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The Sulpicians and the Sisters of Charity: Concentric Circles of Mission

BY

BETTY ANN McNEIL, D.C.

Introduction

The French Sulpicians in Baltimore wrote the earliest chapters in the story of the American Sisters of Charity, punctuated with the pain of human conflict and heroic struggles. In God's Providence, the Holy Spirit used events and personalities to bring about new life in the American Church. Like a team rowing energetically despite the strain, the person at the helm controlled the community's destiny. This paper will consider a developmental perspective of the Sulpician mission as pivotal in the period 1789 to 1850, focusing on the establishment of the Sisters of Charity and key events leading to the union with France of the Emmitsburg community. I will then discuss some mission determinants and their implications for contemporary ministry.

Part 1. Foundation of the American Sisters of Charity

Impact of the French Revolution

Mission Across the Atlantic. Driven from France by the evils and violence of civil war, the Society of Saint Sulpice initially came to the United States to preserve itself during the French Revolution. In carrying out its mission, the Sulpicians made modifications as circumstances required. They expanded their mission of seminary education to meet the urgent needs of a pioneer Church. Their superiors referred to their flexibility as *external ministries*. In 1790 Reverend Jacques-André Emery, S.S. (1732-1810, superior general 1782-1810), gave this instruction to Reverend Charles-François Nagot, S.S. (1734-1816), the first superior in the United States (1791-1810):

Let them [the Sulpician priests] often call to mind that they are destined to perpetuate the spirit and the name of their Society in the new world; and let them always keep before their eyes the rules and the practices of Saint Sulpice [of Paris] . . . [whose] proper and characteristic aim is to

concern itself only with the education of the clergy. The directors of the seminary at Baltimore will confine and consecrate themselves entirely to this work; and if at the beginning and under unusual circumstances they find themselves compelled to take up duties foreign to this work [external ministries], they must consider themselves to be under conditions out of their element, and not to be satisfied until they can return to their special mode of life. . . .¹

In this spirit of evangelization, the Sulpicians facilitated the establishment of the American Sisters of Charity at Emmitsburg and the Oblate Sisters of Providence in Baltimore.²

When circumstances changed in France, a new superior general, Reverend Antoine Duclaux, S.S., was elected in 1810. As a result of the community's reestablishment after the French Revolution, the American Sulpicians received a mandate from France in 1829. Their superior general then, Reverend Antoine Garnier, S.S. (1762-1845; superior general 1827-1845), who had served in America, decided to retrench external ministries in favor of their original founding mission, clerical formation.³ Initially, the directive went unheeded and was issued again in 1845, this time with greater force and a required withdrawal from the direction of the two communities of religious women in Maryland. The Sulpicians' choice to be faithful to their own mission, ultimately led to the severance of the official relationship between the Society of Saint Sulpice in Baltimore, and the Sisters of Charity of Saint Joseph's at Emmitsburg, in November 1850.⁴

Fostering the Vincentian charism. The Sulpicians became the instruments of Providence who transplanted the Vincentian mission, vision, and values into North America and nurtured its growth. They did this first through the modification of the rule developed by Louise de

¹ Charles G. Hebermann, *The Sulpicians in the United States* (New York: Encyclopedia Press, 1916), 20-21. See also Joseph William Ruane, *The Beginnings of the Society of Saint Sulpice in the United States (1791-1829)* (Baltimore: Saint Mary's Seminary, 1935), 202.

² A succinct account of the Sisters of Charity of Saint Joseph's may be found in Mary Ewens, *The Role of the Nun in Nineteenth Century America* (New York: Arno Press, 1978), 44. The Oblate Sisters of Providence were founded in 1829 at Baltimore by Elizabeth Lange and Reverend Jacques Nicholas Joubert, S.S.

³ Hebermann, *The Sulpicians in the United States*, 227. See also [Sister John Mary Crumlish, D.C.] *The Union of the American Sisters with the Daughters of Charity, Paris* (Archives Saint Joseph's Provincial House, Daughters of Charity, Emmitsburg, Maryland. Hereinafter ASJPH), 32.

⁴ *Council Minutes*, Article 36, 6, 15 and 20 November 1850, 4:49.

Marillac and Vincent de Paul for their Daughters of Charity, then by the invitation of Reverend Louis William Valentine Dubourg, S.S. (1766-1833) to the Congregation of the Mission (in Rome) to send members to the United States for ministry.

Common French Heritage

Seventeenth-Century France. The Society of the Priests of Saint Sulpice, founded in 1641 by Reverend Jean Jacques Olier (1608-1657), embodies the Sulpician vision of priestly formation in the Church. Vincent de Paul (1581-1660) and Louise de Marillac (1591-1660) reflected their practical compassion for poor persons in the Company of the Daughters of Charity, which they co-founded in 1633.

Monsieur Olier and Monsieur Vincent were kindred souls who felt a burning within their hearts which impelled them to mission, often collaborating by turning to one another for advice and assistance. Monsieur Olier gave several ordination retreats at Saint Lazare, the headquarters of the Congregation of the Mission, begun in 1625 by Saint Vincent, who was Olier's spiritual director for four years.⁵ Monsieur Olier often told his confrères, "Monsieur Vincent is our father."⁶

From its foundation until suppression during the French Revolution, the Sulpicians were never more than approximately 150 members but they had a major impact on the Church of France. The Society had educated fifty bishops by 1700, numbers which quadrupled in the next century.⁷ Through the end of the seventeenth century until the dawn of the French Revolution, the Vincentian Family developed into a significant presence in the Church in several European countries and elsewhere.⁸ The Congregation of the Mission grew from twenty-seven

⁵ They were associates in both the Company of the Blessed Sacrament, an association whose members met regularly and engaged in charitable projects but secretly, and the Tuesday Conferences, a weekly meeting of clergy in Paris for the purpose of continuing priestly formation Vincent lent Monsieur Olier the services of two Lazarists, Reverend Antoine Portail, C.M. (1590-1660), and Reverend Antoine Lucas, C.M. (1600-1656), to assist with early missions of the Sulpicians. In Europe members of the Congregation of the Mission were called Lazarists, after their headquarters at Saint Lazare. In the English speaking world, they are known more often as Vincentian Fathers and Brothers, or simply Vincentians.

⁶ Pierre Pourrat, *Father Olier, Founder of Saint Sulpice*, trans W. S. Reilly, S.S. (Baltimore: Voice Publishing Company, 1932). Louis Abelly, *The Life of the Venerable Servant of God Vincent de Paul*, trans. William Quinn, F.S.C., from the original text of 1664 ed. John E. Rybolt, C.M., with the notes taken from the *Pémarin* edition (1891) and additional notes by Edward R. Udovic, C.M. (New York: New City Press, 1993), 1:167. Pierre Coste, C.M., *Saint Vincent de Paul. Correspondence, Entretiens, Documents*, 14 volumes (Paris, 1920-1925), 3:266.

⁷ Christopher Kauffman, *Tradition and Transformation in Catholic Culture. The Priests of Saint Sulpice in the United States from 1791 to the Present* (New York: MacMillan Publishing Company, 1988), 29.

⁸ The Congregation of the Mission had established missions throughout France and in Italy, Spain, Portugal, Poland, Lithuania, the Palatinate, Algiers, Mauritius, Bourbon, Constantinople, and China. The Daughters of Charity were serving in France, Verviers, Barcelona, and Poland.

houses in 1660 to 179 in 1789. The Daughters of Charity expanded from seventy-five to 430 houses in the same period.

Immediately prior to the storming of the Bastille, revolutionary forces sacked the headquarters of the Congregation of the Mission at Saint Lazare 13 July 1789. That event erupted into the French Revolution, which precipitated the emigration of the Sulpicians and other clergy to America and elsewhere. Just as the lives of Monsieur Vincent and Monsieur Olier were intertwined in Paris, the paths of subsequent generations of their followers intersected in response to urgent human and spiritual needs, especially in the United States during the early nineteenth century.

Prelude to New Life. The suffering of the French Revolution was a prelude to new life. The merciless persecution of clergy and religious during the revolutionary period played a pivotal role in the mission and ministry of the Society of Saint Sulpice, and consequently in the birth of the Vincentian Family of the United States in France. Ultimately, a governmental decree suppressed religious communities. The Vincentian Family also disbanded, but many members found ways to continue some of their ministries clandestinely there.⁹ Like other communities, during their suppression in France (1792) the Sulpicians dispersed and many members fled to the United States where they implanted the mission of their Society.¹⁰

Mission in North America. Under the direction of the Sulpicians, Elizabeth Seton's community, the Sisters of Charity of Saint Joseph's, adopted a modified version of the *Common Rules of the Daughters of Charity* in 1812. The first article of Chapter One of the *Constitutions of the Sisters of Charity* provided flexibility for future adaptations.

⁹ At this time, the Vincentian Family included the Congregation of the Mission, the Daughters of Charity, and the Ladies of Charity, whose roots may be traced to 1617 when Vincent de Paul organized the first Confraternity of Charity at Châtillon-les-Dombes in France.

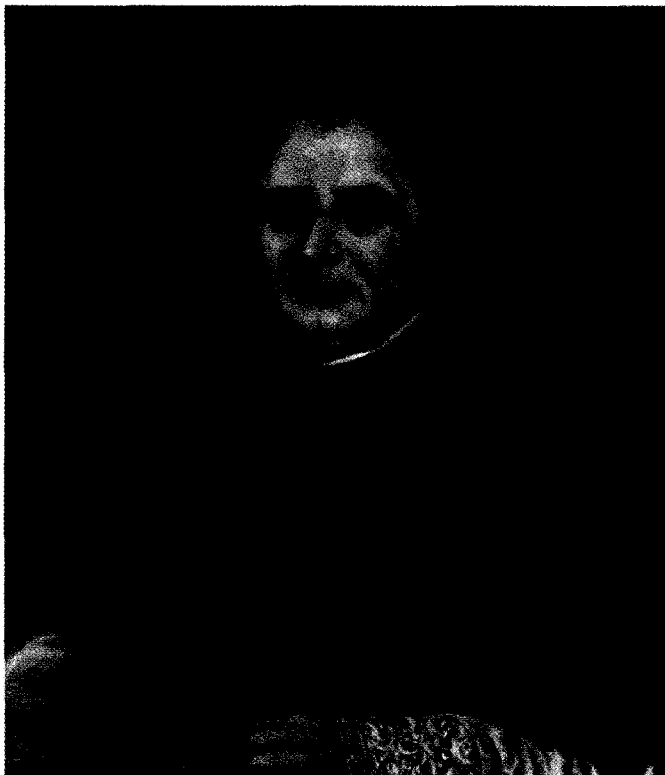
¹⁰ As of 27 November 1790 priests were requested to take an oath to uphold the Civil Constitution of the Clergy. There were two categories of priests: 1) Those who took the oath became state employees; 2) Non-oath takers were considered by the government to have resigned from the State. The latter celebrated Mass *sub rosa* in chapels of religious congregations. If congregations were suppressed, then there would be no more celebrations of the Eucharist. On 6 April 1792 the government issued a decree which included all teaching and hospital congregations, by name. Although the Daughters of Charity are not a canonical religious congregation, they were not specifically named, but were included by implication, e.g. "all other associations of piety and charity are suppressed from the date of publication of the present decree."

The Sisters of Charity in the United States of America, known by the name of Sisters of Charity of Saint Joseph's, are the daughters of Saint Vincent de Paul [and Saint Louise de Marillac], whom they acknowledge as their chief patron[s] and founder[s]. Their Institute is the same as that of the Sisters [sic] of Charity of France with this difference: that the education, which the Sisters of Charity [sic] were there [in France] bound to give only to poor children, will be extended here to all female children in whatever station of life they may be, for which the Sisters will receive a sufficient compensation, out of which they will endeavor to save as much as they can to educate *gratis* poor orphan children. There will also be adopted such modifications in the Rules as the difference of country, habits, customs, and manners may require.¹¹

Elizabeth Seton presided over the first meeting of the corporation 23 July 1817 when the Sisters of Charity of Saint Joseph's adopted its by-laws. In addition to the foundress, Angela Brady, secretary, signed the document which Reverend John Dubois, S.S. (1764-1842; superior general, 1811-1826), witnessed as superior general. The *Constitutions of the Sisters of Charity* also state in Chapter One, Article One, that "this Institution is the same in substance as that of the Society in France, it will have no connection whatever with the Company or Government of said Sisters in France or any European country, except that of mutual charity and friendly correspondence."¹² Inscribed in the corporate seal, "God is Charity," article Eight of the By-Laws (1817) reiterates that the Emmitsburg community is only modeled after the French, rather than having any direct linkage at that time with the French community:

¹¹ See "Constitutions of the Sisters of Charity in the United States of America," (Article I, Chapter I) quoted in Ellin M. Kelly, *Numerous Choirs*, 2 vols. (Evansville, Indiana: Mater Dei Provincialate, 1981), 1:268. Cf. See also [Sister John Mary Crumlish], *1809-1959* (Emmitsburg, Maryland: 1959), 48. Annabelle Melville, *Elizabeth Bayley Seton* (New York: 1951, later Berkley Publishing Group: 1985), 216. Cf. Charles I. White, *The Life of Mrs. Eliza Seton* (New York: Edward Dunigan & Brother, 1853), 261, 295.

¹² Kelly, *Numerous Choirs*, 1:268.



Jean Dubois (1764-1842). Fled the chaos of the French Revolution in 1791, arriving in America and becoming pastor of Frederick, MD. Founded Mount St. Mary's College in Emmitsburg in 1808, and also aided Elizabeth Seton in founding her community.

Appointed as the third Bishop of New York in 1826.

Courtesy, Archives of the Daughters of Charity, Emmitsburg, MD

In as much as the Sisters of Charity of Saint Joseph's is modeled after the Society of the Sisters of Charity [sic] instituted in France by Saint Vincent de Paul [and Saint Louise de Marillac], this board adopts the Rules and Constitutions of that Society, except such of them as may be incompatible with the laws of the United States, the State of Maryland or the above named Act of Incorporation of our Society.¹³

¹³ "Bylaws of the Sisters of Charity of Saint Joseph's (Maryland)," ASJPH 3-1-3.

Impelled by the Charity of Christ. The Paschal Mystery of Christ provides a paradigm for considering the persecution, suppression, and rebirth of the Vincentian Family and the Society of Saint Sulpice as the historical context out of which the followers of Monsieur Olier and Monsieur Vincent acted. Impelled by the charity of Christ, the founders' experience of Church and society filled their disciples with a zeal that motivated them for mission in the face of adversity despite:

- Suppression during the French Revolution.
- Absence of native clergy and religious for the American Catholic Church.
- Demands and implications of Post-Revolution Sulpician Renewal.

Architects of the Charity Charism

Crafting the American Church. The French refugee Sulpicians established Saint Sulpice (later Saint Mary's) Seminary at Baltimore in 1791 at the invitation of John Carroll (1789-1815), first bishop of the United States. Carroll wanted to establish a seminary to train American men for the priesthood. His vision for Catholicism in the United States blended with the Sulpician mission of priestly formation. Native clergy were at the core of Carroll's dream for the American Church. Formation of the clergy was the founding charism of the Sulpicians. However, given the historical context of a new country, preparation for the priesthood first required intermediate education at the high school and college level for potential candidates. So, the Sulpicians adjusted their ministries to meet local needs and accepted students, including Protestants, in their schools. Such adaptations were sometimes questioned by their superiors. It was hoped that Saint Mary's College would be a source of vocations for the major seminary and was also intended for French and Spanish-speaking refugees (later only English speaking ones) as well as for financial support to the seminary.

Building up the Church in America depended on not only the education of candidates for the priesthood but also education in the faith of future leaders, including schools for young girls. Such comprehensive strategies required both personnel and funds. While en route to Boston on a fund-raising trip to benefit Saint Mary's College, a school for boys begun in 1799 at Baltimore, Reverend Louis Dubourg, first met the widow Elizabeth Ann Bayley Seton (1774-1821).¹⁴ As a result

¹⁴ Dubourg, escaped Paris during the Reign of Terror disguised as a fiddler and arrived in the United States in 1794 where he joined the Sulpicians in 1795.

of that encounter Dubourg invited Mrs. Seton to Baltimore where in 1808 she established a boarding school on Paca Street to educate young girls.¹⁵ There the Sulpician project of establishing the Sisters of Charity evolved. The woman who implemented their plan became known as Mother Seton. Even before Elizabeth Seton left New York, Dubourg made some prophetic comments:

If one year's experience persuades us that the establishment is likely to succeed in promoting the grand object of a Catholic and virtuous education and if it pleases Almighty God to give you, your good Cecilia, and your amiable daughter a relish for your function and a resolution to devote yourselves to it so as to secure permanency to the Institution, we will then consult Him about the means of perpetuating it by the association of some other pious ladies who may be animated with the same spirit.¹⁶

Baltimore Sulpician Project. At Paca Street, Divine Providence converged people and resources. Her blooming sense of mission led Elizabeth Seton to make known her desire to teach poor children. About the same time Reverend Mr. Samuel Sutherland Cooper (1769-1843), a convert who was a wealthy Philadelphia seminarian, then studying at Baltimore, also expressed an inspiration to fund programs for the poor. He was concerned about Catholic education for the female sex "which has so powerful an influence in regard to morals and religion."¹⁷ He was willing to purchase property if Mrs. Seton would direct a continuum of services designed on the plan of establishing an institution for the advancement of Catholic female children in habits of religion, and giving them an education suited to that purpose. He also desires . . . to extend the plan to the reception of the aged, and also uneducated persons, who

¹⁵ Dubourg later became bishop of Louisiana (1815-1826) and archbishop of Besançon (1833). Dubourg also invited Reverend Felix de Andreis, C.M. (1778-1820), and Reverend Joseph Rosati, C.M. (1789-1843), (first bishop of Saint Louis, Missouri 1827-1843) to establish the first Vincentian mission in North America (1816). See John E. Rybolt, C.M., "Three Pioneer Vincentians," *Vincentian Heritage* 14, no. 1 (Fall 1993):153-68. At the invitation of Dubourg, on 26 July 1816, the first members of the Congregation of the Mission arrived in the United States at Fells Point, Baltimore on "The Ranger." Mother Seton responded to Bruté's correspondence about the event. "Saint Lazare — Communion — directed those of the Sisters to thanks for the blessed Missioners . . ." See *The Union of the American Sisters*, 25.

¹⁶ William Dubourg to Mother Seton, 27 May 1808, ASJPH II-S-3.

¹⁷ [Sister Mary Louise Caulfield, DC.], *Our Union with France* (Emmitsburg, Maryland: Saint Joseph's, 1882), 5.

may be employed in spinning, knitting, etc. so as to found a manufactory on a small scale which may be very beneficial to the poor.¹⁸

Such unanticipated generosity changed the locus of Elizabeth Seton's future activity from the refined religious atmosphere in the city of Baltimore [with the Sulpicians at Saint Mary's College], to the rustic, pioneering Sulpicians at Mount Saint Mary's College near Emmitsburg. This change defined her ministry and expanded her mission.¹⁹ Soon, Elizabeth Seton's mission radiated beyond its rural valley nestled beside a spur of the Catoctin Mountains in central Maryland. According to tradition, she called this area, Saint Joseph's Valley. The Sulpicians nurtured the mustard seed planted there by Elizabeth Seton and made it possible for her community to grow and flourish in the spirit of Saint Vincent de Paul and his collaborator Saint Louise de Marillac.

Dubourg's Dream. Ever since 1798 when Dubourg was unable to import Ursulines to Baltimore, he entertained the idea of establishing a native sisterhood.²⁰ The combination of Mrs. Seton's presence and Mr. Cooper's offer made Dubourg's dream possible. Elizabeth Seton wrote that one of her most trusted spiritual advisors, Reverend Francis A. Matignon of Boston, "had suggested his plan for me before the gentlemen [Sulpicians] even thought of it — I have invariably kept in the back ground and avoided even reflecting voluntarily on any thing of the kind knowing that Almighty God alone could effect it if indeed it will be realized."²¹ However, the Sulpicians and Bishop Carroll had one disappointment: Cooper stipulated the location for the new establishment — to be made "at Emmitsburg, a village eighteen leagues

¹⁸ Elizabeth Seton to Philip Filicchi, 8 February 1809, quoted in Kelly, *Numerous Choirs*, 1:124.

¹⁹ Some examples of how Elizabeth Ann Seton described her mission in 1809-1810 include: On 9 January 1810, Elizabeth wrote to Eliza Sadler: "If you recollect the system of the Sisters of Charity before & since the revolution in France You will know the rule of our community in a word . . ." See Crumlish, *The Union of the American Sisters*, 18. Elizabeth wrote to Antonio Filicchi 20 May 1810, "All apply to the Sisters of Charity who are night and day devoted to the sick and ignorant." Crumlish, *The Union of the American Sisters*, 18. On 8 November 1810, she wrote to Antonio Filicchi to describe her sisterhood and concluded: "Yet as Sisters of Charity we should fear nothing." Crumlish, *The Union of the American Sisters*, 17.

²⁰ In 1798 Sulpician superior general, Jacques-André Emery could not execute Dubourg's idea to bring the Ursulines to the United States to teach because conditions were not conducive. Annabelle Melville, *Louis William Dubourg*, 2 vols. (Chicago, 1986), 151. Shortly after her arrival in Baltimore, Elizabeth Seton alludes to a Sulpician plan: ". . . so much of my or rather *the scheme* of these reverend gentlemen depends on your concurrence and support that I dare not form a wish." See Elizabeth Seton to Antonio Filicchi, 20 August 1808, Baltimore, Archives of the Sisters of Charity of Cincinnati, Mount Saint Joseph, OH. Hereinafter AMSJ. A 111 050.

²¹ Elizabeth Seton to Philip Filicchi, 8 February 1809, AMSJ A 111 053.

from Baltimore” and he predicted that “it will extend throughout the United States.”²² Refugee Catholic families from southern Maryland had been settling near Emmitsburg in northern Frederick County since 1728. Therefore, the *Régestre* minutes for the Sulpician assembly for 14 March 1809 reads,

It is a matter of buying a plantation near Emmitsburg to found there a community of daughters, *à peu près sur le même plan que les filles de la Charité, de Saint Vincent de Paul* [sic]; [similar to the model of the Daughters of Charity of Saint Vincent de Paul] who join to the care of the sick, the instruction of young girls in all branches of Christian education.²³

The Company of the Daughters of Charity of Saint Vincent de Paul was widely known before the French Revolution for its extensive presence among the sick and poor. The sisters’ blue-grey habit and large, white winged *cornette* were familiar to most Sulpicians, including those who became the superiors at Saint Mary’s College Seminary: Reverend Charles-François Nagot, S.S., (1734-1816; Sulpician superior 1790-1810) and Reverend John Mary Tessier, S.S., (1758-1840; Sulpician superior 1810-1829). Giving form to Dubourg’s dream of securing “permanency to the Institution . . . [and] perpetuating it by the association of some other pious ladies who may be animated with the same spirit” became a significant aspect of the Sulpician mission in the United States during its formative period.²⁴ Elizabeth Seton became Mother Seton on 25 March 1809, when in the basement chapel of Saint Mary’s she first pronounced vows for one year in the presence of Bishop John Carroll, who had concerns about her responsibility for the welfare of her children.

Authority and Governance Models. Over time, as the political scene for religious improved in France, the way Sulpician superiors viewed their mission also changed in the United States. Apparently an organi-

²² Caulfield, *Our Union with France*, 6.

²³ Melville cites this quote with one line in French. Melville, *Louis William Dubourg*, 1:177. See also [Sister John Mary Crumlish], *1809-1959* (Emmitsburg, Maryland, 1959).

²⁴ Dubourg to Mother Seton, 27 May 1808, ASJPH 1-3-3-253.

zational model was first proposed for the Sisters of Charity and the Sulpicians based on their understanding of the relationship of the Congregation of the Mission to the Daughters of Charity (although the structure and functioning of the Vincentian relationship is more distinct than Carroll describes).

There is some evidence that John Carroll may have preferred that he, rather than the Sulpicians, direct the Sisters of Charity: "You know, ever honoured and most esteemed Madame, that after the choice made by yourselves, your chief benefactor, of living under the protection of the priests of Saint Sulpice, I surrendered, as much as a Bishop can surrender, your government into their hands."²⁵ The archbishop of Baltimore, appointed Dubourg as the ecclesiastical superior of the new community.

According to the approved *Constitutions of the Sisters of Charity*: "The Sisters of Charity are established under the authority of the Archbishop of Baltimore and the Superior of the Seminary of Saint Sulpicius [sic] in Baltimore, who shall appoint the Superior [General] who is to govern their society."²⁶ Hence, by virtue of the Constitution, the superior at Saint Mary's Seminary, rather than the Society of Saint Sulpice itself, became their canonical protector.²⁷ Among other recommendations, Archbishop Carroll suggested that this distinction be made.²⁸

Rule of Life. Mother Seton and Reverend John Dubois, S.S., modeled the Emmitsburg community after the French Daughters of Charity but made significant modifications in the *Common Rules of the Daughters of Charity*. In order to adapt them to American conditions, the principal point on which the rules were changed concerned the activities of the sisters in the schools, for the French Daughters devoted themselves entirely to the service of destitute children unable to pay for their education. In the United States, the Sisters of Charity needed to rely on educational activity for income. Therefore, education of female children became a primary thrust of the mission of the Sisters of Charity of Saint Joseph's.²⁹ Another change related to Elizabeth Seton's

²⁵ Melville, *Elizabeth Bayley Seton*, 215. See also Hebermann, *The Sulpicians in the United States*, 209 and Chapter IX.

²⁶ See Article I, Chapter I quoted in Kelly, *Numerous Choirs*, 1:268.

²⁷ Kelly, *Numerous Choirs*, 1:268.

²⁸ John Carroll to Elizabeth Seton, 11 September 1811, Baltimore, ASJPH 1-3-3-1 #45.

²⁹ The first meeting of the new corporation of "The Sisters of Charity of Saint Joseph's" was held 2 December 1816. Its By-laws state: "8th In as much as this Society of the Sisters of Charity of Saint Joseph's is modeled after the Society of the Sisters of Charity instituted in France by Saint Vincent de Paul, this Board adopts the Rules and Constitutions . . ." See Crumlish, *The Union of the American Sisters*, 26.

children, namely that she be permitted to remain their legal guardian and manage their finances even as a community member.

Chapter One, Article 1 of the *Rule of 1812* or *Regulations for the Society of Sisters of Charity in America* reads essentially the same as the *Common Rules for the Daughters of Charity*, with this addition, "A secondary but not less important one [purpose] is to honor the Sacred Infancy of Jesus in the young persons of their sex whose heart they are called upon to form to the love of God, the practice of every virtue, and the knowledge of religion whilst they sow in their minds the seeds of useful knowledge."³⁰ The *Common Rules of the Daughters of Charity* refer to corporal and spiritual service of the poor, including children, without referring to any distinction regarding girls or boys, under their care. The French rule emphasizes neither education nor any particular ministry.³¹

After reviewing the rule which Dubois had translated, Elizabeth Seton wrote Bishop Carroll 5 September 1811: "The rules proposed are nearly such as we had in the original manuscript of the sisters in France. I never had a thought discordant with them as far as my poor power may go in fulfilling them."³² In his response, Carroll, who recommended additional modifications, commented:

I shall and do give my approbation to the Constitutions exhibited to me by Mr. Dubois after they shall have received the alterations suggested by him — You will know from him what these are; and it affords me great pleasure to learn that all the material points on which a difference of opinion was thought to exist have been given up by Messieurs de Sulpice in their last deliberations. If they had

³⁰ Kelly, *Numerous Choirs*, 1:144-45; 152-53.

³¹ This point has been subject to misinterpretation in light of the historical decision by the Council in Emmitsburg in 1845, withdrawing the Sisters of Charity of Saint Joseph's from the direct care of boys in asylums and schools. This decision was made because of serious problems encountered as a result of the practice. Cf. Francis Burlando, C.M., *Memorandum*, 18 December 1849, ASJPH 7-4-2-1, 2. There is no restriction about caring for boys in the Article One of the French *Common Rules of the Daughters of Charity*: "The principal end for which God has called and established the Daughters of Charity, is to honor our Lord Jesus Christ as the source and model of all charity; serving Him corporally and spiritually in the person of the poor, whether sick, children, prisoners, or others who, through shame, dare not make known their wants." John Rybolt, C.M., and Frances Ryan, D.C., *Vincent de Paul and Louise de Marillac Rules, Conferences, and Writings* (Mahwah, New Jersey: Paulist Press, 1995), 168. Cf. Article One, "Regulations for the Society of Sisters of Charity in America," Kelly, *Numerous Choirs*, 1:243.

³² Kelly and Melville, *Elizabeth Seton Selected Writings*, 273.

not, I do not think that I should have approved the Constitutions, as modified in the copy therefore which has been before me. Mr. Dubois has not exhibited the rules of detail and particular duties of the Sisters, but they bring matters of which yourselves and your Reverend Superior will be the best judges, I commit You and them with the utmost confidence to the guidance of the Divine Spirit, . . . I am rejoiced likewise to know that the idea of any other connection than that of charity, is abandoned between the daughters of Saint Joseph's and the society of Saint Sulpice; I mean that their interests, administration and government are not to be the same, or at least under the same control. This removes many inconveniences for You and for the Messieurs of Saint Sulpice — No one of that body but your immediate Superior, residing near You, will have any share in the government or concerns of the Sisters (except for rare and uncommon occasions) the Superior of the Seminary of Baltimore, but not his Society. This however is to be understood so as not to exclude the essential superintendence and control of Archbishops over every Community in his Diocese. . . . Your superior or Confessor need be informed or consulted in matters where the Mother and her Council need his advice. I shall congratulate You and your beloved Sisters, when the Constitution is adopted. It will be like freeing You from a state in which it was difficult to walk straight, as you had no certain way in which to proceed.³³

Once the modified rule met with Mother Seton's approval, it went to Tessier who approved it 17 January 1812. Subsequently Carroll gave his approbation. The sisters began their novitiate which concluded with the pronouncement of annual vows for the first time 19 July 1813.³⁴

³³ Carroll to Seton, 11 September 1811, ASJPH.

³⁴ The text of the first vow formula may be found in Kelly, *Numerous Choirs*, 1:280. It is very similar to that used by Louise de Marillac, on which the traditional vow formula used by the Daughters of Charity until 1969 was based. See A.44B, "Formula of the Vows," Louise Sullivan, D.C., *Spiritual Writings of Louise de Marillac* (New York: New City Press, 1991), 782.

Pastor of Souls. Archbishop Carroll played a pivotal role in bringing the Sulpicians to the United States and also had a major influence on the emerging mission of Elizabeth Seton. Despite the demands of Carroll's mission as shepherd of a vast, undeveloped diocese he also became a spiritual father to Mother Seton and a devoted community supporter and friend. He helped shape her mission and provided wisdom and spiritual guidance for her role in leadership. His paternal advice had a soothing effect.³⁵ For example, at a time when Mother Seton was distressed and Samuel Cooper was displeased about how some community business was being handled by the Sulpicians, Carroll, with an eye to the potential of her mission in the United States, wisely counseled her:

Perhaps Mr. Cooper may make mention of it [the business] to you, tho it is my wish not to have your peace of mind disturbed with such affairs. If however you be spoken to, the part for you to act will be to be entirely passive, and to leave the business to be arranged among themselves. In the meantime, let it be your only concern to progress more and more towards the union of your soul with God, and an entire disengagement from the things of earth. It would be a triumph for heterodoxy & irreligion, & what is of much more consequence, the disappointment of pious and admiring Catholics, should anything happen to shake the stability of your holy establishment. It is not to flatter or nourish pride, the seeds of which are sown in every heart, that I declare an opinion and belief, that its ultimate success under God, depends on your sacrificing in yourself, notwithstanding all the uneasiness and disgust you may experience, and continuing in your place as Superior. Both the Gentlemen of Saint Sulpice and Mr. Cooper have intentions equally pure and pursue the same end, tho they differ in opinion, as to the means of obtaining it.³⁶

³⁵ Melville, *Elizabeth Bayley Seton*, 214-216.

³⁶ John Carroll to Elizabeth Ann Seton, 11 March 1810, Thomas O'Brien Hanley, S.J., ed., *The John Carroll Papers*, 3 vols. (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1976), 3:114.

Also in 1809 Carroll wrote Mother Seton to clarify his role as bishop vis-a-vis the Sulpicians, now her superiors. Carroll respected the Sulpicians' role and authority. He maintained a position of non-intervention. After the founding of the Sisters of Charity of Saint Joseph's, the archbishop served as the final authority on community affairs, such as approval to adopt the *Common Rules of the Daughters of Charity* with its adaptations for the American culture. At the time, Carroll had reservations about the sisterhood's relationship with Paris:

At the very institution of Emmitsburg, though it was strongly contended for its being entirely conformable to and the same with the Institute of Saint Vincent de Paul, yet this proposal was soon and wisely abandoned for causes, which arose out of distance, different manner, and habits of the two countries, France and the United States.³⁷

Whether Carroll agreed with or admonished Mother Seton, he responded with understanding and kindly solicitude for her feelings. Yet, Carroll believed that resolution of any differences should occur between the sisterhood and the Sulpicians directly. Late in 1809, Carroll had assumed ecclesiastical responsibility of the new community himself, despite Mother Seton's pleas to him to restore Dubourg (superior general June 1809-September 1809) after his resignation as superior. Mother Seton admitted to Carroll: "The truth is I have been made a Mother before being initiated."³⁸

Critical Sulpician Roles. Sulpicians promoted native vocations to the Sisters of Charity and were at its helm as key instruments in the development of the nascent community. During her lifetime, Mother Seton's sense of mission was shaped as much by the absence of several Sulpicians from Emmitsburg as by their presence while she was in Baltimore.

³⁷ John Carroll to John-Baptist David, 17 September 1814, quoted in Mary Ewens, *The Role of the Nun in Nineteenth Century America* (New York: Arno Press, 1978), 46. For complete text see "Comment on James [sic] David Letter," 17 September 1814, *The John Carroll Papers*, 3:295. A different perspective is presented forty years later: "I know that your Community was to have been commenced by French Sisters, but insurmountable obstacles prevented them from going to America." See Jean-Baptiste Étienne, C.M., to Mother Etienne Hall, S.C., 28 August 1849, quoted in Caulfield, *Our Union with France*, 27.

³⁸ Elizabeth Seton to John Carroll, 2 November 1809, quoted in Kelly and Melville, *Elizabeth Seton Selected Writings*, 164.

- What might have been different if, Charles-François Nagot, had been in better health and would have been able to have come to Emmitsburg, instead of Dubourg, as the first superior general of the Sisters of Charity like Elizabeth Ann Seton had expected initially?³⁹
- How might the Sisters of Charity have evolved if Louis William Dubourg had not resigned after less than four months, paving the way for Reverend John Baptist David, S.S., to take over?
- How would the first year of the Sisters of Charity have developed if concerns about Reverend Pierre Babade, S.S., (1763-1846) had not led to forbidding correspondence with him?⁴⁰

In God's providence, the non-events for Elizabeth Ann Seton and the Sisters of Charity became the vacuous stuff of sanctity. These paved a path with milestones of the people, circumstances, and events that did occur, such as the following factors:

- Nagot's health prevented his becoming superior at Emmitsburg.
- The superiors' concerns about Babade's incipient alcohol dependency.
- Dubourg's resignation and the brevity of his administration.

The vacancy caused by the latter made it possible for Reverend John Baptist David, S.S. (1761-1841; superior general 1809-1811), Dubois, and others to shape the emerging mission. Probably it was best that Dubourg withdraw because by personality he was one whose energy and creativity launched projects effectively, but often left their development and implementation for others to bring them to maturity. Ulti-

³⁹ From Baltimore Elizabeth Ann Seton had written Julia Scott 9 May 1809: "The Superior of our Seminary here, who is graced with all the venerable qualities of seventy-five, which is his age, a mind still strong and alive to the interests of our little family as if we were all his own . . . is going to take charge of our community and reside in Emmitsburg." See Melville, *Elizabeth Bayley Seton*, 221.

⁴⁰ One author describes Pierre Babade, S.S., as interfering in affairs of the community and another implies that Babade might have been alcohol dependent. Dubourg rendered a decision which forbade the sisters to correspond with Babade, their former friend, confidant, and confessor in Baltimore. The Sisters reacted vehemently against this decision which became a source of pain and conflict for Elizabeth Seton. Melville, *Elizabeth Bayley Seton*, 222. Melville asserts that there was a history of conflict between Babade and Dubourg. See also Melville, *Louis William Dubourg*, 125 and 470, note 8.

mately Dubourg's style of decision making led to his resignation. This resulted from a difference with the Sisters over Babade, their favorite confessor from Baltimore. For Dubourg, his broad understanding of mission included whatever incremental strategies were needed to develop Roman Catholicism among Americans and nurture vocations to the priesthood. The Sisters of Charity would play a key role in educating the faithful in their religion in the nineteenth century.

As foundress and first superior of the Sisters of Charity of Saint Joseph's, Mother Seton held the leadership post from 31 July 1809 until her death 4 January 1821. She soon painfully discovered the demands of obedience to the new community's Sulpician superiors, especially Dubourg and David, with whom she experienced serious differences.

Elizabeth Seton clashed with Louis William Dubourg, S.S., first Sulpician superior general of the Sisters of Charity of Saint Joseph's, who resigned abruptly. His action jolted the nascent community. Twenty years later he recorded his memoirs of the community at the time of its foundation.⁴¹ However his successor, John Baptist David, S.S., was at the helm of the community when the rule for the sisterhood was determined.

In her frequent conferences with her director, [refers to Dubourg], Mrs. Seton learned that he had thought for a long time of establishing the Daughters of Charity in America, and as the duties of this Institute would be compatible with the cares of her family, this virtuous lady expressed a most ardent desire of seeing it commenced and of herself being admitted into it.⁴²

⁴¹ Melville, *Elizabeth Bayley Seton*, 429, n90.

⁴² Louis William Dubourg to l'Abbé Henri Eleves, 15 July 1828, Montauban ASJPH 1-3-3-2, 102. Some authors incorrectly cite Deluol as the addressee of this letter. Although it is written twenty years after Mrs. Seton began her school at Paca Street, this record is the most complete and earliest account by a Sulpician of the founding of the Sisters of Charity in America. "Providence made use in the beginning, of the Sulpicians for the formation of this Community in this country at an epoch when there were no Children of Saint Vincent here yet." Mother Etienne Hall to Jean-Baptiste Étienne, 19 June 1849, ASJPH 7-4-2-1, #20. This evidence shows that the Sulpicians were the prime architects of the American Sisters of Charity and sheds a different light on the traditional story, which lacks documentation in original sources, that "the intention of the Foundress [Mother Seton], from the beginning, was to assimilate the new Institution to that of the French Daughters of Charity, and in concert with Mr. Dubourg, she requested Bishop Flaget of Kentucky, when about to sail for France, in 1810, to make overtures to that effect, to the Superiors in Paris." See Caulfield, *Our Union with France*, 7. Cf. Francis Burlando, C.M., *Memorandum*, 18 December 1849, ASJPH 7-4-2-1, 13.

David had a sense of mission regarding the Sisters of Charity. After 1809, he focused on a disciplined religious formation for the small band of zealous, pioneer religious. He aimed to develop them into an organized community capable of conducting ministry according to certain standards, namely his own.⁴³ David possibly initiated the request for Bishop-elect Joseph Benedict Flaget (1763- 1851) to bring the *Common Rules of the Daughters of Charity* when he returned from an upcoming trip to France.⁴⁴ This ultimately led to the union of the Emmitsburg community with the French Daughters of Charity.⁴⁵

Reverend Dominique Hanon, C.M., (vicar general 1807-1816) provided Flaget with a copy of the rules and designated at least three and quite probably six or more Daughters of Charity from Bordeaux to establish the French community at Emmitsburg, where they were to direct the formation of Elizabeth Seton and her companions.⁴⁶ The prospect of the pending arrival of the French Sisters was unsettling to Elizabeth Seton, who felt torn between her vocational roles as only

⁴³ Elizabeth Seton clashed with David who seemed to be interfering in the administration of her school. Bishop Carroll was her only recourse.

⁴⁴ Years later, an elderly Flaget advised the young Reverend Francis Burlando, CM. (Director 1853- 1873) to do everything possible to unite the Emmitsburg community with the French Daughters of Charity. *Notes on Very Reverend James F. Burlando, C.M.* (Emmitsburg: Saint Joseph's, 1873), 32. Some authors state that Flaget brought copies of both the Constitutions and the *Common Rules of the Daughters of Charity*. He may have brought a document other than the rule since the Daughters of Charity did not have Constitutions properly until 1954. During the Napoleonic era the terms "rules and constitutions" were used interchangeably. This lack of specificity tends to confuse contemporary readers. *The Constitutions of the Sisters of Charity of America*, were written in the United States by Dubois, who later makes reference to sending David at Nazareth a printed copy of them. See Crumlish, *The Union of the American Sisters of Charity*, 24. A careful perusal of the primitive document of 1645, and the statutes issued in 1718, by Jean Bonnet, C.M., suggest a similar outline of juridical principles found in *The Constitutions of the Sisters of Charity of America* (1812). It is also possible, however, that Dubois may have had access to models such as the primitive document of 1645, the "Letters Patent Approving the Daughters of Charity" (1657), the statutes issued (1718) by Reverend Jean Bonnet, C.M., or the "Rules and Constitutions" which were submitted to the Napoleonic Government (1807). See *Genesis of the Company* (Paris: n.p., 1968), 141. "Origin of the Company," *Echo of the Mother House*, no. 8 (October 1965), 526. Elisabeth Charpy, Document 707, "Lettres Patentes Approuvant la Compagnie des Filles de la Charité," *La Compagnie des Filles de la Charité Aux Origines* (Paris: La Compagnie de la Filles de la Charité, 1989), 707; Carven, *Napoleon and the Lazarists*, 158.

⁴⁵ Charles I. Souvay, C.M., "Mother Seton's Daughters. A Lecture Delivered at the Marillac Seminary," 31 July 1917 (Printed privately, n.d.). Also see Kelly and Melville, *Elizabeth Seton Selected Writings*, 272, note 12.

⁴⁶ Although it was customary in Europe for well established communities to offer consultation, formation, mentoring, and personnel to assist new foundations, evidence indicates that the plan was for the French Daughters of Charity to make a foundation at Emmitsburg and direct the formation of the American women in the Vincentian spirit as members of the French community. Reverend Dominique Hanon, C.M., then vicar general, missioned the three Sisters to the United States for this purpose. This demonstrates that the Sulpicians, rather than Elizabeth Ann Seton, were the prime movers from the beginning regarding the eventual union of 1850. See Jean-Baptiste Étienne, C.M., *Notice sur le Etablissement de la Congregation de la Mission après la Revolution de 1789* (Paris: n.p., 1870), 58. See also Melville, *Elizabeth Bayley Seton*, 195, 210-13; 218-19. See also Jean-Baptiste Étienne, C.M., to Mother Etienne Hall, S.C., 28 August 1849, quoted in Caulfield, *Our Union with France*, 27.

parent to her five darlings and as mother to her spiritual daughters. "The only word I have to say at every question is, *I am a Mother*. Whatever providence awaits me consistent with that plan I say Amen to it."⁴⁷ She confidentially expressed her concerns to Bishop Carroll:

How could you have expected my Reverend Father that the regulations of the house would have been concluded before the departure of Reverend Mr. David, since his calculations are turned on the arrival of the French sisters.⁴⁸ What authority would the Mother they bring have over our Sisters (while I am present) but the very rule she is to give them — and how could it be known that they would consent to the different modifications of their rule which are indispensable if adopted by us. What support can we procure to this house but from our Boarders, and how can the reception of Boarders sufficient to maintain it accord with their statutes? How can they allow me the uncontrolled privileges of a Mother to my five darlings? — or how can I in conscience or in accordance with your Paternal heart give up so sacred a right.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ Seton to George Weise [8, nd.], ASJPH 1-3-3-3-2:60b. During the period when the rule and constitutions were being developed, Elizabeth Seton consistently reiterates her primary vocation as mother. "By the law of the church I so much love I could never take an obligation which interfered with my duties to them [her children], except I had an independent provision and guardian for them, which the whole world could not supply to my judgment of a mother's duty." Seton to Catherine Duplex, 4 February 1810, ASJPH 1-3-3-7:65. "The thought of living out of our valley would seem impossible if I belonged to myself; but the dear ones have their first claim which must ever remain inviolate. Consequently if at any period the duties I am engaged should interfere with those I owe to them I have solemnly engaged with our good Bishop Carroll as well as my own conscience to give the darlings their rights and to prefer their advantage to everything." Seton to Julia Scott, 20 July 1810, ASJPH 1-3-3-6:83. "The constitutions proposed have been discussed by our Reverend Director and I find he makes some observations on my situation relative to them, but surely an individual is not to be considered where a public good is in question, and you know I should gladly make every sacrifice you think consistent with my first and inseparable obligations as a mother." Seton to John Carroll, 5 September 1811, Archives Archdiocese of Baltimore, 7N13.

⁴⁸ This implies that David planned for the French Sisters to train the American women in the Vincentian way of life and induct them into the Company of the Daughters of Charity as members. This seems to be corroborated by John Carroll in a summary jotted at the bottom of a letter to David, in which Carroll writes: "At the very institution of Emmitsburg, though it was strongly contended for its being entirely conformable to and the same with the Institute of Saint Vincent de Paul, yet this proposal was soon and wisely abandoned. . . ." See "Comment on James [sic] David Letter," 17 September 1814, *The John Carroll Papers* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1976), 3:295.

⁴⁹ Seton to Carroll, 13 May 1811, Kelly and Melville, *Elizabeth Seton Selected Writings*, 272. The Vicar General of the Congregation of the Mission arranged for the missioning of three French sisters, Sister Marie-Anne Bizeray (1778-1849), Sister Marguerite Voirin (1762-1844), and Sister Augustine

Elizabeth Seton struggled in vain but never developed a comfortable working relationship with David, who seemed overbearing in details. This became an area of tension between them, which she tried to overcome.⁵⁰ However, David's writing reveals an attempt to function collaboratively with both the Sulpicians and Mother Seton regarding administration of the school:

I have begun to write some regulations for the organization of the School of Saint Joseph. I will complete them as soon as I can, and after having proposed them to the approbation of my Brethren, I will send them to you for your revision, and upon your remarks, we shall give them as much stability as they will be susceptible of. In the mean time, be so good as to propose to me your observations, and to let me know how far things are in forwardness.⁵¹

Providentially, in May 1811 David left for the west to work with Flaget in his diocese and was succeeded by Dubois.

Defining the French Connection. In addition to the missioning of French Daughters of Charity to Emmitsburg by Hanon, there is also sufficient evidence from Carroll's pen to date the genesis of the union with France from the conception of the Emmitsburg community by the Sulpicians. The idea arose from the Sulpicians, and probably from

(Continued)

Chauvin (1765-1849), to America, "to aid the rising community by their experience and example" in living the Vincentian mission. Cf. Charles White, *Life of Mrs. E.A. Seton* (New York: Edward Dunigan & Brother, 1853), 261. According to a document issued in 1870 by Jean-Baptiste Étienne, C.M., it was Reverend Dominique Hanon, C.M., then vicar general, who designated the three Sisters for the United States in order to direct the formation of the American women in the Vincentian spirit and to make a foundation of the French Daughters of Charity at Emmitsburg. See Jean-Baptiste Étienne, C.M., *Notice sur le Etablissement de la Congrégation de la Mission après la Revolution de 1789*, 58. The Sulpicians facilitated the arrangements and payment for their passage; Flaget expected them to return to the United States with him. See Crumlsh, *1809-1959*, 290, note 36. Bonaparte prevented them from traveling beyond Bordeaux. Mother Seton continued to expect the arrival of the French sisters and seemed concerned about her status in the community, if, and when, they arrived. She expressed her concerns to Bishop Carroll in her letter of 13 [or 11] May 1811 in which she raises issues about her role, her children, flexibility regarding the rule, and its necessary modifications in light of the needs in the United States. See Caulfield, *Our Union with France*, 7; Crumlsh, *The Union of the American Sisters*, 4-5, 19-21; Melville, *Elizabeth Bayley Seton*, 212.

⁵⁰ Archives Archdiocese of Baltimore, 7M7. See Elizabeth Seton to John Carroll, 25 January 1810, Saint Joseph's Valley.

⁵¹ John Baptist David to Mother Seton, 28 December 1809, Baltimore, ASJPH, copy II-S-1.

Dubourg, although some implicate David.⁵² Apparently differences existed among the clergy closest to Mother Seton about their vision of mission and the most effective means of bringing it to reality. It is thought that Flaget, David, and probably Dubourg favored an implantation by the French Daughters of Charity whereas Carroll, Dubois and John Cheverus of Boston, a trusted advisor of Mother Seton, leaned more toward an American foundation rooted in the Vincentian charism.⁵³ In 1811, Cheverus wrote Mother Seton: "I concur with Mr. Dubois about the propriety of your establishment remaining independent from the [French] Sisters of Charity."⁵⁴ Regardless, the question remains, what did Flaget understand as his mission for the Sulpicians regarding the new sisterhood when he left Baltimore in 1810 for France? Was he instructed to contact the French superiors and request Sisters to come to America? If so, for what purpose? What was Mother Seton's first reaction? Her later thoughts?⁵⁵

Until 1812, when Archbishop Carroll of Baltimore approved the *Regulations for the Society of Sisters of Charity in America*, Elizabeth Seton was expecting the arrival of Daughters of Charity from France. The European sisters were coming as a result of Father Flaget's visit and his request for the *Common Rules* for the Emmitsburg community. Flaget also visited a manufactory at Bordeaux which could have become a model for implementing that aspect of Cooper's vision for Mother Seton's mission.⁵⁶

⁵² Cf. Sister Mary Agnes McCann, S.C., *The History of Mother Seton's Daughters* (New York: Longmans, Green and Company, 1917), 105. This work contains some inaccuracies. It does not adequately address the historical context or highlight the development of factors influencing the Sulpicians to negotiate the union with France on behalf of the Emmitsburg community. See Melville, *Elizabeth Bayley Seton*, 436, note 57.

⁵³ Melville, *Elizabeth Bayley Seton*, 214. Cheverus not only had a significant influence on Elizabeth personally, but also on the unfolding of the Sisters of Charity. See also, Melville, *Louis William Dubourg*, 1:158.

⁵⁴ The full text of the pertinent section reads: "I concur in opinion with Mr. Dubois about the propriety of your establishment remaining independent from the [French] Sisters of Charity & continuing to be merely a house of education for young females . . . However I have some reason to think as you do, that very likely things will speak for themselves & show the usefulness & necessity of leaving you in your present situation. Have another conversation with the Reverend Mr. Dubois on the subject & then do with simplicity what he will prescribe or even wish." John Cheverus to Seton, 4 January 1811, quoted in Melville, *Elizabeth Bayley Seton*, 216. Cf. Richard Shaw, *John Dubois: Founding Father* (New York: United States Catholic Historical Society, 1983), 55.

⁵⁵ There is no evidence extant in Elizabeth Seton's handwriting to document her position either supporting or opposing the possibility of her community uniting with the Daughters of Charity of Saint Vincent de Paul of Paris, France. Other than questions raised by the Council regarding French customs and practice, Mother Seton only expresses her thoughts about involvement with the French Sisters once in a letter to Bishop Carroll. See Seton to Carroll, 13 May 1811, Kelly and Melville, *Elizabeth Seton Selected Writings*, 272.

⁵⁶ Kelly, *Numerous Choirs*, 1:125. Melville, *Elizabeth Bayley Seton*, 212.

However, in 1810 the Daughters of Charity were still in the throes of reestablishment, and the Napoleonic government had suppressed the Congregation of the Mission again.⁵⁷ Of this period, David wrote Elizabeth Seton: "We had lately some news from France. Things go on worse and worse."⁵⁸ What did Flaget convey to the Daughters of Charity at Bordeaux as they planned for their mission in America? It seems that the Sisters were being sent on a special mission by Hanon, the vicar general, to make a foundation in Maryland and admit the American women into the Company.⁵⁹

A letter from Sister Marie Bizeray at Bordeaux addressed to "Our dear sisters, aspirants to the Company of the Daughters of Charity" dated 12 July 1810 explains that she and two companions, Sister Marguerite Woiren, and Sister Augustine Chauvin, were looking forward to coming to Emmitsburg at a future date.⁶⁰ The next year Bruté received a letter stating that eighteen Daughters of Charity were anxiously awaiting passage to sail across the Atlantic.⁶¹ Father Flaget probably must have informed Archbishop Carroll and the Sulpicians in Baltimore about the instability and problems of the religious congregations, including the Vincentian Family, since the French Revolution. By 1811, Flaget had second thoughts about his arrangements.

I dread the arrival of the religious women [Daughters of Charity] who are to come from Bordeaux . . . Their hopes will be frustrated, they will be unhappy . . . If there were

⁵⁷ The Imperial Decree of 8 November 1809 gave the Daughters of Charity legal recognition, but placed the Company under episcopal control rather than under the superior general of the Congregation of the Mission which had been suppressed again. A schismatic period of disunity followed. See *Genesis of the Company 1633-1968*, 2 vols. (Paris: Daughters of Charity, 1968), 1:65-75. See John W. Carven, C.M., *Napoleon and the Lazarists* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1974), 156-158. Carven, "The Vincentian Family and Napoleon," *Vincentian Heritage* 5:2 (1984): 43-64.

⁵⁸ John David, S.S., to Elizabeth Seton, 23 February 1811, ASJPH 1-3-3-2, Supplement #2.

⁵⁹ Archives of the Congregation of the Mission, Paris: De brouillon de Gabriel Perboyre sur les Vicaires Généraux, 486-88.

⁶⁰ Marie Bizeray, D.C., à Nos Chères Soeures, "12 July 1810, Bordeaux, ASJPH 7-4-2-1. Had the group arrived, they may not have been the first Daughters of Charity to minister in North America. "Another group of nuns, probably Daughters of Charity, accompanied eighty-one girls to Biloxi, [Mississippi], in 1721 and returned to France after having witnessed the marriages of all of the girls." Ewens, *The Role of the Nun*, 21. It is uncertain if these women were in fact of the Paris-based Company of the Daughters of Charity. After a foundation made in Switzerland in 1810, the Daughters of Charity did not make any foreign foundations for approximately twenty years until 1829 at the Canary Islands.

⁶¹ ASJPH (copy) II-15-1, P. Boutan to Simon Bruté, 24 October 1811, New York City, cited in Madame Hélène Bailly de Barberey, *Elizabeth Seton*, trans. Joseph B. Code (New York: MacMillan Company, 1927), 458, n. 13. "B. Boutan of New York had traveled from Bordeaux with Bishop Flaget." See Crumlish, *1809-1959*, 47.

yet time to turn them back, I would be of the opinion it should be done. I would wish at least that they be informed in detail of the spirit which reigns in the house at Emmitsburg, of the slight hope of serving in hospitals, and if they wish to come after that we would not have to reproach ourselves.⁶²

Birth of an American community. While awaiting the French Sisters, the Sulpicians used the Vincentian documents to craft an American rule, which received ecclesiastical approbation in 1812. Henceforth, Elizabeth Seton makes no further reference to the arrival of the French Daughters of Charity. The American Sisters of Charity embarked on their novitiate and pronounced vows for the first time 19 July 1813. The Sisters of Charity of Saint Joseph's seem to have been firmly established as an independent, diocesan community modeled on the French Daughters of Charity. Its autonomy is stated at different times in its rule, constitutions, and in the by-laws of the corporation. During Elizabeth Seton's lifetime and the administration of Dubois, even though the Sisters' Council at Emmitsburg consulted Paris about some particular questions, the minutes of Council meetings are mute regarding any notion of union with the French Daughters of Charity.⁶³ Dubois worked closely with the sisters' Council and kept a watchful eye on its affairs especially in the face of perceived threats. For example, David made overtures from Nazareth, Kentucky about establishing another novitiate, but under his own supervision. There is also correspondence between Dubois and Carroll concerning the spirit of the Rule of Vincent, much of which resulted from David's persistent requests from Kentucky.⁶⁴

Mother Seton revealed her ambivalence towards Dubois when comparing him with Dubourg in her letter of 12 May 1811 to Bishop

⁶² Benedict Flaget to Simon Bruté, 17 October 1811, Bardstown, quoted in Ewens, *The Role of the Nun*, 47.

⁶³ Mother Seton and her council submitted several questions to the Daughters of Charity in France for consultation, including: "Can a Novitiate be extended to 5 years as it was by the rule of Saint Vincent for our European Sisters?" 13 February 1814, *Council Book*, 1:2.

⁶⁴ See Crumlish, *The Union of the American Sisters*, 22-23. Dubois, the sisters' superior, refused David's request for sisters, and a separate motherhouse and novitiate, citing French precedent. "The constitutions of the Sisters cannot be modified according to the various opinions of each Bishop . . . If he does not approve of them he can establish another community according to his own ideas. The Sisters of Charity owe them obedience only in what is not contrary to their constitutions once approved." Melville, *Elizabeth Bayley Seton*, 250-53.

Carroll: "Reverend Mr. Dubois [is] an economist and full of details dictated by habits of prudence; Reverend Mr. Dubourg, all liberality and schemes from a long custom of expending. In spirituals also, the difference is equally marked, and their sentiments reflected from their habits."⁶⁵

In what ways did Dubois, because of his experience, influence the Sisters of Charity? Dubois had been a chaplain at Les Petits-Maisons of the Daughters of Charity on rue de Sèvres in Paris for several years prior to the French Revolution.⁶⁶ Dubois was present at the earliest historic milestones of the Sisters of Charity in Emmitsburg, and envisioned a mission which supported the organizational development of the community steeped in the Vincentian tradition.⁶⁷ Dubois translated the rule for the Sisters of Charity, oversaw its modification, facilitated its approval, directed formation of the first novitiate, and the pronouncing of vows for the first time.

Like the French Daughters of Charity, the Sisters made annual vows of poverty, chastity, obedience, and service of the poor.⁶⁸ In writing to Antonio Filicchi from the Stone House, Mother Seton referred to her infant community as the Sisters of Charity.⁶⁹ In 1814, when the Sisters of Charity opened their first mission beyond Emmitsburg at Philadelphia, Mother Seton and Dubois appointed Sister Rose White as the *sister servant*, a term used by Vincent de Paul and Louise de Marillac to designate the local superior.

In 1816 Dubois referred to the possibility of union with France in a letter to Antoine Garnier, S.S., his superior general in Paris. Dubois

⁶⁵ Kelly, *Numerous Choirs*, 1:150.

⁶⁶ Dubois belonged to the Society of Saint Sulpice (1808-1826) and in 1795 became pastor in Frederick, Maryland. From there he engaged in extensive missionary journeys throughout western Maryland. There Dubois came to know the growing Catholic community near Emmitsburg, which worshiped in the house chapel of the Elder family, and later in the Old Saint Mary's Church on the Mountain. Dubois welcomed Mother Seton and her first sisters in June 1809, and surrendered his cabin for their use for several weeks while repairs were completed on their old farm house. During that period he lived at the (still unfinished) seminary. In 1810-1811, Dubois wrote in revisions to the rule of Vincent in order to adapt it to American needs after Bruté made a copy of the English text. Dubois jointly held the title to the 269 acres of property of the Sisters of Saint Joseph's in his name, along with Cooper and Dubourg. After the sisters became incorporated in the state of Maryland in 1817, the Sisters of Charity of Saint Joseph's held the title. See Crumlish, *1809-1959*, 51.

⁶⁷ Melville, *Elizabeth Bayley Seton*, 195, 210-13; 218-19.

⁶⁸ For the text of the first vow formula which was used 19 July 1813, see Kelly, *Numerous Choirs*, 1:280.

⁶⁹ "As Sisters of Charity we should fear nothing." Elizabeth Seton to Antonio Filicchi, 8 November 1809, AMSJ A 111 054.

yet time to turn them back, I would be of the opinion it should be done. I would wish at least that they be informed in detail of the spirit which reigns in the house at Emmitsburg, of the slight hope of serving in hospitals, and if they wish to come after that we would not have to reproach ourselves.⁶²

Birth of an American community. While awaiting the French Sisters, the Sulpicians used the Vincentian documents to craft an American rule, which received ecclesiastical approbation in 1812. Henceforth, Elizabeth Seton makes no further reference to the arrival of the French Daughters of Charity. The American Sisters of Charity embarked on their novitiate and pronounced vows for the first time 19 July 1813. The Sisters of Charity of Saint Joseph's seem to have been firmly established as an independent, diocesan community modeled on the French Daughters of Charity. Its autonomy is stated at different times in its rule, constitutions, and in the by-laws of the corporation. During Elizabeth Seton's lifetime and the administration of Dubois, even though the Sisters' Council at Emmitsburg consulted Paris about some particular questions, the minutes of Council meetings are mute regarding any notion of union with the French Daughters of Charity.⁶³ Dubois worked closely with the sisters' Council and kept a watchful eye on its affairs especially in the face of perceived threats. For example, David made overtures from Nazareth, Kentucky about establishing another novitiate, but under his own supervision. There is also correspondence between Dubois and Carroll concerning the spirit of the Rule of Vincent, much of which resulted from David's persistent requests from Kentucky.⁶⁴

Mother Seton revealed her ambivalence towards Dubois when comparing him with Dubourg in her letter of 12 May 1811 to Bishop

⁶² Benedict Flaget to Simon Bruté, 17 October 1811, Bardstown, quoted in Ewens, *The Role of the Nun*, 47.

⁶³ Mother Seton and her council submitted several questions to the Daughters of Charity in France for consultation, including: "Can a Novitiate be extended to 5 years as it was by the rule of Saint Vincent for our European Sisters?" 13 February 1814, *Council Book*, 1:2.

⁶⁴ See Crumlish, *The Union of the American Sisters*, 22-23. Dubois, the sisters' superior, refused David's request for sisters, and a separate motherhouse and novitiate, citing French precedent. "The constitutions of the Sisters cannot be modified according to the various opinions of each Bishop . . . If he does not approve of them he can establish another community according to his own ideas. The Sisters of Charity owe them obedience only in what is not contrary to their constitutions once approved." Melville, *Elizabeth Bayley Seton*, 250-53.

Carroll: "Reverend Mr. Dubois [is] an economist and full of details dictated by habits of prudence; Reverend Mr. Dubourg, all liberality and schemes from a long custom of expending. In spirituals also, the difference is equally marked, and their sentiments reflected from their habits."⁶⁵

In what ways did Dubois, because of his experience, influence the Sisters of Charity? Dubois had been a chaplain at Les Petits-Maisons of the Daughters of Charity on rue de Sèvres in Paris for several years prior to the French Revolution.⁶⁶ Dubois was present at the earliest historic milestones of the Sisters of Charity in Emmitsburg, and envisioned a mission which supported the organizational development of the community steeped in the Vincentian tradition.⁶⁷ Dubois translated the rule for the Sisters of Charity, oversaw its modification, facilitated its approval, directed formation of the first novitiate, and the pronouncing of vows for the first time.

Like the French Daughters of Charity, the Sisters made annual vows of poverty, chastity, obedience, and service of the poor.⁶⁸ In writing to Antonio Filicchi from the Stone House, Mother Seton referred to her infant community as the Sisters of Charity.⁶⁹ In 1814, when the Sisters of Charity opened their first mission beyond Emmitsburg at Philadelphia, Mother Seton and Dubois appointed Sister Rose White as the *sister servant*, a term used by Vincent de Paul and Louise de Marillac to designate the local superior.

In 1816 Dubois referred to the possibility of union with France in a letter to Antoine Garnier, S.S., his superior general in Paris. Dubois

⁶⁵ Kelly, *Numerous Choirs*, 1:150.

⁶⁶ Dubois belonged to the Society of Saint Sulpice (1808-1826) and in 1795 became pastor in Frederick, Maryland. From there he engaged in extensive missionary journeys throughout western Maryland. There Dubois came to know the growing Catholic community near Emmitsburg, which worshiped in the house chapel of the Elder family, and later in the Old Saint Mary's Church on the Mountain. Dubois welcomed Mother Seton and her first sisters in June 1809, and surrendered his cabin for their use for several weeks while repairs were completed on their old farm house. During that period he lived at the (still unfinished) seminary. In 1810-1811, Dubois wrote in revisions to the rule of Vincent in order to adapt it to American needs after Bruté made a copy of the English text. Dubois jointly held the title to the 269 acres of property of the Sisters of Saint Joseph's in his name, along with Cooper and Dubourg. After the sisters became incorporated in the state of Maryland in 1817, the Sisters of Charity of Saint Joseph's held the title. See Crumlish, *1809-1959*, 51.

⁶⁷ Melville, *Elizabeth Bayley Seton*, 195, 210-13; 218-19.

⁶⁸ For the text of the first vow formula which was used 19 July 1813, see Kelly, *Numerous Choirs*, 1:280.

⁶⁹ "As Sisters of Charity we should fear nothing." Elizabeth Seton to Antonio Filicchi, 8 November 1809, AMSJ A 111 054.

discussed the burden of his current ministry and multiple responsibilities.⁷⁰ He wrote: "I desire more than anything in the world to be freed from the charge of the Sisters — but I see no other hope than that of reuniting them to some other Society which will care for them . . . I shall try to arrange correspondence with the Superior of the Priests of the [Congregation of the] Mission . . . to see whether it would not be possible to form a union between the Sisters here and those [Daughters of Charity] of France."⁷¹ After Mother Seton's death, Dubois continued his involvement with the Sisters of Charity and collaborated closely with Mother Rose White (1784-1841; superior 1821-1827), successor to Mother Seton.⁷²

Elizabeth Seton and Reverend Simon Gabriel Bruté de Remur, S.S., (1779-1839) developed deep spiritual bonds. Bruté traveled to the United States with Flaget in 1810 and arrived in Emmitsburg in 1812, where he stayed until 1815. At that time he left to head Saint Mary's College, Baltimore. Bruté returned in 1818 to the Emmitsburg area where he labored diligently to instill the Vincentian spirit in the Sisters of Charity.⁷³ During the years they worked together at Emmitsburg, Dubois assumed more of an organizational and business role with the Sisters of Charity while Bruté became their spiritual guide. Bruté made a copy of the English translation of the French manuscript of the *Common Rules of the Daughters of Charity* for the Sisters of Charity of Nazareth. He became an assistant to Dubois at Mount Saint Mary's, as well as

⁷⁰ Antoine Garnier, S.S., one of the early Sulicians in Baltimore with Nagot, was recalled to France in 1803 and later became superior general (1827-1845). He influenced Deluol to come to the United States in 1817. "After his [Garnier's] return to France in 1803, he had continued to take the liveliest interest in his American brethren and their fortunes, and *he had been especially urgent with his brethren at Baltimore to give up all employments not strictly connected with clerical education*, and with that purpose in view had sent Monsieur Carrière to the United States in 1829. At that time, however, many insuperable obstacles had prevented the Sulpicians from surrendering their parochial work connected with the seminary and their patronage of the Sisters of Saint Joseph, Emmitsburg, as well as from giving up Saint Mary's College [Baltimore]." (See Hebermann, *The Sulpicians in the United States*, 210.) His successor Louis de Courson took immediate steps to regularize the situation when he became superior general in 1845.

⁷¹ The complete text of his 16 April 1816 letter reads: "I desire more than anything in the world to be freed from the charge of the Sisters — but I see no other hope than that of reuniting them to some other Society which will care for them — If our Superior approves, I shall try to arrange correspondence with the Superior of the Priests of the Mission, formerly Lazarists to see whether it would not be possible to form a union between the Sisters here and those of France." Crumlish, *The Union of the American Sisters of Charity*, 24-25.

⁷² The title used by the French Daughters of Charity, *sister servant* (not superior), was given to Rose White who founded the first mission beyond Emmitsburg at Philadelphia. See Crumlish, *The Union of the American Sisters*, 24.

⁷³ Bruté had a maternal aunt in the Community and his mother had sheltered a Daughter of Charity during the French Revolution. He often used the term "Daughter of Charity" when referring to Mother Seton's sisters. The terms Sisters of Charity and Daughters of Charity seemed to be almost interchangeable at that time.



Simon Gabriel Bruté (1779-1839). Born in Rennes, France, ordained in 1808, Bruté came to the United States in 1810, ending up in Maryland where he is known in part for serving as the spiritual director of Mother Seton. In 1834 he was named first Bishop of Vincennes, IN.

Courtesy, Archives of the Daughters of Charity, Emmitsburg, MD

spiritual director to the Sisters of Charity. Bruté assisted Elizabeth Seton in her last moments and encouraged the Sisters to preserve her writings as a community treasure.⁷⁴ A careful man, slow to act, but vigorous in motion, Bruté was a trusted confidant and advisor for affairs concerning both the Seton family and the Sisters of Charity until 1834, when he was named first bishop of Vincennes.

⁷⁴ In 1820 he advised Mother Seton about her retreat resolutions suggesting she re-read the life of Mademoiselle Le Gras. After her death he noted the return of the books he had lent her including the *Catechism of the Daughters of Charity* and the *Maxims of Saint Vincent*. He also noted what Elizabeth Seton translated: *Life of Monsieur Vincent*; *Life of Mademoiselle LeGras*; *Spiritual Conferences of Monsieur Vincent*. See Crumlish, *The Union of the American Sisters*, 24-26; 28-29.