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Recollections of the Establishment of the Congregation of the Mission in the United States of America, IV.

Joseph Rosati, C.M.

Translated and annotated by Stafford Poole, C.M.

In October, 1818, after a journey of more than two years, the first group of priests and seminarians arrived at the Barrens Settlement in what is now Perry County, Missouri, and there inaugurated the long and eventful history of Saint Mary's Seminary and the Congregation of the Mission in the United States. Bishop Rosati's narrative continues with an account of the first difficult days at the newly founded seminary and college.

What was their joy and happiness when they began to see the homes in that country for which they had sighed for so long! They could not look without the liveliest emotion over the main entrances that faced the courtyard of the homes lived in by Catholics a cross placed in view of everyone and which was the same as a public profession of their faith. They learned that the Reverend Father Marie-Joseph Dunand¹ had established this beautiful

¹Father Dunand was a survivor of an ill-fated attempt to found a Trappist monastery in the Louisiana Territory in the early years of the nineteenth century. He lived in Florissant and from there served various parishes in the Mississippi Valley. He came to the Barrens settlement about once a month and it was he who suggested to the Catholics there that they offer Bishop Dubourg land for his seminary in return for the services of the seminary priests.

custom in that parish. When he was serving it, he had urged all the heads of families to make a cross, invited them to take it to the church on the feast of the Exaltation of the Cross, and, after he had blessed them solemnly, he had suggested that they place it over the main doorway of their homes. This had been carried out faithfully by all the good Catholics.

The missionaries were also very edified by the exactitude with which, in the Catholic home where they had spent the night before their arrival at Si [illegible], prayers had been said before and after the meals, and, in the evening before retiring for the night's rest, the entire family assembled around their head for evening prayer. Later it was learned that these customs were general, that the presence of strangers did not prevent these Catholics, who knew no human respect, from carrying out those acts of their religion with a holy liberty and independence. They invited their guests, who generally were not Catholics, to join in their prayers or to go take their rest in the place assigned to them.

But the joy of our missionaries was complete when, having arrived at the home of Mr. Joseph Manning, they at last saw again their venerable prelate and fond father. They threw themselves at his feet to ask his blessing and their good father grasped them in his arms and said the most pleasant and affectionate things to them, the sincere expression of his paternal heart.

The seminary was far from ready to receive them. Despite all the efforts and activity of Msgr. Dubourg, the building had not progressed very much. It was quite difficult at that time to erect any other kind of building than a "log-house" in a rural area. It was very difficult to find workers and materials. The prices were exorbitant. The smallest thing stopped the construction. For the smallest need it was necessary to send to Sainte Genevieve, a

distance of some twenty-five miles. The wood had been cut and squared into beams, the foundations had been excavated and were almost entirely finished. These foundations were supposed to form what is called in English a "basement story." The rest of the building was to be a strong and heavy framework according to the style of the Creoles of that region. It had two and a half more stories, sixty feet long and thirty-six wide. Three cabins had already been built near the seminary. One, divided into two rooms, served as a kitchen and refectory, the others as lodgings for the Flemish Brothers. Mr. de la Croix, their Superior, lived in a small house that had been built for him at Mr. Manning's, where he lodged as did Msgr. Dubourg when he went to the Barrens.

It was necessary to find lodgings for the newcomers. A good widow, Mrs. Hayden (first the widow of Mr. Kimi [*sic*], then of Mr. Clement Hayden, and now the wife of Mr. Joseph Manning) offered her house which was at that time the best house in all the Barrens. It was about four miles from the place where the seminary was being built and it allowed them to do everything they judged appropriate to accomodate it to the usage of these gentlemen who moved in immediately.²

Mr. de la Croix, with almost all the Flemish Brothers, was sent to Florissant, to a farm that Msgr. Dubourg had just purchased and that some years later he gave to the Reverend Jesuit Fathers and where they now have their novitiate under the invocation of Saint Stanislaus.³

It has already been remarked that Mr. Deandreis remained at Saint Louis as Vicar General and served in the parish and that he opened in Saint Louis the internal

²The Hayden home was located near the intersection of Sycamore Lane and Highway 61, near the present town of Brewer, Missouri.

³Saint Stanislaus Seminary is now a Jesuit infirmary and retirement home.

seminary or novitiate of the Congregation. As a result, the postulants, Mssrs. Ferrari, Vallezano, Dahmen, and Tichitoli, went there after some weeks. The Brothers of the Christian Schools had to stay at the Barrens until they had been situated at Sainte Genevieve, where their establishment was to have its location. They occupied the cabins where the Flemish Brothers had stayed, right near the seminary.

Mr. Deandreis sent his congratulations to the newly arrived by letter. It was with pain that he saw that it was impossible for him to go to the Barrens. Alas! how many times did he not manifest his desire to visit that place that he cherished and where he always hoped to spend the rest of his days in the midst of his confreres. It was, however, written that he would never see it and that that place that had possessed his affection and his heart during his lifetime would possess his body and mortal remains only after his death. He then wrote to Mr. Rosati and appointed him Superior of the house of the Barrens and of Saint Mary's Seminary. He [Rosati], having moved with the seminarians to the house lent by Madame Hayden, set to work with them in order to prepare it in such a way as to suit as much as possible the ordinary exercises of a seminary. The house was about thirty feet by twenty. It had a cellar, a main floor, and an attic. At the front of the house there was a main gate six feet wide. The sleeping quarters were situated in the attic, which had no ceiling and was directly under the roof. The main room of the house was made into a study hall, a recreation hall, and a reception room. Another small room on the side served as a classroom and was occupied by the Superior. The refectory was located in the cellar, which had to be dug out in order to put it down there. To make it brighter, some windows were put into it. It was also necessary to make a door in order to go down there more easily. There were no workers other than

the seminarians and their Superior. There was no chapel. So one of the ends of the porch, or, as they say in this country, the "gallery," was enclosed with a partition made of interwoven tree branches in the form of a basket, which was coated with well kneaded earth mixed with straw. A small window covered with oil-cloth allowed the light to pass through without letting in the outside air or the rain. The interior of this chapel, which was eight or nine feet long and six wide, was hung with white bedsheets. The altar was also rather properly decorated. It could not contain the entire community. The door was left open and some stayed in the open under the porch.

When Msgr. Dubourg came to visit this temporary seminary, after having praised the industry of the seminarians, he said to them, "As for the chapel, you will warm it up, I expect, by the ardor and fervor of your prayers." From the beginning sacrifices had to be made and necessities had to be done without because these things could be had only with great difficulty and after a considerable passage of time. "Ah, well," said the prelate to his young missionaries, "you should not be upset, there is something that will multiply your enjoyment and make it last a long time because each time that you have something that you lack and that you have wanted for a long time you will have true enjoyment, etc." As a matter of fact these enjoyments did last a long time.

There were for some time only four table settings and one very small table and very few chairs. Because of that, no more than four could take their meal at one time. They even had to have a fourth table⁴ and to have something of a wait between them in order to provide time to wash the dishes together with the knives and forks. While awaiting their turn, the other stood while the four who were seated

⁴That is, a fourth serving at table.

around the small table hurried to take their meal in order not to make their confreres wait too long. Their beds were no more than simple mattresses stretched out on a rough and uneven floor that was not even nailed and that made a noise loud enough to wake the others, not only when someone arose during the night, but also when they turned over. The floor of the main floor of the house was more solid and smooth and less noisy, but it was not fitted together and, since it was at the same time the ceiling of the refectory, often the plates, knives, tablecloth and meat were sprinkled with the dust that the cracks allowed to fall, especially when someone walked on top. Quite often, also, the refectory, which had no flooring, was covered with two or three inches of water. When the weather was rainy, it flowed in down the stairs that were cut out of the ground on the outside. It was also necessary to put frames in the windows which was eventually done in order to have sunlight. They were covered with paper but the rain soon broke in on them. The torn paper was replaced with other that was carefully greased, for at that time there was no question of oil in the new seminary. However, the animals that prowled continually around the courtyard were attracted by the odor of the grease. Finally they protected the third ones that were put there by means of small wooden lattices, with which they surrounded the windows. These adventures amused our seminarians, who began to grow very accustomed to the country and applied themselves with ardor to study and very many of them prepared to receive orders.

Before returning to Saint Louis, Msgr. Dubourg resolved to perform an ordination. The pastor Pratte asked and obtained from the prelate that he would do it in his church of Sainte Genevieve. All Saints' Day was appointed for it and the Bishop^É, the Superior of the seminary, together with all the other priests and clerics who were at

the Barrens, went to that town before the day appointed. The ordination did take place in the parish church of Sainte Genevieve to the great satisfaction of all the inhabitants, not only of that parish, but also of all the neighboring places who were present in large numbers. The ordination was total, from tonsure through priesthood. Mssrs. Brassac and Desmoulins were ordained priests. Mssrs. Dahmen and Tichitoli deacons, Mssrs. Gonzalez and Deys subdeacons, Mr. Maenhaut received minor orders and young Barreau tonsure. The following morning Msgr. Dubourg celebrated a full pontifical ceremony and afterward this prelate returned to Saint Louis and the other clerics with Mr. Rosati returned to the Barrens. Some time later, the four postulants left for Saint Louis but Mr. Vallezano was sent back to the Barrens and assigned to serve the parish. For that reason he stayed with Mr. Joseph Manning near the church.

The seminary, after the ordination, consisted of Mssrs. Hosten, Deparc, Valentin, Maenhout, Gonzalez, Degeister, [and] Barreau. Some time later, two young men from the locality, who wished to embrace the clerical state, were received: Clement Hayden and Thomas Layton. Mr. Rosati conducted a daily class in theology and another in philosophy. Every Sunday, after having said an early Mass in the small chapel, he went to the church, usually on foot, heard confessions and preached at the High Mass, which was sung by Mr. Vallezano, who did not yet speak enough English to preach. Mr. Maenhaut, a seminarian, went with the Superior and taught catechism before the High Mass. Together with Mr. Vallezano they dined at Mr. Manning's and then returned to the seminary, where Mr. Rosati gave a lesson in Sacred Scripture to the seminarians. Every Monday there was a spiritual conference. On Thursday, their free day, Mr.^s Rosati heard the confessions of a goodly number of the parishioners in the small chapel. Mr.

Maenhaut taught catechism to the children in the study hall and that was how they spent the entire morning. After dinner the Superior and the Seminarians took a walk in the woods and on their return to the seminary there was a lesson in Holy Scripture. Also Mr. Rosati was quite often called out at night to go visit and minister to the sick and, since the seminary was quite poor and did not yet own a horse, Mr. Rosati generally rode the horse of the person who had come to fetch him. This was almost always a child who would ride behind. In the winter recreation was utilized, especially on free days, for laying in a supply of wood. For that purpose the necessary tools were obtained. A large saw, some axes, iron wedges, etc., were purchased. The clumsiness of our Europeans in handling these, especially the axe, was a great source of amusement to the Americans. One day they wanted to cut down a large tree and asserted that it could be done quite easily with the saw. Four of the strongest seminarians, who thought that they could dispatch it within a few minutes, set themselves to sawing down the tree with a large cross-cut saw. They did their utmost and sweated profusely without getting anywhere and yielded the task to some Americans who wanted to render them this service, and they soon cut it down with their axes.

In order to satisfy the wishes of the neighbors who very much wanted their children to be instructed, a free school was opened at the seminary. It was attended by a goodly number of children and even of young people from the neighborhood. The good Catholics, for their part, aided the establishment very much, first by a subscription that they took up for the building, finally by some provisions that they would send to the seminary. One should not forget the services rendered by Mr. Zacharia Layton, John Layton, Áquila Hagan, and Joseph Manning, who had been named members of a committee entrusted

with keeping watch over the construction. They were almost always ahead of the others in doing all the tasks. All the other Catholics also showed themselves disposed to help in the different jobs. They would freely lend their oxen, their wagons, their horses, whenever there was need of them.

While work continued on the seminary buildings, a considerable amount of work and expense went into the construction of a mill on one of the forks of the river called the Saline, about four miles from the seminary.⁵ Msgr. Dubourg had bought the site and an old mill that was at that time in a poor cabin open to all the winds, with a parcel of land adjacent. There he had a new one built with two sets of millstones and a saw. It was necessary to rebuild the dam from scratch, excavate the channel that brought water from the river to the mill pond. That demanded considerable expenditures. The Bishop made them with the hope that this mill would be a great support not only for the seminary but also for the diocese.

The exercise of the ministry in the parish at the Barrens was a source of great consolation. The Catholics made good use of the means to salvation that were offered to them. They regularly attended services on Sundays and feast days. They approached the Holy Table at least once a month.⁶ The children attended catechism and instructions and had the happiness of receiving the Bread of Angels with the most beautiful of dispositions. Even the Protestants, who up to that time had known the Catholic

⁵This became known as the "Bishop's Mill" and then as the "Seminary Mill." Its foundations could still be seen long after the building itself had disappeared.

⁶In the nineteenth century frequent communion was not common among Catholics. It was not until the decree of Pius X (*Sacra Tridentina Synodus*, 20 December 1905) that the present practice was encouraged.

religion only through the slanders with which it had been attacked by their ministers, lost their prejudices and their dislike and came to hear our sermons in the church. To the extent that they knew our true teaching they esteemed and respected it. They saw our ceremonies with amazement and pleasure and they were charmed by the majesty and beauty of Catholic worship and the good order that reigned in the church. Conversions were not only continuous but also a yearly occurrence at the Barrens after the establishment of the seminary [*sic*].⁷

In all new undertakings it is necessary to expect to encounter great difficulties. It is not surprising, then, if that of the Congregation of the Mission in the United States was not exempt. The country was new. The diocese, even newer than the country, had just been born. Everything was still to be created, everything had to be organized. There was a certain number of parishes to provide for, others to be established, and missions to be sent to visit the Catholics scattered over those vast regions. There was, then, a great need for workers and it was impossible to bring together all the priests of the Congregation in the same place. Mr. Rosati was all alone at the seminary, having with him a postulant brother who was a tailor. Mr. Acquaroni had been put in charge of three parishes. Mr. Deandreis was living with the Bishop in Saint Louis. Still, it must be admitted that Msgr. Dubourg made great sacrifices in order to overcome all obstacles and he lent himself gladly to establish the Congregation in permanent form in his diocese.

Not only did he allow those of his priests and clerics who so desired to join the Congregation, as we have already remarked, but he offered part of his own home as the novitiate. A small brick house was provided, which was in

⁷This sentence is unclear in the original.

his courtyard, for lodging the novices who had their beds, surrounded by curtains according to the usage of the internal seminaries of the Congregation, their table, and a small oratory with an altar where Holy Mass was said. The three postulants, Mr. Ferrari, priest, and Mssrs. Dahmen and Tichitoli, deacons, after having made the customary retreat, were received into the number of the sons of Saint Vincent and began their novitiate under the patronage of the great apostle of the Indies, Saint Francis Xavier, December 3, 1818, under the direction of Mr. Deandreis, who in the midst of a great many other occupations, gave as much attention as a director in our regular houses with no other job than that of caring for his novices. He called his dear novitiate Gethsemane. It was his place of delights, a kind of paradise on earth. On the other hand, the novices responded so well to his care that he was in admiration of them and he used to write to Mr. Rosati that those gentlemen had more need of the bridle than the spur.

Nevertheless, they formed only a part of the objects of this truly apostolic man's sollicitude. He was in charge of the direction and the instruction of the young seminarians of the diocese who had started at the college where Mr. Neil was the president but who were under the authority and the general direction of Msgr. Dubourg.⁸ Every day Mr. Deandreis gave them a class in theology. Mr. Tichitoli experienced some considerable indispositions of health. The doctors declared that the Missouri climate was altogether wrong for him and would soon bring him to death's door. He was then ordained priest and sent to Louisiana, to the pastor at Assumption, Father Bigeschi, without thereby leaving the Congregation, to which he belonged at that time by vows and in which he persevered until death. Mr. Dahmen was also ordained priest. Mr.

⁸The College was the ancestor of the present Saint Louis University.

Ferrari was sent to Vincennes to replace Mr. Jeanjean there. And some time later Mr. Dahmen also went there by order of his Superior to replace Mr. Blanc and he stayed there with his confrere. These gentlemen always remained in their vocation and fulfilled their duties, while observing the rules, and even carried out the exercises of the novitiate. They kept up a continuous correspondence with Mr. Deandreis and in everything conformed themselves to his orders.

After their departure from Rome, Mssrs. Deandreis and Rosati had also corresponded regularly with their superiors and confreres in Italy. They had faithfully informed Mr. Sicardi, then the Vicar General of the Congregation, of all that could interest him with regard to the journey, their employments in the different areas where they had been obliged to stop, and the success that was promised by their mission in which there was so much good to be done. In Italy, and especially in Rome, they were enchanted by the letters that were written to them from America and, in spite of the troubled situation in which the Congregation then found itself, they made truly praise-worthy efforts to help this mission. Mr. Sicardi freely gave the necessary permissions to those who felt themselves called. Mr. Baccari went still further and, with the special help of Mr. Colucci, he collected funds to pay for their journey and to send help of all sorts: books, vestments, sacred vessels, paintings, images, material for habits, and money. The zeal of these gentlemen and of the other Missionaries of Europe for the American mission was truly astonishing. They themselves were poor at the time of the rebirth of the Congregation after a long suppression and, with a generosity worthy of the sons of Saint Vincent, they forgot their own needs in order to assist their confreres in America.

The first expedition sent from Rome to the United

States by Mr. Baccari was composed of Mr. Cellini, a priest novice, a native of Ascoli, and a canon of Santo Spirito in Rome, who has been admitted into the Congregation for the American missions; Philip Borgna and Anthony Potini, clerics who had already made their vows at Rome and were in theology; and Brother Battelani, still a novice, whom those gentlemen had obtained from the house in Genoa. They embarked from Livorno on July 1, 1818, landed at Philadelphia on October 1, and finally arrived at the seminary, that is, at Mrs. Hayden's, January 5, 1819. This reinforcement came just in time and Mr. Rosati, who up to that time had been alone at the seminary, with the arrival of this new colony found himself in a community composed of two priests, two clerics, and two brothers. The number of seminarians was also increased at the same time.

But on the other hand, the growth of the family also increased its discomfort in a dwelling that was so small and confining. Still, it must be admitted that their satisfaction in the painful situation in which they found themselves was admirable. It would have been difficult to find a happier community. The new arrivals had anticipated some very painful sacrifices and they found those that they had to endure rather easy. They accustomed themselves without complaint to a kind of nourishment quite different from that of their country, without vegetables, without greens, and which consisted almost entirely of salted meat that sometimes had begun to spoil. As there was no market, they were obliged to buy an entire steer, salt it in order to preserve it, and in spite of this precaution sometimes they did not succeed. Bacon was then their only resource. Lent was even more painful. But with all that they were happy and content.

For Holy Week the entire seminary went to the Church. Thanks to the generosity of Msgr. Dubourg and of

our confreres in Europe, they found themselves sufficiently provided with vestments and whatever was necessary for the ceremonies. All the offices were celebrated with all the solemnity possible. The good Catholics of the Barrens, who had never seen them, could not get over it and attended in large numbers. What was more consoling was to see the Holy Table on Holy Thursday and Easter Sunday surrounded by a crowd of men and women of every age who participated at the table of the Lamb without blemish. This is what also formed the entire table of the priests and clerics of the seminary. One remembers more than once that in that year on Easter Sunday the priests and clerics of the seminary who had officiated solemnly in the poor church of Saint Mary, having gone to the cabins built on the seminary grounds in which the Brothers of Christian Schools lived, found there a large plate of beans and an omelete for the first course and a plate of hazel-nuts that the good Brothers had collected in the woods. They made a feast of them, with an excellent appetite seasoning those foodstuffs that formed their entire table on that great day. One of the guests later told how in spite of himself his eyes filled and some tears moistened his cheeks. Covered with shame he turned away and hastened to dry them immediately.

Msgr. Dubourg visited the establishment from time to time and attempted to push forward the work of building the house as much as he could. He would have wanted to see all his dear children in a more comfortable situation and he sent the funds necessary to defray the considerable costs. In the month of May he was at the Barrens and made a long stay there. The number of seminarians also increased. Mr. Daubert of New Orleans had been sent there in the month of February and Mr. Saulnier, a tonsured cleric and native of Bordeaux, arrived there in the month of May in that same year of 1819. Mr. Vallezano having

left the Barrens a little before that time to go to Louisiana, Mr. Rosati remained totally in charge of the parish of the Barrens.

It was extremely inconvenient to live four miles from the church and the area where the seminary was being built. Despite the presence of Msgr. Dubourg, the work was not making progress and the principal building was not yet covered. It was then decided to build some cabins closer to those that were already near the seminary, and behind these cabins, with pieces of the beams and the leftover wood used in building the seminary which were stuck in the ground, a kind of very long corridor was made, divided by a partition. There were two rooms, of which one served as a bedroom, the other as a chapel. One of the cabins was the room of the Superior and two other priests, the tailor's shop and the theology classroom. The passage between the two cabins served as a hall for study and for [spiritual] exercises. The refectory and kitchen were in another cabin, at a distance of three or four hundred feet.

In the month of June, then, they moved to this new dwelling which, although more uncomfortable than Mrs. Hayden's home which they had occupied up to that time, had the advantage of being nearer the church which was just a short quarter of a mile away, of supervising and hastening the work on the building, and of living in their own house. There was, then, universal joy when they installed themselves in it and submitted with a free heart to new inconveniences. The house had no door and for some time a blanket served that purpose. There was no yard or enclosure. They were surrounded by animals and sometimes received visits from the cows, whose indiscreet curiosity was not stopped by the blanket. When it rained they could not avoid getting wet and sinking in the mud up to their knees in order to go to meals. That was so

disagreeable in the evenings that some preferred to do without supper. Nevertheless, there was a genuine pleasure in being in their own house. An infinite number of small tasks, to which everyone lent himself cheerfully, offered an agreeable occupation to students and directors during the times of recreation and on free days. They set about clearing a piece of land in order to plant a garden. The need for it was felt and each one worked at it with zeal but no one more than Mr. Cellini, to whose constant efforts was due a large and beautiful garden. It was embellished with rows of fruit trees after it had been surrounded with a good fence. When they began to pick the greens and vegetables, they looked on them like so many sweets to which they were no longer accustomed.

All of this, nevertheless, was only a relaxation and a recreation after the more serious works of study and other exercises of the seminary and the holy ministry. The establishment of the seminary at the Barrens began to attract some Catholics who came to settle there of their own accord because of the advantages that the country offered them for the practice of religion and the instruction of their children. The number of parishioners increased every day. The church was already too small to hold them and at the beginning of the year 1819 they had enlarged and doubled its capacity. A gallery was also built above the door which held very many people and it was there that the choristers of the parish were situated.

In the morning, before daybreak, there would already be a number of men, women, and children waiting at the door to go to confession and it was impossible to finish hearing all of those who presented themselves before the High Mass. Catechism began an hour beforehand. One of the seminarians was in charge of it and he taught it in the church. Immediately before Mass and after catechism the rosary and other prayers were recited. After that, the

parish choristers sang the litany of the Blessed Virgin. After the move from Mrs. Hayden's house to the seminary, the entire community, priests and seminarians, assisted at the High Mass, at which a good choir, composed of three good voices and directed by Mr. Rosati, sang in plainchant not only the Kyrie, Gloria, and Credo, but also the Introit, versicles, offertory, etc., and the parish choristers sang some hymns in English after the Mass. A deacon and subdeacon also participated on solemn days. There were processions at the Rogation Days, the feast of Saint Mark, Palm Sunday, etc., and on Corpus Christi with a very special solemnity. They also began to sing vespers every Sunday and feast days and to have spiritual reading for a goodly number of neighbors who attended it.

The family still continued to increase in number and toward the end of the year two other seminarians were received: an Irishman, Mr. Farrel, and another American, Leo Hamilton.

There was the further advantage of having a very capable brother, Brother [Martin] Blanka, who, even while working with the help of a domestic on making and mending clothing and taking care of the linen, was in charge of provisions. They also had the means for buying a small horse that cost only twenty *piasters*⁹ and which was used both as a saddle horse and to haul the wagon. In that way they made a great savings because it was necessary to go to Sainte Genevieve for the least thing. In that town the seminary had a zealous friend [Father Henri Pratte] who took the greatest interest in its prosperity and rendered it very many services. His house was always open to receive those who went to the Barrens or were coming from it on business or for other reasons. He also visited the

⁹A *piaster* was a unit of money common in Mediterranean and Near Eastern countries. The early Vincentians used it as the equivalent of a dollar.

establishment frequently and rejoiced in the progress that it made. His father, Mr. Sebastian Pratte, lived with him in the rectory and for many years had given himself to God with all his heart and was a source of general edification by reason of his tender piety, his great fervor, his charity, and especially by the resignation, patience, and genuine joy with which he bore with the liveliest and sharpest pains of the gout which tormented him almost constantly. This respectable old man blessed God for having prolonged his days to that time, so fortunate for religion in that country. He esteemed Msgr. Dubourg and regarded all the priests and clerics as his own sons. He received them with joy when they arrived at this house and showered them with attention and care.

Among so many consolations there was no lack of crosses. They always form the portion of the disciples of Jesus Christ in this vale of tears. First, Mr. Deandreis' health was always bad and from time to time he suffered the onset of very strong illnesses that caused fear for his life. Once he was brought very low and asked for the Last Sacraments. At the seminary, some of the clerics who had come from Europe became discouraged and left the seminary. Two went to a neighboring diocese and one returned to France.

Another, already a subdeacon, very pious but also very attached to his own opinion, believed that he had for a long time been favored with supernatural lights. He would write in large and thick notebooks to prove the truths of this, he would pile up passages from Sacred Scripture, one on top of the other, explaining them in his own fashion. He believed that he had been raised up by God to go convert the Jews in Asia and, nevertheless, to carry out his so-called mission he had taken the directly opposite route. He had come to America. Mr. Deandreis, Msgr. Flaget, Mr. David, and Mr. Rosati, whom he had harassed with his

writings and his conversations in a loud voice, had constantly declared to him that he was under an illusion and had urged him to follow the ordinary way and to apply himself to acquiring the knowledge and virtues necessary to work effectively for the conversion and salvation of the peoples who lived in the country to which Providence had brought him. He would calm down for a while, but the attack of this kind of illness always came back, his head would get excited, he would communicate his so-called inspirations to others, and more than once they would lend him an ear and seem ready to adopt his ideas. He opened himself to Msgr. Dubourg who, like the others, openly declared to him that he was under an illusion. But since he could not succeed in getting him to submit to the judgment of those who held God's place in his regard and to whose direction his soul had been entrusted, and since he always returned to the extraordinary ways, Msgr. Dubourg told him that he was on an extraordinary way and that, if his mission were extraordinary, one also had the right to ask him for extraordinary proofs. This did not fail to make an impression on this poor unfortunate, the victim of his own imagination, and he was so completely deluded by his illusions that he wrote to Msgr. Dubourg that the time was coming when God would give brilliant proofs of his mission. He asked him on behalf of God to indicate to him whatever sign or miracle he would ask of him in proof of his mission. Afterwards, at a certain time, on such and such a day which he had the courage to designate, he would do it. Msgr. Dubourg took him at his word and was quite satisfied to have this means of disillusioning him. He told him, then, that he would ask him to resurrect Mr. Carretti or to cure Mr. Deandreis or to cure himself [Dubourg] of his illnesses and crises of nerves to which he was subject and which often put him in the position of not

being able to carry out his duties. The letter was sent opened to the Superior of the seminary who forwarded it to the aforementioned cleric. He was not stopped. He wrote to Msgr. Dubourg that he would choose the last of the three miracles proposed and he set the day on which it would take place. He left the seminary, went to ask the hospitality of the pastor of Sainte Genevieve who gave it to him, spent all of Lent in the most rigorous fasting, took scarcely enough nourishment to live, slept on the ground, kept vigil through the night, in a word, in the continual exercise of the most austere penance. Finally, the day appointed having arrived, Msgr. Dubourg was not cured. On the contrary, on that very day he experienced his nervous illness more violently than ever and to which he was subject afterward just as before. He then wrote to this unfortunate young man who, although covered with confusion, was still not cured of his illusions. He left the diocese at the beginning of the year 1820.

All at once there was a considerable increase in personnel at the seminary with the arrival of Mr. John Rossetti, a priest of the diocese of Milan, with six young men. This zealous priest lived in Milan and there did a great deal of good among the youth, whom he instructed, with the help of other clerics and pious lay persons, in an oratory frequented by several hundred young persons whom he led away by that means from the occasions of dissipation so common in the large cities. Among these numerous young people there was a certain number who were more fervent and exemplary, who were attached to him in a very special way and who wished to consecrate themselves to God and to abandon the world. Some of them were clerics, others were lay persons and workers in different crafts. He cultivated their good dispositions toward virtue and their vocations with care. They had a project of dedicating themselves to the foreign missions

and there was a pious and rich person who offered the funds necessary for carrying out this project. It was believed that a company of missionaries, composed of clerics and workers, would not fail to obtain an assured success in those for distant lands. Some thought was given to Ethiopia. Msgr. Dubourg's arrival in Milan gave birth to the idea that this mission would be perfectly suited to America. It was mentioned to the Bishop, who asked to see Mr. Rossetti. The latter offered him his services and assured him that the necessary funds would be available, not only for the trip, but also for the expenses of the establishment, once they arrived in America. Msgr. Dubourg was delighted with this acquisition and promised Mr. Rossetti to receive him together with his group into his diocese and to put them in an area where they would be able to do a great deal of good. The company was to take the name of Oblates of Saint Charles and like the one in Milan was to be entirely under the jurisdiction and disposition of the Bishop. Mr. Rossetti did not forget the promise that he had made to Msgr. Dubourg but he ran into some unexpected obstacles. The persons who had promised the major part of the funds failed him.

However, in spite of all these difficulties, with a very praiseworthy confidence, he succeeded in leaving Italy in 1819 with two other priests, Mssrs. Marcel Borella and Mariani, a cleric, Mr. John Rosti, and five other young persons: Mssrs. Bosoni, Pifferi, Mascaroni, Vergani, and Turatti. He left from Livorno on the same ship as Mr. Cellini and arrived in Philadelphia. There he was unable to continue his journey for lack of means. He then wrote to Msgr. Dubourg and while waiting he placed his young men in the areas of Philadelphia where they would work at their crafts without being a burden to anyone. The two priests left with Mr. Sibourg, the Vicar General of New Orleans, and went to that city where they were placed into

parishes in Louisiana. Finally, Mr. Rossetti, together with the others in his group, left for Saint Louis and arrived at the seminary on January 5 of the year 1820. They were eagerly welcomed at the Barrens and were lodged as best one could, because the seminary building was not as yet inhabitable. Mr. Rossetti lived with Mr. Cellini and the brother tailor in the Superior's room, which was also the place where they had all their classes, and all the others had a place in the dormitory where our students, the seminarians, and the brothers were. It was quite necessary to close ranks.

This dormitory had no ceiling other than the planks (*clapboards*) that formed the roof nor panes in the windows other than pieces of cloth that were put over them. The snow had free entry and often, on waking, they would find an inch of snow on their covers. Once they had an adventure that cheered everyone up very much. One of those sleeping in the dormitory had gone out during the night. When he came back he could not find his bed. Someone asked him what he was looking for. "My bed," he said, "I can't find it." "But there it is," someone replied." "No, it's not," said the other, "my bed had a blue cover and that is white." (He was looking at it from below). When he touched it and saw that it was snow, he burst out laughing and woke up everyone else. They also laughed a great deal over the adventure.

Winter that year was quite harsh. Mr. Deandreis wrote from Saint Louis, "I have crossed and recrossed the Mississippi on foot over the ice in order to go to Illinoistown."¹⁰ In the refectory at the Barrens, the glasses and water pitchers stuck to the table cloth when they took their meals in the refectory, even though there was a large fire.

These gentlemen adjusted to everything and by their

¹⁰ Now a part of East Saint Louis, Illinois.

patience and piety edified everyone. Since they found very many difficulties and obstacles in carrying out the plan that they had formed in Italy, it was impossible for them to form a Community and set themselves up in a parish or congregation. At that time there was only one priest among them and he knew neither English nor French and he was not of an age suitable for learning these languages soon enough or at least well enough to be able to exercise a ministry. There was a lack of teachers and professors to give the young men the necessary instruction. There was a lack of resources for forming a new establishment that required considerable expenditures. The persons who had originally promised these in Italy had failed them. Msgr. Dubourg, who was busy with the establishment of his seminary, poured all his resources into that. Furthermore, the purpose that they had proposed to themselves in coming to America could for the most part be carried out without any difficulty if, in place of forming a new society, they merged with another that was already in existence, which had rules approved by the Church and was well consolidated by a long number of years, of experience, and of success. This Community was already in the diocese, it had given them hospitality, they had the advantage of knowing it. These reflections were made at the same time by Msgr. Dubourg and Mr. Rossetti. They were communicated to Mr. Deandreis and Mr. Rosati, who declared that they would cheerfully admit to the number of the sons of Saint Vincent these persons for whom they had esteem, provided that they were left with complete freedom and that they showed the ordinary signs of vocation to that state. Mr. Rossetti then announced this project to his companions. He gave them to understand well that they were left entirely free, that those who did not wish to join the Congregation of the Mission could remain at the seminary.

After a considerable time, during which they were able

to deliberate at leisure on the choice that they were to make, Mssrs. Rossetti, Rosti, and Vergani, and Mssrs. Pifferi and Bosoni resolved to enter the Congregation of the Mission, the latter two as brothers, and the other three as clerics. Mr. Mascaroni was admitted to the number of seminarians and Mr. Turatti, not feeling himself called to dedicate himself to God, still remained at the Barrens for a rather long time and was very useful to the seminary. To help finish it, he worked assiduously as a carpenter. Thus the Congregation began to increase and to consolidate itself in America.

Msgr. Dubourg, who was in Saint Louis at the beginning of that year, 1820, had awarded to the priests of the same Congregation the honor of blessing the new cathedral. This was done on January 8 by Mr. Deandreis, assisted by three of his confreres and other clerics. This building, of which there was great need, could not be finished and never was. It was of brick and was one hundred and thirty feet long and forty wide. It was neither plastered nor did it have a ceiling. The front was not any more complete. According to the plans, two aisles and a portico should have been added. The first stone of this building was placed on Low Sunday, 1818.

After the departure of Mssrs. Ferrari and Dahmen for Vincennes, the novitiate no longer had any novices in Saint Louis, something that was a great privation for Mr. Deandreis who had found such pleasure in it. Still he had the consolation of receiving two more novices: Brother [Daniel] Harrington, whom he sent almost immediately afterwards to the Barrens to work on finishing the seminary, since he was a carpenter by profession, and Mr. [Leo] De Neckere, a person eminently distinguished for his extraordinary talents and his great piety, although he was very young, being scarcely twenty years old.¹¹ He had a

¹¹ Leo Raymond de Neckere was born in the diocese of Ghent,

prodigious facility for languages. He had learned English within only a few months and so well that he spoke and wrote it with purity and elegance and pronounced it as if it were his mother tongue. He possessed the same perfection in French, Latin, Greek, Spanish, German, and Italian. His knowledge was very broad and he could speak on all the sciences in the way that an old scholar would have and still he did it with such modesty and reserve that his humility made him even more admirable than his knowledge. Nevertheless, he always had very poor health which often obliged him to remain in bed and take medicines. He had a gift for speaking and amazed by his eloquence whenever he spoke in public. By way of exception to the general rule, Msgr. Dubourg rather often had him take the pulpit in his cathedral, where he amazed and touched everyone, preaching the word of God in French and English with an unction, eloquence, and dignity that are rarely found together in the ministers of the word. The acquisition of such a person was a source of joy for Mr. Deandreis and all the confreres. He was allowed to enter the novitiate on condition that he remain in Saint Louis, where his services were necessary for the college, as professor.

At last the seminary building at the Barrens, although far from being finished, was in a condition to be partially lived in. There was certainly need for it. The family was constantly growing in numbers. New seminarians were received. Two more brothers, that is, Vanucci and Donati, arrived from Italy. The Community continued to take a more regular form to the extent that there was a great number of persons in the Congregation. For lack of

in Flanders, in 1800. He came to the American mission at the age of seventeen and joined the Vincentian Community in Saint Louis in 1820. He was named Bishop of New Orleans in 1829 and consecrated in 1830, shortly after his thirtieth birthday. As far as can be ascertained, he was the youngest bishop in the history of the Catholic Church in the United States. He died in New Orleans during a yellow fever epidemic in 1833.

brothers and of other persons capable of doing the cooking, it was necessary to employ some good women, of a certain age, widows, and of an exemplary and pious conduct. They lived in a separate house and did the cooking and took care of the laundry.¹² Not being accustomed to a Community, these good women sometimes set the table with all the provisions that there were in the house. When the Superior informed them of that, they promised to pay attention to it. On the next day they went to the opposite extreme. There was scarcely anything to eat at dinner. And sometimes that happened in Lent. A new observation produced the opposite excess. Also there was often a total lack of flour. The mills had no water. It was necessary to dispatch two or three persons to the neighbors and sometimes even three or four miles away to borrow flour. So it happened that it was necessary to delay the meal in order to have something to make it with. But when our dear brothers were put in charge of these different departments, there was a turnabout: regularity, economy, and order were properly observed and one began to enjoy the advantages that one looks for in vain anywhere except in a well-regulated Community. Also a way was available for enclosing the courtyards, of beginning to clear and enclose the fields, [and] of planting fruit trees. Everyone contributed to these improvements by his work: the Superior, priests, clerics, seminarians, novices and brothers, without distinction.

¹²In this paragraph Bishop Rosati is being discreet about a prolonged and embarrassing problem at the seminary. The "good women" he refers to were, in fact, black slaves sent there by Bishop Dubourg. Their presence at the seminary caused a great deal of difficulty with the Superiors in Rome, not because they were slaves but because they were women in the house. It was the subject of much discussion and letter writing well into the 1830s. By the early 1840s the seminary had sold off most of its slaves but it continued to hire them from local masters to do the cooking and laundry. The last known slave rentals for the kitchen were in 1864.

This was not the only advantage to be found in the growth of the number of personnel. The community was given a regular form. Until then the Superior, the only priest, had been obliged to fill all the jobs, but after Mr. Cellini made his vows and Mr. Borgna was ordained priest, Mr. Deandreis, in his capacity as Visitor,¹³ appointed an assistant, a treasurer, a prefect of the sacristy, an assistant director of the seminary, an admonitor, a prefect of health, etc., etc. Nevertheless, these arrangements were often upset by urgent circumstances. It was necessary to send Mr. Borgna to Saint Louis because of his health, which demanded a routine that he could not follow at the seminary. There he lived near Mr. Deandreis and was employed at the college. At the same time, Mr. De Neckere was sent to the seminary to follow the exercises of the novitiate. Nevertheless, the state of Mr. Borgna's health again upset this arrangement. By order of the doctors he was sent down to Louisiana, whose climate was more suitable for him, and Mr. De Neckere was recalled to Saint Louis in the month of September, 1820, to replace him at the college.

But a much more considerable upset, ordained by the always adorable decrees of Providence, which seemed to expose the establishment of the Congregation still being born in America to total ruin, was caused by the death of its head, Mr. Deandreis, which took place in Saint Louis on October 15, 1820. After some days of illness, this holy Missionary was taken from his dear confreres and the diocese in the strength of age, being only forty-two years

¹³ De Andreis was not technically the Visitor or Provincial Superior of the American Vincentians but rather the Superior of the American mission. It was not until 1835 that the United States became an independent Province and Father John Timon, C.M., named visitor in the proper sense of the term. The word, however, was often applied to De Andreis (and later to Rosati and Tornatore) because he held the equivalent powers.

old. This loss threw the Bishop and all his clergy, and still more especially all the members of the Congregation, into grief and affliction.¹⁴

Defecit heu! cleri nostri lumen et decus, thus by order of the Bishop did Mr. de la Croix, his secretary, write in a circular letter to the clergy, *evangelii praeco potentissimus, pauperum amator, Loudovisianae [sic] Missionis spes et columen. Praetiosam venerandi sacerdotis mortem inexplebili luctu prosequitur episcopus, lugent et omnium ordinum homines. Utinam tot gemitibus motus Deus totius consolationis aliquos in nobis excitet tantae virtutis haeredes!*¹⁵

“God has disposed of your Father,” wrote Msgr. Dubourg to Mr. Rosati,

“and of my holy co-worker. My dear friend, what can I say to you to console you for this irreparable loss when I myself am drowned in sorrow! *Sicut Domino placuit, ita factum est; sit nomen Domini benedictum.*¹⁶ I am sending

¹⁴The causes of Felix De Andreis' death are not certain. Throughout his life he suffered from ill-health, especially stomach trouble. During his final illness his physician dosed him with calomel. Because of the pain it caused, De Andreis asked him to discontinue it. The physician, according to one account, thereupon mixed the calomel with De Andreis' food. Calomel is a form of mercurous chloride that was commonly used as a purgative. One of its side effects was severe stomach pains and vomiting. Its laxative effect was uncertain and unpredictable. If catharsis did not follow within a certain time, the mercury was absorbed into the system. Mercurous chloride is a cumulative toxin which, after a certain point, can be fatal. It is possible that De Andreis' well meaning but ignorant doctor may have hastened his death by excessive purgation or by mercury poisoning.

¹⁵“Alas! The light and ornament of our clergy has passed away. The most forceful herald of the gospel, lover of the poor, the hope and support of the Louisiana Mission. The Bishop accompanies the precious death of this venerable priest with unquenchable sorrow. Men of all ranks are also in mourning. Oh, if only the God of all consolation, moved by so many sobs, would raise up in our midst some heirs to such great virtue.”

¹⁶“As it has pleased the Lord, so it has been done. Blessed be the Name of the Lord.” Job 1:21 (Vulgate Version).

you the precious remains. They belong to you. But I admit, it is a sacrifice that I am making. With regard to his crucifix, he has bequeathed it especially to you in publicly naming you superior. It is imperative, my dear friend, that you write to Rome to ask for one or two persons of merit, although not too advanced in age, if you desire as much as I that your Congregation keep going for after you we have only young people. Give witness to your Superiors of the profound bitterness in which I am plunged. Bury his body in a place from which it can be easily removed, if necessary. I think that the best thing would be to put it in a cemetery in a large monument of bricks well cemented with mortar and with a cross on the bottom with an inscription. Take the seminarians there on Sunday evenings and the parishioners from time to time. I have sent out some circulars everywhere. I bless you with all my heart and I beg you not to give yourself up to sorrow *sicuti caeteri qui spem non habent*.¹⁷ Do not be afraid of your duties, it is God who gives them to you. He will give you the strength to carry them."

Such was the esteem that this great prelate had for the virtue and the holiness of Mr. Deandreis. And in fact he did send the precious remains of Mr. Deandreis to the Barrens. A number of the most eminent Catholics of Saint Louis, at whose head was Mr. Acquaroni, accompanied them. As they passed through Cahokia, Prairie de Rocher, and Sainte Genevieve, they were placed in the respective churches of these parishes, where they were received as if in triumph by the pastors at the head of a large number of their parishioners and solemn services were celebrated for the repose of his soul. They arrived at the Barrens on the [blank] of October, toward evening. The church was filled with people. On the following day the office and Mass of the Dead were sung and his precious remains were buried, according to the instructions of Msgr. Dubourg, in the

¹⁷ "Like the others who have no hope." 1 Thessalonians 4:13 (Vulgate version).

cemetery behind the small sacristy. When the church was enlarged and a sanctuary and new sacristy were added, Mr. Deandreis' tomb was under the sanctuary. Finally, when the magnificent church near the seminary that is so admired at the present time was finished, these relics, which had been removed from their first coffin and placed in another, were solemnly transported there. The entire numerous parish of Saint Mary's of the Barrens gathered in the old church, the office and Mass of the Dead were sung, Mr. Rosati, the Bishop of Saint Louis, assisted at them in cape, and then, preceded by numerous clergy and followed by a crowd of the faithful who sang psalms, they walked in procession from the old church to the new one. They laid his precious remains in a vault under the floor of the chapel of Saint Vincent, on the gospel side, next to the wall. The following inscription has been engraved on a stone placed on the same side of the chapel. [blank]¹⁸

The loss of this holy man could have ruined the establishment of the Congregation in America, of which he was the founder, the Superior, the support, the soul and the life. His great virtues and talents had won the esteem and veneration of his confreres, who looked on him as their father. After his death they regarded themselves as orphans.

Mr. Rosati wrote immediately to Rome to beg insistently of Mr. Baccari, the Vicar General, not to abandon this mission and to send someone to replace the deceased and to govern it in the capacity of Superior. He represented to him the need of putting at the head of this establishment, all of whose members were young, a man of age and experience. Since Mr. Nervi, the Superior of our

¹⁸ Rosati had obviously intended to enter the inscription at this place but at a later date, perhaps after he had verified its actual wording. The transfer of the body took place on 21 September 1837.

house at Genoa, had always shown a great deal of interest and affection for the American mission, Mr. Rosati begged Mr. Baccari to confide it to him and to send him. He wrote about this to Mr. Nervi himself. But it was all useless. Mr. Baccari answered that it was absolutely impossible to send any personnel. He approved and confirmed the choice that Mr. Deandreis had made before his death and gave to Mr. Rosati the faculties and powers of Visitor. And he even granted him the extraordinary powers of the Superior General for all the cases for which, because of the great distances, it was not possible to wait for an answer from Rome. He received almost the same answer to his other repeated insinances. "God will continue," wrote this venerable old man to Mr. Rosati,

to provide, as he has already done, for the needs of that dear mission. It is a kind of miracle that you have grown so rapidly in that country. Take courage and *esto robustus, valete*.¹⁹ God wants you at the head of that work which he makes it clear is dear to Him. I hope that next year I will be able to send you a capable person to carry out the functions of director of novices.

(To be continued)



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¹⁹ "Stand firm. Farewell." (Cf. Deuteronomy 31:7, Vulgate version).