search.proquest.com/docview/530237386>.

American segment of the population. The school nevertheless served as an organizational model in later years for institutions established expressly to educate African American youths. Both St. Mary's and the schools modeled after it validated an educational methodology that ultimately transcended race and locale.

Despite endorsements of industrial education from different quarters in the educational field, Carter G. Woodson assessed it as incapable of meeting the needs of Negroes. White southern educators, influenced by the growing popularity of industrial education, championed a transition to the new curriculum. The most narrow-minded segment of southern society, moreover, seized upon this phenomenon as an opportunity to demarcate curricula, reserving a superior form for whites while making an inferior form available to blacks. Woodson contended that the skills and experience that industrial students acquired, when compared to those that apprentices amassed working in a manufacturing facility with modern equipment and production processes, did not prepare them for real-world employment. But Woodson also conceded that young African American men had few opportunities to serve apprenticeships, principally because labor unions excluded blacks. Because Woodson sought to condemn racism rather than simply criticize industrial education, he also questioned the long term benefits of classical education. Just as the workplace rejected the technically educated Negro so, too, did the professions reject the classically educated Negro or, at a minimum, prevent him from advancing within them.⁴⁹

⁴⁹ Carter G. Woodson, *The Mis-Education of the Negro* (Washington, D.C.: Associated, 1933; reprint, Chicago: African-American Images, 2000) 11-14. Citations refer to the reprint edition.

Men like Martin John Spalding and John Slattery, who faced the immediate challenge of providing educational frameworks with a genuine capacity to uplift young men of both races, had neither the experience nor the peculiar expertise in the educational field to make perfect decisions. The decisions they made appeared reasonable at and for the time, particularly in light of the condition of the people affected by their decisions. Peter Colcanis, chronicling the abject poverty and desperation that characterized black life in the South after the Civil War, emphasized that the rural population, which included the majority of African Americans, “constituted the poorest groups in the two poorest parts of the poorest aggregate census region in the United States.”⁵⁰ Catholic clergymen who observed these circumstances formed presumptions which, if interpreted harshly, appeared to derive from paternalism and condescension, or, if sympathetically, from compassion and empathy. Regardless of individual attitudes, the Church considered itself in competition with Protestantism for souls, a mindset harkening back to the Protestant Reformation. Yet, the Church’s post-Civil War educational work among blacks in the South, if measured in terms of its investment of resources, bespoke a half-hearted effort.⁵¹ Table 5.2 shows that in 1894, ten years after the Third Plenary Council created a commission to oversee the ministry to Native Americans and African Americans, the American Church had only a nominal presence in the region of study, except in the traditional pockets of Catholicism, Baltimore and New Orleans.

⁵⁰ Peter A. Colcanis, “The Wizard of Tuskegee in Economic Context,” *Booker T. Washington and Black Progress*, ed. W. Fitzhugh Brundage (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2003) 90.

⁵¹ Lincoln Charles Vallé, “The Catholic Church and the American Negro,” *America* 30 (January 19, 1924): 327.

Table 5.2 Negro mission work, 1894

Diocese	Negroes		Priests	Schools	Pupils
	Population	Catholic			
Baltimore	218,000	36,650	14	10	1,400
Charleston	-	1,000	2	1	140
Covington	80,000	117	-	1	375
Little Rock	325,000	250	-	4	200
Louisville	191,147	4,915	1	7	318
Mobile	706,243	2,500	1	4	250
Nashville	500,000	40	-	2	210
Natchez	747,720	1,600	1	5	346
Natchitoches	130,000	9,000	1	7	300
New Orleans	265,000	80,000	-	39	2,705
Richmond	600,000	700	2	5	400
Savannah	800,000	1,000	1	2	190
Wilmington	100,000	450	1	1	202

Source: *Mission Work among the Negroes and Indians* (Baltimore: Foley, 1895), 6.

Note: Table constructed from data in source; (-) indicates zero or no data reported

The work of evangelizing African Americans remained largely undone, with the Church able to count only three percent of Negroes in the fold; without Baltimore and New Orleans the percentage dropped to one-half of one percent. Eighty-eight schools served slightly over seven thousand students, but without Baltimore and New Orleans, those figures fell to thirty-nine schools and under three thousand students.

Pope Leo XIII (1878-1903) encouraged America's Catholics to take on the mantle of leadership in the "noble and praiseworthy passion for knowledge."⁵² In *Longinqua Oceani*, a lengthy 1895 papal encyclical that otherwise was a paean to the American Church, Leo expressed impatience, reminding American bishops of the work that remained undone among Indians and Negroes. "We cannot pass over in silence those whose long-continued unhappy lot implores and demands succor from men of apostolic zeal; we refer to the Indians and the Negroes . . . within the confines of

⁵² Leo XIII, 6 January 1895, Rome, *Longinqua Oceani*, encyclical, "On Catholicism in the United States," in Claudia Carlen, comp., *The Papal Encyclicals*, vol. 2, 1878-1903 (Wilmington: McGrath, 1981), 365.

America, the greatest portion of whom have not yet dispelled the darkness of superstition.”⁵³ Leo’s choice of words and, more tellingly, the timing of the encyclical’s issuance, suggest that he felt the need to spur U.S. bishops to action. When he promulgated *Longinqua Oceani*, eleven years had passed since the Third Plenary Council, and a remarkable twenty-nine since the Second.

In that same year of 1895, the Josephite Fathers established St. Joseph’s Industrial School at Clayton, Delaware to educate Negro boys. The plan for St. Joseph’s reflected Josephite Superior John Slattery’s belief in the capacity of industrial education to develop students’ practical skills, while instilling independence, morality and a respect for the value of work. Like Booker T. Washington, Slattery emphasized manners, morals, and a strong work ethic as hallmarks of a reputable citizen.⁵⁴ In that conviction, and in his approbation of the industrial form of education, Slattery’s industrial school blueprint approximated the one Booker T. Washington had created for Tuskegee Institute.

Despite their endorsement of industrial education, neither Slattery nor Washington dismissed the value of classical education. The skills that Tuskegee graduates exhibited gave tacit testimony to Washington’s objectives: to instill character and habits of industry in students; to provide them the elements of a practical English education; to develop in them a skill in some definite trade; and to prepare teachers

⁵³ Leo XIII, 6 January 1895, Rome, *Longinqua Oceani*, encyclical, “On Catholicism in the United States,” in Claudia Carlen, comp., *The Papal Encyclicals*, vol. 2, 1878-1903 (Wilmington: McGrath, 1981), 369.

⁵⁴ Stephen J. Ochs, *Desegregating the Altar: The Josephite Fathers and the Struggle for Black Priests, 1871-1960* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University, 1996), 87-88.

capable of educating others.⁵⁵ These objectives went far beyond teaching young men to grow yams and young women to mend clothes. In response to the contention that Tuskegee did not prepare its students for the better places in the workplace and society, Louis R. Harlan argues that Tuskegee's catalogue deliberately overstated industrial course offerings and understated purely academic elements of the curriculum. He credits Washington with attracting a first rate faculty to Tuskegee, including George Washington Carver and architect Robert R. Taylor, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology's first black graduate.⁵⁶

Where Slattery and Washington saw value in vocational education, influential white southerners retained an attachment to classical education that originated in the antebellum period. They equated industrial education with "Negro education," a theorem that Northern philanthropists – perhaps inadvertently – endorsed by financing educators like Washington who promoted industrial education for African Americans.⁵⁷ The South's white majority had *de facto* authority to decide the role of public schools in achieving social goals, a prerogative they exercised by controlling public-education funds. Table 5.3 shows the disparity between per-pupil expenditures for black and white pupils in five representative southern states in 1910.

⁵⁵ Charles W. Dabney, *Universal Education in the South*, vol. 1, *From the Beginning to 1900* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1936), 498.

⁵⁶ Louis R. Harlan, *Booker T. Washington: The Making of a Black Leader, 1856-1901* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972) 140, 276.

⁵⁷ Joan Malczewski provides a concise summary of the scholarly discourse on northern philanthropists' intentionality in "Weak State, Stronger Schools: Northern Philanthropy and Organizational Change in the Jim Crow South," *Journal of Southern History* 75, no. 4 (November 2009): 963-966.

Table 5.3 Public school expenditures per pupil, selected southern states, 1910

	GA	LA	MS	NC	SC
Black (\$)	1.76	1.31	2.26	2.02	1.44
White (\$)	9.58	13.73	10.60	5.27	10.00
Black/White (%)	18.4	9.5	21.3	38.3	14.4

Source: Data from Joan Malczewski, “Weak State, Stronger Schools: Northern Philanthropy and Organization Change in the Jim Crow South,” *Journal of Southern History* 75, no. 4 (November 2009): 973

Because whites considered themselves culturally and intellectually superior to African Americans, “public schools for blacks primarily consisted of the elementary grades and emphasized manual labor and industrial training.”⁵⁸ Dunning School scholars punctuated this mentality, contending that African Americans’ “innate inferiority” precluded any expectation that “education would lead to racial equality.”⁵⁹ St. Mary’s Industrial School and the Catholic industrial schools that followed its model contradicted these hypotheses in a number of ways: First, the all-white student body at St. Mary’s evinced Catholic educators’ acceptance of vocational training as appropriate for white boys. Second, the inclusion of classical subjects in the curricula of industrial schools commissioned specifically to educate African American boys and girls bespoke Catholic educators’ confidence in the aptitude of their black students to assimilate academic subjects. Third, Catholic educators perceived sufficient worth in vocational training to argue against public schools’ becoming the sole source of that form of education. Witnessing to the latter, Catholic University of America professor John A. Ryan

⁵⁸ Vincent P. Franklin, “American Values, Social Goals, and the Desegregated School: A Historical Perspective,” in *New Perspectives on Black Educational History*, ed. Vincent P. Franklin and James D. Anderson (Boston: G.K. Hall, 1978), 200.

⁵⁹ Laura F. Edwards, “Southern History as U.S. History,” *Journal of Southern History* 75, no. 3 (August 2009): 548.

expressed his support for vocational training in a pamphlet enumerating social reforms necessary to ensure America's economic growth and social stability after World War I.⁶⁰ While cautioning that a nation could not afford to have all its citizens educated in manual skills to the exclusion of cultural education, Ryan argued against public schools' possessing an exclusive charter to offer industrial training. He urged parochial and private schools to offer vocational courses as well, in order to preclude "class divisions in education . . . [or] a State monopoly of education."⁶¹ In general, Catholic educators recognized that both literary and industrial education served practical purposes and that African Americans stood to profit from both. They embraced an expansive concept of education that, benefiting from insight into local social and economic conditions, rejected any *a priori* mutual exclusivity that other observers might impute to the two forms of education.

No discussion of such complexity could fail to have disciples at both poles. Harvard-educated W.E.B. Du Bois criticized Booker T. Washington and the Tuskegee model, insisting that industrial education prevented blacks from reaching their full potential. Close to Du Bois in his affection for the classical disciplines, John Boyle O'Reilly, editor of Boston's *Pilot*, the self-acclaimed oldest Catholic newspaper in America, asserted with hyperbolic floridity that "the negro will never take his full stand beside the white man till he has given the world proof of the truth and beauty . . . that are in his soul. . . . One great poet will be worth a hundred bankers and brokers . . . to the

⁶⁰ John A. Ryan taught theology and political economy at Catholic University of America from 1915 until his retirement in 1939.

⁶¹ "John A. Ryan and the Bishops' Program of Social Reconstruction, February 12, 1919" in *Documents of American Catholic History*, ed. Ellis, vol. 2, 589, 603.

negro race.”⁶² In contrast to O’Reilly, an argument from nearer the other end of the spectrum came in an 1889 pamphlet produced in the name of the directors of the (Catholic) Colored Industrial Institute at Pine Bluff, Arkansas under the aegis of Little Rock’s Bishop Edward Fitzgerald. The pamphlet declared that “the feeling of the best educators in the country [was] growing stronger and stronger in favor of industrial training;” it called industrial training the “spirit of the times and the wisdom of the age,” and argued that too much effort had gone into turning out lawyers, doctors and politicians,” and not enough to “prepare youth in a practical way for everyday life.”⁶³

While the theorists built their respective cases, the schools – church-affiliated or public – typically reflected an amalgam of the two educational theories in varying proportions. The Virginia Industrial School for Colored Girls included in its curriculum “the elementary studies,” but focused on sewing, laundering, gardening, canning and poultry care.⁶⁴ The state-run Virginia Manual Labor School for Colored Boys, which had an enrollment of 218 students in January 1926, operated under the principle that its students needed “a thorough training in elementary subjects.” Cognizant of the demands of modern industry, the school, nevertheless “laid great stress upon manual and industrial training.”⁶⁵ Augusta, Georgia school official Elizabeth Holt defended industrial training as a means to equip Negroes for the type of work available to them in

⁶² “John Boyle O’Reilly’s Speech in Behalf of the Negro, December 7, 1885,” in *Documents of American Catholic History*, ed. Ellis, vol. 2, 435-436.

⁶³ “The Colored Industrial Institute of Pine Bluff Arkansas,” three-page pamphlet, 8 December, 1889, AASM, RG 10/12, Fitzgerald, 2. The copy of the pamphlet examined for the current study bore a handwritten note at bottom of the last page signed by Bishop Fitzgerald, reading in part, “I think Industrial teaching may yet be found to be the solution to the Negro problem.”

⁶⁴ J.E. Davis, “A Virginia Asset: The Virginia Industrial School for Colored Girls,” *Southern Workman* 49 (August 1920): 359.

⁶⁵ Thomas L. Dabney, “Negro Schools in a Virginia County,” *Southern Workman* 57 (January 1928): 37-38.

that region of the country.⁶⁶ Holt praised her white school superintendant for acquiescing to a request from “Negro leaders in the educational life of the community” to forego some of the “purely academic work” of the type offered in white-only schools so that Negro schools might devote more time to industrial education. In four Augusta schools organized along these lines, girls received instruction in sewing, cooking, and laundry work, while boys received training in various forms of shop work. The curriculum allowed these schools to “supply the city with . . . certified cooks, laundresses and seamstresses.”⁶⁷ In Savannah, Georgia, the Culyer Street School provided its co-educational student body “the usual grammar school studies,” but there, too, the curriculum emphasized industrial training, much of it – especially for the girls – in domestic skills such as cooking, serving meals, and housekeeping.⁶⁸ The Culyer Street School clearly fit the schema Holt described when she said that industrial schools prepared students for the jobs that were available.

No group had a larger stake in the success of Catholic educational programs for people of color than the black Catholic laity. This segment of the Church voiced its aspirations and expectations at three national congresses in 1889, 1890, and 1892. Daniel A. Rudd, whose work as editor of Cincinnati’s *American Catholic Tribune* had earned him the respect of black Catholics, originated the idea for the congresses.⁶⁹ On the matter of education, delegates’ speeches, papers, and discussions indicated that black

⁶⁶ Elizabeth Holt, “Negro Industrial Training in the Public Schools of Augusta, Georgia,” *Journal of Home Economics* 4, no. 4 (October 1912): 315.

⁶⁷ Holt, “Negro Industrial Training,” 323, 316-317.

⁶⁸ Otis Ashmore, “A Savannah School of Industry,” *Southern Workman* 44 (September 1915): 485.

⁶⁹ “Colored Catholics: Their Convention Will Be Held at St. Augustine’s Church Today,” *Washington Post*, January 1, 1889, <http://lib-ezproxy.tamu.edu:2048/login?url=http://search.proquest.com/docview/138410295>.

Catholics clearly understood that low educational attainment had a negative effect on African Americans' quality of life. The delegates' ideas for solving the problem added another measure of ambiguity, however, to an increasingly discordant discourse on the subject. W.E.B. Du Bois, Booker T. Washington, and *Boston Guardian* editor William Monroe Trotter engaged in spirited and often rancorous debate over the benefit that redounded to African Americans from the various forms of education.⁷⁰ From inside the Church, the voices of John Slattery, Katharine Drexel, and later, Jesuit John LaFarge further complicated the discussion. Years later, Du Bois provided a sense of how complex the debate had become when, in a 1932 retrospective, he declared that "the problem ha[d] not been settled," and he criticized both the classical college and the industrial school for failing to foresee the "tremendous transformation of business, capital, and industry" that shaped the new century.⁷¹ Du Bois "never dismissed the necessity and desirability of industrial training," especially because schools like Tuskegee "created a demand for teachers . . . with a broad educational background."⁷² Du Bois's antagonist, Booker T. Washington, rejected southern whites' limiting Negroes to industrial and agricultural training, and, in particular "its avowed purpose of keeping the Negro 'in his place.'"⁷³ Washington and Du Boise clearly shared some points of agreement.

⁷⁰ James D. Anderson, *The Education of Blacks in the South, 1860-1935* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988), 104-105.

⁷¹ W.E.B. Du Bois, "Education and Work," *Journal of Negro Education* 1, no. 1 (April 1932): 63, 67. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2292016>.

⁷² Mary Law Chaffee, "William E. B. Du Bois' Concept of the Racial Problem in the United States: The Early Negro Educational Movement," *Journal of Negro History* 41, no. 3 (July 1956): 244. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2715830>.

⁷³ Chafee, "William E. B. Du Bois' Concept," 244.

African American Catholics convened the first of the three Catholic Afro-American congresses in Washington, D.C. on January 1, 1889. Conference Chairman Rudd addressed the delegates on the subject of education. He noted that educated African Americans occupied a conspicuous place in American society because, compared to the percentage of educated whites within the white population, educated persons of color represented a much smaller fraction of their overall numbers. To correct this situation Rudd called for the creation of more Catholic schools, where the educational regimen focused not only on the “head and on the arm,” but also on “a strong morality.”⁷⁴ Rudd spoke of the need for more young black men to learn a trade, but he acknowledged that union men, intent on protecting their own positions, had little interest in admitting black men to their brotherhoods. Eliminating this barrier, Rudd said, required a combination of efforts.⁷⁵ With this in mind, the delegates produced a written closing address to American Catholics. They acknowledged the critical role that education played in elevating people to the higher tiers of civilization, and pledged the congress to supporting the establishment of Catholic schools at the primary and higher levels. The address did not miss the opportunity to endorse vocational education, stating that “one of our greatest and most pressing needs is the establishing of industrial schools, where the hand of our youth may be trained, as well as the mind and heart.”⁷⁶

⁷⁴ “Proceedings of the First Colored Catholic Congress, Held in Washington, D.C., January 1, 2, and 3, 1889,” in *Three Catholic Afro-American Congresses* (Cincinnati: American Catholic Tribune, 1893; reprint, New York: Arno Press, 1978), 25-26. Citations refer to the reprint edition. The reports of the three congresses, though bound in one volume, differ slightly in titling, punctuation, and abbreviation.

⁷⁵ “Proceedings of the First Colored Catholic Congress,” 26-27.

⁷⁶ “Proceedings of the First Colored Catholic Congress,” 68-70.

The second congress convened in Cincinnati July 8-11, 1890. Doctor William S. Lofton of Washington, D.C. spoke on the topic of education, which again occupied a prominent place on the agenda.. Lofton commended the Catholic Church for its rich tradition of scholarship and educating the faithful in morals, culture, and the practical arts. He noted that few African Americans worked in the trades, a fact he attributed to workplace discrimination that blocked the entry of black men and, in consequence, denied them the opportunity to acquire the skills the trades required. Schools for manual training that might provide an alternative method for blacks to learn these skills, Lofton argued, did not exist. He cited with approval a *Washington Post* editorial that criticized American schools' continuing emphasis on literary education. Quoting at length from the *Post* piece, Lofton related that its author considered the educational systems of France, Germany, and Japan superior to America's because industrial education "accompanied and complemented" literary education.⁷⁷

Lofton did not promote industrial education as a replacement for the literary form. In fact, he observed that intellectual, education "trains the superior endowment of understanding which likens man to his Creator." Because, in Lofton's perception, so many schools administered by whites practiced discriminatory admissions policies, he recommended establishing a privately-funded agricultural and industrial school that gave preference of admission to colored boys.⁷⁸ In response, the delegates established an Industrial Committee comprised of prominent African American Catholics, including

⁷⁷ "Education in France," *Washington Post*, Jun 23, 1889, <http://lib-ezproxy.tamu.edu:2048/login?url=http://search.proquest.com/docview/138346285>.

⁷⁸ "Second Colored Catholic Congress, Held in Cincinnati, Ohio, July 8, 9, and 11, 1890," in *Three Catholic Afro-American Congresses* (Cincinnati: American Catholic Tribune, 1893; reprint, New York: Arno Press, 1978), 97-103. Citations refer to the reprint edition.

Lofton, to secure from the U.S. Congress “an appropriation . . . for the establishment of an Industrial School for Colored Catholics, in Washington.”⁷⁹ A final comment on the subject came in an address by Charles H. Butler who referred to industrial education as “the great need for our boys . . . [to] equip them to successfully compete with their more favored white fellows.”⁸⁰

The third congress convened January 5-7, 1892 in Philadelphia where, three years after the first congress, education remained at the forefront of delegates’ minds. Butler proposed one of the first resolutions, recalling that eight years earlier the Third Plenary Council had encouraged increasing the number of Catholic schools to give every Catholic child the opportunity to attend one. Butler’s resolution “call[ed] the attention of the Catholics of America to the unjust discrimination made against colored children . . . who, by reason of prejudice of color, have been deprived of those educational advantages which are so freely extended to people of every race and clime.”⁸¹ Though on its surface little more than a statement of grievance, Butler’s resolution emblemized a theme that pervaded the three congresses – a call for racial justice and an expansion of educational opportunity as a means to secure it.

Daniel A. Rudd presented the first paper at the Philadelphia congress. Like Butler’s resolution, it addressed the problem of education for African American children. Rudd explained that with so few Catholic high schools available for African American

⁷⁹ “Second Colored Catholic Congress,” 103-104.

⁸⁰ “Second Colored Catholic Congress,” 108.

⁸¹ “Third Colored Catholic Congress, Held in Philadelphia, Penn., Jan. 5, 6, and 7, 1892,” in *Three Catholic Afro-American Congresses*, (Cincinnati: American Catholic Tribune, 1893; reprint, New York: Arno Press, 1978), 133. Citations refer to the reprint edition; Guilday, ed., “The Pastoral Letter of 1884,” in *National Pastorals*, 246.

boys over age twelve, many boys who attended Catholic elementary schools had no choice but to go on to public high schools, a circumstance that often caused them to “become luke-warm or drift away from the safe guidance of the Church.”⁸² Rudd’s assessment foretold a continuing challenge that confronted the Church into the twentieth century: large numbers of African American children baptized into the faith who ceased practicing it when they left their Catholic elementary schools.

The Catholic Afro-American congresses expounded on the influence that education exerted on the socio-economic advancement of African Americans; they recognized the efficacy of both literary and vocational education; and they articulated a determination to secure for African Americans the same access to education that the rest of American society enjoyed. Because bishops and other members of the Catholic clergy attended the congresses’ meetings and participated in devotional and social activities, they heard first-hand the concerns and ideas that the delegates put forth. In the waning years of the nineteenth century, the topic of education remained near the top of episcopal agendas.

In 1895, nearly thirty years after Martin John Spalding established St. Mary’s Industrial School, his nephew John Lancaster Spalding – the same whose eloquence had graced the subject of education at the 1884 council – wrote about educators and the benefit that students derived from education. “Hence the true educator, even in giving technical instruction, strives not merely to make a workman, but to make also a man . . . who shall be upheld by faith in the worth and sacredness of life, and . . . enriched,

⁸² “Third Colored Catholic Congress,” 133-134.

purified and ennobled.”⁸³ Spalding’s reflection summarized Catholicism’s historic position on education and illuminated a path for the Church to tread as it stood at the threshold of the next century.

The same year that Spalding penned these words, 1895, the Josephite Fathers established St. Joseph’s Industrial School. Although St. Joseph’s differed from Baltimore’s St. Mary’s Industrial School in that it purposed to educate only African American students, it exemplified the older institution’s approach to industrial education, requiring students to complete literary as well as vocational courses. While the Josephites, like others engaged in Catholic education, recognized the value of a classical program, they also knew that graduates of vocational programs met the growing economy’s need for technically trained workers. On a personal level, priests and religious understood that schools like St. Joseph’s afforded many black boys and young men a last refuge from a world that had nearly robbed them of their future.

Father John Slattery held the post of Josephite Superior when St. Joseph’s Industrial School opened, but the school owed its existence more to Father John Anthony DeRuyter than to anyone else. Born in Holland in 1853, DeRuyter studied for the priesthood with the Mill Hill Missionaries in England; ordained in 1878, he came to the United States and in 1889 started St. Joseph’s mission for African Americans in Wilmington, Delaware. In a letter dated “Feast of the Epiphany” (January 6), 1890 DeRuyter – writing with the approval of Wilmington’s Bishop Alfred A. Curtis –

⁸³ John Lancaster Spalding, “The Scope of Public Education,” in *Catholic Education in America: A Documentary History* ed. Neil G. McCluskey (New York: Teachers College, Columbia University, 1964), 173. McCluskey cites the source of this contribution as John Lancaster Spalding, *Means and Ends of Education* (Chicago: A.C. McClurg, 1895), 140-150.

appealed to Catholics in the diocese for financial assistance. DeRuyter conveyed both his fledgling mission's dire need of funds and his concern for the spiritual welfare of the diocese's African Americans. He asked Catholics to help with the "great and apostolic work placed on my unworthy shoulders," informing them that one hundred thousand Negroes in the diocese received not "the least spiritual assistance from the Catholic Church."⁸⁴

Despite a desperate shortage of money, DeRuyter relied on donations to move ahead with projects to help the poor. He built St. Joseph's Church and started an elementary school in the church basement that he staffed with Franciscan Sisters of Glen Riddle, Pennsylvania.⁸⁵ He opened St. Joseph's Home for Colored Orphan Boys that provided not only meals and shelter but an elementary education equal to what the diocesan schools offered. When the number of boys in the orphanage increased beyond the capacity of the building that housed them, DeRuyter gave up his home in the recently-constructed rectory to make room for more of them. Although the home for orphans met the basic needs of younger boys, DeRuyter realized that as they matured into manhood they would need to learn a trade if they were to find employment and achieve self-sufficiency. This concern spawned the priest's idea for St. Joseph's Industrial School "to teach the boys a trade, to let them support or at least help to support themselves, and when they are twenty-one years of age, they can go forth among their own people and make good Christian workmen."⁸⁶

⁸⁴ John A. DeRuyter to Catholics of Wilmington diocese, 6 January 1890, "Rev. John Anthony DeRuyter, S.S.J.," Folder 4, ASSJ.

⁸⁵ "Rev. John Anthony DeRuyter, S.S.J.," Folder 4, ASSJ.

⁸⁶ "St. Joseph's Industrial School, Clayton, Delaware," *Colored Harvest* 2, no. 3 (1898), 44-46, ASSJ.

Such an enterprise required funding. Mother Katharine Drexel of Philadelphia, heiress to the Drexel fortune and founder of the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament for Indians and Colored People, provided the Josephites with funds to purchase the Delaware property and its dilapidated buildings. In May 1895 DeRuyter and twenty-five boys from Wilmington made the move to the Clayton facility where they immediately began refurbishing buildings and working the four hundred-acre farm. DeRuyter postponed opening the school until November to allow sufficient time to bring the buildings up to usable condition and harvest the crops that had ripened over the summer. During the first year of the school's operation, Mother Katharine made subsequent contributions to cover costs of refurbishment and maintenance. She also funded the purchase of an additional one hundred and thirty-five acres and the construction of additional buildings to enable the school to carry out its industrial-education function.⁸⁷

To allow DeRuyter to focus his energies on getting the industrial school up and running, Slattery assigned Fr. Charles Riley to assist with the responsibilities at St. Joseph's Church in Wilmington.⁸⁸ In August 1896, less than a year after the industrial school opened, DeRuyter suffered a fatal heart attack in Wilmington. From that point until 1902 three different Josephite priests held the rectorship at the industrial school. Despite the loss of DeRuyter, the school continued to expand and in 1902, Father Louis Pastorelli became rector, a post he held until 1912.⁸⁹ Pastorelli later served as superior of

⁸⁷ "The Beginning of St. Joseph's Industrial School, Clayton, Delaware, 1895-1902," 3-4, typed essay in unnumbered folder, ASSJ; "St. Joseph's Industrial School, Clayton, Delaware," *Colored Harvest* 2, no. 3 (1898), 44-46, ASSJ.

⁸⁸ "The Beginning of St. Joseph's Industrial School, Clayton, Delaware, 1895-1902," 1-2, typed essay in unnumbered folder, ASSJ.

⁸⁹ "St. Joseph's Industrial School," Folder 2, ASSJ.

the society from 1928 to 1942, a time that saw historic growth the in Josephites' ranks, in the number of missions they served, and the number of African American converts brought into the Church.⁹⁰ Chapter VI provides a more detailed examination of the Josephites during Pastorelli's tenure as superior.

St. Joseph's Industrial School's continued emphasis on dairy and crop farming kept the young men constructively engaged in pursuits that St. Joseph's – and schools of its type – saw – as wholesome and productive.⁹¹ Further, it allowed the school to meet most of its needs for meat, vegetable and dairy products, and in most years the sale of surplus production allowed the agricultural operations to turn a profit. Enrollment ranged between sixty-five and eighty, with boys working in furniture, shoe, tailor and printing shops, each supervised by a foreman experienced in his respective trade.⁹²

The story related by one alumnus exemplified what the school's founders had envisioned. In 1895, Frank Simmons entered Father DeRuyter's little school in Wilmington. The following year he moved to the industrial school in Clayton where he learned interior and exterior painting and, in the winter months, attended classes and got a basic education. When he left St. Joseph's, one of the priests helped him get a job as a handyman for the Knights of Columbus in Wilmington; he stayed there for about six months and passed the job along to another young man from St. Joseph's. Simmons related that he wanted to make his way as a painter but did not have any connections to help him get a job. "At the time there weren't many colored painters in the trade. So I

⁹⁰ Ochs, *Desegregating the Altar*, 4.

⁹¹ "St. Joseph's Industrial School," *Colored Harvest* 5, no. 8 (October 1908): 152, ASSJ.

⁹² "The Beginning of St. Joseph's Industrial School, Clayton, Delaware, 1895-1902," 6-7, typed essay in unnumbered folder, ASSJ.

was almost forced to go into business for myself.” Some of the men he knew from the Knights of Columbus contracted with him to paint their homes. From that start, Simmons built a business that he ran for fifty-five years, selling it in 1961.⁹³

Figure 5.1, a statue on the grounds of St. Joseph’s Industrial School, provides a visual image of the school’s philosophical foundation. In the center stands St. Joseph, in the Christian tradition the husband of the Virgin Mary, the earthy father of Jesus, and a carpenter by trade. To Joseph’s left a Negro boy stands holding a carpenter’s square, a symbol of the school’s technical training; to Joseph’s right, another Negro boy sits reading, symbolizing the school’s academic curriculum. While the statue admittedly exudes sentimentality, it also states simply but eloquently what went on there from 1895 to 1972. Men like DeRuyter and Slattery, whose energy made the school a reality, understood the circumstances that shaped the manner of their work. While their school, and others like it, instructed African American students in how to make shoes, plant a row of beans, or run a print shop, it also taught them grammar and geometry.⁹⁴ Equally important, it introduced them to standards of morality and behavior that, in the long run, may have proven more valuable than all the other education combined.

⁹³ Joseph C. Razza, “Saint Joseph’s Industrial School in Clayton, Delaware, As Seen by One of Its Charter Alumni,” *Colored Harvest* 74, no.3 (March-April, 1962): 20, ASSJ.

⁹⁴ Beginning in 1898 and continuing for an unknown number of years thereafter, the printing shop at St. Joseph’s Industrial School produced the annual report titled *Mission Work among the Negroes and the Indians*, the 1895 edition of which provided the data for table 5.2.

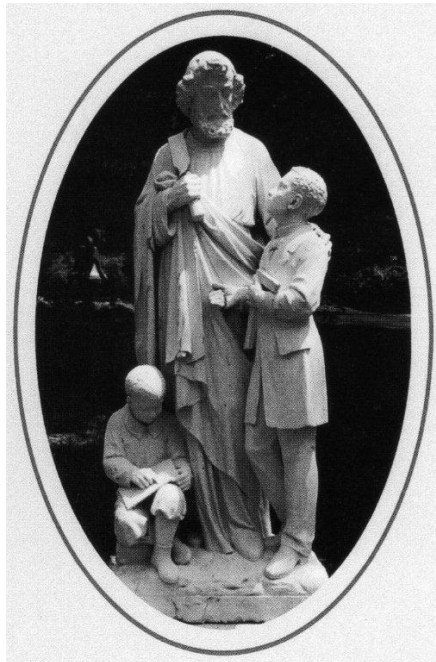


Figure 5.1 Statue at St. Joseph's Industrial School, Wilmington, Delaware.
(Source: Josephite Archives)

The siting of St. Joseph's Industrial School in Clayton brought an ancillary benefit to area Catholics of both races. For years they had relied on priests from Dover or Wilmington to celebrate mass once or twice a month in St. Polycarp's chapel. In 1911, a Josephite priest from St. Joseph's took over this duty on a regular twice-monthly schedule. Bishop John J. Monaghan sold the chapel intending to erect a church, but World War I postponed its construction. Parishioners began attending Sunday mass in the industrial school's chapel, a practice that continued to 1968 when they dedicated a new church under the patronage of St. Polycarp.⁹⁵

⁹⁵ "Dedication of St. Polycarp's Church, Smyrna, Delaware, May 26, 1968," commemorative program, Folder 4, St. Joseph's Church, Clayton, Delaware, ASSJ.

CHAPTER VI
WOMEN AND MEN IN THE HARVEST FIELD: THE NUNS AND PRIESTS OF
THE AFRICAN AMERICAN APOSTOLATE

This chapter examines the missionary work of the women and men engaged in the African American ministry and corroborates Chapter II's assertion of the consonance of that work with the tenets of Catholicism. It uses the charism of the different religious congregations to backdrop the actions of the priests and religious in their ministries. Because of the expansive geographic and chronological dimensions of the ministries examined, the chapter's structure relies less on place and time than it does on the objectives and methods of the religious organizations and of individual members.

The goals of the American Church's ministry to African Americans included both their religious conversion and their social advancement. The mass and sacraments comprised an essential part of the system of beliefs that motivated the Church to engage in spiritual and temporal ministry which, in turn, dictated the centrality of the priesthood to Catholic ministerial initiatives. The priest alone had authority to baptize converts, hear confessions and celebrate mass. Depending on the size of the parish and the priest's duties, he might also give catechetical instruction to potential converts and the faithful. The sisters shared a portion of the latter responsibility and their time in the classroom included instructing young students in dogma and morality as well teaching them their ABC's.

The chapter looks at the sisters ahead of the priests for two reasons: First, the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament provided a level of financial support to the African American ministry that facilitated work of other religious communities that would otherwise have gone undone. Second, women of color comprised the entire membership of the Oblate Sisters of Providence and the Sisters of the Holy Family, a racial phenomenon without analog in the American priesthood. This fact provides the groundwork for broaching an especially contentious issue, the ordination of African American men to the priesthood.

Women religious did not wait for American bishops to meet in the nineteenth century's plenary councils to set New-World ministries in motion.¹ The year 1639 marked the women's first appearance in North America when three French Ursuline sisters arrived in modern-day Canada to minister to French settlers. They copied the methods that Ursulines had fashioned in seventeenth-century France, which hardly resembled traditional European, cloistered-convent life. French Ursulines propagated Catholicism by the example of their piety and by their engagement with the secular world.² In New Orleans, another group of French Ursulines established a permanent convent in 1727, the first within the borders of the modern-day United States. The New Orleans Ursulines braved the frontier's dangers and hardships to establish an academy

¹ Although the Church draws distinctions between "nuns" and "sisters" based on the vows the women take and the degree to which they interact with the secular world, the current study's use of the terms approximates their interchangeable use in the twenty-first century's lexicon.

² Emily Clark, ed., *Voices from an Early American Convent* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2007), 7.

for girls and a school for blacks and Indians.³ The Ursulines' worked among African Americans in New Orleans from that point through and beyond the *terminus ad quem* of the current study. They adapted to Louisiana's tumultuous political situation, though occasionally a hint of friction developed between them and ecclesiastical and civil authorities.

Toward the end of Spain's suzerainty over Louisiana, Cuban-born Luis Ignacio de Peñalver y Cardenas served as Bishop of the Diocese of Louisiana and the Two Floridas. In his 1795 report, Peñalver y Cardenas expressed pleasure that the Ursulines achieved "excellent results" educating young girls, but he complained that the sisters' "inclinations [were] so decidedly French" that they refused to accept Spanish women as postulants until they could demonstrate fluency in French.⁴ Clearly, ethnic culture retained the capacity to divide a people who embraced a common faith, one that purportedly had the power to move mountains.⁵ Tension among Catholic factions in culturally, ethnically, and racially diverse New Orleans manifested itself in groups' drawing apart from and competing with one another.⁶ This phenomenon persisted into the twentieth century not just in New Orleans but throughout the North and South, especially along ethnic and racial lines.

³ George C. Stewart, *Marvels of Charity: History of American Sisters and Nuns* (Huntington, IN: Our Sunday Visitor Publishing, 1994), 51-52.

⁴ Luis Ignacio de Peñalver y Cardenas to his European superiors, New Orleans, 1795, in "A Report on Catholic Life in New Orleans by Its First Bishop, 1795," in *American Catholic History: A Documentary Reader*, eds. Mark Massa with Catherine Osborne (New York: New York University Press, 2008), 35.

⁵ Matthew 17:20 RSV, "If you have faith the size of a mustard seed, you will tell this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move."

⁶ Randall M. Miller, "A Church in Cultural Captivity: Some Speculations on Catholic Identity in the Old South," in *Catholics in the Old South: Essays on Church and Culture* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1983), 34-36.

The transfer of Louisiana from France to the United States in 1803 brought fresh concerns to the New Orleans Ursulines with regard to their civil status and property rights, a disquietude they expressed in a letter to President Jefferson. In his reply, Jefferson assured the Ursuline superior that the Constitution guaranteed the sisters' property would remain "preserved . . . sacred and inviolate." He told them they need fear no interference from government, and could rely on "all the protection" his office could give them.⁷ Relieved that their new government had no intention of interfering with their work, they went about expanding the colonial beachhead they had secured. The president's assurances notwithstanding, early nineteenth-century anti-Catholic sentiment characterized women religious as a deviation from contemporary gender norms.⁸ As sisters continued to enter the South through the remainder of the nineteenth century and into the twentieth, this image of Catholic women religious educators lessened but never fully disappeared. Further, the education of black and mixed-race young women in New Orleans proved an irritant to a white, Protestant patriarchy that exercised authority over a "slave society" with established gender and racial bounds.⁹

The work of these early Ursulines and other communities of women did not escape the notice of the American hierarchy. The bishops, despite being men of their time and therefore beholden to its notion of male superiority, valued the work the sisters performed. In their 1866 pastoral letter they expressed "deepest reverence for those holy

⁷ Thomas Jefferson to Seourr. Marie Therese Farjon de St. Xavier, Washington, 15 May 1804, in *Documents of American Catholic History*, ed. John Tracy Ellis, vol. 1, 1493-1865 (Chicago: Regnery, 1967; reprint, Wilmington: Glazier, 1987) 185.

⁸ Donna Porche-Frilot and Petra Munro Hendry, "'Whatever Diversity of Shade May Appear': Catholic Women Religious Educators in Louisiana, 1727-1862," *Catholic Southwest* 21 (2010): 35.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 36.

Virgins, who, in our various religious communities . . . serve God with undivided heart.” They acknowledged that the sisters’ lives of self sacrifice had caused “thousands estranged from our faith” to take a more favorable view of the Church.¹⁰ On a practical level, applauding women’s virtue while discouraging their pursuit of a career and wealth indirectly encouraged them to labor in the Church’s charitable and educational institutions. At the same time, the bishops perpetuated the notion of women’s “subordinat[ion] . . . to the supremacy of the male intellect.”¹¹

As clerics, the bishops understood that life in service to the Church required an ongoing pursuit of inspiration and guidance. They, as well as the Church’s priests and religious, often found both of these in the writings of Catholic contemplatives and spiritualists like Alphonsus Liguori (1696-1787), an Italian priest who founded the Redemptorist Fathers to minister to the poor in Italy.¹² Liguori spent much of his time in contemplation and wrote extensively on moral theology.¹³ His books on spirituality and the religious life included one that, though written principally for nuns, had application for others called to the religious or priestly life.¹⁴ A glimpse into Liguori’s instruction on ministry provides a sense of what animated the professed women of non-monastic religious communities. Liguori described perfect charity as concentrating on a person’s spiritual welfare over his bodily needs because “the dignity of the soul

¹⁰ Peter Guilday, ed., “The Pastoral Letter of 1866,” in *The National Pastorals of the American Hierarchy, 1792-1919* (Washington: National Catholic Welfare Council, 1923), 221-223.

¹¹ Paula M. Kane, *Separatism and Subculture: Boston Catholicism, 1900-1920* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994), 100, 178.

¹² Charles B. Herbermann et al., eds., *The Catholic Encyclopedia: An International Work of Reference on the Constitution, Doctrine, Discipline, and History of the Catholic Church* (New York: Robert Appleton, 1911), 12: 683.

¹³ Herbermann et al., *Catholic Encyclopedia*, 1: 334, 338.

¹⁴ Alphonsus M. Liguori, *The True Spouse of Jesus Christ and the Nun Sanctified by the Virtues of Her State* (Dublin: John Coyne, 1844), vii.

transcends the lowly condition of the flesh.”¹⁵ While sisters who worked in the African American apostolate understood that bringing Catholicism to people outside the fold fit Liguori’s “perfect charity” criterion, they also understood that they lived and worked every day in conditions that Liguori could not have imagined. They took justifiable satisfaction, therefore, in their ministry to the “flesh,” specifically the portion that dwelt between the ears of the children they taught. Although they did not waver in their belief in Catholicism’s capacity to improve the spiritual state of the young people entrusted to their charge, they sustained a belief that the education they provided the children unquestionably improved their temporal lives.

The sisters’ teaching role increasingly eclipsed – but did not eliminate – their other forms of benevolence. In the 1830s, an alliance between the New Orleans region’s white planter class and an emerging white commercial class imposed new social and economic restrictions on both free and enslaved blacks. More than at any other time, religious groups and institutions became providers of services that people of color could not access elsewhere. In imitation of the Ursulines, whose charity had for a century inspired Louisiana’s black Catholics, Henriette Delille, Juliet Gaudin, and Josephine Charles – all light-complexioned, mixed-blood women of color – established a congregation of women called the Sisters of the Holy Family. Typical of the period, creating such a community required a male spiritual advisor and advocate. French-born Father Etienne Jean Francois Rousselon lent his support to Delille, Gaudin and

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 277.

Charles.¹⁶ The new community, Louisiana's first for women of color, imitated the all-white Ursuline model in terms of its female leadership, but went further by securing for black women "identities as pious women, educational leaders, and sponsors of literacy," all of which had previously remained far outside their compass.¹⁷ The new order of religious women emblemized black women's ascendancy to modest leadership roles in Catholic religious instruction and charitable services, an ascent that began in the eighteenth century and came to full flower in the early decades of the nineteenth. This phenomenon occurred largely because the Ursuline nuns had performed the role in the evangelization of New Orleans that traditionally fell within the purview of male priests. Their robust program of evangelization relied on the education and catechization of women. The Ursulines grasped the benefit in providing instruction to the member of the family with the greatest responsibility for bringing up their children.¹⁸ Mothers could teach their children what the sisters taught them.

Henriette Delille and her small band of followers began their ministry before they formally became a religious order, providing catechetical instruction to slave children and adults.¹⁹ They won an ally in a devout French laywoman of means, Mademoiselle Jeanne-Marie Aliquot. In 1833, as Aliquot disembarked her ship at New Orleans to visit her sister, Sister Francis de Sales at the Ursuline convent, she fell into the river and would likely have drowned had a black man not jumped into the water and

¹⁶ Sister Audrey Marie Detiege, *Henriette Delille, Free Woman of Color: Foundress of the Sisters of the Holy Family* (New Orleans: Sisters of the Holy Family, 1976), 28, ASHF.

¹⁷ Porche-Frilot and Hendry, "Whatever Diversity," 47-48.

¹⁸ Emily Clark and Virginia Meacham Gould, "The Feminine Face of Afro-Catholicism in New Orleans, 1727-1852," *William and Mary Quarterly* 59, no. 2 (April 2002): 413, 416-417.

¹⁹ Sister Mary Catherine Walto, "A Brief History of the Origin and Development of Welfare Activities of the Sisters of the Holy Family" (B.A. thesis, Xavier University, 1933), 3, ASHF.

rescued her.²⁰ In gratitude, she promised to devote herself to helping the sick and the poor among the African American population. She made good her promise, not only supporting Delille and company financially but working alongside them as well.²¹

The little congregation encountered resistance from those inside and outside the Church who thought that women of color did not possess the virtue and ability to wear the habit of a vowed religious. In fact, the order's establishment in 1842 followed two earlier failed attempts to secure ecclesiastical recognition. Such prejudice did not deter the sisters, however, and they continued their ministry to the poor through the Civil War and Reconstruction. In 1842, the sisters took in two indigent women and cared for them, the earliest residents of what in 1848 became the Old Folks Home of the Holy Family. In 1892, Thomy Lafon, who generously supported the sisters' work during his lifetime, passed away and bequeathed money to the sisters to enlarge the facility. The expanded and renamed Lafon Old Folks Home of the Holy Family opened in 1895 and quickly became home to more than one hundred dependents. In 1932, the sisters reported sheltering, feeding and clothing an average of 112 old men and women, with a waiting list of up to twenty-five, "not including those whom the police might bring to the door at any hour."²² The sisters operated separate boys' and girls' homes which they supported by begging for food at the markets and, on paydays, begging for money from dock workers and at railroad stations. Later, contributions from benefactors and

²⁰ M. Boniface Adams, "The Gift of Religious Leadership: Henriette Delille and the Foundation of the Holy Family Sisters," in *Cross, Crozier, and Crucible: A Volume Celebrating the Bicentennial of a Catholic Diocese in Louisiana*, ed. Glenn R. Conrad (New Orleans: Archdiocese of New Orleans, 1993), 365.

²¹ Sister Mary Francis Borgia, "A History of the Congregation of the Sisters of the Holy Family of New Orleans," (B.A. thesis, Xavier College, 1931), 7, ASHF; Detiege, *Henriette Delille*, 25, ASHF.

²² Walto, "Brief History," 10-12, ASHF.

the Community Chest reduced the need for the sisters – and the orphans who routinely accompanied them – to beg in public.²³

By 1881, the Sisters of the Holy Family had sufficient financial resources to purchase the former Orleans Ballroom in the French Quarter and convert it to a mother house, convent, and school.²⁴ There the sisters established St. Mary's School for young African American girls, later named St. Mary's Academy for Young Ladies.²⁵ An undated prospectus (brochure) for the school pledged the sisters to “the religious, moral and literary improvement of the children,” and listed among the courses of instruction: reading, writing, grammar, composition, arithmetic, history, geography, science, etiquette, “sewing, in all its branches,” painting and French. Under “Terms,” the prospectus listed monthly board and tuition at fifteen dollars.” The sisters made their purpose plain, that “in whatever situation or employment, . . . the pupils of this Institution will be found fully competent for the discharge of their respective duties.”²⁶

The Sisters of the Holy Family repeatedly demonstrated their ability to adapt to fluid situations. In 1875, the superior of the order, Mother Josephine, sent Sisters Magdalene and Elizabeth Cecile to Opelousas to open St. Joseph's School, the order's first mission school.²⁷ In 1900, a series of events occurred that pointed up the

²³ Ibid., 20-22, ASHF.

²⁴ Sister M. Theresa Vincent Rousseve, “The Educational Activities of the Sisters of the Holy Family of New Orleans, Louisiana, 1842-1955” (M.A. thesis, Catholic University of America, 1955), 7, ASHF; Tracy Fessenden, “The Sisters of the Holy Family and the Veil of Race,” *Religion and American Culture* 10, no. 2 (Summer 2000): 190-192. <http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=1052-1151%28200022%2910%3A2%3C187%3ATSOTHF%3E2.O.CO%3B2-Y>.

²⁵ Although some sources record the school's inaugural year as 1882, two prospectuses bear the notation “Incorporated in 1880.”

²⁶ “Prospectus of St. Mary's Academy for Young Ladies of Color, Directed by the Sisters of the Holy Family,” undated brochure, ASHF.

²⁷ Walto, “Brief History,” 38, ASHF.

complexity and delicacy of race relations within the American Church. Father J.M. Lucey, pastor of St. Peter's Church in Pine Bluff, Arkansas, invited the sisters to take charge of the parish's industrial school. Lucey explained that although the Sisters of Charity of Nazareth had done excellent work there, he believed that the colored people of Arkansas would appreciate having sisters of their own race in the school. The sisters arrived in January 1901 and found a physical plant with two buildings housing dormitories, classrooms, an auditorium, a chapel, a library, and domestic science departments. A wealthy, African American town's resident had donated money toward construction of the facilities. Enrollment grew from three boarders and sixty day students when the sisters arrived to thirty boarders and two hundred and fifty day pupils by the following September.²⁸ Lucey expressed his pleasure at this turn of events, writing to Father Edward R. Dyer, the Sulpician who served as secretary of the Negro and Indian Commission: "The colored people of the town seem to feel for the first time that the school is really for them. . . . The colored sisters will do more than ten white priests among their people."²⁹ Dyer knew about the industrial school in Pine Bluff dating back at least as far as 1897 when Little Rock's Bishop Edward Fitzgerald had written to Dyer soliciting Commission funds for the project.³⁰

When a yellow fever epidemic struck New Orleans in 1905, the Sisters of the Holy Family showed their versatility and willingness to serve wherever needed.

Laundries refused to wash the sheets from the hospital that treated victims of the

²⁸ Borgia, "History of the Congregation," 109-110, ASHF.

²⁹ J.M. Lucey to Edward R. Dyer, Pine Bluff, 7 February 1901, Commission for Catholic Missions among Colored People and Indians, Record Group 10, Box 412 (RG 10/12), Inv. 158, AASM.

³⁰ Edward Fitzgerald to Edward Dyer, Little Rock, 12 October 1897, Commission for Catholic Missions among Colored People and Indians, Record Group 10, Box 412 (RG 10/12), Inv. 157, AASM.

disease so the sisters courageously took on the work. They spent the summer and fall that year keeping the hospital supplied with clean linens.³¹ By 1910, their community had grown to 105 sisters with responsibility for an academy and thirteen schools in New Orleans and three in Texas.³² In 1913, sisters staffed the Holy Rosary Institute in Lafayette, Louisiana, a girls' vocational boarding school. Father Phillip Keller, founder of the school, relocated it to Louisiana from Galveston, Texas when local public schools drew away too many of Holy Rosary's students.³³ The curriculum at the school in Lafayette offered academic subjects designed to prepare qualified students for teaching positions in rural schools. On the technical side, Holy Rosary also provided instruction in sewing, dress making, and millinery; students assisted with cooking, housework and laundry and learned through practical experience. In 1924, the school adopted a "scientific method" that provided classroom instruction in nutrition, menu preparation and cooking.³⁴ "The girls [were] taught all that a woman should know in regard to the home, along with regular elementary and high school courses."³⁵

Although the Sisters of the Holy Family held the distinction of being Louisiana's first religious community of women of color, the Oblate Sisters of Providence claimed lineal precedence over them because their establishment in Baltimore in 1828 marked them as the first such community in the United States.

³¹ Walto, "Brief History," 30, ASHF.

³² James A. Burns, *The Growth and Development of the Catholic School System in the United States* (New York: Benziger, 1912; reprint, New York: Arno Press, 1969), 343. Citations refer to the reprint edition.

³³ Vincent Rousseve, "Educational Activities, 52-53, ASHF.

³⁴ Walto, "Brief History," 39-42, ASHF.

³⁵ Borgia, "History of the Congregation," 140, ASHF. The *Lafayette Daily Advertiser* of December 30, 2010 provided an interesting postscript to the story of the Holy Rosary Industrial Institute. The buildings and property, which are on the National Register of Historic Places, have been returned to the custody of the Sisters of the Holy Family who hope to rehabilitate the Institute for use as an adult education center and medical care facility for the poor.

Chapter V, in its presentation of early, local efforts to educate African Americans, noted that a Washington, D.C. parish priest, Father Vanlomen, opened a seminary for young women of color in 1827. Vanlomen secured the services of a devout, educated, young African American woman named Maria Becraft who, in 1820 at age fifteen, had opened a small day school for colored girls in Georgetown.³⁶ After becoming associated with Vanlomen's school, Becraft continued as a lay educator until 1831 when she entered the convent of the newly founded Oblate Sisters of Providence. As a sister, she demonstrated the same skill as a teacher that she had shown as a lay woman. She also showed exceptional promise as a vowed religious and the Oblates envisioned her one day serving as the community's superior. Unfortunately for the young order of sisters, Becraft's death in 1833 brought those hopes as well as her contributions as an educator to a premature end.³⁷ The Oblates' story, of course, encompassed more than an account of this one talented woman's life and had begun years before.

As the eighteenth century neared its close, French-speaking refugees from France and Saint Domingue adopted as their parish church the chapel at St. Mary's Seminary which French Sulpicians had founded in 1791. Whites worshipped in the main chapel and blacks in the basement chapel, *la chapelle basse*. In 1794, with hardly enough students enrolled in the seminary to keep the faculty occupied, Father William

³⁶ Diane Batts Morrow, "In the Larger Black Community": Catholicism in *Black Women in America*," *U.S. Catholic Historian*, 18, no. 2 (Spring 2000), 70.

³⁷ "History of Schools for the Colored Population," *Special Report of the Commissioner of Education on the Improvement of Public Schools in the District of Columbia, 1871* (Washington: Bureau of Education, 1871; reprint, New York: Arno Press, 1969), 205. Citations refer to the reprint edition which retains the original report's pagination.

Louis DuBourg started a catechism class at the seminary for black parishioners.³⁸ Father Jean-Marie Tessier took over the class two years later when DuBourg left to assume the presidency at Georgetown College.³⁹ In 1827, the job of instructing the black parishioners passed to Father James Hector Joubert who soon realized he could make his catechism classes more effective by raising students' literacy. With Archbishop James Whitfield's permission, Joubert started a small school. For teachers, Joubert enlisted two educated women of color, Elizabeth Lange, the Cuban-born daughter of Saint Dominguan refugee parents, and Saint Dominguan-born Mary Madeleine Balas. Up to that time, Lange and Balas had been using their own little house as a school and orphanage but had exhausted their personal funds.

The women informed Joubert of their desire to establish a religious order for women of color, an anomalous notion given the racism and sexism that characterized much of nineteenth-century Baltimore society and, in varying degrees, the American Church. In a broad social context, the religious order they envisioned would commit free women of color to the service of black children rather than to their more traditional occupation of serving white adults. In a narrower, ecclesiastical context, the order would have to function within a hierarchical framework constructed and administered by white males.⁴⁰ When in the past these women had put forth their idea for a religious community, they received nothing but discouragement from every quarter. Joubert,

³⁸ Joseph W. Ruane, *The Beginnings of the Society of St. Sulpice in the United States, 1791-1829* (Washington: Catholic University of America, 1935), 98.

³⁹ Christopher J. Kauffman, *Tradition and Transformation in Catholic Culture: The Priests of Saint Sulpice in the United States from 1791 to the Present* (New York: Macmillan, 1988), 113.

⁴⁰ Diane Batts Morrow, *Persons of Color and Religious at the Same Time: The Oblate Sisters of Providence, 1828-1860* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 143-144.

however, agreed to help them bring their hope to fruition, thus prompting one chronicler of the period to label Joubert “the apostle of the colored people in Baltimore and founder of the Oblate Sisters of Providence.”⁴¹ For a long time, the male-dominated Church preferred to recognize the priest-counselors of women who started religious orders as the founders, a practice that decreased with the emergence in time of Catholic historians whose narratives adhered to a less sexist standard.⁴²

Using the Benedictine rule for a model, Joubert wrote a set of rules for the informal community, the first of which read: “The Oblate Sisters of Providence are a religious society of virgins and widows of color. Their end is to consecrate themselves to God in a special manner not only to sanctify themselves and thereby procure the glory of God, but also to work for the Christian education of colored children.”⁴³ Marie Rosine Boegue, another native of Saint Domingue, joined Lange and Balas and they moved into a rented house near St. Mary’s Seminary. Joubert secured the support of two generous lay benefactresses with Saint Dominguan roots, Madame Ducatel and Madam Chatard, to meet the financial needs of the fledgling community.⁴⁴ In July 1829, the three women took their vows of poverty, chastity and obedience as the first Oblate Sisters of Providence. By November of that year, the school they started had

⁴¹ John Gilmary Shea, *History of the Catholic in the United States*, vol. 4, *From the Fifth Provincial Council of Baltimore, 1843, to the Second Plenary Council of Baltimore, 1866* (New York: John G. Shea, 1890), 25.

⁴² Margaret Sue Thompson, “Concentric Circles of Sisterhood,” in *Building Sisterhood: A Feminist History of the Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary*, comp. Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, Monroe, Michigan (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1997), 5-6.

⁴³ Grace H. Sherwood, “America’s First Negro Religious Order: The Oblate Sisters of Providence Won an Uphill Fight,” *Baltimore Sun*, August 25, 1929, <http://lib-ezproxy.tamu.edu:2048/login?url=http://search.proquest.com/docview/543454713>.

⁴⁴ Grace H. Sherwood, *The Oblates’ Hundred and One Years* (New York: Macmillan, 1931), 15-16.

fifteen day students and nine boarders.⁴⁵ Cholera struck Baltimore in 1832 and the Oblates augmented the Sisters of Charity in a temporary cholera hospital. When Archbishop Whitfield contracted the disease, Oblate Sister Anthony Duchemin helped nurse him back to health. While treating the Archbishop's housekeeper, Sister Anthony contracted cholera herself and died.⁴⁶

When the Oblates' dear friend Father Joubert passed away in 1843, the Sulpicians did not assign a replacement as spiritual director for the sisters, but the women continued to observe their order's rule and pressed on with their work. In 1847, Thaddeus Anwander, a member of the Redemptorist order that Alphonsus Liguori had founded, assumed Joubert's former duties.⁴⁷ Over the ensuing decades, priests from the Society of Jesus (Jesuits) and the Society of St. Joseph (Josephites) served the sisters in this capacity.⁴⁸ Only dogged determination and a commitment to their vows carried the community through the difficult antebellum years. When Know-Nothings took to excoriating Catholics and at times perpetrating violence against them, the sisters felt particularly vulnerable to xenophobic hysteria; they were, after all, French-speaking women of color, teaching the baleful Catholic religion, to other people of color, in the language of a foreign country.⁴⁹ They endured, however, and in the period from the 1860s to the twentieth century established missions in Philadelphia, New Orleans, the

⁴⁵ Kauffman, *Tradition and Transformation*, 113-115.

⁴⁶ Christopher J. Kauffman, *Ministry and Meaning: A Religious History of Catholic Health Care in the United States* (New York: Crossroad, 1995), 54.

⁴⁷ Kauffman, *Tradition and Transformation*, 115.

⁴⁸ Thomas W. Spalding, *The Premier See: A History of the Archdiocese of Baltimore, 1789-1989* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press), 166.

⁴⁹ John J. Fialka, *Catholic Nuns and the Making of America* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2003), 109-110.

Midwest and the Southeast.⁵⁰ English Josephite priests arriving for the first time in Baltimore in 1871 found a parochial school and a convent academy (boarding school) operated by the Oblates for the benefit of African Americans.⁵¹

In 1910 Oblate membership stood at 139 sisters with charge of two schools and two academies in Baltimore.⁵² As educators nationwide established more stringent standards for teachers, most jurisdictions required increasing percentages of high school teachers to possess college degrees. To meet these new requirements, Catholic teaching orders sent their members back to school to earn the necessary credentials. The Oblates had particular difficulty meeting these requirements because of the racially restrictive admissions policies at Catholic colleges and universities. As a result, the Oblates almost had to surrender administering Immaculate Conception High School in Charleston, South Carolina, a respected assignment as well as a source of continuing revenue for the financially strapped sisters. Only by supplementing the two degreed Oblates with two lay graduates of New Orleans's Catholic, all-black Xavier University did the sisters hold on to their faculty positions.⁵³ In 1919, Thomas Wyatt Turner, Chairman of the Committee for the Advancement of Colored Catholics, wrote to Archbishop Giovanni Bonzano, the Apostolic Delegate to the United States, to protest the Catholic University of America's policy of refusing admission to persons of color. Turner argued that it kept black sisters from enhancing their professional skills through participation in the

⁵⁰ Diane Batts Morrow, "'To My Darlings the Oblates, Every Blessing': The Reverend John T. Gillard, S.S.J., and the Oblate Sisters of Providence," *U.S. Catholic Historian* 28, no. 1 (Winter 2010): 2.

⁵¹ John T. Gillard, *The Catholic Church and the American Negro* (Baltimore: St. Joseph's Society Press, 1929), 140.

⁵² James A. Burns, *The Growth and Development of the Catholic School System in the United States* (New York: Benziger, 1912; reprint, New York: Arno Press, 1969), 343. Citations refer to the reprint edition.

⁵³ Batts Morrow, "'To My Darlings the Oblates,'" 16.

university's summer education courses, thus degrading the quality of education they delivered to black children.⁵⁴ Not until 1936 did the Catholic University of America open its doors to black students. Turner attributed university officers' denials of past discrimination against colored applicants and students to "inexcusable ignorance or . . . [a] deliberate attempt to evade the truth."⁵⁵

African Americans appreciated having sisters of their own race in the classrooms; white Catholics' attitudes toward black sisters ranged from tolerance to benevolence. In general, priests in charge of parishes that had schools staffed by the sisters appreciated their presence and their work. Father J.M. Lucey of Pine Bluff, the priest who wrote glowingly about the work of the Sisters of the Holy Family, voiced similar praise for the Oblates. In 1904 Lucey wrote to the *Western Watchman*, St. Louis's Catholic weekly, to "awaken some interest in the work of our two colored orders of Sisters, the Oblate Sisters of Providence and the Holy Family." Lucey declared that because "the colored people love their own blood, just as other races do," colored sisters could accomplish the same thing for the people of their race in the South that white sisters had accomplished for whites.⁵⁶

Although principally engaged in teaching children, the Oblates served other needs. Just as they had stepped in to care for cholera victims in 1829, a hundred years later they assisted people affected by the Great Depression. As breadlines at the sisters'

⁵⁴ Cyprian Davis, *The History of Black Catholics in the United States* (New York: Crossroad), 217-218.

⁵⁵ Thomas Wyatt Turner, letter to the editor, *Baltimore Afro-American*, October 17, 1936. <http://lib-ezproxy.tamu.edu:2048/login?url=http://search.proquest.com/docview/543414748>. Turner wrote on behalf of the Federated Colored Catholics.

⁵⁶ J.M. Lucey to Editor, *Western Watchman*, Pine Bluff, 12 September 1904, Commission for Catholic Missions among Colored People and Indians, Record Group 10, Box 412 (RG 10/12), Inv. 158, AASM.

convent door in Baltimore grew longer, only the donations that the nuns begged from local food provisioners allowed them to meet the increased demand. They regularly fed more than one hundred men daily.⁵⁷ When the Oblates celebrated their centennial in 1929, Baltimore's *Afro-American* placed the number of sisters in the order at 170, and observed that "their work is significant . . . in the fact that it has demonstrated without doubt that the Negro woman can rise to the exalted heights of complete self-abnegation and can consecrate every minute of her life to some unselfish cause."⁵⁸ The *Baltimore Sun* noted that the order dated back to slavery's days when "the purpose of the sisters, the education of colored boys and girls, met with much opposition."⁵⁹ Although opposition to their work had diminished over the hundred years since their founding, the sisters' lot never became an easy one.

A third women's religious order founded for service in the African American apostolate, the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament for Indians and Colored People (SBS), did not come into existence until 1891. Founded at Cornwells Heights, Pennsylvania outside Philadelphia, this newest order differed markedly from the Oblate Sisters of Providence and the Sisters of the Holy Family not only in its northern roots. The SBS accepted only white women into a community that, unlike the impoverished Oblates and Sisters of the Holy Family, enjoyed full coffers from its earliest days. Mother

⁵⁷ Batts Morrow, "To My Darlings the Oblates," 11.

⁵⁸ Wm. N. Jones, "100 Years of the Oblate Sisters," *Baltimore Afro-American*, November 23, 1929. <http://lib-ezproxy.tamu.edu:2048>

[/login?url=http://search.proquest.com/docview/530769316](http://lib-ezproxy.tamu.edu:2048/login?url=http://search.proquest.com/docview/530769316). Diane Batts Morro cites this article in "To My Darlings the Oblates," noting its source as the Archives of the Oblate Sisters of Providence.

⁵⁹ "Oblates to Mark Their Centenary: Celebration Of Colored Catholic Sisterhood Will Open Tomorrow," *Baltimore Sun*, November 23, 1929. <http://lib-ezproxy.tamu.edu:2048/login?url=http://search.proquest.com/docview/543414748>.

Katharine Drexel, foundress of the SBS, brought to the new order of sisters not only her intelligence, devotion to service, and personal piety, but a considerable fortune.

Katharine grew up in the affluent household of Philadelphia financier Francis Anthony Drexel and his second wife Emma Bouvier Drexel. The Drexels' wealth came from Francis's position as a principal in the prosperous investment banking firm that his father Francis Martin Drexel founded in 1837.⁶⁰

Katharine Drexel had two sisters: older full-sister Elizabeth born, like Katharine, to Francis and his deceased first wife Hannah Langstroth Drexel; and younger half-sister Louise, daughter of Francis and Emma. Life in the devoutly Catholic Drexel household centered on individual piety and service to others, and the family provided financial assistance to countless poor people – almost all of them total strangers – without regard to race or ethnicity.⁶¹ The family's wealth allowed the Drexel sisters to travel extensively, and on a visit to the Western states, Katharine became keenly aware of the plight of Indians.⁶² Father James O'Connor, a Drexel family friend and Katharine's spiritual advisor, had become Bishop of Omaha in 1876, a see that encompassed Nebraska, parts of the Wyoming Territory, the Dakotas and

⁶⁰ Sister Patricia Lynch, *Sharing the Bread in Service: Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament, 1891-1991* (Bensalem, PA: Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament, 1998), 2-12; Dan Rottenberg, *The Man Who Made Wall Street: Anthony J. Drexel and the Rise of Modern Finance* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001), 29-33, 53; Nicole Farmer Hurd, "The Master Art of a Saint: Katharine Drexel and Her Theology of Education" (PhD dissertation, University of Virginia, 2002), 26, <http://lib-ezproxy.tamu.edu:2048/login?url=http://search.proquest.com/docview/305483610>.

⁶¹ Rottenberg, *Man Who Made Wall Street*, 53; Farmer Hurd, "Master Art of a Saint," 24-25, <http://lib-ezproxy.tamu.edu:2048/login?url=http://search.proquest.com/docview/305483610>.

⁶² Mother M. Agatha, "Catholic Education and the Indian," in *Essays on Catholic Education in the United States*, ed. Roy J. DeFerrari (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1942; reprint, Freeport, NY: Books for Libraries Press, 1969), 536. Citations refer to the reprint edition.

Montana. O'Connor benefited from his relationship with the Drexels as the family contributed generously to Indian missions in his episcopate.⁶³

When Francis Anthony Drexel, by this time a widower a second time, passed away in 1885, the Drexel sisters inherited fourteen million dollars (more than 300 million dollars in 2011). On a European trip, Katharine had an audience with Pope Leo XIII and asked the pontiff to send more missionaries to serve Indians and Negroes, the two most isolated segments of America's population. Leo responded by suggesting to Katharine that she should consider becoming a missionary herself, a thought she had entertained for some time.⁶⁴ Demonstrating the entrepreneurial disposition and "hardnosed financial acumen" she acquired as a Drexel, she committed herself to the work Leo had recommended and established a missionary organization that at its height operated sixty missions and schools committed specifically to the welfare and conversion of Negroes and Native Americans.⁶⁵ A newspaper article observed that the heiress had "startled society in this city [Philadelphia] and New York by becoming a nun."⁶⁶ Mother Katharine unfailingly emphasized the importance of education and, consistent with that thinking, funded programs to educate teachers. In Louisiana, for example, she established three normal schools to help fill the need for qualified teachers in rural Catholic schools. Because teaching represented one of the few career options for

⁶³ Lynch, *Sharing the Bread in Service*, 14; Rottenberg, *Man Who Made Wall Street*, 150-151.

⁶⁴ Mother M. Agatha, "Catholic Education and the Negro," in *Essays on Catholic Education in the United States*, ed. Roy J. DeFerrari (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1942; reprint, Freeport, NY: Books for Libraries Press, 1969), 508. Citations refer to the reprint edition.

⁶⁵ Rottenberg, *Man Who Made Wall Street*, 174.

⁶⁶ "Heiress to Millions: She Is Devoting Her Life and Money to Benefit Two Dark Races," *Baltimore Afro-American*, September 13, 1902. <http://lib-ezproxy.tamu.edu:2048/login?url=http://search.proquest.com/docview/530228782>. The dateline on this story is Philadelphia, September 6.

blacks in the South, normal schools yielded a manifold benefit. They produced professionally trained educators who put education within reach of children of their race, and they served as role models for them. The SBS normal school at Xavier in New Orleans later became the first Catholic university for African Americans.⁶⁷

The SBS owed their existence to the Drexel family in a spiritual as well as a material sense. The SBS constitution instructed the sisters to work toward their personal sanctification by: leading the Indian and colored races to the knowledge and love of God; instructing them in religion and other useful knowledge; caring for their orphans and spiritually or corporally destitute children; visiting their sick at home or in hospitals; visiting and instructing Indian and Colored prisoners; sheltering distressed women of their races; and aiding needy priests and religious communities engaged in the same ministry.⁶⁸ The lattermost of these had particular significance for others laboring in the vineyard.

Mother Katharine multiplied the work of the SBS in the African American apostolate through financial support of women and men who otherwise worked under conditions of chronic penury. Until her death in 1955, she honored her commitment to the missions by: establishing schools and staffing them with members of her own order; subsidizing teachers' salaries in schools staffed by lay teachers and sisters of other religious orders; funding the purchase of land and building materials for schools and

⁶⁷ Patricia Lynch, "Mother Katherine Drexel's Rural Schools: Education and Evangelization through Lay Leadership," *Cross, Crozier, and Crucible: A Volume Celebrating the Bicentennial of a Catholic Diocese in Louisiana*, ed. Glenn R. Conrad (New Orleans: Archdiocese of New Orleans, 1993), 270.

⁶⁸ "Mother Katharine Drexel Drafts the Constitution of Her Congregation, May 25, 1907," in *Documents of American Catholic History*, ed. John Tracy Ellis, vol. 2, 1866-1966 (Chicago: Regnery, 1967; reprint, Wilmington: Glazier, 1987) 574-576.

churches; and providing funds for the continuing operation and maintenance of parish facilities.⁶⁹ Mother Katharine showed particular affection for, and generosity toward, orders of priests engaged in the work dearest to her. The Holy Ghost Fathers (*Congregatio Sancti Spiritus* – “Spiritans”) a missionary order founded in France, fit this criterion.⁷⁰

One of the earliest contacts between the SBS and Holy Ghost Fathers occurred in connection with St. Emma’s Industrial and Agricultural College for Colored Youth in Virginia. The school, which accepted its first students in 1895, owed its existence to the generosity of Louise Drexel Morrell – Katharine’s sister and wife of Edward Morrell – who named St. Emma’s in honor of her mother. St. Emma’s sought to prepare young black men for new opportunities in agriculture and the trades in the economically resurgent South. (Records occasionally refer to St. Emma’s by its Rock Castle, Virginia location or as “Belmead,” the property’s name under its original owner, Confederate Civil War General Philip St. George Cocke.)⁷¹ The school offered training in a wide variety of vocational skills: baker, wheelwright, blacksmith, painter, upholsterer, woodworker, and mill operator. While the founders and faculty expected that students would meet with success in the workplace, they also hoped that they would “become representative men of their race.”⁷² St. Emma’s curriculum bore similarities to the

⁶⁹ *Century Book: Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament* (Bensalem, PA: Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament, 1991), 6-8, ASBS.

⁷⁰ In more recent times, the word “Spirit” replaced “Ghost” in the order’s name; members are commonly referred to as “Spiritans.”

⁷¹ Marie Barat Smith, “A History of St. Emma’s Military Academy and St. Francis de Sales High School,” (master’s thesis, Catholic University of America, 1949), 5-6, ASBS

⁷² “St. Emma Industrial and Agricultural College for Colored Youth, Rock Castle, Virginia: Establishment and Aim,” *Colored Harvest* 15 (October 1912): 193-194. ASSJ

Hampton-Tuskegee model and fit the template for Catholic institutions created to prepare graduates for work and life.⁷³ Louise Drexel Morrell also insisted that St. Emma's curriculum reflect traditional Catholic educational philosophy, and practices she observed on visits to Catholic vocational schools in Europe.⁷⁴ The latter included the school's becoming and remaining self-sufficient in food production. A promotional brochure published by St. Emma's in 1918 spoke enthusiastically about the school's stock breeding program, dairy herd, poultry division, fruit and vegetable truck gardening, and canning and preserving operations.⁷⁵

St. Emma's characterized labor as honorable and "an indispensable condition of success in every department of life." Students studied subjects taught in traditional parochial schools but focused on industrial education. St. Emma's did not intend to "educate the students beyond what [was] proper for the sphere of life in which they [were] expected to move."⁷⁶ Not until decades later, when Benedictine Fathers took over the administration of St. Emma's in 1929, did the curriculum reflect a serious shift away from the heavy emphasis on vocational education. The Benedictines accomplished this by changing the schedule of instruction to alternating weeks of academic and industrial studies.⁷⁷ When Mr. and Mrs. Morrell first conceived the idea for St. Emma's, they hoped to staff it with priests and brothers of the Congregation of the Holy Ghost. The

⁷³ Gillard, *Catholic Church and the American Negro*, 184.

⁷⁴ Ronald O. Pessner, Jr., "The St. Emma Military Academy: A Catholic Response to African-American Missions and Industrial Education," (undergraduate thesis, University of Virginia, 1992), 5-6, ASBS.

⁷⁵ "Prospectus of the St. Emma Industrial and Agricultural College, Powhatan Co., Va." (Rock Castle: Brothers of the Christian Schools, 1918), 19-22, Box 21, Folder 1, ASBS.

⁷⁶ "A Model Negro Trade School in Virginia," *Colored Harvest* 7 (March 1904): 474. ASSJ

⁷⁷ "Catalogue of the St. Emma Industrial and Agricultural Institute, A Trade School for Colored Boys in Charge of the Benedictine Fathers, 1936-1938," Box 1, Folder 1, ASBS. *Century Book: Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament* (Bensalem, PA: Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament, 1991), 99, ASBS.

Morrells admired the work that Spiritan missionaries had done among African Americans in the Morrells' hometown of Philadelphia, and they wanted the same quality of men to work with the boys and young men who would attend St. Emma's.⁷⁸ Unfortunately for Mr. and Mrs. Morrell's plans, a shortage of qualified, English-speaking teaching brothers forced the Spiritans to turn down the assignment, but a Spiritan priest served as chaplain at St. Emma's from its opening until 1899.

The Morrells' efforts to secure the services of the Spiritans for their new boys' school attracted the attention of Josephite Superior Father John Slattery and instigated an incident that typified how individuals and groups that belonged to the same parent organization – the Catholic Church – sometimes worked at cross purposes. As early as 1893, Slattery wrote to Philadelphia's Archbishop Patrick J. Ryan, in whose diocese the Spiritans worked. He cautioned that Ryan's endorsement of the Spiritans could prove embarrassing to the bishop if Rock Castle became a Spiritan novitiate or "drift[ed] into white work, which everyone cognizant of the ways [of] the Holy Ghost Fathers, expects." Slattery, who knew the Josephites did not have enough personnel for the work at St. Emma's, listed four priests of the Richmond Diocese he believed met the requirements of the work. As an enclosure to his letter to Ryan, Slattery listed the Spiritans' current American assignments: 35 priests, 39 scholastics, 25 lay brothers, 3 lay novices, 1 college and 14 churches, of which only 2 priests, 2 lay brothers and two churches engaged in work among African Americans. Slattery sent a separate letter to Richmond's Bishop Augustine Van de Vyver who had jurisdiction both over the region

⁷⁸ Louise Drexel Morrell to Joseph Oster, 16 February 1894, 8-B-34, ACSSp.

where the Morrells planned to erect St. Emma's and over the four Richmond diocesan priests Slattery recommended for assignment to the school.⁷⁹ Slattery's efforts to influence events as St. Emma's came to nothing. The Morrells ultimately contracted with the Brothers of the Christian Schools to serve on the faculty, and with the exception of the period 1899 to 1903, Spiritan priests served as chaplains.

In 1903 Fathers William F. Stadelman and Joseph Cronenberger reestablished the Spiritan presence as chaplains at St. Emma's and its sister school, St. Francis de Sales, located across the valley. Mother Katharine opened St. Francis for colored girls in 1899, naming the school after the patron saint of the Drexel sisters' late father.⁸⁰ The SBS structured the curriculum at St. Francis de Sales to "educate girls for competent Christian teaching in southern schools," and provide "training in the domestic arts and sciences."⁸¹ A visitor to the school in 1909 declared that few educational institutions in the South, whether for white or black students, equaled St. Francis de Sales, and none surpassed it. The same visitor recommended that African American parents, regardless of religious persuasion, consider St. Francis for their daughters' education. The sisters there, according to the visitor, made no effort to force Catholicism on the students nor did they interfere with the girls' religious practices.⁸² Mother Katharine believed that the missionary character of the SBS dictated that St. Francis admit students of all religious

⁷⁹ John R. Slattery to Patrick J. Ryan ; John R. Slattery to Augustine Van de Vyver, Baltimore, 11 June 1893, both in 8-B-34-3, ACSSp., cross-referenced as SSJ LBP-1-165 and SSJ LBP-1-166, ASSJ; enclosure to Slattery's letter to Ryan, 8-B-34-4, ACSSp., cross-referenced as SSJ 16-Y-36, ASSJ.

⁸⁰ Koren, *Serpent and the Dove*, 168-170; *Century Book: Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament* (Bensalem, PA: Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament, 1991), 99, ASBS.

⁸¹ Marie Barat Smith, "A History of St. Emma's Military Academy and St. Francis de Sales High School," (master's thesis, Catholic University of America, 1949), 8, ASBS.

⁸² "Catholic School for Colored Girls: St. Francis de Sales Institute at Rock Castle, Va., The Result of Untiring Work on Part of Devoted Sisters," *Baltimore Afro-American*, September 18, 1909. <http://lib-ezproxy.tamu.edu:2048/login?url=http://search.proquest.com/docview/530285661>.

denominations. In the school's second year of operation, non-Catholics constituted approximately fifty percent of the student body.⁸³

Just as SBS schools reflected Mother Katharine Drexel's ability to organize and manage, so too did her dealings with the beneficiaries of SBS generosity demonstrate her business sense. In one of her letters to Spiritan Superior Eugene Phelan, she requested an updated list of Spiritans assigned to work among African Americans, which assignment formed part of a 1909 agreement between the SBS and the Spiritans. In return for Drexel's commitment of ten thousand dollars, the Holy Ghost Fathers had agreed to "furnish for parish work among the Colored People in the United States not less than six priests who shall be devoted to the duty of ministering and teaching the Roman Catholic religion among the Colored People in the United States, it being understood and agreed between the parties that such parish work shall be in parishes not existing at the time this agreement goes into effect but in other parishes then to be established."⁸⁴ For the SBS, having a wealthy heiress for a foundress carried with it the collateral benefit of receiving *pro bono* legal services from a Drexel attorney, a fact evident in the form and content of agreements they signed with other religious communities. Mother Katharine stood among the women of her time who did not require a larger social movement to tell them to embrace their identity. In one instance, she

⁸³ Farmer Hurd, "Master Art of a Saint," 146, <http://lib-ezproxy.tamu.edu:2048/login?url=http://search.proquest.com/docview/305483610>.

⁸⁴ Katharine Drexel to Eugene Phelan, Cornwells Heights, 2 February 1921, 6-D-11-5, ACSSp.

replied to a request for SBS sisters to *man* a school by advising her correspondent that the sisters would *woman* it.⁸⁵

Over the decades, the SBS and Spiritans enjoyed a close-knit working relationship built on mutual respect and their shared objective of ministering to African Americans. The SBS sisters at St. Francis de Sales and the Spiritan chaplains there and at St. Emma's ministered to the mixed-race rural populace living in the vicinity of the school. In addition to saying mass at a nearby chapel, the Holy Ghost fathers also acted as chaplains for the local penal institution and the sisters gave religious instruction to the inmates.⁸⁶ Friction arose from time to time, usually the result of personality clashes, usurpation of real or perceived authority, or finances. In matters of the latter, Louise Drexel Morrell displayed the same hardnosed business sense of older sister Katharine. Morrell's letters to Spiritan Provincial Eugene Phelan, for example, expressed her concern that Father Aloysius Roth, Superior at St. Emma's from 1921 to 1925, had made unreasonable demands for higher compensation. Morrell based her assessment on her and Mother Katharine's comparison of "salaries allowed in several dioceses" and the lower cost of living in Virginia. For his part, Roth complained to Phelan that a priest "should live in reasonable comfort according to his state and have in addition for future use or to give to his society which educated him, a surplus."⁸⁷ To keep down costs, Roth and his associate Father John Fitzpatrick scrimped on coal, forcing Fitzpatrick to sleep

⁸⁵ Koren, *Serpent and the Dove*, 156. Koren cites the source of this comment as "Katharine Drexel, Spiritan Archives, 8A-22-51."

⁸⁶ *Century Book: Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament*, 100, ASBS; Eugene Phelan to Lawrence Riley, 10 April 1927, 6D-11-9, ACSSp.

⁸⁷ Louise Drexel Morrell to Eugene Phelan, 15 January 1923, 8-B-36-3, ACSSp.; Aloysius J. Roth to Eugene Phelan, Rock Castle, 27 February 1923, 8-B-36-4, ACSSp.

with his window closed on cool nights. Roth complained that as a result, “the atmosphere escaping from his room in the morning would function as an excellent germicide.”⁸⁸ Louise Morrell eventually consented to increase the salary of each priest from \$1,000 to \$1,150 annually, but the priests had to accept responsibility for all expenses except repairs to their house and barn.⁸⁹ Morrell’s correspondence with Spiritan provincials over the ensuing decades showed that she took an exacting, personal interest in St. Emma’s. Her commitment to providing a first rate learning environment for the school’s African American students caused her to hold everyone associated with St. Emma’s to rigorous standards.

Although religious orders might compete with one another in places where their mission territories overlapped, competition ultimately took a backseat to the understanding that “everyone worked for the same boss.” The sexist attitude and behavior of some priests grated on the sisters, but the men who labored in the African American apostolate understood that the school – and, by extension, the teaching sisters – constituted an irreplaceable part of their ministry. When the sisters teaching in parish schools came from Cornwells Heights, the parish usually received some form of financial subsidy to complement the contribution that the sisters made in the classroom. Alexandria, Louisiana Bishop Cornelius Van de Ven expressed all of these sentiments in a 1916 letter to Spiritan Provincial Eugene Phelan, thanking Phelan for all he had done

⁸⁸ Aloysius J. Roth to Eugene Phelan, Rock Castle, 12 September 1924, 8-B-36-18, ACSSp.

⁸⁹ Statement of compensation, 8-B-36-17, ACSSp.

to enlist Mother Katharine's assistance to the benefit of the bishop's diocese, and concluding that "it is all for the glory of God and the salvation of souls."⁹⁰

In an example of how much the African American ministry depended on Drexel and her religious community, Phelan wrote to Mother Katharine in 1915 following a recent visit to the Louisiana mission field. His letter, which hinted of a progress report, gave an example of how the poverty of local African American Catholics compelled missionaries to rely on outside financial support. He reported that in Alexandria, Louisiana, only the generosity of the SBS and a memorial offering by a priest's family allowed for the purchase of land and construction of a 42' X 84' church with heat, electricity, and city water.⁹¹ Phelan also expressed gratitude for Drexel's generous gift of ten thousand dollars that had enabled the establishment of Holy Ghost parish in New Orleans, and he admitted to his disappointment that the "diocesan authority" had decided on the church's location and gave neither Mother Katharine nor him a "say" in the matter.⁹² Phelan and Drexel's experience in this instance witnessed to the authority that bishops exercised within in their episcopates.

Although members of religious orders might contribute to the accomplishment of a diocese's objectives – in the case of the African American apostolate, expending funds of their own and performing work that the diocese's own priests might shun – the bishop exercised paramount authority, even when it came to siting a church whose existence proceeded from the generosity of others. A separate matter a few years later involved

⁹⁰ Cornelius Van de Ven to Eugene Phelan, Alexandria, 5 March 1916, 1A-10-20, ACSSp.

⁹¹ Eugene Phelan to Katharine Drexel, Norwalk, Connecticut, 31 December 1915, 6-D-11-2, ACSSp.

⁹² Phelan to Drexel, 31 December 1915, 6-D-11-2, ACSSp.

Bishop William T. Russell's dissatisfaction with an independent-minded Spiritan assigned to the colored parish in Russell's Charleston, South Carolina diocese. Phelan acknowledged to the unhappy bishop that Spiritans "[were] taught in the most positive way to reverence and obey the venerable bishops under whom we work."⁹³

Unfortunately, the authority that those venerable bishops exercised sometimes hindered, or at least complicated, the missionaries' efforts.

From the closing decades of the nineteenth century through at least the first three decades of the twentieth century, the disjointed character of the African American apostolate and the uneven results it produced reflected the decision of the Second Plenary Council to leave the apostolate in the hands of local bishops rather than place it under a national ecclesiastical authority. This situation handicapped religious orders like the Spiritans at both the individual and organizational levels. Time had proven the bishops who met in 1866 prescient in one regard, however. They anticipated that the American Church would not have enough priests to meet the demand of the African American ministry and should look to Europe for assistance: "If from the abundance of priests which the Catholic countries of Europe enjoy, some, moved by the Spirit of God, would come to our aid, we but remind them that the harvest is great, but the laborers are few."⁹⁴ Thus did members of the Holy Ghost Fathers, with the permission of the Sacred Congregation *de Propaganda Fide*, travel from France in the 1870s, at first to minister to German immigrants in the American Midwest and shortly later to become engaged in

⁹³ Eugene Phelan to William T. Russell, 1920, 7A-24-32, ACSSp.

⁹⁴ *Concilii Plenarii Baltimorensis II, Titulus X, Caput IV*, no.491. Cited in John T. Gillard, *Colored Catholics in the United States* (Baltimore: Josephite Press, 1941), 114.

the African American apostolate.⁹⁵ Their history of missionary ministry among people of color in other parts of the world reflected their congregation's unique charism. The Spiritans ordained black men to the priesthood in Paris as early as 1842 and assigned them to missionary outposts in Africa. In evidence of their commitment to a native clergy – something John Carroll had encouraged for the predominately white United States as early as his 1792 pastoral letter – the Spiritans also established a minor and a major seminary in Africa.⁹⁶

The year 1895 brought another group of European priests to the United States, the Society of the Divine Word. Founded in Steyl, Holland in 1875 and drawing most of their early members from among German priests who fled their homeland to escape the *Kulturkampf*, they became more familiarly known in the U.S. as the SVDs, an abbreviation of their Latin name, *Societas Verbi Divini*. The SVDs established a foundation among European immigrants in the Midwest and then looked outward for other missionary opportunities.

With the permission of Natchez, Mississippi's Bishop Thomas Heslin, Father Aloysius Heick traveled to Vicksburg, Mississippi where, in 1906, he established St. Mary's mission church and school, the first SVD parish in the South. Two years later, Heick founded the Holy Ghost Mission in Mississippi's capital city of Jackson, home to eleven thousand African Americans, none of them Catholic. Heick's experience at St. Mary's and Holy Ghost taught him that local black Protestants had little interest in

⁹⁵ Koren, *Serpent and the Dove*, 27-37.

⁹⁶ Stephen J. Ochs, *Desegregating the Altar: The Josephites and the Struggle for Black Priests, 1871-1960* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1990), 53.

converting to Catholicism. Black people considered the Roman liturgy alien and without the enthusiasm and religious expression that marked their own religious services. Heick became convinced that the children represented the best hope for bringing new souls to the Church, something Mother Katharine Drexel could have told him. With her financial assistance, Heick erected a multi-purpose brick building that served as Holy Ghost's church, school, rectory, and convent. The school opened in 1909 with one hundred and ten students enrolled, all but one non-Catholics.⁹⁷

Heick and Drexel both understood that the children's natural desire to learn brought them to school, but the welcome and nurture that the teaching sisters provided offered the best hope for effecting conversions. Arnold Janssen, superior and founder of the Divine Word Missionaries, had written to Heick in 1905 advising him that conversions would "hardly be possible without the help of the sisters." Janssen believed that "if they succeed in winning over the children, and through them their parents . . . a good number of conversions might not be impossible."⁹⁸ Regardless of whether those conversions occurred, the SBS and SVD missionaries carried on their work in Mississippi.

Early Divine Word missionaries in the South observed behavior toward people of color that concerned them; it became apparent very quickly that white Catholics, and

⁹⁷ Michael Meier, "Divine Word Missionaries' Black Apostolate in the Southern United States of America," (PhD dissertation, Pontificia Universitas Gregoriana, Rome, 1961, trans. William J. Bonner, 1989), 40-55, ASVD; Paul J. Edwards, "Just a Tiny Mustard Seed in 1908," *St. Augustine's Messenger* 29, no. 8 (1951): 203-204, 213, ASVD; Ernest Brandewie, *In the Light of the Word: Divine Word Missionaries of North America* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2000), 189-191.

⁹⁸ Arnold Janssen to Aloysius Heick, Steyl, 5 September 1905, in *Arnold Janssen, SVD: Letters to the United States of America*, ed. Josef Alt, trans. Robert Pung and Peter Spring (Nettetal: Steyler Verlag, 1998), letter #122, 299-301, ASVD.

even some white priests, exhibited openly racist sentiments toward African Americans. On the other hand, they noted that Negro Protestant ministers enjoyed a close relationship with the people of their race and exerted a strong influence over them. Fathers Matthew Christman and James Wendel, by then experienced in the African American apostolate, advocated for a seminary to develop a native clergy. Their thinking paralleled an editorial arguing that “the Negro will naturally resent the idea to join a church that does not give him a chance to advance to the offices of that church.”⁹⁹ The SVDs appealed to Bishop John E. Gunn of Natchez, whose diocese included the state of Mississippi, to authorize such an undertaking. With Gunn’s permission, the SVDs established a seminary in Greenville, Mississippi at the site of their Sacred Heart parish and Sacred Heart High School, Mississippi’s first Catholic high school for Negroes. A two thousand dollar donation from Mother Katharine paid for the construction of a small building and the modification of others to create a usable facility. By the end of its first year of operation, the seminary had fourteen young men enrolled. Local whites, Catholics among them, voiced their disapproval of the seminary and in 1923, the SVDs relocated it to Bay St. Louis, Mississippi. As a Gulf Coast town, Bay St. Louis had an appreciably higher percentage of black and white Catholics than other parts of the state. The seminary moved into a new facility erected specifically for the purpose and named after the African Bishop Augustine.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁹ “Our Southern Missions,” *The Christian Family: An Illustrated Monthly Magazine for the Catholic Home* 13, no. 6 (June 1918): 186.

¹⁰⁰ Laurence Williams, “The History of St. Augustine’s Seminary,” November, 1948, Box F, Folder 15, ASVD.

Not everyone celebrated the seminary's opening as a leap forward for African Americans. The *Chicago Defender* ascribed a negative connotation to the idea of a separate seminary for men of color.

Organizing and training our men and women as priests and nuns would be a wonderful idea if Jim Crowism was not allowed a place on the program. The fact that separate institutions for the purpose are used shows that the members of the Race who take the step are either looked upon as inferiors or are deemed unfit as associates by the heads of the Catholic Church. If true Christianity played any part in the proposition, the men and women affected would not be segregated, but would be allowed to enjoy the advantages which go along with affiliations already thoroughly organized.¹⁰¹

The *Defender* pointed out a harsh reality of the African American Apostolate, that young men who grew up in a southern, black parish had few options if they wished to consider seriously a vocation to the priesthood. They could study at a northern diocesan seminary if one would take them, at a seminary outside the United States, or with the Society of the Divine Word at St. Augustine's. Other religious orders with an appreciable presence in the African American ministry – in particular, the Spiritans and the Josephites – did not turn away black candidates out of hand, but their screening process resulted in the rejection of most applicants. Stephen Ochs has argued convincingly that during the 1918-1942 incumbency of Louis B. Pastorelli as superior of the Josephites, the Society of St. Joseph systematically disqualified applicants, a policy that did not change appreciably until the Second World War.¹⁰²

¹⁰¹ "Priests Stand By Jim Crowing in Church Work: Catholics Have Separation in Schools Where Old Custom Is Taught," *Chicago Defender*, September 29, 1923, <http://lib-ezproxy.tamu.edu:2048/login?url=http://search.proquest.com/docview/491974642>.

¹⁰² Ochs, *Desegregating the Altar*, 3-4, 321-322.

Numerous factors came into play with regard to a young Catholic man's belief that he might have a priestly vocation, the latter term derived from the Latin *vocare*, "to call." Two of these factors had application for African American aspirants in particular, two others for all aspirants. First, as noted in the previous chapter, only three percent of African Americans in the area of study professed the Catholic faith, a fact that limited the number of potential aspirants from within the larger black population. Second, the African American young men who entered seminaries typically came from segregated parishes; hence attending the seminary gave them their first experience living in close quarters with whites.¹⁰³ The environment often proved uncomfortable for African American seminarians as some of their new classmates and roommates, despite aspiring to the priesthood, felt and exhibited a sense of superiority toward them. Third, most seminarians did not make it all the way to ordination.¹⁰⁴ The lengthy period of priestly formation, typically twelve or thirteen years following graduation from an eight-year elementary school, gave seminarians plenty of time to decide the genuineness of their vocation. Although a priest's separateness might afford him a certain prestige in Catholic circles, choosing the priesthood often meant a life of hard work and poverty; Josephite Father John DeRuyter providing a case in point. Some young men who thought they might have heard a call chose therefore not to answer it. Lastly, priests had to remain celibate, a requirement peculiar to Catholic clergy, and this greatly narrowed the pool of potential applicants regardless of race. If a life of hard work and few creature comforts

¹⁰³ Gillard, *Catholic Church and the American Negro*, 85-93.

¹⁰⁴ Ochs, *Desegregating the Altar*, 397. Ochs notes that in the case of St. Augustine's Seminary, of 340 students enrolled through 1943, only 17 were ordained to the SVD priesthood.

caused some young men to decide not to answer the call, celibacy caused at least as many of them to denying ever hearing it.¹⁰⁵

St. Augustine's Seminary did not solve the problem of too few African American priests, but it represented a step toward a solution. Genuine progress toward bringing more men of color into the Catholic priesthood did not begin, as noted, until the 1940s, which falls beyond the range of the current study. The seminary at Bay St. Louis did, however, raise awareness of the need for African American priests and, moreover, demonstrated beyond any doubt that African American men possessed the intelligence and virtue that the priesthood required, and the Church hoped for in all its priests. The Society of the Divine Word ordained its first four St. Augustine's Seminary graduates in 1934: Anthony Bourges, Maurice Rousseve, Vincent Smith, and Francis Wade.¹⁰⁶ By establishing the first seminary for African Americans, the Society of the Divine Word distinguished itself beyond its work in parishes and schools, opening at least one door for men of color to be "priests forever, according to the order of Melchizedech."

Black Catholics, who accepted as did all Catholics that the priest functioned as an *alter Christus* (another Christ) when celebrating the mass, took particular satisfaction in seeing men of their race elevated to this singularly venerable office. The racial attitudes of both lay and clerical white Catholics, however, impeded a facile integration of black priests into the body Catholic. When SVD Provincial Bruno Hagspiel and southern bishops found themselves in a quandary over where to assign Bourges,

¹⁰⁵ Albert J. Herbert, *Priestly Celibacy: Recurrent Battle and Lasting Values* (Houston: Lumen Christi Press, 1971), 23.

¹⁰⁶ Brandewie, *In the Light of the Word*, 2000), 229.

Rousseve, Smith, and Wade, they created a new black parish, Immaculate Heart of Mary in the Diocese of Lafayette, Louisiana, and assigned all four priests to serve there.¹⁰⁷

At the time the question arose regarding the assignment of the four new black priests, whites' negative reaction to black priests, or the expectation of such reactions, had for decades influenced bishops' decisions in the American Church. The experience of Josephite Father John J. Plantevigne in 1909 provides an early, glaring example of this. Plantevigne – whose ordination in 1907 marked the last time the Josephites ordained a black man until 1941 – earned a reputation early in his priesthood as an especially effective preacher, a talent he put to use conducting missions in black parishes in Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, Mississippi and Alabama.¹⁰⁸ Parishes scheduled missions every year or two as a method of rejuvenating parishioners' spiritual lives. Typically conducted by a visiting priest or priests, missions included daily mass, meditation, availability of a priest for confessions, and an evening talk on faith or morality.¹⁰⁹

In the spring of 1909, Plantevigne looked forward to leading a mission at St. Dominic's, a large black parish in the heart of New Orleans, but he received a letter from New Orleans's Archbishop James H. Blenk asking him not to come. Plantevigne wrote to his Josephite superior, Justin McCarthy, and to Blenk to express his deep disappointment, and to protest that Blenk had allowed the bigotry of white Catholics to

¹⁰⁷ Ochs, *Desegregating the Altar*, 338-342.

¹⁰⁸ Albert S. Foley, *God's Men of Color: The Colored Catholic Priests of the United States, 1854-1954* (New York: Farrar, Strauss, 1954), 85-86. Within the Church's lexicon, the term "mission" has more than one meaning. As used most frequently in the current study, it refers to conversionary activity in places where the faith has little or no presence. As used here, it refers to a periodic, structured event for spiritual renewal.

¹⁰⁹ Sister Mary Ruth Coffman, *Build Me a City: The Life of Father Harold Purcell* (Montgomery: Pioneer Press, 1984), 58.

influence his decision. In an effort to assuage Plantevigne's hurt, Blenk explained in a second letter that he did not wish to do anything that might put the work among the blacks at risk or "stir up prejudices and suspicions calculated to endanger the real progress that I have just as much at heart as you have."¹¹⁰ Plantevigne and New Orleans's black Catholics remained unconvinced. They believed that their Church had once again demonstrated that white Catholic opinion held more sway than Catholicism's principles.¹¹¹

An event some years earlier in rural Louisiana, an area less exposed to scrutiny by a large, white Catholic population, provides an interesting contrast to Plantevigne's experience. In September 1902, Josephite Pierre Lebeau wrote to Josephite Superior John Slattery from his mission church in Palmetto, Louisiana expressing his pleasure at the recent visit of Father John Dorsey, a black Josephite ordained that year. Lebeau reported that his black parishioners welcomed Dorsey joyously and took particular delight in attending a Mass celebrated by a black priest. Lebeau used the occasion to impress upon Slattery that black Catholics wanted priests of their own race, adding that black Protestants criticized the Church because the clergymen who led its parishes did not share the skin color of their congregations.¹¹² The American Church did not resolve this issue during the period of the current study. Although missionary orders like the Society of the Divine Word grew native clergies in Asia and Africa, white prejudice

¹¹⁰ James H. Blenk to John J. Plantevigne, New Orleans, 31 March 1909, in Foley, *God's Men of Color*, 88. Foley's work contains the full letter.

¹¹¹ Foley, *God's Men of Color*, 81-90; Ochs, *Desegregating the Altar*, 167-171.

¹¹² "Father Dorsey in Louisiana," *Colored Harvest* 3, no. 9 (January 1903): 381, ASSJ.

against people of color in America's bi-racial society kept the numbers of African American priests at levels that statisticians would characterize as "not meaningful."

Other than the annual collection for Indian and Negro missions, white Catholics, especially in the North, generally remained oblivious to events transpiring in the African American apostolate. The religious orders engaged in that ministry just as likely remained anonymous to them. American Catholics did not have an easy time keeping track of the growing number of men's and women's religious orders at work in various ministries around the country and the world. The Passionist Fathers enjoyed better name recognition among American Catholics because Passionist priests conducted missions at many local parishes. The charism of the Passionists – formally the *Congregatio Passionis Jesu Christi* – derived from their belief that God's love for the world manifested itself in the passion and death of Jesus. The Passionists disseminated this message to the faithful and to prospective converts by conducting missions and retreats, the latter a more intense form of spiritual renewal. Missions and retreats attracted observant parishioners as well as those who had become lax in their practice of the faith.

Paul Francis Daneo founded the Passionists in Italy in 1720, and in 1852 the congregation sent a number of its members to the mission territory of the United States. In just a few years, these first arrivals and their confreres who followed them established monasteries in Pennsylvania, New York, and New Jersey.¹¹³ In 1865, Archbishop Martin John Spalding invited the Passionist Fathers to Baltimore to preach the papal jubilee. They so impressed Spalding that he asked them to build a monastery for their

¹¹³ Robert E. Carbonneau, *The Passionists in the United States, St. Paul of the Cross Province: A Narrative History*, (Chicago: Passionist Community Catholic Theological Union, 1998), 4-10, ACP.

congregation in Baltimore, which would benefit the diocese by providing another church in an underserved section of the city. The Passionists laid the cornerstone for St. Joseph's Monastery in the premier see in 1867.¹¹⁴

The significance of the Passionists' African American ministry derives less from its proportion than from its unusual character. In fact, precision dictates attributing one element of that ministry not to the Passionist community, but to a single priest – a former Passionist. Father Harold Purcell, the grandson of Irish immigrants, was born in Pennsylvania in 1881. He entered the Passionist preparatory seminary at the relatively young age of fifteen, something not uncommon then, nor as late as the 1960s. Ordained to the priesthood in 1904, Purcell spent the next seventeen years conducting missions and retreats throughout the country, including many in the South. With a reputation as an inspiring and persuasive speaker and writer, he started *The Sign* magazine in 1921 at the request of his superiors, serving as its editor until 1934.¹¹⁵ During those years, Purcell missed few opportunities to condemn perceived injustice, and he saw in the South a continuing pattern of injustices perpetrated against blacks and Catholics.

In 1921 Purcell wrote a *J'accuse* piece condemning a Birmingham, Alabama trial court for acquitting Methodist minister Edwin Stephenson of the shooting death of Father James E. Coyle, pastor of St. Paul's Catholic Church. The priest had officiated at the wedding of Stephenson's daughter Ruth to Pedro Gussman, a Puerto Rican and a Catholic. Ruth's conversion to Catholicism and marriage to Gussman – whose ethnic

¹¹⁴ Thomas W. Spalding, *Martin John Spalding: American Churchman* (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1973). 179.

¹¹⁵ "Father Harold Purcell," Passionist Archives, <http://cprovince.org/archives/biographical/purcell-harold.php>; Coffman, *Build Me a City*, 39, 69.

and religious alterity rendered him unacceptable in her father's eyes as a mate for a southern Protestant white woman – so enraged Stephenson that he confronted Coyle on the rectory's front porch and shot him. Stephenson's attorney, future Supreme Court Justice Hugo Black, gained an acquittal through “an imaginative defense that appealed to the city's religious and racial prejudices.”¹¹⁶

In 1934, Purcell left the Passionists – but not the priesthood – to fulfill a dream of erecting a medical and educational complex to serve African Americans in the South. His Passionist superiors did not contest the worth of Purcell's idea, but considered it inconsistent with the Passionist charism. During his years as editor of *The Sign*, Purcell had acquired a wealth of experience with the relatively new medium of direct mail, and had built up an extensive mailing list. He put his experience and his list to work in raising money for his dream project, the City of St. Jude. Purcell had pored over statistics to identify the greatest needs of the black community. Beyond the obvious one of education, Purcell saw a need for better medical services. He learned, for example, that in Alabama, physicians attended 84% of white births, but only 24% of black births, the result largely of Jim Crow laws that denied blacks access to white hospitals, even the Catholic hospital operated by the Daughters of Charity.¹¹⁷ To correct these deficiencies, Purcell opened a medical dispensary for the poor in Montgomery, and built a church with school rooms in the basement. In the years that followed, he and his team expanded the St. Jude's complex both in size and in the services provided, culminating with the

¹¹⁶ Andrew S. Moore, *The South's Tolerable Alien: Roman Catholics in Alabama and Georgia, 1945-1970* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2007), 2; “‘Not Guilty,’ Verdict at Stephenson Trial: Birmingham Jury Clears Minister at Murder Trial,” *Atlanta Constitution*, October 22, 1921, <http://lib-ezproxy.tamu.edu:2048/login?url=http://search.proquest.com/docview/497936364>.

¹¹⁷ Coffman, *Build Me a City*, 133.

opening in 1951 of a \$1.5 million hospital.¹¹⁸ Harold Purcell passed away in 1952 at age 72. His eulogist, Father Frank Giri, spoke directly to the African American people who came to honor their priest. He told them, “He belonged to you. He loved you, and lived for you, and worked for you. . . . He recognized your great worth as God’s children and as men. . . . The best way he would wish you to remember him is that you remember the great values for which he stood – your own great dignity.”¹¹⁹

Elsewhere, a very different situation led Passionists to borrow an idea – and a railroad car – to solve a problem they faced. In North Carolina, and throughout the sprawling United States, some Catholics lived in isolated agricultural areas beyond the Church’s reach. Michigan diocesan priest Father Francis C. Kelley characterized these regions as “the America of the small towns, villages, and countryside,” devoid of churches and pastors; where Catholics lived at risk of abandoning their faith, and worse, failing to instill it in their children. In 1905, Kelley created the Catholic Church Extension Society of the United States of America which brought the faith to the hinterlands by building churches and chapels and arranging for priests to visit them regularly.¹²⁰ Kelley recalled that when Pope Pius IX traveled by rail to visit the Papal States he brought along a rolling church, or “chapel car.” In America, both the Anglicans and the Baptists had used chapel cars in rural areas, the latter denomination experiencing

¹¹⁸ Coffman, *Build Me a City*, 149-173; “Father Harold Purcell,” Passionist Archives, <http://cpprovince.org/archives/biographical/purcell-harold.php>

¹¹⁹ Coffman, *Build Me a City*, 212.

¹²⁰ “The Origins of the Catholic Extension Society” in *Documents of American Catholic History*, ed. Ellis, vol. 2, 561. The selection is excerpted from Francis Clement Kelley, *The Bishop Jots It Sown: An Autobiographical Strain on the Memories* (New York: Harper, 1939), 114-123).

good results from their rail-based ministry.¹²¹ Kelley convinced a few generous benefactors of the benefit the Church might derive from such a resource, and they agreed to fund the refurbishment of an old sleeper car. The “St. Anthony” entered service as the first of three chapel cars that the Extension Society used to reach rural Catholics. The next two cars, “Saint Peter,” and “St. Paul” owed their existence to the beneficence of Peter Kuntz, a prosperous, Catholic businessman of Dayton, Ohio who paid the entire cost of constructing them from the ground up.¹²²

Eighty-four feet in length, the new cars had a fully furnished, seventy-seat chapel forward, with altar, pews, and organ fashioned from native woods. Figure 6.1 provides a partial interior view of this section of the chapel car St. Peter. The rear of the cars contained two sleeping rooms for the chaplain and his assistant, a shower-bath, and a complete kitchen.¹²³

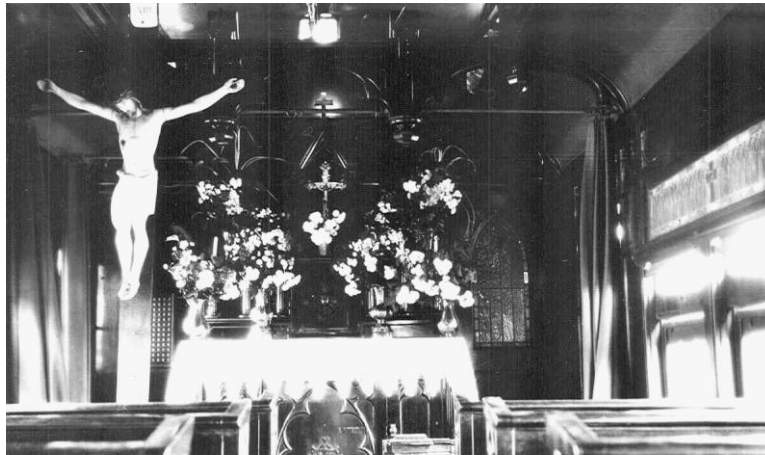


Fig. 6.1 Chapel car St. Peter showing pews, altar, and crucifix.
(Source: Passionist Archives)

¹²¹ Francis C. Kelley, *The Story of Extension* (Chicago: Extension Press, 1922). 69, ASSJ.

¹²² Kelley, *Story of Extension*, 70-73, 91-96.

¹²³ R.M. Powers, “Chapel Car: Church on Rails Traveled from Mission to Mission,” *Newark Advocate*, February 24, 1972, Group 211, Series .01, Box 1, Folder 1, North Carolina Chapel Car, ACP.

The chapel car St. Paul went into service with the Passionists in December 1924; when it returned to Chicago for maintenance and repairs in 1926, the St. Peter took its place with Father Stephen Sweeney onboard as chaplain. When the car arrived in Plymouth, North Carolina on April 16, 1926, someone placed a note under the door of the car that read: "This is to notify you that your presence in this City is not desired, and I would advise you that you let the 3:55 train of this date carry you away safely." In place of a signature, the note read, "Plymouth Klan 140." Sweeney and the car remained in Plymouth and the night passed uneventfully.¹²⁴ Incidents like this one were the exception, however, and Passionist chaplains reported that locals greeted the chapel car more often with curiosity than with hostility. On a visit to Kinston, Sweeney related that twenty-four (presumably white) visitors came to hear him speak, among them a Mr. Ward, local Kleagle of the KKK. Sweeney described Ward as "a railroad man who has been perfectly lovely to us here."¹²⁵ Sweeney repeatedly complained to his provincial that the Extension Society did not provide the promised funds to have the chapel car hooked up to trains and moved from place to place. Conversely, he reported that "every railroad man we met was the soul of courtesy and kindness. I could write a miniature volume about the kindness of non-Catholics. If we are here today it is due to them and not to Extension."¹²⁶

The Passionists could not point to the chapel cars as a great success, except in the sense that they made for good copy in *The Sign* magazine. The publication enjoyed its

¹²⁴ Luke Hay, "A Radio Talk on the Chapel Car," *Extension Magazine* (June 1930), 28; Stephen Sweeney to Stanislaus Grennan (Provincial), 16 April 1926, both Group 211, Series .01, Box 1, Folder 11, ACP.

¹²⁵ Stephen Sweeney to Stanislaus Grennan (Provincial), 10 March 1926, Group 211, Series .01, Box 1, Folder 8, Letters of Father Stephen Sweeney to Provincial, ACP.

¹²⁶ Sweeney to Grennan, 2 March 1926.

widest circulation in the same northern Catholic enclaves that the Passionists relied on for donations to fund their ministries. Priests who manned the chapel cars learned that both whites and blacks who came to visit knew next to nothing about Catholicism, relying instead on rumor and folklore to inform their opinions about the religion. More significantly, the priests learned that their efforts to evangelize people of color had the unintended consequence of alienating white people and forcing them beyond the Church's evangelical reach. Sweeney wrote to his provincial "I have been looking forward to a mission or two amongst the colored. Fr. Gabel tells me that . . . if I give any to the colored, my work will be ruined amongst the whites. Isn't that awful?"¹²⁷ The racial and logistical complexity of the situation that the Passionists wrestled with in rural North Carolina demonstrated that even in the less heavily urbanized South, conducting missionary efforts within, or in close proximity to, population centers increased the likelihood of their success.

Passionist Father Mark Moeslein's experience at Mother of Mercy parish in Washington, North Carolina provides a more typical example of the work that priests did in the African American apostolate. In 1928, Moeslein arrived at Mother of Mercy mission in Washington, North Carolina at the age of seventy-four. A year earlier a \$10,000 gift from a benefactor had purchased a lot and built a school. Within a year, the school's enrollment numbered nearly one hundred while the congregation totaled five. Moeslein and the parishioners used the school's chapel for their church, and "even the altar boys were non-Catholic." Over the years both the congregation and the school

¹²⁷ Stephen Sweeney to Stanislaus Grennan (Provincial), 10 March 1926, Group 211, Series .01, Box 1, Folder 8, Letters of Father Stephen Sweeney to Provincial, ACP.

grew, and Mother of Mercy opened a high school that graduated its first senior class in 1937. It was the first Catholic high school in North Carolina to receive state accreditation.¹²⁸ Moeslein served in North Carolina until 1943.

Unlike the Passionists, the Josephites did not face the conundrum of putting the evangelization of whites at risk if they ministered to African Americans. The Josephite charism consecrated its members exclusively to the welfare and conversion of the American Negro. Founded in Mill Hill, England in 1866, St. Joseph's Society of the Sacred Heart for Foreign Missions had not yet received its first missionary assignment when Rome directed it to send priests to the United States for work among African Americans. Events of the ensuing years, however, expanded the scope of the society's ministry and resulted in the creation of the American Josephites as they have existed since 1893. The original society's English founder, Father Herbert Vaughan, went to Rome in 1870 to request a missionary assignment from *Propaganda Fide*. He wrote his friend Lady Herbert of Lea at the time telling her of the turf battle he encountered in Rome. "Nothing is yet settled about our mission. The French refuse to give up an inch of Japan. I have had to fight for a field of martyrdom."¹²⁹ On a visit to the United States in 1871, Vaughan witnessed the distressing situation of black people and determined that he had found the ministry he sought for his society. On July 18, 1871, Vaughan wrote to Lady Herbert to relate that he had written Father O'Callaghan in Rome to remind him "that the Mill Hill Fathers were awaiting a missionary assignment from the Pope . . . and

¹²⁸ Berchmans McHugh, "Blessed Are They: A History of Passionist Missions in North Carolina, 1928-1964," as told to Jeanne Devine (n.p.: 1985), 20-21, Group 211, Series .01, Box 1, Folder 10, ACP.

¹²⁹ Herbert Vaughan to Lady Herbert of Lea, Rome, 30 May 1870, in *Letters of Herbert Cardinal Vaughan to Lady Herbert of Lea, 1867-1903*, ed. Shane Leslie (London: Burns Oates, 1942).

at the same time to tell him that there are five million blacks in North America thoroughly neglected.”¹³⁰ The Holy See granted Vaughan’s request. Accompanied by four other Mill Hill priests, Vaughan arrived in Baltimore in December 1871. On Christmas he wrote to Lady Herbert almost giddy over how well things had progressed to that point. “We have taken possession of the colored Church, St. Francis Xavier’s. . . . [and] the poor colored people have been going about ever since telling their friends that they have now got ‘priests of their own’ and are in great joy.”¹³¹

Until 1887, men who wished to become Josephites had to go to Mill Hill to study, but in that year Vaughan and Cardinal James Gibbons opened St. Joseph’s seminary in Baltimore to form men for the Josephite priesthood.¹³² Through the 1870s and 1880s, the ranks of the Mill Hills grew rapidly, and with that growth came new assignments in India, Borneo, and New Zealand. Some of the Mill Hill priests in the U.S. believed this expansion distracted the society from its foundational work among African Americans. In 1893, John R. Slattery, an American-born Mill Hill priest, effected an amicable separation from the Mill Hill Fathers to form the new St. Joseph’s Society of the Sacred Heart. The new society, working under authority of the Archbishop of Baltimore, restricted itself to the evangelization of Negroes in the United States.¹³³ Four other Mill Hill priests opted to join Slattery, among them John A. DeRuyter whose work in Delaware received mention in Chapter V, and Charles

¹³⁰ Herbert Vaughan to Lady Herbert of Lea, Mill Hill, 18 July 1871, in *Letters of Herbert Cardinal Vaughan to Lady Herbert of Lea, 1867-1903*, ed. Shane Leslie (London: Burns Oates, 1942).

¹³¹ Herbert Vaughan to Lady Herbert of Lea, Baltimore, Christmas 1871, in *Letters of Herbert Cardinal Vaughan*.

¹³² Gillard, *Catholic Church and the American Negro*, 40-41.

¹³³ Peter E. Hogan, “St. Joseph’s Seminary – One Hundred Years,” *Josephite Harvest* (Spring 1989): 8-9, ASSJ.

Randolph Uncles, the first black man ordained in the United States. The Mill Hills had put tremendous energy into expanding their American ministry, and at the time of the separation, they counted twenty churches and one hundred missions in eighteen dioceses under their care.¹³⁴

As the Josephites opened parishes and missions in the Deep South, they realized how much ground the Church had lost to Protestant denominations. One Josephite reported to his superior that his parish encompassed half the diocese of Natchez, Mississippi. As he traveled through it, he “found the Negro Protestant churches filled with souls who had been baptized in the Catholic Church. Not only were the pews full but even the deacons and ministers in many cases were Catholics.”¹³⁵ The difficulty of ordaining more black priests proved Slattery’s greatest frustration during his 1893-1904 tenure as Josephite Superior. From the time that the Mill Hill Fathers ordained Uncles in 1891, the Josephites ordained only one other African American, John H. Dorsey in 1902. Slattery criticized Catholics for their prejudice against their black coreligionists, most famously in his sermon at Dorsey’s first mass as explained in Chapter IV. After his term as superior, Slattery traveled to Europe where he became engrossed in the study of secular philosophy. He wrote to Mother Katharine Drexel, who had generously supported the Josephites’ work, and complained of prejudice in the Church against Negro priests and accused some white priests and bishops of hypocrisy.¹³⁶ In early 1904, he wrote from Berlin to Cardinal Gibbons, explaining that ill health required that he retire

¹³⁴ John B. Alberts, “Black Catholic Schools: The Josephite Parishes of New Orleans during the Jim Crow Era,” *U.S. Catholic Historian* 12, no. 1 (Winter 1994), 87.

¹³⁵ Samuel Kelly to Justin McCarthy, Scranton, MS, 22 March 1908, Reverend Samuel Kelly, S.S.J., Folder 4, ASSJ.

¹³⁶ John R. Slattery to Mother Katharine Drexel, 4 March 1903, H-10B, ASBS.

as superior. He signed the letter, “Your faithful servant and brother, John R. Slattery.”¹³⁷ Slattery soon left the priesthood and the Catholic Church and married. In spite of this shocking turn of events, the Josephites continued their work establishing parishes and schools, as a majority white religious society ministering exclusively to people of color. Their work continues at this writing.

Josephite Superior John R. Slattery represented the voice of the ideal, crying for justice and equity. New Orleans’s Archbishop James H. Blenk, on the other hand, represented a position not as easily defined as Slattery’s, but one illustrative of the positions of his episcopal confreres. At the Third Plenary Council (which met the year before Blenk’s 1885 ordination), the bishops had decided to accept a segregated Church as the solution to the problem of discrimination against black Catholics. This presented a unique problem in New Orleans, where black Catholics had historically worshipped alongside white Catholics; those two groups alongside Catholics whose color derived from both; and those three alongside Catholics whose color represented some admixture of white black and Native American.¹³⁸ Although black Catholics did not want to worship separately from their white coreligionists, the lack of schools for black children moved them eventually to condone separate, segregated parishes. Each new parish that opened in a black section of New Orleans meant another school where children could receive an education denied them elsewhere.¹³⁹ Blenk and other American bishops of the

¹³⁷ John R. Slattery to James Cardinal Gibbons, Berlin, 26 January 1904, Folder 101A1-100B13, item 101B6, AASM.

¹³⁸ John B. Alberts, “Black Catholic Schools: The Josephite Parishes of New Orleans during the Jim Crow Era,” *U.S. Catholic Historian* 12, no. 1 (Winter 1994), 78-80.

¹³⁹ John B. Alberts, “Black Catholic Schools: The Josephite Parishes of New Orleans during the Jim Crow Era,” *U.S. Catholic Historian* 12, no. 1 (Winter 1994), 92-94.

period faced two issues: racial prejudice within their own flocks, and an American society that tolerated rather than embraced its Catholic constituent. The bishops therefore crafted compromise solutions that limited further alienation of Catholics by broader American society, but prolonged the alienation of African Americans.

Within this context, how does one rate the performance of the individual women and men who labored in the vineyard? Until roughly the 1960s, written accounts of women religious and their communities exhibited a decidedly hagiographic bent. Bishops provided exemplars for the convention in their pastoral letters, in 1837 praising the “pious and meritorious sisterhoods” for “devoting themselves to the whole cause of godlike charity . . . and tending with the same assiduity the wretched calumniator of their creed, their virtue and their sex, as they would their most generous defender.”¹⁴⁰ The no less adulatory 1866 pastoral spoke of them as “holy virgins,” deserving of the rewards promised to the “chaste spouses of Christ” and equally deserving of the “reverence with which they have been regarded in the Church.”¹⁴¹ The Holy See similarly drifted toward hyperbole, as when Pius XII referred to sisters as “veritable lilies in the Garden of Christ and delight of the saints.”¹⁴² To impugn this kind of verbiage does not say – especially given the literary fashion of the time – that Catholic women religious and their ministries did not merit recognition. However, the tendency of Catholic writers well into the twentieth century to heap inordinate adulation on them resulted in narratives that mythologized more than analyzed them. In a similar vein, writers either ignored or

¹⁴⁰ Peter Guilday, ed., “The Pastoral Letter of 1837,” in *National Pastorals*, 116.

¹⁴¹ Peter Guilday, ed., “The Pastoral Letter of 1866,” in *National Pastorals*, 221-222.

¹⁴² Pius XII, 1 November 1939, *Sertum Laetitiae*, encyclical “On the Hundred and Fiftieth Anniversary of the Establishment of the Hierarchy in the United States,” in Claudia Carlen, comp., *The Papal Encyclicals*, vol. 4, 1939-1958 (Wilmington, NC: McGrath, 1981), 25.

downplayed examples of human frailty or personalities that did not fit the ideal image of women religious that the Church wanted to hold up to the public.¹⁴³ Nevertheless, fairness dictates the conclusion that the women who labored on behalf of African Americans had good intentions, and they did good work.

And so, too, the men. Stories about priests, produced almost exclusively from inside the Church, also read like heroic epics, even though anyone who ever knew a priest recognized in him his humanity, hence his imperfection. In 1889 a Jesuit wrote an essay about the essence of the priestly life, part of which read: “The world needs men. Not grand geniuses or plausible talkers. It is not sentimentality and dreams that will save it, but acts and deeds. It was not merely by revelations and visions that the saints became such, but by spiritual combat, by self-denial, and overcoming the enemies of their souls.”¹⁴⁴ Such men worked among African Americans, and they did good work.

The labors of the women and men in the African American apostolate did not escape the notice of the Holy See. In 1936, on the fiftieth anniversary of the issuance of the Third Plenary Council’s decrees, Cardinal Secretary of the Sacred Consistorial Congregation Raffaele Carlo Rossi sent a congratulatory message to the Church in the United States. Rossi commended the prelates of the 1884 council for their foresight in mandating the annual collection of money *pro Indorum et Nigrorum missionibus* (for the Indian and Negro missions), and he noted the many successes the American Church had achieved in the ensuing half century. While he conceded that much work remained, he

¹⁴³ Margaret Sue Thompson, “The Context,” in *Building Sisterhood: A Feminist History of the Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary*, comp. Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, Monroe, Michigan (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1997), 25.

¹⁴⁴ P.A. Von Doss, “True Manliness, 1889,” in *Gender Identities in American Catholicism*, ed. Paula Kane, James Kenneally, and Karen Kennelly (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2001), 53.

pointed to growth in the numbers of churches, missions, and schools as proof of progress within the apostolate, reserving a special word of praise for the workers in the vineyard. To these men and women who “dedicated themselves to the assistance of the Negroes,” Rossi extended “the special blessing of the Holy Father as a pledge of the greater blessings of God.”¹⁴⁵ He, like anyone who took the time to look closely at the Church’s evangelization of African Americans, recognized that nuns and priests performed the most difficult and tedious work of the apostolate, thankful to receive in recompense a blessing like the one Rossi conveyed.

¹⁴⁵ Raffaele Carlo Rossi, Rome, 24 August 1936, Protocol Number 821/19, “To Their Eminences, the Cardinals, and to Their Excellencies, the Archbishops and Bishops of The United States of America,” copy, 1A-8-30, ACSSp.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

The preceding chapters explained the beliefs and principles that inspired the American Church to undertake its ministry to African Americans, examining within the context of that ministry the work of individuals and organizations and the coincidental circumstances that advanced or impeded their efforts. This chapter relies on salient events and data to form an evaluation of the ministry's accomplishments and shortfalls as viewed retrospectively from 1939. While the ministry exhibited an overarching consistency with Catholicism's tenets, the Church's failure to incorporate sound leadership principles into its missiology impeded the evangelization of African Americans; it denied African American Catholics full participation in their Church; and it enabled success only where local initiative overcame bureaucratically imposed paralysis.

Although it overstates the case to characterize the African American apostolate as a war or even a battle, calling it a struggle does not transgress its definitional bounds. By the time this struggle occurred, America had organizations in both the public and private sphere that had grown and succeeded by adhering to a set of management principles proven effective across a broad spectrum of applications, including warfare. Coincident with the period of the current study, the U.S. engaged in the Civil War, Spanish American War, Philippine War, and World War I. Prussian military theorist Carl von Clausewitz had codified the practices applied in those conflicts in his 1820s

treatise *On War*. Military schools continue to study Clausewitz's principles and a number of recent management books have adapted them to modern business practices. The American Church would have done well to apply two of Clausewitz's principles to its African American ministry – unity of command and objective.¹ The first requires that decision making authority reside in a single leader while the second – considered preeminent by most students of von Clausewitz – requires a clear definition of, and commitment to, the organization's objective.

At the Third Plenary Council, bishops solidified individual diocesan control over the African American ministry, ignoring the principle of unity of command which, oddly enough, had served the Church well at both micro-and macro-organizational levels for centuries.² They failed to create a unified office and invest a high ranking, ecclesiastical official with authority to coordinate and direct the ministerial effort. Calls from men like Joseph Anciaux for a Vatican-appointed bishop to oversee the ministry fell on deaf ears. The general absence of diocesan priests from the African American apostolate and the correspondent presence of so many priests from religious orders suggests a stronger commitment to the apostolate's objectives among the latter, especially those, like the Josephites, whose charism specifically bound members to the ministry.

The approach that the Church took to evangelizing blacks demonstrated a poorly defined objective, a condition that fomented tension and conflict at numerous points of

¹ See complete work, Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, trans. O.J. Matthijs Jolles (New York: Modern Library, 1943).

² Recent military scholarship has expanded Clausewitz's principle of "unity of command" to include the concept of "unity of effort." The apostolate lacked both. See John G. Morgan, "Rethinking the Principles of War," *U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings* 129, no.10 (October 2003): 34-38, <http://lib-ezproxy.tamu.edu:2048/login?url=http://search.proquest.com/docview/59864351>.

intersection among the parties – clergy, lay, black, white, female, male, group, individual. The Church trumpeted the equality of humankind and the right of every individual to partake of the benefits of membership in the mystical body of Christ. Though unquestionably a noble position, the Church failed to overcome the racial prejudice of individual white Catholics and secure for all black Catholics’ the temporal benefits of membership in the mystical body. These benefits included educational opportunities, economic advancement, and the respect of their fellow Catholics.³ The deficiencies of the African American ministry did not escape notice in Rome. Even if the Holy See had wanted to, it could not ignore what it heard from Anciaux and Slattery, from the lay congresses that Daniel Rudd inspired, and from media reports about the poor state of race relations in America.

In 1939, Eugenio Maria Giuseppe Giovanni Pacelli ascended to the papacy as Pope Pius XII (1939-1958). Before year’s end, the new pope issued an encyclical recognizing the sesquicentennial of the American Church. One hundred and fifty years had passed since Pius VI (1775-1799) elevated John Carroll to the Baltimore episcopate. Into the encyclical’s congratulatory language, Pius wove the Holy See’s position on contemporary matters and reasserted papal authority over the entire Church, which included the American branch, domiciled in a globally powerful nation on the brink of becoming a dominant one. In fact, Pius made bold to attribute America’s strength to the nation’s strong religious faith, reminding American Catholics that “reverence for the

³ Marilyn Wenzke Nickels, *Black Catholic Protest and the Federated Colored Catholics, 1917-1933: Three Perspectives on Racial Justice* (New York: Garland, 1988), 295; David W. Southern, *John LaFarge and the Limits of Catholic Interracialism, 1911-1963* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1996), 78.

Faith of Christ is a holy and established principle of the American people, seeing that it is the foundation of morality and decency, consequently the source of prosperity and progress.”⁴

Pius made two other statements that had particular relevance for American domestic missionary endeavors. In one he praised the virtue and generosity of Americans for supporting home-mission enterprises such as the Catholic Church Extension Society and the Commission for Catholic Missions among the Colored People and the Indians. In the other, he prodded the American Church with an expression of concern. “We confess that we feel a special paternal affection . . . for the Negro people dwelling among you; for in the field of religion and education we know that they need special care and comfort and are very deserving of it. We therefore . . . pray fruitful success for those whose generous zeal is devoted to their welfare.”⁵ The pontiff made the unequivocal point that the American Church had not yet completed its work in the African American apostolate; he made it equally clear that the Holy See had a specific interest in the success of that work.

Events of the period reflect a lack of clearly defined objectives and the absence of a single authority responsible for directing the African American apostolate. About the time of Pius XII’s encyclical, Mother Katharine Drexel wrote to Father John J. Burke, Executive Secretary of the National Catholic Welfare Conference (NCWC) to

⁴ Pope Pius XII, Rome, 1 November 1939, *Sertum laetitiae*, encyclical “On the Hundred and Fiftieth Anniversary of the Establishment of the Hierarchy in the United States,” in Claudia Carlen, comp., *The Papal Encyclicals*, vol. 4, 1939-1958 (Wilmington, NC: McGrath, 1981), 24.

⁵ Pope Pius XII, Rome, 1 November 1939, *Sertum laetitiae*, encyclical “On the Hundred and Fiftieth Anniversary of the Establishment of the Hierarchy in the United States,” in Claudia Carlen, comp., *The Papal Encyclicals*, vol. 4, 1939-1958 (Wilmington, NC: McGrath, 1981), 24.

advance her idea of using the Catholic Radio Hour to heighten the Catholic laity's awareness of the Church's African American ministry. Drexel contended that educating the white laity "into a more sympathetic understanding of the Negro and his position" would hasten African Americans' embrace of the faith.⁶ Drexel understood the black ministry as well as anyone. Her attention to detail was legend; she visited the mission fields regularly and never failed to "kick the tires" during her visits. Her letter to the NCWC expressed two important conclusions she had arrived at: first, the attitudes of white Catholics toward blacks had a negative effect on the evangelization effort; second, the ministry had not progressed at a pace that she considered satisfactory.

The disunity that afflicted the African American ministry manifested itself in the breadth of different organizations engaged in it and the different approaches they took to the work. The ministry lacked an authority figure at the top, and its constituent elements had different – and at times, conflicting – objectives. Mother Katharine's appeal to Burke at the NCWC demonstrated her willingness to use any tool at her disposal to advance African Americans' cause in the Church, but it also hints at the leadership void. At the same time that Drexel wrote to the NCWC, the Catholic Interracial Council of New York under Jesuit John LaFarge had its own program for improving the situation for blacks in the Church. LaFarge, an early veteran of African American missions in southern Maryland and editor of the influential Catholic magazine *America*, emphasized the importance of educational opportunities for black Catholics and prescribed

⁶ Mother Katharine Drexel to John J. Burke, Cornwells Heights, 3 November 1939, Collection #10, NCWC/USCC General Secretary/Executive Department (J41), Box 104, Folder 2, Archives of the Catholic University of America, hereinafter ACUA.

cooperation between blacks and whites as the mechanism for securing racial justice. By at least one estimate, the Catholic Interracial Council – which traced its roots back to a 1924 predecessor group – emerged in the post-World War II period as the preeminent church organization for promoting racial justice.⁷ In that same year of 1924, African American Catholics established a lay organization, the Federated Colored Catholics of the United States (FCC).

The driving force behind the FCC, Thomas Wyatt Turner, held a doctorate in biology from Cornell University and headed the science department at Hampton Institute. In his capacity as the organization's president, Turner wrote repeatedly to the American hierarchy to express the grievances of black Catholics. Turner and the FCC called for an expanded black clergy, something that had become a point of contention between them and the Josephites because of the society's failure to accept black candidates into its seminaries. At the same time, the FCC lobbied for black representation on Church boards and greater educational opportunity for blacks, including their acceptance into Catholic University of America.⁸

In 1932, the Federated Colored Catholics opened their convention in New York City with great fanfare. Prior to the event, John LaFarge and fellow Jesuit William Markoe, both of whom had long records of supporting racial justice in their Church, had worked behind the scenes to steer the convention's agenda. Both LaFarge and Markoe supported an interracial approach to the problem and hoped to moderate Turner, whose

⁷ Jay P. Dolan, *The American Catholic Experience: A History from Colonial Times to the Present* (New York: Doubleday, 1985), 369.

⁸ Southern, *John LaFarge and Limits of Catholic Interracialism*, 76-79.

militant stands on issues, they believed, had alienated allies and potential allies within the Church. Turner, on the other hand, frustrated by the slow pace of change in the white-led Church, believed that a vocal, black laity offered a better way to overcome the sclerosis that prevented the Church from solving its problem of racial discrimination. Although FCC convention delegates reelected Turner as president, they voted to change the organization's name to the National Catholic Federation for the Promotion of Better Race Relations, intending that the name change – endorsed by LaFarge and Markoe – would eliminate any perception of racial division within the Church.⁹

Tension between Turner, LaFarge and Markoe had brewed for some time and a complete unraveling of their relationship rapidly ensued. The breakdown stemmed from a fundamental difference in objectives. The priests assigned the highest priority to converting non-Catholic African Americans and denounced discrimination by white Catholics principally to the extent that it discouraged black conversions. Turner took a different view of the matter, deeming conversion incidental to achieving justice for black Catholics and developing a black clergy.¹⁰ The conflict hinged on the question of dominance by lay or clerical, black or white, and whether the course that the two organizations followed would reflect LaFarge's gradualism or "the urgency of black protest aimed directly at the hierarchy and clergy."¹¹ This mortal clash of wills gives rise to the question, was there no one in the hierarchy with the authority to force a reconciliation and redirect the energies of these men and their organizations toward a

⁹ "Catholics Agree to Drop Word 'Colored'" *Chicago Defender*, September 17, 1932, <http://lib-ezproxy.tamu.edu:2048/login?url=http://search.proquest.com/docview/492369222>; Southern, *John LaFarge and Limits of Catholic Interracialism*, 135.

¹⁰ Wenzke Nickels, *Black Catholic Protest*, 295.

¹¹ Southern, *John LaFarge and Limits of Catholic Interracialism*, 141.

common purpose? The situation's outcome, specifically diminution of Turner's and the FCC's influence, evinced the existence of no such office or individual.

The African American ministry's top-down failure to craft a strategy that incorporated the principles of unity of command and objective became painfully obvious to the missionaries in the field, as the experience of Passionist missionary Mark Moeslein in North Carolina demonstrated. One of Moeslein's catechists had spoken without success to a young black man about converting to Catholicism. At one point, the prospective convert challenged the catechist, asking why the Church considered him good enough to become a member, but not good enough to attend the Catholic University of America in Washington. When the catechist advised Moeslein of this exchange, the priest wrote to an acquaintance, Benedictine Francis A. Walsh, a philosophy professor at Catholic University. "Is it true," Moeslein asked, "that our University, for the upkeep of which collections are taken up in mission chapels for the colored, bars Negro students? I am unable to answer the question. The Catholic system works from the head down, not from the feet up. As I see [the] missionary effort among Negroes, it is bolstered chiefly from white feet up."¹² Employing gentle sarcasm, Moeslein, who at the time could look back on fifty-six years in the priesthood, expressed his understanding of two realities: the upper reaches of the hierarchy set the Church's course; yet, missionaries at the grass-roots level guided and sustained the African American apostolate.

¹² Mark Moeslein to Francis A. Walsh, 11 November 1934, Group 211, Series .03, Folder 7, ACP.

Also at the grass roots level, Catholics discussed the lack of racial harmony inside and outside their Church and raised their voices in the cause of social justice for African Americans. In 1936, parishioners in a study group at Notre Dame Church in Manhattan passed a resolution encouraging other parishes to join them in protecting Negroes' rights and bettering their spiritual and material condition. A spokesman said that millions of American Catholics could make the "single greatest contribution" to solving the most serious social problem confronting the nation by working with others committed to establishing interracial justice.¹³

All of this had obvious immediate and long-term ramifications. When the civil rights movement gained traction in post-World War II America, the Church's participation bore striking similarities to its African American ministry of the preceding sixty years. All during that period the American Church had struggled to articulate and implement policies in the African American apostolate that did not drive off its majority white membership. When faced with a similar conundrum beginning in the late 40s and extending into the 60s, the Church again waffled. Civil rights activism therefore took root not with cardinals and bishops, but at the local level as priests, nuns, and Catholic laypersons became the Church's face in the movement, and the institutional Church found itself criticized once again for ambiguity.

The actions of Bishop Thomas J. Toolen of the Mobile-Birmingham diocese provide an interesting case in point. In 1965 the bishop cautioned priests and nuns of his

¹³ "Help of Catholics for Negroes Asked: Notre Dame Study Club Here Urges All Parishes in Nation to Support Movement," *New York Times*, March 27, 1936, <http://lib-ezproxy.tamu.edu:2048/login?url=http://search.proquest.com/docview/101928209>.

diocese to steer clear of the Selma voting rights march and, instead, “stay at home and do God’s work.”¹⁴ Toolen’s concern centered, as it did for many Americans, on the negative connotation of public disobedience and on a suspicion that outside forces – the Cold War still had twenty-five years to run – had much to gain from political and social unrest in America. Yet, during his forty-two year episcopal tenure (1927-1969), the same Toolen had overseen the construction of churches, schools, and orphanages for African Americans, and ordered the desegregation of Mobile’s Jesuit-run Spring Hill College, making it the first integrated institution of higher learning in Alabama.¹⁵ As Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen reminded Alabamians when he eulogized Toolen in 1976, Toolen integrated diocesan schools in 1964 before Alabama desegregated its public schools. Toolen’s pastoral letter on that occasion, which he required every pastor in the diocese to read from the pulpit, explained to the faithful, “I know this will not meet with the approval of many of our people, but in justice and charity, this must be done. I ask all of our people to accept this decision as best for God and country.”¹⁶

Another contribution that Toolen made to African Americans’ welfare in later years had a particular connection to and significance for the current study. In 1941, Toolen authorized construction of a small Catholic maternity hospital for black women, and personally procured the services of two nursing sisters of the Sisters of Mercy to staff it. From the day it opened, the tiny facility barely met the needs of the black community. When Toolen approved a plan for a larger hospital, he enlisted the

¹⁴ Southern, *John LaFarge and Limits of Catholic Interracialism*, 368.

¹⁵ Keith R. Claridy, “Thomas J. Toolen,” *Encyclopedia of Alabama*, encyclopediaofalabama.org.

¹⁶ George Dugan, “Archbishop T.J. Toolen Eulogized by Sheen at Funeral in Alabama,” *New York Times*, December 10, 1976, <http://lib-ezproxy.tamu.edu:2048/login?url=http://search.proquest.com/docview/122963041>.

assistance of a local Josephite priest to procure the land, a sensitive matter since it involved erecting a facility for African Americans close to a white section of the city. The priest used charm and persuasion on politicians and Protestant ministers to get the diocese the land it needed for its hospital, and at length he put the deal together. The Josephite priest was Father Vincent Warren, whom the Klan had kidnapped in Virginia in 1926. The new facility opened under the patronage of Blessed Martin de Porres, a seventeenth-century, mixed race Dominican brother who spent his life in service to the poor. It held the distinction of being the first Alabama hospital where African American and white doctors worked side-by-side.¹⁷

The Church faced a very basic challenge of measuring the success of its far-flung ministries. Josephite John T. Gillard published two scholarly works, one in 1929 and a second in 1941, that together form the largest and most accurate collection of data on African American Catholics in the first half of the twentieth century. Gillard wrote that the Catholic Church had an inherent advantage in any task it undertook because its hierarchy of authority facilitated coordination of effort. He tempered that observation by noting that there also existed “an unusual amount of leeway for sectional and local autonomy which may . . . result in partial points of view, short-sighted programs, and

¹⁷ Transcription of interview of Father Vincent Warren by Josephite Archivist Father Peter Hogan, October 5, 1965, ASSJ; Sister Maria, R.S.M., “History of the St. Martin de Porres Hospital, Mobile, Alabama,” *Journal of the National Medical Association* 56, no. 4 (July 1964): 303-304, www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2610728/pdf/jnma00548-0005.pdf; Keith R. Claridy, “Thomas J. Toolen,” *Encyclopedia of Alabama*, encyclopediaofalabama.org.

inadequate orientation of local programs to larger needs.”¹⁸ Gillard could not have made a more cogent assessment of the African American ministry.

This does not suggest that the Church failed in its ministry; only that it did not accomplish all that it might have. Surely the generosity of Katharine Drexel and other members of the Drexel family expanded the scope of the ministry and the results it achieved. As the year 1939 came to a close, the Church continued its work on behalf of African Americans. Catholic priests, brothers, and sisters in the area of study staffed hospitals, clinics, orphanages, and homes for boys, girls, and the aged, all of them dedicated exclusively to people of color. In 162 churches and missions, 216 priests served 165,755 parishioners, while 153 schools enrolled 30,035 students.¹⁹ All these activities, though admittedly encumbered by error and human frailty, proved Catholics’ loyalty to the tenets of their faith. The men and women – whether lay, professed or ordained – who unashamedly expressed and demonstrated their love for humankind because they saw Christ in every woman, man and child regardless of color, testified to the validity of their beliefs. It was they who were the Church.

¹⁸ John T. Gillard, *Colored Catholics in the United States: An Investigation of Catholic Activity in Behalf of the Negroes in the United States and a Survey of the Present Condition of the Colored Missions* (Baltimore: The Josephite Press, 1941), 3.

¹⁹ “Our Negro and Indian Missions: Annual Report of the Secretary of the Commission for the Catholic Missions among the Colored People and the Indians,” (Washington: Commission for the Catholic Missions among the Colored People and the Indians, 1940), 27; Gillard, *Colored Catholics in the United States*, 227-235.

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