1819

As his pastoral experience grows, Felix understands more clearly the realities of missionary life in America. He plans new missions, in Indiana and Florida, but has to battle indifferent Catholics in Saint Louis. The mission to the Indians continues to figure in his thoughts and prayers, yet their problems with alcohol and different cultural standards aggravate his worries. These doubtless weaken his health, so much so that he nearly dies (numbers 63, 64), either from illness or from being dosed with a form of mercury. He acknowledges many times that missionary life is both rewarding and difficult. He fears being named a bishop to help Dubourg. Life at the Barrens moves on and he has the happiness of being reunited with Joseph Rosati after nearly two years. Angelo Inglesi, a clerical impostor, makes his first appearance in 1819. Overwork and multiple anxieties clearly take their toll on Felix, and the year closes with him in the grip of a major depression (number 72).

58. TO JOSEPH ROSATI, C.M., PRIEST, BARRENS

Saint Louis
9 January (1819)

Very Reverend and Dear Father,

I did not want to write you since I am so busy. I wrote a long letter to Rome and three to Bordeaux this afternoon, and the novitiate has two doorbells that keep calling me back and forth and leave me no time. But I have to think about packing the box and the package. I hope that you will be happy to find [in it] almost everything you asked

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The addressee is not given, but internal evidence, such as the mention of Valezano at the Barrens, leads one to conclude that it was Joseph Rosati.

557 These letters are no longer extant.

558 That is, the two novices.
Correspondence 1819

for. But Rodriguez and the Montpellier Catechism are for the Christian Brothers.

The novitiate causes me wonderment, I am telling the truth. I am filled with contentment at the exact punctuality, dedication and fervor that these good novices show. They have more need of a bridle than of a spur. I do not need to repeat anything twice. They keep discovering my intentions. They are the first to ask me to hold chapter to ask a penance, etc. Their only problem is committing some small fault against the rule: keeping silence, genuflecting on entering and leaving, etc. They act as if they were already seasoned novices. Only once did I succeed in arriving before them at morning prayer, although I use all my diligence. They used to have some problem in getting up at five in the morning according to our practice, but the novitiate had hardly begun when their diligence reached its highest pitch. For my part I try to show my satisfaction. This excites tears on both sides, and we are happily in Domino ["in the Lord"]. I note readily that, even though my spirit is sluggish, it accomplishes much. God and Saint Vincent be blessed. The bishop wanted to say things which would have diverted and rendered useless all my efforts. I opposed them with some force, and he has left me completely alone. Pray for us. Regards to Father Valezano and to all. I am in the love of Jesus Christ,

Your very humble and devoted servant,

F. De Andreis

Unworthy Priest of the Congregation of the Mission

[In the margin:] The bishop has no time to write.

559 Pouget, François Aimé, (1666-1723), Instructions générales en forme de Catechisme... où l'on explique... l'histoire et les dogmes de la religion, la morale chrétienne... et les usages de l'église (Paris, 1702). The catechism, popularly known as the Montpellier catechism, was often reprinted and translated. It had been put on the Index of Forbidden Books because of its supposedly Jansenist tendencies. Many French editions appeared. An English translation is: General instructions by way of catechism (London, 1723). Alphonse Rodriguez, S.J. Practice of Perfection and Christian Virtues. (Many editions and translations.)

560 The bishop wrote Joseph Rosati at this same period, "I sometimes find Father De Andreis not too flexible, sometimes even a little hard. This comes from his temperament .... Burn this. Besides, I count on your discretion.” (Dubour to Rosati, from Saint Louis, 24 December 1818; copy in SLAA, Rosati papers, 1-A-3,1.)

561 Valezano, a priest already accepted as a candidate for the Congregation, was serving as the pastor of the Barrens. He did not pursue his wish of entering the Community. His name is spelled variously, although the spelling here is the one he used.
Correspondence 1819

59. TO FRANCESCO ANTONIO BACCARI, C.M.,
PRO-VICAR GENERAL, ROME  

Saint Louis, Missouri Territory  
4 February 1819

Very Reverend and Dear Father,

Thanks be to God and to the most holy Virgin and to Saint Vincent, our dear confreres, Father [Francis] Cellini, Brother [Philip] Borgna,


In his annual letter to the Vincentians, dated 2 February 1819, Baccari reported on the American mission as follows:

I have to admit to you that I cannot read his [De Andreis's] letters without feeling moved and shedding tears of consolation. May it please God that in a few words I might be able to describe all the good being done there, and which our confreres are doing. Up to today, they have acted like true apostles .... They work at cultivating the souls of Catholics, of whom there are a good number in those vast regions. They also work at converting the many Protestants and their ministers who have become established in those areas to carry on business. They have, moreover, worked at converting the Indians, who dwell in those vast forests. [He continues to describe their personal qualities, and conduct, and the difficulties of the work.] There [Saint Louis] they have built a house and seminary, and a cathedral has been built. Up to now, their usual food is badly cooked corn and meat that is bad and tough. Their drink is water, quite often of bad quality. Their homes, at least in Kentucky where they stopped for a long period, are made of tree trunks, and the little churches where the Catholics assemble from distant places on feast days are built in the same way as the cabins in the interior of North America. Both day and night, they are summoned to help the sick and the dying in places as far away as sixty and sometimes a hundred miles. They have to preach three or four times on feast days in various parishes removed from one another, and celebrate two masses, and sometimes remain fasting until evening.

(Recueil, 2, 353-54.)
and Brother [Anthony] Potini, and our novice lay brother [Bartholomew] Bettelani, have arrived at the end of their journey. It is our seminary of Saint Mary of the Barrens, eighty miles from here, where Father Rosati is the superior. I have not had, and I do not know when I will have, the pleasure of embracing them because of the unceasing occupations that keep us apart for now. It has been sixteen months now since Father Rosati and I have seen each another. And it has been some months since I have seen Father Acquaroni who is thirty or forty miles from here on the other side of the [Missouri] river, the first [Rosati] to the south, the second [Acquaroni] to the north of Saint Louis. I am here stuck beside the bishop to preach, to exercise the ministry of vicar general, and to be assistant in the parish, since the bishop himself is the pastor, *ut ei Ecclesiae praediorum dominium cedat* ["as it grants to him the right to the returns from the Church"]. I have to teach theology to several young ecclesiastics who run a school for the public, called an academy. But what consoles me most is the duty of being director of the novitiate, since I have angels for novices. They anticipate me in doing whatever they should do according to the most

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563 An eye-witness wrote:

Tho there is a strong current of prejudice in this place against the Catholic church, I have not heard one reasonable objection against the lives or conduct of its ministers—(there are 10 or 12 here). And I must bear witness that the sermons of the Bishop Du Bourg and the vicar general (Mr. D’Andreas) breathe only the most evangelical spirit.

(Graff von Phul to John Breckinridge, from Saint Louis, 31 December 1818. In collections of the Missouri Historical Society, Saint Louis.) Von Phul and his sister, Anna Maria, were not Catholics, although she joined the Church in 1822.
Correspondence 1819

minute and punctual observance of the rules. Fortunately I have been able to get a copy of these and I have translated them from Italian. We have conferences, repetitions, chapter, readings in common, colloquies, etc., everything in English. Since I have spoken enough in other previous letters about the novitiate, I will not do so just now and will move on to other matters.

I am humbly grateful to your and Father Colucci’s zeal and to all the others who have contributed to the work by the help sent us in these new colleagues. However, if you ever have the chance to send others, I would beg you please to follow the principle that I mentioned in my preceding letter of sending only those who have finished their novitiate and their studies. Otherwise they run a great danger because the need for candidates is so great that this sometimes causes them to fall away from their duty, and we cannot allow people to come here who are still in formation and who do not yet exercise the ministry. With some difficulty I obtained from the bishop the permission for the novices to spend only six months in a strict and rigorous novitiate because meanwhile they live here at his expense and he has reading at table imposed on himself with all the others, just like in our own refectory, because the novices eat at the same table. I am awaiting Brother Bettelani here to switch with Brother Blanka and I will give

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56 The Paris manuscript recalls:

While he directed the internal seminary at Saint Louis, the seminary was reduced to two young clerics. Yet, despite the small number, everything took place in perfect regularity, and both of the seminarians would go in turn one or more times a week to ask Father De Andreis what they should do to fulfill obedience. One day one of them went to find him for this purpose, and he wept a great deal. Father De Andreis told him to go with his companion and have a walk in the garden. In the fervor of obedience, our two novices went to the garden for this purpose, even though it did not have gravel paths. They had scarcely done so and gone twenty feet when they saw a door open, and Father De Andreis calling them. And what was their astonishment when they came across the threshold and saw their Director on his knees, a towel in his hand, humbly wiping their [muddy] shoes.

(Notices VI, 1801-1847, AMP, 435.)

56 This letter is no longer extant. He would repeat the same request in subsequent letters.
him the opportunity of finishing his novitiate, something I was unable to do for Father Cellini. Since the cost of living is so high here, the bishop is not able to increase his expenses to maintain one more novice. He will do what he can there at the seminary, and at the end of the story we will see *quid iuris* ["what the condition is"].

I attribute the happy outcome of our labors in large measure to the prayers of our good confreres in Europe. There are many conversions, especially of heretics and infidels who become fervent Catholics. In all my life over there I would never have performed as many baptisms and assisted as many dying as I have done here in less than a month. Not long ago I was called at midnight to attend a man who had no religion at all. I instructed him in religion, disposed him for the better, baptized him, and he died in excellent sentiments. Similar cases are frequent. I have already baptized a large number of adults. I was a godfather (the only time in my life) at a baptism celebrated by the bishop of a very fervent Jew. In the circumstance there took place a phenomenon worthy of mention. That is, at the very time that he was celebrating the baptism, a great swarm of bees covered the roof of the church. It was so visible that boys in the street ran in a group and were yelling around the church to chase them away. The baptism was scarcely over when the bees disappeared without ever being seen either before or since. This good omen, of which there are other examples in church history, seems already to begin to be verified in the extraordinary zeal of this neophyte. From time to time, he writes me the most beautiful letters and they show how well grace is working in his heart. He is even ready to publicize the story of his life and conversion to help convert many others. The tender celebration of the children's first communion converted him.

I will probably include in this letter another letter from the bishop to the cardinal prefect of Propaganda. In it he makes a petition that needs to be supported and which someone should be interested in

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566 De Andreis gave Bettelani some pastoral experience. He was a baptismal sponsor for a child baptized by De Andreis, 31 August 1819.
567 Jean Daniel Levy. Letters 50 and 51, of 17 and 26 June 1818.
568 Associated with the conversion of Saint Ambrose.
569 The letter referred to is dated from Saint Louis, 16 February 1819. Original in the archives of Propaganda Fide; typed copy in DRMA, Dubourg papers.
Correspondence 1819

promoting. For this purpose please give this responsibility to one of our confreres. It deals with an affair for the greater glory of God and for the greater good of souls. Because printing books is extremely costly here, he would like to get from Propaganda a set of type to establish in our seminary a print shop both for English and French. Providence has already sent us a printer, a fervent convert from heresy.570 The good which would be done by this means is incalculable, but you have to realize that the English alphabet has four letters more than the Italian, namely K, W, Y, X, and French has vowels accented with the three accents, grave, acute and circumflex. As a result we need a zealous person to solicit, represent and take to heart this matter. He would succeed without much effort and would contribute to the great good resulting from it.

I do not know when we will begin the formal missions prescribed by our rule. If we could be reassembled there would not be any further difficulty, but the urgent needs that keep us apart will not let up so quickly. Meanwhile, we work to form good priests and to bring order to our establishment. God has his own times. May his holy will be done. More and more each day the blessed end of possessing him comes closer and everything is going well.

The construction of our seminary has not finished, but soon will be. When it is done I will move there. Up to then Father Rosati, with about fifteen seminarians, among whom are already some Americans,571 are being lodged like anchovies in a barrel, in a miserable log cabin at best. After repetition on Sunday in our novitiate chapel here we read

570 The printer was James C. Cummins, the publisher of the Missouri Gazette and Public Advertiser. He became an intimate friend of De Andreis and was his penitent. Clearly, De Andreis was not expecting that Cummins needed a print shop, but likely meant that the publisher could help establish one and teach others how to use it. (Data from Cummins to Timon, from Pittsburgh, 20 August 1839; SLAA, Rosati correspondence, I-B-4.38.) Dubourg made his own request to Propaganda, 16 February 1819. (“Correspondence of Bishop Du Bourg with Propaganda,” SLCHR 1:3 [April 1919]: 189.) It is unknown whether this request was answered.

571 According to records kept by Rosati, there were two American students, both natives of the Barrens: Clement Hayden and Thomas Layton. Hayden was the son of Sara Hayden, on whose property the pioneer students lodged. He left after some months. Layton also left within a short time.
Correspondence 1819

the excellent circular letter\textsuperscript{572} that was sent us. I have sent it to Father Rosati. We will try to conform ourselves entirely to it as, thanks be to God, we have always done in the past.

My stomach does not let me write much, but it lets me make use of the hand of our good Father Ferrari, a priest novice, as I do quite often in the many letters I have to write.\textsuperscript{573}

I render infinite thanks for the confirmation you give me of the faculty granted me by good Father Sicardi. He already gave me the patent of superior in proper form. He added the faculty of visitor for America\textsuperscript{574} and granted me orally the faculty of being pro-vicar general should the need arise for it. I would not want that paper to be mislaid, the one I put in the hands of Father Sicardi before I left Europe. In it is contained a copy of the agreement made with Bishop Dubourg regarding our American establishment. Bishop Dubourg, Father Sicardi and I signed it, and everything should be regulated on this basis.\textsuperscript{575}

We have every reason to rely on the goodness, zeal and love of our

\textsuperscript{572} Francesco Antonio Baccari, the Italian vicar general, 1817-1827, sent out annual letters to the members of the Congregation, at least to those under his jurisdiction. Perhaps the letter referred to here is dated 12 April 1818; it is found in Recueil 2, 341-46. Written in Latin, the subject was the obligations of superiors, such as good screening of candidates, uniformity in all things, observance of the vow of poverty, evenhanded treatment of all the confreres, and avoidance of singularity (great individual differences).

\textsuperscript{573} Rosati expanded on this observation:

\begin{quote}
When he could not write, he dictated from his bed. It was so rapid that it was difficult to follow him, proof that his discomfort and pains never left him, and were chronic. Sometimes they tormented him terribly; he was often found confined to his room and had to stay in bed.
\end{quote}

(Rosati, "Life," Summarium, 104.)

\textsuperscript{574} Although De Andreis was not visitor (or provincial superior) in the strictest sense, since the American mission was not a province, he was able to exercise some of the functions of the visitor because of the distance between Rome and Saint Louis.

\textsuperscript{575} An original exists in the Archives of the General Curia, Rome. It has been reprinted in English in John E. Rybolt, C.M., ed., The American Vincentians. A Popular History of the Congregation of the Mission in the United States. 1815-1987. (Brooklyn, N.Y.: New City Press, 1988), 451-54. Philip Borgna, who reached the United States in 1818, recalled in later years the difficulties inherent in this agreement. It was based more on theory than on experience, and the realities of frontier life, De Andreis’s ill health, and high costs kept it from being observed carefully. (Borgna to Casoni, from Fermo, 20 January 1849, in the Archives of the General Curia, Rome, De Andreis collection, Volume I, Part I, Sect. D, inserted after page 300.)
Correspondence 1819

good shepherd, yet death can change things and prudence demands that we not overstep the accustomed forms of good procedure.

For us to have candidates we will also keep spreading the seeds of new establishments. The first will probably be in the state of Indiana in a place called Post Vincennes, and the second in Pensacola, Florida. The one is in the north and the other is in the south of the United States. According to what I wrote at length to Father Sicardi, good Father Rosati would be better than I for the reasons mentioned in that letter, and I do not see it necessary to repeat them here. He [Rosati] wrote me complaining that, despite my repeated attempts to obtain the instructions and rules of particular offices, our men have brought none of these with them. Therefore, it is necessary to write to Rome (these are his words) to see if they are content that we start our new institute off the top of our heads because they have left us in this state without the necessary means to keep to our own usages. The only thing we have here is that each one has his own copy of the Common Rules that I was able to find in France. It is a quarto copy of the Lisbon edition with its additions at the beginning and end, and the bulls of the Popes concerning the Congregation. I found it with the Daughters of Charity. And my companions who passed through Genoa were able to get another one: the rules of the Visitor, the local superior and the assistant. Finally I found those for my office of professor, those of the novices and of the students. We lack all the others. For now we have resolved not to distance ourselves at all ne latum quidem unguem ["a hair’s breadth"] from our rule, mission and customs, and so aut simus ut esse debemus, aut prorsus non simus ["either we should be as we ought to be, or we should not be at all”]. For this reason, we rely on God’s fidelity and we have placed our confidence in the blessings of heaven and on the protection of our holy father [Saint Vincent]. We begin to see his teaching clearly verified, the saying that goes (Acami lib. 2 cap.

576 Neither of these new missions became permanent Vincentian charges. Philip Borgna visited Pensacola in 1821, mostly to evaluate the situation. He returned to his regular assignment in New Orleans, however.

577 He wrote favorably about Rosati in his letters of 20 May 1817 and 24 February 1818.

578 *Regulae seu Constitutiones Communes Congregationis Missionis* (Lisbon, 1743).
"when a certain disastrous voyage or a very difficult mission is undertaken for the service and the glory of God, it is his thought to keep us and to help us. Those can do more than three workers who say that when God sets his hand to the work, he does so forever, and takes away human means and makes it necessary for us to act without our own forces." For you and anyone else to get an idea of our situation relative to the most important objects of our mission in these lands, namely Catholics, Protestants and the Indians, it should now fall to me to go into some detail concerning each group.

Relative to the Catholics, they are those domestici fidei ["of the household of the faith"], the main objects of missionary zeal. Their ignorance and laziness is the normal result of having been deprived for so long of any cultivation and spiritual assistance. As a result, they present to the watchful zeal of evangelical workers a spectacle similar to that which is seen in the vision of the prophet Ezekiel: a vast field full of dry fleshless bones without the spirit of life. This is a spectacle capable of causing even those with the most active zeal to lose heart because they do not know where they should begin. The same primitive ideas of Christianity and Catholicism which they have formed through their constant interaction with every sort of heretic and infidel are counterfeits, wasted and corrupted, and they are little disposed to reform them.

For example, I found myself in a city [Pittsburgh] where a rich Catholic merchant who enjoyed the reputation as the main support of Catholicism used every imaginable mark of hospitality toward us. One evening he came to visit us as we were eating and he began in a nice way to say that a person can be saved in all the sects; one has only to be good. He was so tenacious in this opinion that only with some difficulty

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579 Domenico Acami, Vita del venerabile servo di Dio Vincenzo de Paoli... raccolta da quella scritta da Mons. Louis Abelly (Rome, 1677). This edition was often reprinted and edited by different confreres. De Andreis quotes this passage probably from memory, since Acami wrote only: "Believe me, three workers can do more than ten when God sets his hand to the work." This citation comes from a letter of 4 December 1650 from Saint Vincent to Marc Coglée (Coste, CED, 4:115-16; English translation, Marie Poole, D.C., ed., Saint Vincent de Paul: Correspondence, Conferences, Documents. 8 vols. (New York: New City Press, 1983), 4:122.)
581 Ezek 37.
Correspondence 1819

did I succeed in persuading him that outside the true Church there is no salvation. Another missionary told me that he had been taken to another city and he went to lodge in the house of a very good Catholic whose wife was reputed to be a very fervent Christian. When he was at table she told him that she esteemed religion greatly, as well as the holy practices of hearing mass and preaching, but as to confession, it is une chalouperie ["rubbish"]. And so there are people who are not persuaded about hell and they do not know about the most obvious things. It is very hard work to get them to abandon their prejudices. The best that can be done is with boys and girls, and this is truly consoling. They make their first communion with an admirable fervor and they continue coming to catechism lessons and the sacraments.

Above all, young women astonish me with their simplicity and purity. They are lilies of candor, angels incarnate, and already a great good can be assured for the piety of the next generation. Meanwhile, the others are saved later at their deathbed.

There are people here of every nation, even Italians. They know how to offer compliments but are perhaps the most estranged from religion. The Irish are usually fervent and fierce against heretics. I will report here an anecdote about these Irish Catholics that is quite funny. Even though there are persistent persecutors against the Catholics, who through disrespect are called Papists, they cannot come to blows because of the perfect liberty that the government grants to every religion.

One of these enemies of the Papists had put above the door of his hotel some verses by which he invited Protestants, Turks, Jews, Quakers, Atheists, Deists etc., to enter, while refusing entry only to Papists. One of these Irish Catholics with a good wit passed by that place. When he read these verses in his own good humor, he decided to add two others that said "he who wrote this wrote very well, the same is written on the gates of hell." The heretics generally are very well disposed and many are converted, as well as entire families.

As regards the Indians, this is very difficult. These poor people remain incapable of forming even one idea of spiritual, eternal and divine things. They know God and all their actions always begin with

582 By 1819, the Irish numbered about 100, two-thirds of the foreign-born population of the city.
an act of worship (something to shame Christians). When they come to have a discussion with the whites they begin by passing around [the pipe] and they say with the first cloud of smoke *Anareqare ky okakanda*, that is, “may this rise up on high to divinity.” But such knowledge is only for the present life. I am persuaded that God has given them a religion different than ours. If we speak to them about the future life they don’t understand anything. Being able to speak to just one of them through an interpreter is the only outcome to be expected. They agreed that, since I was the agent of the Master of Life, I should at least give them a small coin to buy some whiskey, an intoxicating liquor that they love. Then they become more like animals than they were before. Yet with patience and time one can accomplish something with them.

A good friend of mine has traveled for a long time in the midst of the Indian nations. He assures me that if we had a good remedy for ailments of the eyes, this would be a great means to open the way to do much good among them, since they are very affected by this problem. May God deliver me from thinking only about wanting to impose religion by means of apparent marvels, but why should it not be allowed that the road be opened by means of natural healing? A man who might succeed in healing their physical eyes would find them most disposed even to higher things, such as healing their spiritual blindness, which is much worse than the first. Concerning this, I remember that while I was in Rome I heard people talking about a certain water excellent for the eyes, called “the water of Signora Rosa.” Perhaps God might want to use this means to heal the double blindness of these wild nations. *Tentare non nocet* [“there is no harm in trying”]. Therefore, I am appealing to your zeal or to the zeal of someone whom you might want to put in charge of this task, someone who would take the trouble on the first opportunity which presents itself for America, to procure for us a certain quantity of this water with instructions about how to employ it. Even better, get for us the secret of using it and send it to us *sub sigillo* [“under seal”], and assure those to whom it belongs that we will use it only with great care. The reason for requesting this is so important that every good Christian would appreciate it and regard it as a glory to be able by this means to contribute to such a great good.

I have received letters from the three men who were sent to us. As far as I can tell, and from what Father Rosati tells me about them, they
Correspondence 1819

seem to be excellent subjects, especially Father Cellini. He has given
the finest proofs of his attachment to the Congregation and to the virtues
proper to a good missionary. I recently accepted two other subjects
as clerical postulants. They are Flemish and will be admitted into
the novitiate when there is room. Their vocation has been well tested
and we are especially firm in the maxim of Saint Vincent that we should
never move anyone either directly or indirectly to embrace our institute,
since it belongs to God to call such a person, in order that for such a
spiritual building there should be no stone except what has been placed
by his divine hands.

My ailments continue. They bring their crises, they change their
tune, but the issue is always the same: the grave will heal all. Sanitas
nostra immortalitas est ["Our health is immortality"]. Since I do not
perform the penance due for my sins, in an excess of goodness the
Lord is acting with me as one does with criminal paymasters. From
them one grabs by force what one can. To God's glory, all the others
are quite well and they join me in offering you their respectful homage
and deepest veneration with the most affectionate regards to all our
confreres. We recommend ourselves warmly to your prayers and
sacrifices.

When you have the opportunity to have an audience with the Holy
Father, I beg you to kiss his foot and obtain his blessing for all the
American Missionaries, especially the novices, so that directly from
this source and center the apostolic spirit might spread abroad
abundantly on them by means of that blessing. At the same time, I ask
you that we might be able to avail ourselves here of all the faculties
and privileges which we enjoy over there when we are on an actual
mission, since we might be able to be considered in our situation [here]

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583 A slightly different version was quoted in the notice about Cellini. "I received
letters from all three of our novices. As far as I can tell, and according to what Father
Rosati tells me about them, they are all excellent subjects. Mr. Cellini in particular has
given very fine proofs of his attachment to the Congregation and of the virtues most
distinctive of a missionary." Since Cellini had studied medicine in Rome, the bishop
wrote Cardinal Litta for permission to have him practice medicine, something normally
forbidden to priests. (Dubourg to Litta, from Saint Louis, 7 June 1819; copy in DRMA,
Dubourg papers.) Cellini left the Congregation to join the diocese of Saint Louis in 1827.
584 Leo De Neckere and Leo Deys.
585 Augustine, Sermon 255, 7; PL 38, col. 1189.
586 A common act of veneration at certain papal ceremonies at that time.
as a continuous and uninterrupted mission.

A thousand pardons, please, for such inconveniences to you. Truly I have never been good for much and may it please the Lord to remove from the earth this useless weight that I am. I would only want as the summit of my desires to finish out my poor life in an Indian cabin with a death capable of repairing the disorders and corruptions of my life. Yet may God’s will be done.

Meanwhile, with sentiments of most profound esteem, respect and veneration for you, I am

your most humble, devoted and obedient servant,

Felix De Andreis
unworthy priest of the Congregation of the Mission

60. LENTEN REGULATIONS, 1819

Dearly beloved children in Jesus Christ:

Since Lent was originally established for penance, all Christians who have reached age twenty-one, and whom grave reasons of health or hard work, or any other similar reasons, do not render fasting impossible or dangerous, are obliged to fast. In addition, fasting must also be joined to abstinence from meat. Even in these recent times the Church has not relaxed this discipline. Nevertheless, moved by considerations of pity and condescension for her very weak children, she has left it to the wisdom of the bishops to dispense from the law of abstinence according to circumstances and the times.

As a result, his lordship the bishop has taken into account the scarcity and high price of other kinds of food, and is permitting the use of meat during four weekdays this Lent: Sundays, Mondays, Tuesdays


De Andreis, the vicar general, probably wrote this letter to the members of the diocese in the name of the bishop. Although undated, it can be assigned to 1819, since the 1820 letter from the bishop is extant. (Original printed letter in SLAA, Dubourg papers; copy in DRMA, Dubourg papers.) It is also possible that he copied the bishop’s letter for his own use.
and Thursdays. You should note, nevertheless, that those dispensed from fast for the reasons mentioned above may eat meat only once on these fast days.

On the four final days of Holy Week abstinence is prescribed as well as fasting.

At the same time, however, that the Church relaxes for you the severity of her discipline, you should understand that she looks to you for a renewal of zeal. This is to make up to the Lord by voluntary satisfactions and by a greater readiness to attend the special instructions customarily given to the faithful during this season. You should likewise attend to the other exercises of religion to dispose yourselves thereby to celebrate worthily the great mysteries of our redemption that took place through the passion, death and resurrection of the son of God. These will also dispose you in the best possible way for the Christian duty of confession and Easter communion. Lent was established for this great goal.

_in another hand:_ We will pray for the president of the United States and the members of Congress, for his excellency the governor of this state, the members of the legislature, for all judges, magistrates and civil officials charged with watching over our temporal happiness, so that the Lord will fill them with his spirit, etc. 588

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588 This paragraph was written at right angles to the rest of the letter. Its connection with the remainder of the letter is not clear; it may have been written after the admission of Missouri as a state in 1821.
Correspondence 1819

A view of pioneer life. Early nineteenth century.
Public domain

The cathedral of New Orleans. Early nineteenth century.
Public domain
Very Reverend and dear Father,

What a pleasure it is for me to receive here in the farthest corner of the world your kind letter along with the gift of good Brother Bettelani whom you sent here to complete his novitiate with the other three novices. They are now located at the seminary of Saint Mary of the Barrens, eighty miles from here. The good young man feels a little confused finding himself in a new country *ignotae linguae* ['of unknown language'], whose customs differ so completely from those in Europe. But we have already become friends and I hope that eventually we will be satisfied with each other. Once more I ask you never to send novice brothers here, because they are exposed to terrible temptations. The reason is that in this country only slaves are servants, while tailors and shoemakers, etc., make immense fortunes and are on a par with lawyers and gentlemen of the first rank. Thus brothers, unless they are more than settled in their vocation, run the risk of losing not only their vocation but also their faith in God and their soul.\(^{591}\)

I am immensely grateful to your charity for the help of your prayers in which I have great confidence; that is certainly the greatest need in the situation in which we find ourselves. Our undertaking is too far above human powers; we may suffer, struggle, and do good *in immensum* ['to the utmost']\(^{592}\) but everything has to come from the grace which must enlighten us *quid faciendum* ['as to what we have to do'] and strengthen us *ad agenda quae viderimus* ['to do what we have seen that has to be done'], and makes us seek God and his glory in

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\(^{590}\) Letter 61. Letter, part autograph, part in the hand of Andrew Ferrari, Italian, three pages, in the archives of the Collegio Brignole-Sale, Genoa, De Andreis letters.

The addressee is probably Father Giovanni Matteo Craveri/Cravieri, mentioned in the “Itinerary.”

\(^{591}\) Ezek 3:5.

\(^{592}\) 2 Cor 10:13.
Correspondence 1819

everything. I beg you therefore to continue this help for us and to recommend us often to the prayers of good souls. I cannot go so far as to give you all the details of our mission; you will be able to get them from Rome. As it is, my poor stomach does not allow me to write at length and often forces me to use the helping hand of good Father Ferrari who will continue from here on dictante me ["while I dictate"].

Humanly speaking, our establishment is secure. According to the agreement made with Bishop Dubourg in Rome before I departed—he is our most worthy bishop, and takes truly the place of a father for us—our house, which also has to serve as the seminary, is now being built in a place called in English The Barrens, in French Bois Brulé. It is situated on a property of 640 arpents [acres] of land uncultivated, I believe, since its creation. The house will be sixty feet long and thirty-seven feet wide. Besides a basement to be used for storage and our dining room, according to the custom of this country, the building will rise up two more stories and will have an attic, a building quite respectable for a wild country like this. Until the building is ready for occupancy, Father Rosati with our confreres who came from Rome and a troop of European seminarians joined by several Americans are lodged temporarily in a poor cabin, a log house as it is called here. There they hold classes for the public and help at the parish in charge of Father Valezano, cousin of our Father [Giuseppe] Allegretti, already accepted as a novice. However, because of the small number of confreres, he has had to see his longed-for hour of beginning his novitiate delayed to serve in that parish. It is composed of very fine Anglo-American Catholics, simple, hard-working and industrious people. Father Valezano has distributed a large picture of Saint Vincent to each family, and exhorted them all to place themselves under his protection, because it seems clear that Providence has given him as their protector since it has placed their town permanently under the care of his sons.

Father Acquaroni is currently serving two little parishes about thirty miles from here on the other side [of the Missouri river]. These are the French settlements of Portage des Sioux and La d’Ardenne [Dardenne]. This priest is doing well and is well liked. I stay here beside the bishop as his vicar general and I serve as assistant at the cathedral, whose pastor is the bishop himself. At the same time, with utmost consolation, I act as director of the seminary where, by God’s grace, the rules of the novitiate are observed exactly and I have only reasons for satisfaction in such employment.

59 Change of handwriting.
The novitiate opened 3 December, the feast of Saint Francis Xavier, with three novices, two Italians and one German. Some days after, for reasons of health, one of them Tichitoli had to be sent to Lower Louisiana for a change of climate. Three other excellent candidates have already been accepted, but their reception had to be delayed. The reason is the lack of room in the seminary and the great costs in maintaining subjects in this capital city full of people of every nation. They are constantly arriving from Europe or other parts of America to settle here, this being a young country that promises much to the speculators of this world here below. With regard to religion, although Catholics are at least nominally in the majority in comparison with any particular sect, nevertheless all of them together constitute a larger number. Besides the sects known in Europe, new ones are formed here, so to say, almost daily, and are based on nothing else than ignorance and religious indifference. We have to do our ministry sometimes in French and sometimes in English. Among the French as well as among the English many call themselves philosophers, but their philosophy consists of nothing but presumptuous ignorance and excessive attachment to false earthly goods. Even though the fruits of our ministry do not yet conform to our wishes, they nevertheless console us because many are converted and many more give us hope that instruction and tireless cultivation will in the end see religion perfectly established. In my opinion, conducting our missions according to the regulation of Saint Vincent will work miracles in these towns and so I am anxious to see them started.

Last October everything was ready to begin the first mission in Father Acquaroni’s parishes and then we would have continued in other places, but urgent reasons forced us to postpone doing so till next spring.

I ask you to convey my regards to the very worthy Father [Gaetano] Nervi and to all our good confreres and, if you have the opportunity through some of our Piedmontese, please convey my greetings and my poor news to my relatives in Demonte. I am not writing them because I have no time. I do not expect to have the strength to embrace you again on this earth but I firmly hope to have it in heaven.

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594 Andrew Ferrari and Joseph Tichitoli.
595 Francis Xavier Dahmen.
596 That is, as postulants, but who lived elsewhere. They were Leo De Neckere, Valezano and Deys.
597 Nervi (1768-1824) had been superior at Genoa.
Correspondence 1819

With sentiments of my deepest respect, esteem, and veneration, I am your most humble, devoted and obedient servant.

Felix De Andreis,
unworthy priest of the Congregation of the Mission

62. TO BARTOLOMEO COLUCCI, C.M., SUPERIOR, ROME598

Saint Louis
9 February 1819

A thousand pardons, please, if I make use of the much better handwriting of our good Father Ferrari, a priest novice, to express my sentiments to you. My stomach refuses to let me write at any length, and it does so because I just returned from a twelve-mile horseback ride to minister to one sick person, and instead of one I found three. That is our life. Sometimes I even have to go up to sixty miles to visit a sick person. I have not seen Father Rosati for sixteen months. At first he was three hundred miles away. Now, for the last five months, he has been only eighty miles away. Also I have not seen Father Acquaroni for about five months, and he is only thirty miles away from me on the other side [of the Missouri river]. The reason for this is the lack of priests. I humbly thank your zeal for the help sent us in three excellent co-workers.599 Sed quid sunt haec inter tantos ["But what are these among so many"]?600 To supply the needs of this huge diocese we would need a regiment of tireless workers, and there would be work enough for all of them. But the problem is that there would be no way to support them, because we are stretched, stretched even to find enough to maintain the few who are here. Besides maintaining these men, how much other good might we accomplish if we just had the money. Churches once begun are left unfinished because of lack of funds; books to be printed cannot be produced because of lack of money and so on.


599 Philip Borgna, Anthony Potini, Francis Cellini. In addition, the group numbered Brother Bartolomeo Bettelani.

In the hands of the missionaries in these regions money would be a means of help especially for the Indians. With money, projects could be accomplished which would best help to capture these poor creatures. I have already begun translating into English the catechism that you know, with some changes at the beginning and end to adapt it to the region where we are.\textsuperscript{601} During spare moments we are working on translating into French and English, one the life of Saint Vincent, another his maxims and the Common Rules, and another a few other things. It is no small job to translate into these two languages all our writings. But I am convinced that we have to do so. Although we cannot limit ourselves to being traveling missionaries, here at the boundaries of our institute, we will see marvels since the soil is excellent, though choked with weeds and thorns that stifle the seed sown by the Father of the family. This is my constant focus, but we will need time, patience and a long life.

Father Valezano, cousin of our Father Allegretti, a confrere from Turin, has already been accepted into our novitiate. But to his displeasure he was obliged at the very beginning of his novitiate, because of a lack of other subjects, to go and help at the parish of Saint Mary of the Barrens, where our house and seminary is located. He distributed to each family of these good Anglo-Americans one of your large pictures of Saint Vincent and he encouraged them to place themselves under the protection of this saint, whose sons had come from so far to work for the salvation of their souls.

This country is now beginning, so to speak, to emerge from chaos, since it has never before been inhabited. The ground is still untilled, and the people of this colony go about clearing it with tireless labor. These are poor people, simple, hard working, industrious and above all devoted to religion, more so than many colonies which dwell under heaven.

Less than a day's journey from here is a nation of Indians called Sava Hannon [Shawnees]. These will be the first upon whom their [our] ministry will be extended. Several Indians have already been baptized, but they can be relied on only at the moment of death, unless we first take great pains to make their nomadic life suitable for Christian life. I have already undertaken the work of writing a grammar and a catechism in the most common Indian language. I found an interpreter who has wholeheartedly given himself to God. He will help me in the

\textsuperscript{601} See letter 50, 11 July 1818.
Lord, and has promised to bring me an even more helpful Indian for such a work. And so I have to take things step by step, and cool my impetuous zeal, which would like to do everything in one day. It would end up by spoiling everything and by consuming the hopes for a more wonderful harvest while the field was still unripe. We certainly need to meditate often on that maxim of Saint Vincent: "God’s works are mostly done little by little, and have their own beginnings and their own growth." As a result, we should not intend to do everything at once and in a hurry or think that all will be lost if it does not happen with due care; we should rather proceed slowly and pray much."

Thank you very much, and my compliments to Fathers Giordana and [Giovanni Battista] Garofani for their contribution. Also to Fathers [Nicola De] Giorgio and Alimenti, and to all the members of the conference.

Brother Borgna writes me in French, complaining that Father Baccari deceived him by saying that he would have much to suffer, because he seems not to have suffered at all. Their journey of eight months and their present miserable situation should have satisfied at least partially his promised sufferings.

We have celebrated all the masses for the deceased confreres, and those named in your letters, but for the many not named we have said a large number of masses. Since their names are repeated in various letters, we wonder with some reason whether the number of those not listed has been often repeated. Since masses here are our principal support, please tell the superior to be so good as, when he announces the list of the departed, to do so in such a way that we will not have to celebrate several times for the same men.

I will not repeat here what I have written in other letters. I am always taken with and embarrassed by God’s goodness in calling me to this mission, and in keeping me always on the cross to detach me from the world and to purify all the filth in my heart, to make me worthy of being forever united with him. Father Colucci, help me to thank

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602 "... but it seems to me that God’s affairs are accomplished little by little and almost imperceptibly..." (Coste, CED, 2:226; in letter 570, 9 February 1642, from Vincent de Paul to Bernard Codding.) De Andreis joined this citation with another, "their own beginnings...", from an undated letter to Louise de Marillac, cited by Collet; see Mission et Charité 19-20 (Janvier-Juin 1970): 171. The rest of the citation appears to be De Andreis’s own conclusions.

603 A sort of discussion or prayer group at the Vincentian house in Rome; De Andreis had been its director.
him for this, and pray for me that I not ruin God’s work. In heaven alone do I hope to embrace you, where alone I am to rest. I am in sentiments of the most distinct esteem and respect for you,
your most humble and devoted servant
Felix De Andreis,
unworthy priest of the Congregation of the Mission

P.S. I repeat once more that I recommend myself to your prayers, and I confide greatly in the Hail Mary (this is wrong) in the Glory Be of the conference. On the evening before I left Rome, I asked them to please recite this prayer every evening for the poor American.

This *sanctorum communio* [“communion of saints”] is a great thing. We need it, but [we need] prayers especially, since we need great virtue not to ruin it. Here the poor missionaries receive after their preaching neither warm cakes, nor a barley tea, nor wine and not even the leisure time to change clothes. Instead, drenched with sweat, they have to chant mass or baptize or go to visit the sick or engage in [public] controversy. We need to be angels here, and if we start to ruin things, woe to the world. We have here priests whose example causes us to fear. There is one among others who, after turning his back on religion and taking a wife, continues to abuse religion with his rare talent of writing and publishing. When his so-called wife died, we hoped to see him return to the Ark [of Noah] as before. But, *(o tenetrae, o lutum, o sordes)!* [“O darkness, o mud, o filth”], although he was in his sixties, he remarried, and sought to have a young woman for his wife and then brought out another small book against religion. Another young man whom we ordained a subdeacon here began the same behavior some months back. May the Lord help us. Whoever wishes to be an example has every means here, and so there is no hypocrisy. Dear Father Colucci, I tell you the truth: I am annoyed and fed up with this evil world. I find in myself an abyss of perversity. If God had not placed his hand on my head, I would be worse than any other. Ah, when will we get out of such errors, *et erit Deus omnia in omnibus* [“and God will be all in all”]?606

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605 Casto Gonzalez.
606 Eph 1:23 NAB: “[the church … ] the fullness of him who fills the universe in all its parts.”
Correspondence 1819

63. TO JOSEPH ROSATI, C.M., PRIEST, BARRENS

Saint Louis
17 March 1819

Very Reverend Father Rosati,

You should not be surprised if I have waited until now to send you my letter, since it certainly was not because of a lack of good will, but because I did not have any opportunity for it. I also add that any opportunity would have been useless for me because of a grave illness that, although it is not now so dangerous, still makes me feel its effects. This was erysipelas of the head, and because of it I suffered the most excruciating pains. When the doctor saw the danger, he worked hard to stop its progress as quickly as possible. He employed all his knowledge to get me out of danger. Blistering agents and mustard plasters, seven or eight bloodlettings, mercury pills, purges, etc., all, so to speak, worked together to crucify my body, already badly treated by the force of the illness. Nevertheless, since last Sunday was the seventh day, reckoned as one of the most critical days for this type of illness, I received viaticum as a precaution. Then, thank the Lord, the danger passed, but my weakness was such that I was unable to stand up. The mercury had so affected my mouth, my gums, my tongue and my palate that every kind of food became unbearable, both because of the pain and sufferings in taking any food, and because of the little

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608 Dubourg also reported on his sickness of the previous month: “Father De Andreis has suffered much these days from his intestinal illnesses.” (Dubourg to Rosati, from Saint Louis [?], 20 February 1819; original in SLAA, RG 1-A-3,1.) Erysipelas involves high fever and inflamed tissues.

609 Stephen Hempstead, a wealthy and important citizen, recorded that doctors used the following similar treatments on his dying wife: jalup (a purgative), cream of tartar, laudanum, mercury, seneca, warm baths, horseradish root (for blistering), mustard seed (for blistering) and hot vinegar. (“I At Home,” Bulletin of the Missouri Historical Society 15:1 [October 1958]: 48.)

610 Bishop Dubourg reports the same event: “Father De Andreis is out of danger. He alarmed me greatly the day before yesterday. Yesterday morning he received holy viaticum, and was much better afterwards.” (Dubourg to Rosati, from Saint Louis, 15 March 1819; original in SLAA, Rosati papers, 1-A-3,1.)
Correspondence 1819

relish I had in tasting any. To judge by the way I felt, I would say that an infinity of needles had been placed around my gums. They pricked them constantly and caused a constant flow of disgusting saliva.611

My illness put an end to the sacred conferences that were taking place in church each Friday and Sunday in Lent to instruct the people mainly about confession. Father Niel would propose the questions and doubts, taking the part of the entire congregation, and I would answer whatever he asked me.

I recommend myself to your prayers in particular, and to those of all your good community and the Congregation.

I am with all respect your humble servant,

Felix De Andreis,
Unworthy priest of the Congregation of the Mission

64. TO JOSEPH ROSATI, C.M., PRIEST, BARRENS612

Saint Louis
27 March 1819

Esteemed and dear Father Rosati,

Although very weak as I begin to get out of bed after several days, I am anxious to report to you in detail about my illness, which I naturally thought would finish me off. The abundant bloodlettings, repeated up to three times a day, made even the doctor wonder whether nature would still be able to survive. The result was that before the doctor did the last bloodletting, he told me his doubt, but morto per morto [six of one, half-dozen of another], and so I told him to do what he judged best. He let the blood and I fainted in his arms. Even though not a Catholic, that good man did everything to save me, even spending the night by my side. He used everything his skill could suggest, and especially dosed me with mercury.

611 Philippine Duchesne had the same treatment, and recorded her sensations as follows: "I felt many ill effects from it—sore mouth, salivation, continual weakness in my limbs, and my head so unbalanced that I labored under the illusion that I was two people..." (Callan, Philippine Duchesne, 329), a letter to Mother Barat, 30 October 1820. French text in Paisant, Les années pionnières, L. 83, p. 326.

Nevertheless, between the sixth and seventh day, a Sunday, everything was prepared for my death. The bishop judged it proper to give me viaticum. What a situation it was for me! The room was full of people with handkerchiefs in their hands and tears in their eyes, and I was more in the next life than in this one because of the sickness. Before the bishop administered the sacred host to me, he addressed me, in English, interrupted at each word with weeping (my heart was bursting). He ordered me through the full weight of his authority as my bishop to ask God to grant me another period of life. At this unexpected announcement of such an order, which I did not expect, I experienced a certain repugnance to act, since I have always preferred to put myself completely in God’s hands and have done this without ever asking for anything. But after such an order, I immediately obeyed. From then on I suddenly began to improve. The crisis passed, the illness vanished and all danger went away.

But I had, and still have, such an incredible weakness that I cannot even grasp a full glass. I will recover, but the mercury did not let me chew and forced me to abstain from whatever might strengthen me. Only milk seemed good in that condition, but my stomach did not allow it, and so I will recover from this when it pleases God. I am reporting this so that you might help me thank God for his grace and above all to beg the divine goodness that the life granted me still will serve for nothing else than an opportunity to do penance, to detach myself from everything, to live for God alone and to prepare myself better for that great step which we all have to take sooner or later and on which our eternity depends.

I have seen the axe laid to the root of the tree. I have looked into the terrifying face of death. I have seen all earthly vanity disappear like smoke. I have recognized how sweet it is to leave this vale of tears when the heart becomes truly a stranger. But my own heart has still not been detached from everything. I still do not know how I would describe it best, since it keeps me from complete union with God since I am still too attached to myself. But the Lord treats me with so many [pains?] that eventually he forces me to be freed from myself. May he be blessed! How I rejoice in this ... ! Let me, let me move all my good beyond the river of this life, that is, to move all my desires to heaven, and so I will laugh at death and at everything else.

613 14 March.
614 Dubourg to Rosati, 22 March 1820, from Saint Louis (DRMA, Dubourg papers) reported that De Andreis continued to be very sick.
615 An allusion to Matt 4:10.
616 Blank in copy.
Correspondence 1819

My regards to all, especially to Brother Blanca. I feel that there is one more thing to say, and then I will finish. Pray for me, since I have become half-Turk without mass, without office, etc., since my head has become like the Brig “Ranger,” tossed to and fro by the storm, and I do not know when it will settle down. Be happy, be healthy among your companions, and it will be a great support for me to receive news of you. I am sorry that after so much time the envelopes and the packages to be sent to you are still lying around the house, but I do not know when I will have a chance to send them. The coffee has already suffered and is half moldy. These are the circumstances of the foreign missions. We have experienced them, we have accepted them with whatever else could be expected to be worse. And so it could be said: *Amice, non facio tibi iniuriam* [“Friend, I do you no harm”]. It was said to us: *Potestis bibere calicem* [“Can you drink the cup”]? We have answered: *Possumus* [“we can”]. And so there are no means here to restore my strength. On the final days when we could eat meat, it was impossible to find any for a broth ... with a soup of bread in putrid water from our well, which the doctor condemned, without butter, without eggs, I wonder when there will be something to restore my strength. For ten years ... how many other woes! how many causes of my illness ... to spend two weeks without being able to eat meat, which is always as hard as shoe leather, etc. May God grant us the grace to change everything into good!

I am, in the love of Jesus Christ, your humble servant,
Felix De Andreis,
unworthy priest of the Congregation of the Mission

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617 The vessel that brought De Andreis and Rosati to the United States.
619 Matt 20:22.
620 Before Lent.
Portrait of Louis William Dubourg.
Collection of the De Andreis-Rosati Memorial Archives
Correspondence 1819

65. TO FRANCESCO ANTONIO BACCARI, C.M.,
PRO-VICAR GENERAL, ROME

Saint Louis
26 April 1819

Very Reverend and Dear Father,

I found your most appreciated letter of last October very helpful in lifting me up somewhat after a serious case of erysipelas of the head which brought me usque ad portas mortis ["to the gates of death"]: For the first time in my life I received holy viaticum, from the hands of the bishop. Before giving me communion in the presence of a large group of clergy and laity who had gathered, with tears in their eyes, to assist at the ceremony, he gave me a short talk in English. In it, among other things, he directed me to beg from the Lord a lengthening of my life. So right then I obediently made a request that I had never made nor thought of making. But I did so on condition that this extension of life would serve only to prepare me better for death with perfect detachment from myself and total dedication to God. And so from that point on I then began to improve and to get out of danger. Despite

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Although the addressee is not identified, his identity is confirmed by Letter 68, 7 July 1819, referring to this letter.

522 Ps 107:18.

523 De Andreis's private spiritual resolutions, dated 14 March 1819, expand on this key event:

Having received Viaticum from the hands of Bishop Dubourg, he held the Blessed Sacrament in his hands and gave me a discourse in English. In it he ordered me to request a longer life from God. I obeyed him for friendship's sake, but on condition that this lengthening of life be implored only to do penance, and to promote the glory of God and the salvation of souls, and to detach me always from myself, and to unite myself interiorly to him, with the purpose of constantly preparing myself for that last hour on which eternity depends.

At that instant, I began to improve in my illness, and little by little I gained my health back completely. From now on, I resolve to abandon myself unreservedly to God's dispositions.

(Ricciardelli, Vita, 475.)
Correspondence 1819

the many bloodlettings and frequent mustard plasters and blistering agents, the doctor had me treated with so much mercury that I almost believed that the results of the remedy were worse than the sickness itself. But at last, as it pleased God, everything turned out well. I now find myself better than before. May God will that, as the favor has been obtained, so its condition will be verified as well.

I have spent my entire life, up to this my fortieth year, in completing projects and in making good resolutions. I have chatted about the great ideas of virtue and perfection. I have talked and written much, but my whole heart is still empty of virtue. When it comes to the point of practicing what I have thought, written and preached, I find myself, to my surprise, a beginning novice. I have to start my career. This is because I still have illusions about my self-love, and up to this point I have added a certain kind of masked hypocrisy (I do not know what it should be called), hidden even from the same miserable hypocrite. May the Lord supply before death that holy hatred and that holy and sincere disregard of myself which forms the basis of virtue. It is the source of all virtues, but I am truly lacking it.

I come now to the gracious attention you give us in your much-appreciated letters. After giving most humble thanks for them, and for the very pleasant news that they give us of the Congregation, etc., I do not add anything else, except that you can imagine the things that are required in any one of our houses with a church and seminary. I can say that we are lacking everything. The seminary is not yet finished, and I do not know when it will be habitable. The church still exists only in imaginary spaces, and other things cannot be decided until later. Should it please the Lord to inspire some rich benefactor over there to dedicate several thousand scudi to some good work like the erection of our church, I would then beg you to please take down your harps from the willows and play them for this good purpose. In that case, you yourself could decide on the size, the subject, and the number of paintings, etc. Since the parish church is about a [quarter of a] mile away from the seminary and is dedicated to the Virgin, we have therefore thought of dedicating ours [the house chapel] to Saint Vincent. You will discover that the matter will go far but I have little hope of seeing it completed before I die, since I think that I do not have much time left.

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624 He refers to the annual circular letter of 2 February 1819, and perhaps others sent privately containing necrology notices. (See Recueil, 2:347 ff.)
625 Ferrari's hand begins here.
626 An allusion to Ps 137:2, and to the power of music to influence others.
We will look for the results of the efforts of Father Colucci concerning the shipment of the statues. As to the Indian boys, especially because of the information that came to me from the letter that I wrote about them, I now believe that it is not right to send them. May it please God that, according to his and our desire, we live in union and completely follow uniformity in our way of dressing. But in the present state of things this is impossible. You should try to imagine the immense extent of this country. How difficult it is to cross it in any season, a land in which the population is scattered all over and does not have up to now enough priests to meet each one’s needs. And so missionaries have to live according to the agreement made with the bishop, and substitute for pastors at least in these initial periods. Once the seminary furnishes suitable subjects to replace the dispersed missionaries, they will reassemble at a common center, and will again enter completely our normal rule. It seems to me that this was the practice of the missionaries sent out by Saint Vincent to various foreign missions. They could not have been any different either, at least at the beginning. For the rest, we need to remain attached to our rules and customs as best we can.

When we are in the house, we wear cassock, cinchtre, biretta, just like over there. But when we have to go out into the country, we have to adapt our dress to the custom of the region to avoid attracting the laughter and ridicule which would not fail to fall on our ministry itself. For example, if we had to be seen as we are in Italy, on horseback in cassock, and especially with a tricorn hat, even Catholics would be ashamed to approach us, and the heterodox would use the occasion to take us for wild men and visionaries. We hope that, with time, they will put aside these prejudices. Meanwhile, for now, in virtue of principle, everything calls us to set aside what is secondary.

By the grace of God, religion is daily making new strides. The Catholics are being reformed, even though more heretics are converted than Catholics, and from the beginnings which we see, I do not doubt at all that one day (and that day cannot be far off) religion will be seen

627 This did not take place, probably since the cathedral was never fully completed nor decorated.

628 "9. When, in course of time, and by means of the training of young students for the Church, they have provided a sufficient number of priests to replace the missionaries dispersed in different parishes, the latter will then be enabled to withdraw into one or more houses, according to the regulations of their institute, restricting themselves to the usual functions of the same, retaining those others only, that are annexed to their existing houses." ("Foundation Contract," in Rybolt, ed., American Vincentians, 453.)
Correspondence 1819

to flourish in its turn in these deserts. *Pinguescent speciosa deserti* ["the deserted places will flourish"]\(^629\) I am omitting various other things that I wrote in some previous letters that you have received, or I hope you will receive as soon as possible.

To arouse fervor in his flock, and especially to enable the conversion of heretics, the bishop has established a confraternity of men, all Anglo-Americans, and good and fervent Catholics, under the invocation of the Blessed Virgin. He made me its director, and last Sunday we had our first meeting. This is something really unusual in these parts. The bishop is tireless and is constantly exercising all his zeal for the good of his flock. We need a man like him, endowed with many talents, virtues, and both natural and supernatural qualities to bear up under such a weight. Besides, the affairs of New Orleans take an active turn, or to say it better, everything that placed an obstacle to episcopal jurisdiction has been handled.

Fathers Rosati, Acquaroni and Cellini, as well as our present novices, Ferrari and Dahmen, are well. So, too, are Brothers Borgna, Potini and Blanka. But in my opinion the novice brother, Bettelani, lacks vigor and he is only one among the four postulant brothers we need. He is content, however, to remain as a domestic. I assure you, regarding novices, especially brothers, that conditions in this country are so extremely difficult that, if they have a vocation, they are exposed to a great danger of losing it. If they have none, it is that much worse for them and for us.

We are praying for the deceased [confreres] whom you told us about. I repeat that we need books and relics and paintings and images and vestments and linen and cloth to make cassocks, serge for cloaks or capes, and cloth which is unavailable here, etc., etc., whatever is required, as you well know, to set up a house or a church, all that will be precious. We will kiss their hand and pray for our benefactors. I would not want you to regard as poetic, and nearly impossible, like that matter of the statues, the project that I am about to propose to you. I have thought about this a hundred times, but I have never yet remembered to mention it in my letters.

You should know that this American land, especially in this western part, still remains virgin territory, almost like in the time of Adam and Noah. The greatest need that we have is to get arms to clear and to set to work at once on the cleared land. Here the peasant class is really

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\(^{629}\) Ps 65:13 NAB: "The untilled meadows overflow with it (and rejoicing clothes the hills)."
unknown. Each one works his own land by himself or has his slaves work it. Day laborers are quite scarce and costly. Besides, slaves sell for 1000 or 1500 scudi each, and the little lads go for 600. They cause many serious problems that it would be too much to describe here. Consequently, having land is of no use, and the 640 arpents (which I do not know how to convert to Roman measure) that form the endowment of the seminary, remain up to now of no use at all to us. And so here is my plan.

I often recall having encountered in Lombardy a large number of farm families who spend their whole lives year after year under the tyrannical yoke of a despotic landowner. It is very difficult to find something to buy, and they are still up to their ears in terrible debts. If one of our confreres would decide to come here to join us in these parts, after having assembled a sufficient amount for this undertaking and be willing to have one of these families cross the sea and lead them here, he would assure the wealth both of this family and of our seminary, half of whose land would be given them. They would be sure of every spiritual and temporal help. This is not an unrealistic project, since every day rich landowners go to Europe and return here bringing back German or Irish or Flemish farm families. The bishop himself has brought back with him various Flemish farmers, whom he has already set upon land bought by him, to serve as the Bishop's Table.630 If you agree to support this project, everything will go forward well to alleviate the greatest problem for the [maintenance?] of our establishment. On the other hand, according to the expression of Saint Vincent, we will continue to rest under the banner of Providence. 

630 These farmers, who had originally come to the Barrens to work the land there, soon wanted to move to the bishop's property in Florissant. They lived and worked there to support him.

631 A generic citation, quoted from memory. Probably another version of "He who lodges under the banner of confidence in God will ever be favored by His special protection." (Coste, CED, 11:39; Conference to Vincentians, 24.)
Correspondence 1819

Courtesy of the author

Oh! if only we would rely on these teachings which the prudent speak of! But now this paper is about to end. 632

Our compliments to all, etc. Prayers, prayers for us that we not forget our confreres, and all that has come from Europe, which seems like an answer to prayer.

I am, with the deepest respect and veneration, your most respectful, devoted and humble servant,

Felix De Andreis,
unworthy priest of the Mission.

632 De Andreis’s hand finishes the letter.
Correspondence 1819

66. TO THE MEETING AT MONTE CITORIO, ROME

Saint Louis
21 June 1819

Ad Majorem Dei Gloriam

I learned from a letter that I recently received that one of our letters has been read at the evening meeting at Monte Citorio. Since this group continues to show zeal and interest for this mission of ours, I take advantage of the opportunity of a Italian from Bergamo, a long-time resident in this city, who is going to Europe on business, to send a letter to the same, ever appreciated and most loved meeting. It seems to me that I am still looking at you from my presider’s seat.

I have no doubt that news from a mission so remote as ours might be able to reawaken in the center of Christianity extraordinary sentiments of piety, religion, zeal and fervor in hearts open to such sentiments. What a difference between Rome and Louisiana. There one swims in an abundance of the means of sanctification: churches, ministers, liturgies, books, culture, good example, monuments of piety, supports of all sorts. One would have to be monstrously evil not to experience the urge to live a Christian life. Here, on the other hand, we lack every means of salvation, and everything conspires to remove from mind and heart any idea or thought about religion. To tell the truth, our arrival in this wooded desert could not have been more opportune. People regarded as the wisest in the land have assured me that matters were reduced to such a level that they believed that the

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A group of clergy and laity that met daily at Monte Citorio. De Andreis had been its director. The participants seem to have listened to religious conferences, shared their faith and prayed together. De Andreis appeals here to their charity. It was at one of its evening sessions that bishop-elect Dubourg first heard De Andreis. Rosati described the group as follows: “for several of the last years he spent at Rome, he regularly preached each evening, for about three quarters of an hour, to a large group. It was composed of persons of every state, peasants, domestics, lawyers, priests, prelates and occasionally even cardinals. It met in a hall located near the door of the house at Monte Citorio.” (Rosati, “Life,” Summarium, 45.)

634 “To the Greater Glory of God.”
old cabin which served as a church was going to tumble down and with it the last spark of piety would forever be snuffed out. That is our situation. Despite our continuous efforts, we find it quite difficult to reawaken the faith and nourish devotion. Also, although the bishop has brought from Europe a colony of about forty evangelical laborers with a surprising quantity of implements and sacred ornaments, we still find ourselves absorbed like a drop of wine in a barrel of water.

The need is still so great that we cannot even lift our head against the rush of the stream, yet the good that is being done is great. Crowds of adults are baptized, many who had fallen away and who had no idea of religion are being reconciled and set on the path of salvation. When the youth of both sexes make their first communion, they are trained to live a Christian life. Nevertheless, so much good remains to be done, and the resources for it are so feeble, that the good [still to be done] overwhelms the good that is being done. This sometimes causes our arms to droop.

We have to deal here with every sort of person from every nation, color and language. Classes are distinguished primarily by color. There are five different colors: whites, blacks, mulattos (born of a white man and a black woman and vice versa), the reds, that is the Indians, and the reddish called half-breeds, that is, born of a white man and an Indian woman. But each color presents its own style and diverse dispositions, and each demands from us a different treatment. The whites come from different nations and languages. For the person who needs to be prepared to speak, to hear confessions and to preach in both languages, they can be reduced to those who speak either English or French according to the occasion. Ordinarily, on meeting a person, we do not know which language to use, if the other is not the first to speak.

Yet, those who love religion are not the ones who leave their native parts to come to seek a fortune in America, at least ordinarily, and so they present a vast field for zeal. And although not everyone gets in the net, still, by God’s grace, the net is not cast in vain. Here normally a large number come to the sermons, given mostly in both languages, and also many times during the day the ministers of other sects are dispossessed because they have little to do. A great number of people, although not yet disposed to embrace the Catholic religion, nevertheless have this saying, “if I have to have a religion it is the Roman Catholic religion.” This is already a great step and to go the rest of the way

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635 An allusion to Ps 110:7.
Correspondence 1819

such means to him who alone is capable of satisfying completely the heart that he made for himself alone. I see through experience the great advantage of abandoning one's home country, parents, friends, etc., to become detached from the world even more and to acquire that true spiritual freedom found only in those who really love God.

We have established here, under the invocation of the most blessed Virgin, a group of men, who are for the most part good English Catholics. We use them to convert heretics and to do other good works in places we cannot go by ourselves. I am responsible for their direction and I would like them to be associated with the meeting of Monte Citorio. I will await your pleasure and the list of indulgences with a letter of communication with all the societies and confraternities of Rome through pontifical concession. But we do not know specifically which indulgences are accorded to each individual group.

I have written this in some confusion and at various times because I do not have time and I have to run all over, sometimes to baptize or to assist the dying or to catechize or to preach or to have a funeral, weddings etc., and it would be better if I could be multiplied especially in the confessional. Every day and hour has its own ministry, and I have to be ready day and night to leave dinner or to go by land or water in pirogues—that is what we call tree trunks carved out inside on which we risk crossing rivers terrifying in their breadth, more than a mile wide, and with a rushing and speedy current. These people are accustomed to a wild life and a missionary has no small task at the beginning to overcome his natural aversion and to adjust to their habits. Sometimes I am sick to death that I cannot accomplish more. If we had money to start some establishments of charity and instruction, these would greatly facilitate our ministries, and would make them more fruitful.

Just as the see of Rome presides over all the sees of the Catholic world through its primacy of dignity and jurisdiction, so the Roman people ought to preside over all the people through the primacy of their fervor and edification. This is like what Saint Paul wrote to the faithful of still pagan Rome, [Rom] 16:19 *Vestra enim obedientia in omnem locum divulgata est* ["Your obedience has been proclaimed everywhere"]. Just as the more central parts of the human body which receive the greatest abundance of food communicate nourishment to the external members in greater abundance, so it seems to me that the faithful of Rome ought to take on themselves that which the apostle writes in 2

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639 That is, of English nationality, which consisted mainly of those born in Ireland.
Correspondence 1819

Cor 8:14 *Vestra abundantia ilorum inopiam suppleat* ["Your abundance should make up for their lack"]. Not that there are not already some rich people here who might be able, if they were willing, to supply the most basic help. Unfortunately they are not Catholics, or are Catholics in name only and so have not the least interest in the establishment of religion, to say nothing of greater interest in seeing that it not be established. Nothing would give a better idea of the Catholic faith than to see the generosity of true Catholics, especially from Rome, in propagating it in the most distant parts of the world. Nothing in fact is more effective in destroying innate prejudice in heretics—this is the mainspring that moves the missionaries to act in their interest—than in seeing how, instead of looking for money, they obtain spiritual benefit at no personal expense. That generous trait is capable of exciting them to imitate it.

I recommend the missionaries and the mission to the prayers of the meeting, especially the usual *Gloria Patri*. 640

I am, in the love of Our Lord Jesus Christ most cordially your most humble devoted and obliged servant.

Felix De Andreis

*In another hand:* Received 21 January 1821

67. TO FELIX DE ANDREIS, C.M., SAINT LOUIS 641

[Post Vincennes, Indiana] [July 1819]

I set out on Friday morning accompanied by one of the inhabitants of Vincennes who was to be my Pilot and in the evening we arrived at a house about twenty miles from St. Louis at the beginning of the great

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640 Sessions of the meeting concluded with this prayer.


The route taken by the writer followed roughly the same route as US Highway 50, one of the major emigrant routes of the time.
The next day we left the house very early to cross the Prairie which is fifty miles in breadth before the flies should become more troublesome. But after having rode seventeen or eighteen miles, I perceived that I had left my saddlebags at the house where we had passed the night. My Pilot took my horse being stronger than his, went back to the house, and instructed me to go on, and to wait for him at a house four miles farther. Riding by myself on my Pilot’s horse, who was in a very bad condition [with a thoroughly broken saddle which hardly fit on its back, and with a bridle half leather and half tree bark,] I was afraid of falling in the hands of Robbers, who as I had been told a few days ago attacked some passengers. But I think that Providence by the means of my very poor trotting horse and attire delivered me from that danger.

Arrived at the place to which I had been directed, I stopped to look for my companion with great uneasiness, which grew still greater as his arrival retarded. The night came and I did not see him. My Landlord, who was a Baptist, made me a thousand questions about Catholicks. He was a good man and seemed to be satisfied with my answers. Next morning more anxious than ever I did not know what to do. Finally I resolved to go on; thinking that he had passed in the night. [At six I arrived at another habitation where they told me that many passengers had spent the night there, and probably that my guide

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642 The prairie begins at or near Lebanon, Illinois, located on US Highway 50. This town was platted in 1814.

643 The material in brackets is cited from a second and expanded version of the text.
was with them. I stayed there till ten, and not seeing him again I set out. Thus during the rest of my journey always tormented by thirst, burnt by the sun which seemed to be as powerful in these Prairies as in the Wilderness of Arabia, always in motion to fight against the most importunate flies, that made the horses frantick, and more as he was not much exercised in patience once threw himself down, and turned on his back. Happily I had time to jump down, but in mounting again, I fell on the ground.

At length I arrived at Vincennes, whither my Pilot had also arrived, a few hours before. He had alarmed the whole Parish thinking that I was lost. The cause why he had not come was that the horse had run away from him. Moreover, a few miles from the place where he had left me, while he was coming back he had been attacked by a man who asked the saddle bags; and while the Robber endeavoured to throw him down from his horse he had snatched the stick from his hands and gave him such a terrible blow in the head, that he laid him dead, or half dead, on the ground. Then at full gallop he escaped from two horsemen that followed him for several miles armed with rifles.

[Andrew Ferrari, C.M.]

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64 The probable location of this “habitation” is Half-Way Tavern, built in 1818 as a stagecoach stop. It is now a reconstructed historical site on US Highway 50.
Very Reverend and Dear Father,

I have not even one Italian with me to help me write in this language, and so I have to write myself, despite the trouble it causes my stomach. I had to send out on mission the only Italian remaining with me, Father Ferrari, a priest novice, with another French priest twenty days ago to Post Vincennes. It is a four-day trip from here, in the state of Indiana, among the Indians, in the diocese of Bardstown, and we hope to have a second establishment there. I will not repeat here what I said in the enclosed letter addressed to the meeting of the Porteria, since you can read it at your leisure. The bishop has been at the Barrens for three months now supervising the building of our house and seminary there. I have agreed that Brother Borgna be ordained a subdeacon on Father Rosati's assurance to me that he had finished his theology studies.

I am now going to speak to you of a delicate matter that I ask you, please, to keep very secret, salvo necessitatis jure ["except in case of need"]. The bishop has spoken to me several times of his need, and the diocese's too, of having a coadjutor [bishop]. This person would become his successor pro praemoriente ["in case of his early death"]. The need is urgent, but the difficulty concerns the person on whom the choice would fall. Because of my physical condition, to say nothing of my absolute moral inability, which everyone recognizes, and, also, because of the conversations which the bishop had with me, I seem to
Correspondence 1819

have nothing to fear. Nevertheless, since I know that our bishop lives up to the saying of the Sage, *prudentis est mutare consilium* ["the prudent man changes his plan"], it is very easy for him to change his plans even two or three times a day before finally executing them. For this reason, although he has often wanted to see, and has placed in my hands letters addressed to the cardinal prefect of Propaganda to request, bulls of a coadjutor for N., yet he might have changed his plans, especially during such a long absence from Saint Louis. As a result, I am persuaded that Propaganda will take no step without consulting you, or at least without letting you offer a suggestion. For this reason, I think that you are obliged in conscience for more and more reasons to object strongly, if it is a question of your unworthy correspondent. Please do not suppose that this is a result of humility. The episcopal dignity offers here no nourishment to ambition. It would rather be the result of laziness, if it were not a duty of justice, piety and religion.

I leave to one side all the personal reflections that clearly make me unworthy of such a position, and I point out only that it is for the good of the Congregation, since I see clearly that were this to happen, our American establishment would completely disappear. There would be only Father Rosati left to maintain it. But he would seem, for even more and better reasons, irreparably exposed to the same result if he were *ad altiora vocatus* ["called to higher things"]. Consequently I assure you that I am tired of living; I would like to pull myself away. It is time for me not to go higher but lower. I do not want to clothe myself but rather to be stripped. Hence I prefer to die with weapons in my hands, since the time for rest has not yet arrived. An eternity of rest is good enough for a fool like me, but it is quite another thing to work and to govern a diocese where there is every difficulty imaginable and where the smallest imprudence could ruin everything. At present, I still pull the cart as vicar general, but I would rather let that go, and I hope soon

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648 Rosati reported that, during De Andreis's years in Rome, the pope himself had suggested that he might be made a bishop: "We should not lose sight of this worthy priest. Men like him should be placed on bishops' thrones." (Rosati, "Life," Summarium, 47-48; another instance on 62.)

649 A commonplace expression, based on *hominis est ...* ["it is human to change one's plan"], which De Andreis incorrectly attributes to the author of the biblical book of Proverbs.

650 Probably John Baptist David, S.S., as coadjutor of Bardstown, Kentucky. He was elected to this position 4 July 1817, but consecrated only 15 August 1819.

651 The writer means that his being made a bishop would be the result of Baccari's laziness in not objecting; Baccari is obliged to object from justice, piety and religion.
Correspondence 1819

to succeed. In such a position, although not at the ship’s helm, I am nonetheless in a position to understand the huge gulf between pastoral duties and my dispositions for them. Hence, nothing could drag me into it, and with me, drag down endless souls. What use would it have been then for me to have come seeking a desert in America to hide in and disappear? I hope that this suffices to let you enter into my feelings. Espouse my cause and take my part, and so I will rest secure.

In another letter of mine I spoke to you of the project of sending me a family of farmers accompanied by one of our priests. A more favorable opportunity to carry out this project could not present itself, since the bearer of this letter, as you can find out from him in person, has the same plan himself, and he will not stop until he completes it. If it seems right, you will be able to come to an agreement with this same person about the method, the arrangement and the passage. Should it ever happen, as it could, that this letter reaches you by another means, the bearer will, nevertheless, not miss the opportunity of making himself known over there.

This last week we held the first communion of about forty young boys and girls, with great satisfaction and many tears, and for the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin [15 August] we will have another group of them. It is also quite consoling for me to hear a former prostitute tell me: Since you arrived in this area, no one has touched me. Then a blasphemer tells me: Since you began the instructions I have not blasphemed or sworn. Another infidel assures me that the first communion of the children induced him to be baptized, etc. Yet amid these consolations there sometimes develop very sharp thorns. For example, two days ago I was forced to deny ecclesiastical burial to a former Parisian from a leading family who had died without letting me or another priest come to see him. Several times during his illness we arrived to minister to him. This is a very serious matter in this area, so much so that another priest, who denied burial to a vile slave living in concubinage, barely escaped with his life, since his assembled relatives are bound by blood ties to the main families. This makes me see that God watches over us in a special way, because everything passed with the greatest tranquility. Even though they had protested to me that they would first bury me and then bury or have someone

652 Letter 65, 26 April 1819.
653 Jean Daniel Levy, the convert from Judaism, baptized by the bishop. (See Letters 50 and 51, of 17 and 26 June 1818.)
Correspondence 1819

bury the impenitent man, they were persuaded greatly by my unworthiness to merit martyrdom.654

We have a great need here of English books. The few that are here are very expensive. I know that over there you can find them sometimes, and quite often in the bookstalls, as they call them, and because purchasers are few, they are available very cheaply. I myself have bought many there for less than one scudo. Consequently, inasmuch as the good of our mission moves you, please pay attention to this and get us some. Father Grassi, who has not been in the west of America beyond the Alleghenies, thinks that books are abundant here, such as they are in Maryland, Pennsylvania, and especially in Washington and Georgetown, but he is quite mistaken. If there is an area or an institution where books are necessary, it is without doubt this area and this institution.

At Monte Citorio I sometimes had to look for additional work for myself, and it seems to me that more than half my fingers were idle, but here I am loaded with jobs and I am tired of listening ad nauseam to paradoxes and paralogisms being repeated. At Rome these are found only in books of theology called Objecta Adversariorum ["the objections of adversaries"]. They are cabbages fried and refried, cooked and recooked, pounded and repeated, and they get up every day to sally forth as if they had just been born. This calumny has been shown to be

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654 The same incident is reported with greater detail in the Paris biography:

One time there was a question of giving ecclesiastical burial to an old Parisian who lived with a woman publicly; he died without having given the least signs of repentance and after refusing the assistance of the Church. Father De Andreis, who had at that time gone to bed because of a headache, was asked [about this] by a clergyman [Niell]. He absolutely refused ecclesiastical burial; the bishop had been leaning toward granting it, but he appreciated Father De Andreis's repugnance. He spoke about this with him; the discussion was lively and at the end the bishop went to the church and found the people before the door, and they brought in the body. As soon as he [Dubourg] went up in the pulpit, both with words and with the spirit of Saint John Chrysostom and Saint Ambrose, he said, "You may pull me in pieces," he cried out, "before making me disobey the laws of the Church." Those who were present were in confusion and left in silence; they brought the body with them and buried it in the woods.

(Notices VI, 439.) Borgna reports the same incident, adding that the man had died from drink. (Borgna to Casoni, from Fermo, 20 January 1849, in the Archives of the General Curia, Rome, De Andreis collection, Volume I, Part I, Sect. D, inserted after page 300.)
Correspondence 1819

as bright as the sun; but they turn a deaf ear and the same song continues to be sung as if it had never been sung before. It is so horrible to deal with ignorance supported by malice and presumption. This only makes me see more clearly that evil abyss of heresy, and it always makes more clear to me our beautiful and resplendent truth. May it please God to receive the gift of my blood to strengthen it. What a grace this would be. Truth and nothing else. God is truth. Jesus Christ is the truth who prayed for all the true faithful ut sint sanctificati in veritate; fiat, fiat, amen, amen ['they may be sanctified in truth; let it be, let it be, amen, amen'].

My very humble compliments to all, and with the deepest respect I am your most humble
Felix De Andreis
unworthy priest of the Congregation of the Mission.

P.S. Your goodness and zeal for our missions that exudes from every part of your very welcome letter inspires in me the confidence that I employ in mine. I would like to know if the months Father Cellini spent on the journey, as well as the time he spends now at the seminary, might count for the time of his novitiate. Since it is now under construction and poor Father Rosati is very busy, he can scarcely follow any of the exercises of the novitiate, since he is busy with distracting duties, and it is impossible to give him a place here, as I have tried in vain. Besides, although I have not yet seen him, the bishop writes me that he is a precious subject, and Father Rosati is taken with him, especially because of his great attachment to our Congregation and his genuine spirit. If you agree that, however he has spent them, the last two years since his admission constitute a considerable time of strict novitiate, I will admit him to vows.

You cannot believe our great need of another good brother. Brother Blanka is excellent, but he is alone. We do not have here the three or even four postulants and the novice who recently came. Here artisans are haughty, and one has to pay them reverence. Even if you would pay double the price, you would not find a shoemaker who would want to adjust a stitch on a shoe, and likewise when shoes and clothes are in need of repair, the matter is desperate. We would have to throw them away. Everyone is equal .... We need more brothers who have

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655 See John 17:17, and the conclusion to various psalms.
656 Francis Cellini, Philip Borgna, Anthony Potini, Brother Bartholomew Bettelani. Cellini was a novice, as was Brother Bettelani.
made their vows and who are very much attached to their vocation. Otherwise, they are in great danger of being lost. With time, we will perhaps be able to find postulants among the Americans. I have written you once before about admitting ordained men and candidates for ordination *título missionis* ["to the title of the mission"], and I am waiting for your answer.

**Addressed:** To Most Reverend Father Francisco Baccari, Priest and Pro-Vicar General of the Congregation of the Mission, Monte Citorio, Rome.

**In another hand:** De Andreis. Received 26 June 1821.

**69. TO FELIX DE ANDREIS, C.M., SAINT LOUIS**

Assumption Parish [Louisiana]
3 September 1819

Dear Father,

This is the first time that I have taken the liberty of writing you, at least to have the consolation of asking for some advice and for a little courage in the exercise of my difficult ministry. I have always been against burdening myself with parish ministry, and in my own country perhaps I would have been able to have a parish, but the fear of burdening myself with such a great weight has made me prefer an assignment that took me elsewhere. Yet, to admit this has terrified me, and I have not looked for it. The result is that Father [Giuseppe] Tosi, your confrere, in some way obliged me to do so, and I did not have the courage to resist him because of my esteem for his holiness. So, now I find myself in charge of a parish where I think I have 20,000 souls scattered over more than 50 leagues. I always encounter the most difficult cases that bishops would decide in Europe. But I am here alone, with no one of experience to whom I can turn to ask for advice.

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657 Letter 53, 3 September 1818.
659 Giuseppe Tosi (1769-1842), a Vincentian priest at the seminary of Piacenza, which Bigeschi had attended.
Correspondence 1819

I have consulted with an old Spaniard, but he did not satisfy me. The Italians are young and have had no practice in this region. Those who might be able to console me are too far away.

The administration of all the sacraments here is more difficult than elsewhere and, as inexperienced and ignorant as I am, I find myself in this abyss without seeing when I can escape. I assure you, dear Father, that I have often drenched with my tears the bread I eat and the roads I tread. In everything, I see what I lack. I have an enormous negligence, extreme tepidity. What can I do in such a difficult post?

Yesterday, two Spanish girls came to go to confession. They are twenty years old, but have not yet made their first communion. One of them wanted to get married in two weeks. They have not learned one syllable of the catechism, and said only that they knew the basic prayers. There is nothing else in this than the fear of not being able to get married. This fear drives them to learn the catechism, since my predecessor was very insistent on not giving the sacrament of matrimony to anyone who had not received the sacrament of the eucharist. Once I open this door, I am done with.

Most of them do not take care to become instructed. What to do in such difficult cases? I cannot burden myself with the instruction of the Spaniards, since I do not know the language, and they do not speak French. A quarter of my parish is inhabited by Spaniards. If they are refused marriage, they go to the justice of the peace. I see what a labyrinth exists for me, a person of no experience.

Here the blacks are made to work on feast days, with the excuse of fearing a revolt, and of keeping them from being given as prey to all sorts of vices. If the masters come to confession, and, for the reasons mentioned, do not want to desist from making their slaves work, then absolution may be given to them.

This is a little sketch of the thorns to be found in the exercise of parish functions. Dear Father, please examine whether I could do enough so as not to want to leave the parish. I have always had the wish to give missions for idolaters, but I see that I do not merit this favor. Nonetheless, I feel this desire. In your charity, please tell me if you think this is a temptation or a vocation.

Tichitoli is in a good house some five leagues from here to be purged, something he needed. I have received news about him that he

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660 Perhaps Bernardo de Deva, a Spanish Capuchin, and founder of the parish; he died in 1826.

661 These priests were mainly those recruited by Dubourg for his diocese.
vomited up a great deal of bile, and that he is now well. The doctor caring for him assures me that his chest is very good, and that after this purge he will put on a lot of weight. I wrote the bishop about him, but I do not think that he will be able to remain alone in a parish. He does not yet have the necessary reflection, since he finds himself embroiled in tiny details, and doubts of conscience torment him. In a parish he needs to be carefully controlled. Yet I see that he is doing very great good in the confessional, and that God grants him some special illumination.

Please recommend me to God, so that I might do his will, and that I might once be converted.

With all respect, I have the honor of calling myself,

your most devoted servant,

Joseph Bigeschi\textsuperscript{662}

\textit{Addressed}: Monsieur, Monsieur De Andreis, Vicar general, Territory of Missouri, Saint Louis of the Illinois [\textit{in another hand}: Missouri].

\textit{Postmark}: New Orleans, Sept. 23.

\textsuperscript{662} Joseph Bigeschi was a diocesan priest from Florence who arrived with several others in early 1817. The bishop stationed him at Assumption parish where he remained until his return to Europe in 1827. Little is known of him.
Correspondence 1819

70(a). TO FRANCESCO ANTONIO BACCARI, C.M., PRO-VICAR GENERAL, ROME

Saint Louis
23 September 1819

Dear Father:

I am taking advantage of the departure of several priests for Lower Louisiana to send you this letter. It has been 22 months now since I separated from dear Father Rosati on the banks of the Mississippi, and from that point on I have not been able to see him again. However, a few days ago, I was able to embrace him again. On that occasion, I was able to shed the responsibility for the English, which I gave to him. Afterward, I was able myself to give the retreat for the ordinands. During my poor retreat conferences I took as a theme the motto of the United States, *E pluribus unum* ["One out of many"]. I will be happy if I succeed. Please help me with your prayers and those of the Congregation, since I am convinced that a great good depends on this.

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664 This was temporary, lasting only during Rosati’s visit, which lasted for about a month, from at least 22 August to 12 September, according to his notes, “Funzioni.” (Copy in DRMA, Rosati papers.)

665 His care was to assure that the future priests from various countries would become united.
Father Rosati’s presence has caused a scruple to develop in me: should I not go instead to replace him in running the seminary, which is what our formal mission has been, and leave him here to fulfill the office of vicar general, and to see to all the other needs? I proposed this plan to the bishop, but he opposed it very strongly for many personal and local reasons. To reassure my conscience, we left the decision to some wise priests who had been called to a meeting for this purpose. Among these was Father Rosati himself. It was decided that I could go in good conscience, but that I should remain a little while longer until the seminary is completed, provided someone from elsewhere could take my place. One of the reasons put forward was my health. Last winter, I suffered ferocious erysipelis of the brain. Although it left me wavering between time and eternity, it has now somewhat improved.

You tell me in your letters of being burdened *ultra vires* [“beyond your strength”]. I could say the same, but it should not be concluded from this that it is just that my strength is weak. Yet, so that they might know something to glorify God about, to whom alone the glory is due, the number of baptized adults is large. Several times I have baptized an entire pew at one time during the High Mass. I explained one by one all the ceremonies of baptism to a huge crowd of people. These people are partly Indian, partly half-breeds, and come from all sorts of sects or nations. We always have catechumens to instruct, the sick to visit—who sometimes become Catholics on their deathbeds—and other services that always occupy us. I can say that the confessional has become our daily post. Preaching is very frequent, since there is not a marriage or a baptism without preaching, and often, too, at funerals. Frequently several times a day there are both French and English sermons.

During next month, October, I will go with a Flemish priest to give a mission at Portage des Sioux, where Father Acquaroni fulfills the duties of pastor. I am here alone with only one novice, a German priest. I had to put him into my room to leave the building for another

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666. Erysipelis is characterized by high fevers and severe skin blisters. See Letters 63-64.

667. An allusion to 1 Cor 10:13, “God is faithful and will not let you be tried beyond your strength.”

668. He seems to mean that his spiritual life and abilities are also weak.

669. Probably Francis Niel, ordained a priest in Saint Louis, 19 March 1818.

670. Francis X. Dahmen, ordained in Saint Louis only two weeks previously, 5 September 1819. He did not take vows, however, until 28 May 1821.
Correspondence 1819

use. There should be others, since they are asking to be received as novices, excellent prospects all, but I have to wait to accept them since there is no proper room.

Concerning the novice or postulant brothers, I have a plan to propose to you. We are here in the greatest need of brothers, and it would not be difficult to have some free blacks or mulattos, but once we begin to admit these "people of color," as they say here, the matter is over. No white man will ever want to be associated with them, since there is a prejudice deeply rooted here that a white man would disgrace himself by being associated with those people. Another means might be, therefore, with papal permission, to found a kind of third class, coadjutors distinct from the regular brothers. This would hold only for America, because of the special conditions in this country. The bishop and Father Rosati have made this suggestion to me at various times. I await thoughts about this.

When the bishop was in Paris [he received] from Father Verbert, the vicar general there, with all the most authentic documents, an important relic of Saint Vincent, that is, his kneecap. He was kind enough to divide it with us after breaking it down the middle, and he gave us a superb reliquary to contain our half. The other half he has kept for his cathedral, whose secondary patron is Saint Vincent. His feast is celebrated as a double of the first class with an octave, since the first patron ab antiquo ["from the beginning"] has been Saint Louis, who gives his name to the city and to all of Louisiana. To hold the relic reserved for the cathedral, he would be delighted to have a gilded wooden bust depicting Saint Vincent, with an opening

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671 Dubourg made the same suggestion to Philippine Duchesne concerning the Sacred Heart nuns, as reported in Paiseant, Les années pionnières, L69, p. 283, 15 November 1819.

672 The word is missing in the original.

673 Charles Emmanuel Verbert, French vicar general from 12 August 1816 to 4 March 1819.

674 This event took place 16 May 1817 at the chapel of the Daughters of Charity, 140 rue du Bac, Paris, where the body of Saint Vincent was then kept. The records specify that Verbert opened the oak box containing the saint's bones, removed the right kneecap and, in the presence of several Vincentian priests and Daughters of Charity, gave it to the bishop. Bishop Dubourg brought his half of the relic with him to Montauban when he left the United States. It was later given to the Vincentian Province of Toulouse, whose provincial gave it to the Cathedral of Saint Vincent de Paul in Fort-Dauphin, Madagascar. There is no record today of where the other half of this relic is now, whether it was ever divided, or whether the requested reliquary was ever made or delivered. See [Alphonse Vandamme], Le Corps de Saint Vincent de Paul (Abbeville: Paillart, 1913), 82-83, 212.
Correspondence 1819

in the chest to hold the sacred pledge. I now ask you to get this for us, and find the way to give this worthy bishop this small token of our gratitude for the many benefits that we receive continuously from him. Thus, at the first opportunity of sending something else, you could send us something beautifully made in those parts.

I would like to be able to give you a complete report of our establishment, which consists in a square mile of land probably completely uncultivated since the time of Adam. The building will be habitable this coming November. The expenses occurred in this country for construction are incredible. For this reason, we are making all the economies we can. Each one lends a hand. Father Cellini works all day long like a common laborer, and the bishop himself has no problem with working and helping to carry lumber and spending the whole day supervising and encouraging the work under the blazing sun until nightfall. I hope to be able to include a little sketch of the design for you. Up to now, the seminary exists in a poor and badly built log cabin, called here a log house. Our rules and our exact daily schedule have been introduced there as far as the situation allows. They live extremely poorly. There is bread baked on the hearth, fresh water in place of wine, sometimes meat, sometimes not, potatoes, cabbages and vegetables. Dinner normally consists in a porridge of creamed corn, and this is the best gift there is. They sleep as they can, almost one on top of the other, so to speak, and they wear themselves out greatly in the ministry and in teaching.

The extremes of cold and heat here are unbelievable. The ground is stingy in producing edible fruits, but, by contrast, is extremely fertile in insects of every kind. These bother us terribly. I counted up to ten different kinds of little beasts that infest me at night and do not let me sleep. It seems incredible, but I have really succeeded in killing hundreds of bedbugs. Above all there is here a kind of insect unknown over there, called a tick in English. It is like a little scorpion, which gets completely under the skin and makes you see stars. People have told me that someone died for not having been able to pull out the insect from the delicate part where it was hidden. The only way to remove it is to make an incision and then pick it to pieces. To kill it you have to get it out as quickly as possible with a tweezers. Excuse me for dwelling on these details. I think that this might satisfy the curiosity of those who love knowing about everything.

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675 See item 70(b) below.
I assure you that when I think of Italy, it seems to me like an earthly paradise in comparison with America. I do not understand why so many Europeans come to submit to so many problems and privations for a miserable grant of land. Were it not for the glory of God and for the salvation of souls, I would not stay here even if I were gilded with all the gold in the world. Consequently, those determined to come should have a great hunger for souls; otherwise, they will not remain. If they have this hunger, fine, but they should realize that will have ways of satisfying it here. This is not the way it is over there, where, if I do not do something well, someone else will do it instead, and better than I. Here, however, you can say that in nearly everything that is done, if I had not come, it certainly would not be done. The reason is that even now with all the many priests who have come, we act as if each one were acting alone, since each one has enough and more than enough to occupy him. And so, when someone is needed for a work, there is no question of supplying another as happens over there, but rather of letting the work go. For this reason, our souls get so rusted out that our arms droop. The more the work, the greater the need. The other day 676 I went to visit a Catholic who was dying in a completely Protestant family. I ministered to him and while I was saying goodbye, the father of the family came up to me and declared that his entire family wanted to become Catholics. I clasped him to my chest and encouraged him that with instruction he would be ready to be baptized. There are many scenes like this, and there is no time for pitched battles: sustine … tentationes Dei ["bear with the trials from God"]. 677 The demon does not sleep. He directs all his efforts to disturb the good. The other day a troop of Protestant ministers arrived here from New York to uphold the falling Dagon. 678 Hi in curribus et hi in equis, nos autem in nomine Dei nostri ["Some are strong in chariots; some, in horses; but we are strong in the name of the Lord, our God"]. 679 Here, heretics are starting to disappear, but [there are] 680 states among the United States without any Catholics at all, and they are not even known there. What good could be done in time!

I have to say candidly that I have a little problem with what I wrote on a previous page: "fresh water in place of wine," since I would not

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676 The word is missing in the original.
677 Sir 2:3 (Vulgate).
678 1 Sam 5:3.
679 Ps 20:8.
680 The word is missing in the original.
Correspondence 1819

like to leave anything doubtful or exaggerated. That is true of the seminary, but here, at the bishop’s table, there is a watery beer, and, to my embarrassment, I make use of wine for my stomach, even though it costs one dollar a bottle. It is true that I follow the letter of the rule, *aqua plurima diluto* [“(wine) diluted with plenty of water”], since a little bottle is enough to redden the water for an entire day. My illness follows me everywhere to turn me away conclusively from my self-love, provided I do not talk about it. The clever tempter always finds ways to gain access and rise to the surface. Infelix ego homo. *Quis me liberabit de corpore mortis huius* [“Miserable one that I am. Who will deliver me from this mortal body”]?

I beg your prayers, that my foolishness not cause the destruction of God’s work!

With profoundest respect and veneration for you,
your most humble, devoted and obedient servant,
Felix De Andreis
unworthy priest of the Congregation of the Mission.

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681) Common Rules, 4:3.
682) Rom 7:24.
Letter, with sketch of the seminary at the Barrens.
Copy courtesy of the author

A detail of De Andreis' sketch of the Seminary at the Barrens.
Copy courtesy of the author
The inside of the building is divided, as usual, into corridors, large rooms and private bedrooms. To save space, some corridors have to serve also as dormitories for the seminarians. During the day, their beds will be raised up into a sort of wardrobe, and will stay out of sight. The large rooms will be used for classes, a study hall and recreation room, office, library and one [is set aside] for the internal seminary [novitiate]. There are four on each floor. The dining room, the kitchen and the pantry with the storeroom are in a semi-basement. The harsh cold of this climate has obliged me to agree to have eight heated rooms. In all, there will be room for 24 persons, with 15 chimneys.

A large courtyard, a farmyard and adjoining garden. The building is 60 feet long, 37 wide. It has three floors, with the storeroom in the basement.

A considerable part of the land has already been planted to meet the most urgent needs, and if the 640 acres are put into cultivation, there will be no need for more land. But where will we find the hands? The seminary is already provided with horses, cows, and other necessary animals, but it is located in the middle of woods 25 miles away from Sainte Genevieve, the closest city, or rather village, where everything is lacking.

There is a population to form the parish, but the houses are scattered all over an area of 20 or 30 miles, with the closest house half a mile away. They are all farmers, country people who work their own lands and live in the direst need.

Next year, I hope to see everything finished, and to move there in person, *vita comite* ["if I am still alive"] and to lay my bones there, *ut ibi requiscant in pace* ["that they may rest there in peace"].
Correspondence 1819

71. TO FELIX DE ANDREIS, C.M., SAINT LOUIS\textsuperscript{663}

Bordeaux
24 November 1819

Father, I received your two letters dated 10 August and 8 December 1818 at almost the same time.\textsuperscript{664} The first informed me of the decline in your health, and I learned of your pains and the dangers that you have run during Lent. Thanks be to God that you are with my brother on that dear mission.

Take care of yourself. If chocolate does you some good, use it. You ought to have some by now. I sent to my brother a box that left here 1 August this year, but I am afraid that it might not arrive in as good a condition as the first one. Please tell me about it frankly, so that I might not neglect to take needed precautions. Besides, this last box is inside an even larger one sealed with tar. I had it double wrapped in tin. Without realizing that this large box would have to be emptied at New Orleans, the chocolate will have to make its own trip to Saint Louis, and it might spoil en route. Please be so kind as to tell me a word about it.

Father Vincent [Wlechmans] thanks you for your remembrance. His health is still flourishing; his house is prospering, and it is very edifying. It has been asked to form a new establishment at Libourne.

The archbishop [Aviau] enjoys better health, although he had two very serious falls. He just purchased a chapel dedicated to the Holy Virgin under the name of Our Lady of Verdelais, where two very visible miracles took place this year. One woman, sick for 15 or 18 years. (Madame de Camiran) used to vomit up all her food one hour after eating. She went to Verdelais, and after mass she ate a fine breakfast. She returned for her husband, not expecting a miracle, and saw him putting away all that she had taken, yet she kept her breakfast down and did not vomit afterwards.

Father [Guillaume] Soupre, pastor of Sainte Croix, became deaf to the point of not being able to hear a cannon close to his ears. He was struck by paralysis on his right side, and so he spent all his funds at the Faculty [of Medicine], which decided that it could provide no other

\textsuperscript{663} Letter 71. Autograph letter, French, two pages, with address, in SLAA, De Andreis papers.

\textsuperscript{664} These two letters are no longer extant.
Correspondence 1819

remedies. Then he thought about agreeing, with shame, to submit his resignation to the bishop, and to retire to Cadillac [tear]. People gathered to ask for his cure from God through the intercession of his most holy mother. They held a novena at Verdelais, and each one said his mass in turn, with Father Soupre in attendance. On the last day, young De Selau, whom my brother knows, was celebrating. At the Our Father, Father Soupre said in a low voice to the person next to him: "I am healed. I can hear the Our Father." Many people attended, but he did not say anything until after mass. Then, when the priest had gone to the sacristy, he went to announce the miracle, and intoned the Te Deum. The witnesses signed.685

After these two events the bishop acquired that chapel. He is going to provide there for the elderly priests who can no longer work in their parishes because of their advanced age.

The weather is turning marvelous. They are pressing us for our letters. I have only the time to recommend myself to your good prayers, and to offer you my profound respect.

Widow Fournier, née D[u]B[ourg]

Addressed: Father De Andreis, Missionary of Louisiana, Saint Louis, Upper Louisiana

In another hand: 1819, 24 November, Bordeaux, Madame Fournier

685 These events are recounted in Patrick J. O'Reilly, Histoire de Verdelais (Bazas: Labarrière, n.d.); and R.P. de Rouvray, Histoire du pelerinage de Notre Dame de Verdelais (Paris: Grasset, 1953). The date of Mme. de Camiran's cure is given as 9 July 1819.
Correspondence 1819

I will not try to describe our situation here because at your convenience you can learn of it directly from the bearer of this letter, who stayed with us for several months. There is no more fitting situation for a missionary, I think, than to fulfill the three ends of our institute: one’s own sanctification, the sanctification of the clergy, and the sanctification of the country people. What is to be found in a foreign country with strange languages, with usages and customs that vary so much, with persons of different nations and characters, with no other bonds than those of faith and charity? You could not believe how many humiliations, privations, anxieties and harsh problems there are for someone who is found perhaps between a sky of bronze and an earth of iron691 without being able to find any other solution than recourse

691 A reference to Deut 28:23, a curse in the mouth of Moses.
to God for the necessary strength which can contribute greatly to one’s own sanctification.

I do not know if the greater evil in this country has been to have so few priests, or to have some who are evil, and so the greatest need is to form good priests. This is our main occupation. Father Rosati is in charge of our house and seminary, eighty miles from here. As vicar general, I must for the moment remain here beside the bishop where there is a college of young men near the bishop’s house. They form something like another seminary, and I offer courses in theology and philosophy for them. Practically all the people in this area can be called country people because here there is no peasant class. Each one is at the same time both lord and farmer, and the women are called Madame or Lady. One cannot be distinguished by dress. What an opening is being granted to missionary zeal. Beginning with nominal Catholics and then moving through the infinitely diverse ramifications of sects, one also encounters even infidels, atheists and Indians. In the area of the one million square miles that constitute this immense diocese we have a little bit of everything. I gave a retreat a month ago to a monastery of nuns of the Sacred Heart. They came from Paris and are occupied successfully in the education of girls, and they are like angels. Among the Catholics there are those with good hearts, and faith and grace make new conquests daily. I reproach myself continually for my meager zeal. Oh, if you were here, how you would burn, seeing what we see!

The Freemasons hold their public processions in broad daylight with their weapons, their ornaments, their coats of arms, their symbols, with a band etc., and they cannot be forbidden. Besides, everything works toward keeping Catholics from taking part; at least human respect keeps them from doing so.

In the public streets of the city [Indian] men walk about practically naked with that same nakedness with which our crucified Lord is depicted. Their shoes are made of skins as is the covering hanging upon their back, with earrings and nose rings, with feathers on their head, their faces painted in various colors. These are the poor Indians. The women wear a type of trousers and a jerkin almost like one of our men. They have masculine faces, and wear a wool blanket on their

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692 De Andreis would go to the Sisters again to celebrate the feast of the Sacred Heart, 8-9 June 1820.

693 Letter 51, 26 June 1818.
Correspondence 1819

back. It is adjusted in such a way as to form a kind of hood on their shoulders, and there they carry their babies.

You should hear the wild declamations of Protestant ministers who rage and gnash their teeth against us. They avail little or nothing with those [Indian] people, for they despise them. If they do not become Catholic, only laziness will prevent them. Their meetings are deserted and each one runs to ours.\(^{694}\) They say that it is important to have a religion, and there is no reason to hesitate, and that they should become Catholics.

In all this an overabundance of zeal on our part would ruin every effort. A certain Protestant minister named Thayer had the grace of converting to Rome when he saw certain miracles which took place there through the intercession of the Venerable [Benedict Joseph] Labre.\(^{695}\) He became a Catholic and was ordained a priest and he returned to America full of zeal for converting all the Protestants. He might have succeeded if he had acted with less ardor, but his zeal was so excitible that it proved to be an insuperable obstacle that ruined all his endeavors.\(^{696}\) Whenever I have spoken forcibly I have had to repent because people began to cry out, “What is this? Do you think that you are preaching in Italy? Doesn’t he realize that we are in a free country? If you keep going like this, we will burn the church and your house.”

We have to move moderately and respect their prejudices. We have to keep ourselves from calling them heretics, and not to profane the names of Luther and Calvin, etc. Otherwise, it is quite certain that no progress

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\(^{694}\) Stephen Hempstead, a practicing Presbyterian, would attend the funeral services for his son-in-law, Manuel Lisa, 13-14 August 1820. The use of Latin left Hempstead mystified. Lisa had been an important figure in the development of the fur trade. De Andreis, however, was not the celebrant for Lisa’s funeral.

[Sunday, 13 August 1820] . . . the Funeral of Manual was attended in the afternoon at the Roman Church—being his request to be Buried there and to have high Mass according to the Order of the Church with the request that I and family would attend.

[Monday, 14 August 1820] I with my family in the forenoon go to the Roman Church and attend Mass by the request of Manual altho to me it was an unknown Tongue not understanding one Sentence of their Ceremony [sic].


\(^{695}\) Benedict Joseph Labre (1748-1783); canonized in 1883.

\(^{696}\) John Thayer (d. 1815), a converted Congregationalist, joined the Church in Rome in 1783, was ordained in Paris in 1787, and returned to Boston in 1790. After some failures in administration, he served in missionary capacities in various places, including Kentucky, where he worked with Father Badin. He retired to Ireland in 1803.
Correspondence 1819

would be made and that we would die as martyrs because of our own imprudence. A Protestant general\(^697\) happened to see, with his own eyes, a priest in a biretta violating the sixth commandment in a meadow with a certain woman.\(^698\) After some time the bishop told me that this priest was me, something that I had not known. I could do nothing but laugh and so did the bishop; but everyone else regarded it as a calumny, since at the very time that it was being spread about, I was in church giving instructions on that same topic with all the simplicity that my conscience inspires. May God be blessed in this. But here is why we should find the wise middle, \textit{ne quid nimis, et ne quid minus} ["not too much and not too little"].\(^699\) It is a matter of attracting souls to God. If what is needed is nerve, then there it is; but this is not a matter of seeing what the proper means is to bring about this effect. This is the main point, \textit{Arundinem quassatam non confringit, et lignum fumigans non extinguet} ["The bruised reed he does not crush; the smoldering wick he does not quench"]\(^700\).

I admit the truth that the sea on which I have embarked is so vast, stormy and strangely varied, that if I could not from time to time glimpse the northern star of God’s will so clearly and brilliantly as to calm my every anxiety, then I would soon go crazy and despair. In vain would I try to describe for you such a state. This is evident in my every expression. Although there are many very distinguished clergy here, I can say \textit{hominem non habeo} ["I have no man"]\(^701\). I myself have to stand and be the support of everyone else without any human support. I have horrible moments in which I am under pressure without finding any means of escape. I am obliged to preach often, and always in foreign languages. I have to expend myself, so to say, to the point of exhaustion to hear confessions every day in one or other language. I have to decide

\(^{697}\) Brevet Brigadier General Daniel Bissell (1768-1833) is the likely author of this slander. After being courtmartialed for “Disobedience to orders; unofficerlike conduct; and ungentlemanly conduct,” General Bissell spent the years 1815 to 1821, the date of his honorable discharge, at Bellefontaine, his estate still standing near Saint Louis. He died there in 1833. (Harold W. Ryan, “Daniel Bissell—His Story,” \textit{Bulletin of the Missouri Historical Society} 12:1 [October 1955]: 32-44.)

\(^{698}\) Literally, “Berta,” a traditional woman’s name in ecclesiastical Latin for “So-and-So.”

\(^{699}\) Probably a commonplace expression, or developed by De Andreis; used in part in Terence, \textit{Andria}, 1,61 (Loeb Classical Library, Terence, 2 vols; vol. 1, 10-11).

\(^{700}\) Matt 12:20.

\(^{701}\) Based on John 5:7 NAB: “I do not have anyone (to plunge me into the pool) . . .
on cases with unimaginable speed; these actually happen here daily. Every day I must always be ready at any time to go and to come on foot or on horseback, to make long trips exposed to heat, cold, hunger, thirst etc., and these at a moment’s notice! One fatigue follows another, one pain follows another without anyone to offer the mutual support available in the [parish] missions over there. Since it is impossible to change clothes after preaching, I always wear wool against my skin, and so after preaching I am no different than before!

Because of the intense cold, I find ice in the chalice some days, even though we have a fire by the altar, without which it would be impossible to celebrate. This morning the precious blood was so stuck to the bottom of the chalice that I needed some time to detach it by placing the chalice near a flame and turning it around and around. The cold of these regions is such that it quickly penetrates the marrow of the bones, as well as the brain, where it seems ready to kill me. Whenever external problems are not joined with internal ones, they are tolerable and even sometimes pleasant; but when the nails of the cross pierce both body and soul, then the poor Adam is destroyed and human strength is really exhausted. The divine is then made more clearly visible than ever.

My main goal here is to build an establishment for the missionaries where regularity is observed in all its vigor. But who am I to so do? I lack only three things to do it: insight, strength and holiness. For this reason I go to the source of all of these, and repeat each day the following prayer, with as much confidence as I can: *Illumina, Domine, tenebras meas claritate sapientiae tuae ut quae agenda sunt videam; adjuva infirmitatem meam potentia virtutis tuae ut ad agenda quae viderint convalescam, vince malitiam meam suavitate gratiae tuae, ut te solum in omnibus quaeram et in te super omnia requiescam* ["O Lord, enlighten my darkness with the light of your wisdom that I may see what I should do. Aid my weakness with the power of your strength that I may be strengthened to do what is to be seen. Conquer my wickedness with the sweetness of your grace that I may seek you alone in all things, and that I may rest only in you"]. Afterward I remain at peace amid all the storms and contradictions, amid all the doubts and anxieties. I rely on this promise: *quodcumque orantes petitis credite quia recipietis, and jacta super Dominum curam tuam et ipse te enutriet* ["whatever you ask in prayer, believe that you will receive"];\(^{702}\) "cast your care upon (the Lord) and he will support

\(^{702}\) Mark 11:24.
Correspondence 1819

After this it seems to me that I will not be far from the place where I will find my peace, since I will then be disposed to conform myself to the meaning of this prayer; besides, I would welcome your advice on this.

Oh, very dear and most venerated Father Depietri, pardon me for this expansion of my heart. How differently I now see the matters than I did when I was in Europe! How much this external and internal solitude, this state of being despoiled and of living precariously contributes to dissipating the clouds of self-love! When Moses and Elijah disappeared, there remained only God and so the transfiguration ended. Oh, God alone! God alone! God alone! In heaven, on earth, everywhere! Really, I have to say this! In God there is no jest; there is no question of giving but of being given, or of sacrificing but of being sacrificed, or of being loaned out but of being immolated without reserve. Oh, if I could put an end to being worried about myself, and be occupied only with the salvation of others! But God’s will can accomplish this. It is enough that we have the strength of reaching the end, of seeing God, or loving him and possessing him, O eterna veritas, O vera charitas, O vera eternitas, tu es ipse Deus meus ad quem suspiro die ac nocte [“O eternal truth, O true charity, O true eternity, you are my God whom I long for day and night”].

Everything in the blink of an eye, God in everything and everything in God. Everything with no relationship to God is darkness, horror and death and nothingness. No creature can prevent the divine will from being fulfilled in us, and we want nothing more and nothing less than this. Sicut fuerit consilium in coelo ita fiat [“As it is willed in heaven, so let it be”]. And so there is no question of doing as much as Saint Francis Xavier did, or Saint Francis Solano, but only as much as the eternal God wants to demand of our weakness and our meanness. This is the sum, the crux, no matter what anyone might say about it to the contrary.

For a hundred different reasons, only Bishop Dubourg himself could have undertaken and sustained this mission. In fact he is, after God, its mover and its principal foundation and, humanly speaking, he seems to be the one who over the years with due firmness established the clear priorities for the works he has undertaken. May God deign to preserve him for us because a great good depends on him. He came

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703 Ps 55:23.
704 Based on Augustine, Confessions, 7,10.
705 Cited loosely from 1 Macc 3:59/60.
here to establish the episcopal see and he found here only a miserable and completely dilapidated hut for one priest, and a tumbledown cabin as a church, along with four acres of land, half of which served as a cemetery, the other half as a garden. He found here hearts little ready to accept him, souls plunged in ignorance, vice, and an almost total forgetfulness of religion. But today what a difference! He has already set up a considerable foundation to sustain his household, a cathedral (perhaps the best in the United States), where he will begin to officiate in a few days. In addition, he has built in various places five or six solid brick churches with a certain magnificence, a college for the education of young people of our sex, and a monastery for the weaker sex. These are already inhabited and functioning. Our seminary and house have become an object of wonder for the Americans. The Catholics call it a “big house” par excellence and the Protestants call it a “papist nest.” In fact, nothing in these regions is more elegant, although we are quite far from having one single side of the Alberoni quadrangle. The desire for change is so great. The church is frequented, the liturgies are celebrated with pomp and propriety. The nourishment of the word of God is abundant. A considerable number of persons frequent the sacraments on great solemnities. About a hundred people come to communion, and many adults are baptized, sinners and heretics converted, marriages legitimized, scandals abolished and much more is expected soon. Except for a large number who are still enemies of religion and who threaten us greatly in their determination to manifest their evil intentions, hearts are generally won and the bark begins to set sail. The bishop unites to his very great talent the fact that he is an American citizen. He has some relatives in New Orleans, and he has many great gifts that make him worthy of esteem and love. He has a prudent zeal, he is active, industrious and tireless.

I am always mindful of the advice concerning the independence of our establishment that you kindly offered me in your room the eve of my departure from the college. You gave me the example of the house of Bastia. I am very much obliged to you for this and because of that I have held several long conversations with the bishop concerning these issues. They resulted in the placing of our establishment on a good foundation with all the proper legalities. He has already signed over 640 acres of land, of which a certain section has already been farmed. I do not know, however, where we will find hands to cultivate the rest. If we had a family of good peasants from Piacenza we would do ourselves great mutual service. If you and others could do this, I would be very grateful. The moment is very opportune; they could
accompany Brother Albasini. You can take this proposal to be as serious or as ridiculous as you wish, but this brother could bring us a little of the good reputation of the Alberoni, and this would be very useful for us.

Brother Blanka has done well for us during the past year, but as he could not find all the medicines, I wound up being a neutrum quid ["big nothing"]. We are in a country full of medicinal plants but we are unable to acquire them. We are in a country of sugar cane, and coffee grows not far from us, yet we pay more for each of them than you do in Italy. In addition, we have here in the Mississippi excellent and abundant fish, and in fact anyone succeeds if they take the trouble to go fishing but I do not know if they do so except occasionally. Such a situation means that this is a young country where, so to say, the basic needs of establishing it absorb all human activity and no thought is given to the indispensable needs of [the spiritual] life.

My poor Italian has already become useless. I use it now only for these letters sent to our correspondents in Italy, and it is beginning to grow rusty. I think that the scholars of the Academy would find many points to correct, and so please pardon them because of the enormous drain caused by our having to translate into French and English all the Italian texts. Since our heads are limited, one idea chases out another, et pluribus intentus minor est ad singula sensus ["the more intent I am to many things, the less care I give to each one"]. At least in all this there is more profit from imitation than less.

I now realize that I have made a mess of this letter. It has no order or design because it was composed at various times during periods of relaxation. And so I hope you will please take it just as it is. Because of my sins I am the one who suffers less than the others. My companions suffer more than I do because they do not have the advantages that I have of being at the bishop’s side and in the capital city. My health seems to have improved daily. Oh, might it still please God to lead me to die in the midst of the Indians. I would reach the summit of my desires. And because it is almost certain that we will never see one another again in this world, we will have certainly enough time to see one another in the next world. I hope to join you there in glory, not because of any merit of mine, but only through the merits of him who came to save poor sinners like me. Nevertheless, how much I would delight in receiving a few lines from your hand. I beg you to permit

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[706] A commonplace expression in scholastic psychology.
that all my good friends and acquaintances, for example Fathers Laura, Rigo, Passeri, Giriodi, Reviglio, De Bernardis ... I don’t know if Fathers [Giuseppe] Martinengo, Bianchi etc., Father [Domenico] Dell’Anna, Briasci, Coppaloni, Gambarelli, [Giuseppe] Bersani etc., and especially Father Concellini, the rector of the Seminary, are still there. I hope they find here a token of my remembrance, esteem and respect, and that they are remembered in the sacrifices of these poor missionaries to the Indians. Immense tracts of land and sea divide us in body, but the same faith and charity unite us in spirit and love, and the same happiness will unite us one day in heaven where only friendship is true, solid and durable. I will never finish. The satisfaction I experience in conversing with you, although at some distance, is holy. Finally, this letter is quite long and tiring. A thousand pardons and believe me to be always filled with the same sentiments of affectionate esteem and sincere veneration for you.

Your most humble and obligated servant,
Felix De Andreis

unworthy priest of the Congregation of the Mission

In another hand: Letter of Father Felix De Andreis to Father De Pietris.
Authentic copy.

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707 Fathers Bianchi, Briasci, Coppaloni, Gambarelli and Concellini may be diocesan priests, since their names are not found on lists of Vincentians. Diocesan clergy often taught at the Alberoni.