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Preface and Introduction

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PREFACE

Cardinal Newman wrote somewhere that we are all links in the great chain of providence. He wrote, further, that we may never know exactly what providence expects of us but we can be sure that we will accomplish it if we are only faithful. Each of us is the beneficiary of the fidelity of those who have gone before us; our hope is that we will be as great a benefit to those who follow us.

In these pages you will gain insight into the life of a man who was faithful, whom many in his own time called a “saint.” The life of Reverend Felix De Andreis, C.M., is particularly pertinent to citizens of the Midwest, to Catholics in the many Midwestern dioceses, and to the Vincentian Fathers and Brothers, because for all of these individuals he was a part of their beginnings. He, along with many others, certainly helped to create who and what we are today. The Archdiocese of St. Louis, in particular, owes him a great debt of gratitude.

In reading the letters of De Andreis you will encounter a human being — not unlike ourselves — meeting the challenges to be holy and to be strong in the face of some extraordinarily difficult circumstances, not unlike our own. You will meet a man who was a friend to others, Bishop Joseph Rosati and Saint Rose Philippine Duchesne being among them. You will read of his longing for a home that he left for the sake of bringing the gospel to an alien land. You will read of his own deep commitment to holiness and of his commitment to the ideals of Saint Vincent de Paul, the founder of his religious community.

My hope is that, in the pages of this book, you will find a teacher — a man who can help each of us see what we can be for others, what fidelity to Jesus Christ looks like, and the ways in which our lives can be gifts to the people of tomorrow.

27 May 2002

Justin Rigali
Archbishop of Philadelphia
(Former Archbishop of Saint Louis)

INTRODUCTION

Rose Philippine Duchesne, herself a canonized saint, called him a saint;¹ and Benedict Joseph Flaget, bishop of Bardstown, wondered whether he should pray for his soul or pray to him as a saint.² Even the Roman Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith offered its sympathy at his death and invited Bishop Dubourg to open a formal process for beatification if there are "*certa quaedam illius sanctitatis indicia*" ["some specific indications of his holiness"].³ The object of their veneration was Andrew James Felix Bartholomew De Andreis, born and baptized on 12 December 1778, in Demonte, a small town of Savoy, now a part of Italy. He was the founding superior of the Congregation of the Mission, the Vincentians, in the United States.

Honored during his life for his piety and knowledge, De Andreis continued to receive recognition after his death in Saint Louis, Missouri, 15 October 1820. He remains largely unknown outside American Vincentian circles, yet his cause for beatification, and ultimately canonization, was introduced in Rome. The decree from the Holy See announcing this decision spells out the details of his life, and this collection of his correspondence and historical writings attempts to remedy ignorance about his work. It sheds light as well on his remarkable character and holy life, and presents a view of the Church in the nascent Midwestern United States.⁴

After moving to America, De Andreis spent three years in Saint Louis supervising and guiding the first American Vincentians until his death. In his time Saint Louis was a city built along the banks of the Mississippi River. A town of some 3000 persons, Saint Louis had four north-south streets, and about 18 east-west streets. The people lived mostly in rough wooden dwellings, although their wealthier

¹ For example, in her letters to Mother Barat, L. 70, 1 December 1819, and to Mother Deshayes, L. 82, 29 August 1820, in Chantal Paisant, ed., *Les années pionnières* Paris: Cerf, 2001, 289, 321.

² Flaget mentioned his "simplicity, piety, fervor" in a letter of condolence to Rosati, from Bardstown, 6 November 1820; in SLAA, Flaget papers.

³ Finbar Keneally, ed., *United States Documents in the Propaganda Fide Archives* (Washington: 1966), vol. 3, #15474, dated 1821.

⁴ Apart from one posthumous portrait in Rome, reproduced in this volume, we know little or nothing about his appearance. Engravings of him were, however, distributed as early as 1825, and these form the basis of many other common illustrations (See Rosati to Philip Borgna, 5 November 1825; original in SLAA, Rosati papers; copy by Souvay, in DRMA, Rosati papers).

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neighbors had brick or even stone houses.⁵ At that time, this frontier town had some 40 stores, a post office, three banks, a land office, a brewery, two distilleries, and a steam flour mill.⁶

De Andreis' correspondence and historical writings, primarily the American ones, should be read against this frontier background. On a daily basis he saw trappers, traders, Indians, the descendants of African slaves, immigrants from the original English colonies as well as new arrivals from Europe. Although most did not have religion on their minds, his patient commitment to the Vincentian vision of the care of the poor and love of the clergy marked him as a saint in their midst.

Who were his correspondents? What importance did they have? Despite the precarious nature of mail delivery in the early nineteenth century, we have a great many of his letters to Joseph Rosati, his American confrere, and later first bishop of Saint Louis. There are also several reports to his superiors in Rome (Fathers Sicardi and Baccari). A special collection is his family correspondence with his father (one letter) and his brother. De Andreis wrote other letters to friends and colleagues in Europe and the United States. The few surviving letters written to him have been included here for the sake of completeness.

Rosati, the author of the first life of Felix De Andreis, remarked that "a collection of his letters would take up several volumes which would be fruitfully read."⁷ Although many, if not most, of his letters have been lost, a great number remain from his American period. All his extant letters have been collected from many sources for the first time, their texts established, translated from Italian, French and Latin into a readable modern American English, and annotated to increase understanding and appreciation of their contents. Copies were collated

⁵ James Neal Primm, *Lion of the Valley*. St. Louis, Missouri, 2nd ed. (Boulder, Colo.: Pruett, 1990), 108.

⁶ Saint Louis Planning Commission, *History of the Physical Growth of the City of Saint Louis* (Saint Louis, n.d., [about 1969]), 10.

⁷ "Summarium super dubio," in Sacra Rituum Congregatione. *Sancti Ludovici, Beatificationis et Canonizationis Servi Dei Felicis de Andreis . . . Positio super introductione causae* (Rome: Guerra et Mirri, 1918), 103. Printed in the original language, this volume contains the "Life of De Andreis" considered to be the best and surest version of what Joseph Rosati wanted, since the Roman text was transcribed directly from his manuscript.

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against originals or printed documents, where available. In some cases, early copies provided a better or clearer reading than the surviving originals, which had suffered damage over time. To render the originals readable, it was necessary to standardize. For example, biblical quotations are given in English translation; currency is cited in its original forms; and formal salutations and conclusions of the letters have been regularized.

One notable problem is that the writer was neither always consistent or coherent. He sometimes wrote at one sitting, but more usually completed a letter over a period of time. He was often sick, even confined to bed, and this led him to dictate his letters. His young secretary, Andrew Ferrari, occasionally had trouble keeping up with his superior and lost the train of his thought, with confusing results. These letters, however, have been kept as they are in their original form. Particularly in his later letters, his reflections on his condition and the American mission are frequently repeated. Other problems in transcription arose from the form of proper names. These have been kept in their original forms, except for those who lived in America. In that case, these names have been regularly put into English (Felix instead of Felice, for example). Archaic weights and measures, such as arpents and Roman miles, and obsolete currency (louis d'or, scudo, bajocco, paolo, piastre, etc.) have been left in their original forms. His use of titles of address have been smoothed out to correspond to modern usage, such as "Very reverend and dear Father" to translate the florid "*Molto Reverendo Signor, Patrone osservatissimo ed onoratissimo Padre.*" All Vincentians have been identified with first names and dates where possible.

Besides the letters, both from and to him, this volume prints associated documents. These are items which he referred to or joined to his correspondence, the principal one being his "Itinerary." This work, in turn, was based on his "Important Notices," also presented here. These letters and historical writings have been supplemented by accounts of his missions given while he was stationed in Rome. These accounts give a feel for his Vincentian missionary work, before he embarked on the Atlantic to reach the New World. The majority of these documents have never been translated into English or previously published.

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Some of De Andreis' writings have not been included, particularly his spiritual writings and sermons. These are lengthy and less interesting and valuable for understanding his life in its historical context.

Sources for documenting De Andreis' life are given in the bibliography, the primary one being the life begun by Joseph Rosati.⁸ While in Italy, some months before his death, Rosati entrusted the completion of his work to Giovanni Battista Semeria, one of a family with several Vincentian members.⁹ Rosati's French work was completed and translated into Italian, and the bishop intended to have it published in June 1843, but his illness and subsequent death, 25 September 1843, delayed the project.¹⁰ An expanded version—with chapters nine through twelve—was published in English by Francis Burlando, C.M., eighteen years later, in 1861. The author of the four additional chapters is unknown.

Contemporary with Rosati's work was the incomplete sketch written by Carlo Casoni, C.M., a Vincentian historian living in Rome. The basis for Casoni's work was letters and other reminiscences of De Andreis. A brief work, undated, is a series of notes on his life, sent to the Vincentian mother house in Paris, called the "Paris manuscript" here. Its author is unknown, but the work appears to incorporate many an eye-witness detail.¹¹ The most complete life is by Giuseppe Ricciardelli, C.M., the promoter of his cause for canonization. Further significant information is presented in the volume prepared for his canonization process, no longer actively pursued.

⁸ Rosati had already written at least two other historical accounts: a life of Andrew Ferrari, C.M., and his "Recollections of the founding of the Congregation of the Mission in the United States of America." Rosati's own diary shows that he wrote his life of Felix De Andreis between 1 and 10 July 1839 at the Barrens. Virtually the complete text has been published in the canonization volume.

⁹ This man is said to have been an Oratorian, but a Giovanni Battista Semeria entered the Congregation of the Mission in 1834, and made his vows in 1836. He left the Congregation in 1853. Perhaps he joined the Oratorians afterwards.

¹⁰ Rosati to Étienne, from Rome, 20 October 1842; in archives of the General Curia, American province papers, Rosati file. Rosati's original biography is in the same archives.

¹¹ To this can be added *Annales de la Congrégation de la Mission en Italie. Quatrième Époque De 1815 à 1874*, Archives de la Mission. This large register, arranged chronologically, presents information mainly in French about De Andreis, citing some of his letters. A few items of information are found nowhere else. The work was copied about 1880, perhaps from Casoni's manuscript life.

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The main source for the De Andreis letters are: (1) the General Curia of the Congregation of the Mission, Rome; (2) the archives of the Roman province of the Congregation of the Mission, Rome; (3) the archives of the Turin province, Turin, Italy; (4) the archives of the archdiocese of St. Louis, Saint Louis, Missouri; (5) the archives of the Collegio Brignole-Sale Negroni, Genoa, Italy; (6) the De Andreis-Rosati Memorial Archives, DePaul University, Chicago, Illinois. In addition, individual letters were found in the archives of the archdiocese of Baltimore; the Sulpician archives, Baltimore; the archives of Propaganda Fide, Rome; the archives of the Congregation of the Mission, Paris; and the archives of the Eastern Province, Germantown, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Unfortunately, De Andreis's own letter book, which he kept as a record of his correspondence, has disappeared. Also, some of the original letters known only a few decades ago have disappeared and exist now only in copies. Much of the work of copying was done by the indefatigable Charles Leon Souvay, C.M., vice-postulator of De Andreis's cause and subsequently superior general.

Background information has come from several sources, as noted in the footnotes. The most important of these sources, however, have been the correspondence and historical writings of Joseph Rosati.

The editor wishes to acknowledge with gratitude the many persons who have assisted in the gathering and production of this work, an undertaking lasting nearly twenty years. Besides the archival sources mentioned above, information was received from the Congregation for the Causes of the Saints, Vatican City; the American Catholic Archives, University of Notre Dame, South Bend, Indiana; the archives of Georgetown University, Washington, D.C.; the archives of the Sisters of Charity, Cincinnati; the Sisters of Loretto, Nerinx, Kentucky; the Sisters of Charity of Nazareth, Kentucky; the Daughters of Charity in Paris and Emmitsburg, Maryland; the Sisters of the Sacred Heart, Rome and Saint Louis, Missouri; the Sisters of La Réunion, Bordeaux and Guadalajara, Spain; the Sisters of Charity of Nevers, France; the archives of the archdioceses and dioceses of Albenga-Imperia, Baltimore, Belleville, Bordeaux, Boston, Charleston, Louisville, New Orleans, New York; the cathedral archives of Porto Maurizio, Italy; Saint Paul's Cathedral, Pittsburgh; the Jesuit archives in Rome and

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Saint Louis, Missouri, the Sulpician archives in Paris;¹² the Vincentian provincial archives in Naples; the Missouri Historical Society, Saint Louis, and the State Historical Society of Missouri, Columbia; the State Library of Indiana, Indianapolis; the Historical Society of West Pennsylvania, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; the New York Historical Society, New York City; the Enoch Pratt Free Library, Baltimore, Maryland; and the Archives Départementales, Bordeaux.

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¹² The principal manuscript collection is E.M. Faillon, "Mémoires particulières pour servir à l'histoire religieuse de l'Amérique du Nord," 5 vols.