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Recollections of the Establishment of the Congregation of the Mission in the United States, Part 3

Joseph Rosati C.M.

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

By Joseph Rosati, C.M.
Translated and annotated by Stafford Poole, C.M.

(The first Vincentians have arrived at Saint Thomas Seminary in Bardstown, Kentucky, the last stage of their journey to Missouri. After almost a year’s delay, they finally reach the Barrens in October of 1818.)

Mr. Deandreis was given charge of the theology class by Mr. David. It was attended by the seminarians of the diocese of Bardstown and by those of Msgr. Dubourg. In that way Mr. David had time to give the missionaries a class in English, which Mr. Deandreis himself attended, his “spelling book” in hand. And indeed, he used to say that the words of Jesus Christ were to be fulfilled in us to the letter, Nisi efficiamini sicut parvuli, non intrabitis in regnum coelorum [“Unless you become like little children, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven.” (Matthew 18:3)]. On the other hand, the holy and learned Mr. David also gladly exchanged his classes in theology for that small class in English and also with equal pleasure took the trouble to stammer for us beginners some insights that
were truly sublime and worthy of him. "What happiness for me," he used to say to his scholars, "to teach you English. I will share in the merits of your labors and when someday you will preach the word of God in the different countries to which you will be sent, I will proclaim it in some way through your mouths."

Under such a capable teacher, the majority of the missionaries made rather rapid progress in English. After only a few months they were in a condition to preach, to hear confessions, to go visit the sick and to exercise all the functions of the ministry. Mr. Rosati preached his first sermon in English at Saint Thomas on Quinquagesima Sunday\(^1\) and continued thereafter to preach from time to time in the same church, at Saint Joseph’s in the town of Bardstown, at Holy Cross, Saint Mary’s, Saint Charles, etc. Mr. Deandreis also gave his first sermon at Saint Thomas on the first Sunday of Lent and continued quite often to administer the word of God in various nearby areas. Mr. Ferrari began his preaching in English at almost the same time. This progress encouraged our missionaries a great deal because the English language had at first frightened them very much.

At the same time they were practicing their French, which they had the opportunity to speak at the seminary. In order to have the opportunity to speak to the seminarians in English, they joined them in their three hours of work which, at that time, they did every day after dinner. They sawed wood with them, not only for the use of the house but also for the different constructions and building projects that were being done. They followed them and helped them in the garden [and] in the fields, and they made it their pleasure to join them in every kind of work. On their walks on their free days, at the other

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\(^1\) The last Sunday before Ash Wednesday.
times of recreation, with an English book in hand, they practiced reading, translating, and they attempted to accustom their foreign voices to the difficulties of English pronunciation. The young American seminarians assisted them in this with the best grace in the world and with admirable patience helped them to acquire the knowledge and use of their language.

At the same time Mr. Deandreis busied himself in their regard with all the duties of a zealous superior. He reminded them of their obligations in his spiritual conferences, he comforted them in their pains, relieved their doubts, built up their courage [and] reanimated their fervor in private interviews that he frequently had with them. He had their confidence and almost all had chosen him as their director and ordinary confessor. Neither did he neglect their needs. With a fatherly solicitude he took care of all their necessities and had a special care for their health, especially when they were not well. Thus he loved them like a father caring for the dearest of his children.\[2\]

On April 12, Mr. Rosati, together with Mr. Chabrat, left Saint Thomas for his first mission and on the 21st they arrived at Vincennes in the State of Indiana, one hundred and fifty miles from Bardstown. This small town is one of the oldest foundations in the entire country. It had been founded by the French. Their descendants still preserved the language and religion of their fathers. There was a log church [and] a house for the pastor, but after the death of Mr. Rivet, in the month of February, 1804, there had not been a resident priest for very many years. They were visited only a few times a year by Mr. Donatien Olivier, the pastor of Prairie du Rocher who, in order to give them the consolations of religion, had to cross the open prairies for a distance of almost two hundred miles. After the erection

\[2\] The translation of these last words is uncertain.
of the diocese of Bardstown, Msgr. Flaget used to visit
them himself on occasions and he sent there in succession
Messrs. Badin, Nerinckx, and Chabrat. These visits had
sustained the Creoles of Vincennes in their religion. Messrs.
Chabrat and Rosati arrived there on April 21, 1817. Since
both at Vincennes and in the neighboring countryside
there were a number of Catholics who spoke English, Mr.
Chabrat took charge of their instruction and entrusted the
care of the Creoles to Mr. Rosati. He preached to them
every Sunday and Holyday in French and taught catechism
in the same language each day to a large number of
children of both sexes who were preparing for their First
Communion. Fifty-two of them had the happiness of
making it on Pentecost Sunday.

At that time a large number of Indians were at
Vincennes, either to sell their furs or for business with the
agents of the American government. Mr. Rosati went to
see them, accompanied by an interpreter. When one of
them, a venerable old man of the Miami nation named The
Owl, learned that he was a priest, he arose, came before
him, gave him hand and said that he saw him with great
pleasure, that he knew that he was the minister of the
Great Spirit, the Master of Life, charged to show to men
both by words and example all that they ought to do, that,
as for himself, being totally ignorant as he was, he never let
a day pass without saying in the morning, "Great Master of
Life, you have preserved me this night. I thank you.
Preserve me also during this day." He told him that he was
happy to possess the papers that the Great Spirit had given
him in order to instruct the others. At the same time he
gave very great signs of respect and friendship.

Some weeks later that same old man fell ill and showed
great pleasure on seeing the priest. Mr. Rosati had been
notified and went without delay to a creole home, where
the good old man had retired. He found him lying on the
floor, covered with a blanket. The Indian sat up immediately and, after having taken Mr. Rosati by the hand, he told him that he was quite ill, that he would not recover, that he did not regret this world, that on the contrary he desired nothing else than to go see the Great Spirit, that he knew that in the condition that he was in it was impossible to go there and that he desired that someone show him the way.

Mr. Rosati took the occasion to speak to him of the necessity of Baptism, instructed him in the principal mysteries of our holy religion and prepared him to be baptized. The Indian showed a great desire to receive this sacrament and, as he was in danger, Mr. Rosati baptized him without delay. When he asked him what name he wished to take, he answered that he wished to be called Michael. After the baptism, Michael did nothing but pray. He was heard to repeat frequently these French words, *Oh, mon Dieu, mon Dieu!* Mr. Rosati went to see him the next day. The poor old man at first made his excuses that he could not speak to him because he was very ill. The next day he died. He was given a solemn funeral. A Mass of Requiem was sung. As he was one of the chiefs of his nation, there was a large number of Indians at his burial, among whom was his son, a pleasant young man who spoke English and who seemed impressed by the ceremonies. He told Mr. Rosati that he would try to die like his father. He was exhorted to have himself instructed in the true religion.

Among the children who frequented Mr. Rosati's instructions, there was one named Simon Petit la Lumiere. He was very attached to the two missionaries and he was almost always with them. He manifested a great desire to follow them and to go to the seminary. Consent was obtained from his grandfather, for he had lost his parents. He then went with Messrs. Chabrat and Rosati to Saint
Thomas Seminary, where he persevered in his vocation. After his ordination to the priesthood, he was sent to Indiana where he did a great deal of good. He is now (in 1840) the Vicar General of the Bishop of Vincennes.

In the month of September, 1817, at the end of the retreat that the priests and brothers of the Congregation made according to their custom, some letters were received from Baltimore that announced the welcome arrival of Msgr. Dubourg with a very numerous company of priests, young ecclesiastics, and pious laity who were devoting themselves to the missions of his diocese. Msgr. Dubourg asked his venerable confrere, the Bishop of Bardstown, to please go to Saint Louis together with Mr. Andreis [sic] and some other missionary in order to announce to the Catholic inhabitants of the area his intention of living among them with the majority of his clergy and of setting up in their city some establishments for the religious and literary education of their children.

Msgr. Flaget gladly lent himself to the wishes of his old friend and on October 2 set out on horseback for Saint Louis with Messrs. Deandreis and Rosati and Brother Blanka. It was a trip of more than three hundred miles [and] the routes were then bad and difficult. They got lost many times and one night, in the deepest darkness, they were on the point of falling off a cliff when, by a disposition of Providence, the horses refused to go on. They stopped, lighted a fire and retraced their steps. Another time, after having been exposed to the rain for a long time, they could scarcely find a way of drying their clothes in the homes where they stopped, and sometimes they did not find any food there. The venerable Bishop of Bardstown, accustomed [to this] after so many years of his laborious ministry during which, according to his own account, he had become identical with his horse, sympathized with the new missionaries and encouraged
them by his example.

After a journey of nine days, they finally reached Kaskaskia [Illinois], a village that is almost entirely Catholic and French, one of the most ancient foundations in that country. It had formerly been the center of the Jesuit Fathers’ missions among the Indian nations that lived in those vast and beautiful regions in large numbers. Mr. Deandreis and his companions were moved to tears when, on descending the hills that bordered the other side of the river [the Mississippi], [on] that magnificent plain on which the village was located, they saw rise up the spire of the church steeple, crowned by the Cross. They paid reverence to the sign of our redemption which at that time one so rarely saw look down on the towns and villages of the United States. Their emotion was renewed again in a pleasant way when, having come down to the house of Colonel Pierre Menard, one of the most respected citizens of Illinois, they heard the sound of a large and beautiful bell which after sundown invited the faithful to recall the great mystery of the Incarnation of the Eternal Word and to recite the prayers of the Angelus. These Catholic customs, together with many others that are very appropriate to sustain the faith and support piety among the faithful, have been faithfully preserved in the parishes inhabited by the descendants of the French (who are called Creoles) throughout the country. Msgr. Flaget and the missionaries whom he was leading were now able to relax from the fatigues of their long and laborious journey amid the care that Mr. Menard and his estimable family showed them under their hospitable roof. 3

The holy Bishop of Bardstown had already visited this region and had given some missions there with great

3Pierre Menard (1766-1844) was a fur trader, merchant, and first Lieutenant-Governor of Illinois. He was very important in the early history of southern Illinois.
success and there had administered the Sacrament of Confirmation. There he had earned the esteem and affection of the Creoles and of the Americans and on his return to his diocese had taken with him the hearts of the inhabitants of the entire region. Thus they had learned with joy of his arrival and hurried to visit him. The missionaries could well congratulate themselves on entering the country which they were to cultivate under such auspices. In the morning they all had the happiness of celebrating Holy Mass in the parish church. It no longer had a resident pastor. The venerable Mr. Olivier, pastor of Prairie du Rocher, was in charge of it and he came there to officiate one or two Sundays a month. As soon as that holy priest had been informed of the arrival of Msgr. Flaget at Kaskaskia, he went in haste and, after having presented his respects to Monseigneur, he embraced the missionaries and congratulated himself on having from then on a good number of coworkers who had come to share his apostolic labor.  

Messrs. Olivier and Menard accompanied them to the shores of the Mississippi. In a small ferryboat they crossed this magnificent river, which is almost a mile wide, even more than thirteen hundred miles from its mouth. On the other side they found Mr. Henri Pratte, the pastor of Sainte Genevieve, with a goodly number of his parishioners. Msgr. Flaget and the missionaries were all lodged with the pastor, near the church, and were heaped with care and friendship by Mr. Pratte, his family, and all the people in the parish, who on other occasions had distinguished themselves above all the other Catholic population of the region by their eagerness and zeal to profit by the instructions of Msgr. Flaget. They were particularly devoted to him and he for his part cherished

4 Father Olivier apparently believed that the missionaries were going to remain in that area.
them like well-beloved children. The young priest was a native of Sainte Genevieve. He had made his studies and been ordained to the priesthood in Canada. He had returned only two years before and been given charge of the parish by Msgr. Flaget. He had worked with great zeal and success to sustain in it the fervor that Msgr. Flaget’s mission had inflamed in the hearts of the inhabitants. He was cherished and esteemed by all.

On the following day, Sunday, Mass was celebrated in the Church of Sainte Genevieve. Mr. Deandreis sang the parish Mass and Msgr. Flaget preached in French. After Vespers he gave a second sermon and announced the purpose of his journey. He spoke to them of their new Bishop, of the numerous colony that he was bringing with him, of his intention of fixing his dwelling in the region, and of procuring for them a great number of spiritual and temporal advantages, especially that of giving a good religious and literary education to their children. He observed to them that no choice had yet been made, either with regard to the Bishop’s residence or with regard to the establishments to be made; that due regard would be paid to the zeal that the inhabitants would show for having these establishments] and the ease with which the resources presented would enable the projects that they had to be carried out. He concluded his talk by inviting the heads of families to assemble at the rectory in the morning.

The majority of the fathers of families assembled at the pastor’s home on the following Monday and Tuesday. Msgr. Flaget, Pastor Pratte, Messrs. Deandreis and Rosati were present. There was a great deal of talking and a manifestation of a desire to have some establishment for the instruction of the young people, but nothing special was decided on. An estimable old man cried out, “Ah, I see well that Pain Court [short of bread] has won out over Misere [wretched].” On that occasion he was a prophet.
Pain Court was a nickname that the inhabitants of the region gave to Saint Louis and Misere was the nickname for Sainte Genevieve.

On the following Wednesday, Msgr. Flaget, accompanied by the missionaries, was escorted to the river by the pastor and a number of parishioners. They crossed it on a small platform of planks on two canoes or hollowed-out tree trunks and, having arrived at the other side, they found Mr. Olivier there with a number of parishioners from Prairie du Rocher, where they went to spend the night. The following morning, after having celebrated Holy Mass, they were rejoined by the pastor of Sainte Genevieve who accompanied them to Saint Louis. In the evening they reached Cahokia and spent the night at Mr. Garrot's. At that time Mr. Savine was the pastor of that parish. He lived on a small farm a mile from the church. They saw him the next day.

Finally, they reached Saint Louis which at that time was little more than a small village. Almost all the houses were of wood. The streets were not paved and the houses there were strewn at intervals along First and Second Streets. There was none along the riverbank. The church was a poor and small frame building. It was on Second Street. To the north was a cemetery and to the south a stone house for the pastor, in very poor condition. It was divided by a wooden partition into two rooms, one large and one small. The whole thing presented a picture of desolation. For many years there had been no resident priest. Mr. Savine, the pastor of Cahokia in Illinois, six miles from Saint Louis, came there to officiate every third Sunday. In the small room, a bed was prepared for Msgr. Flaget, while the others slept on the floor in the same room on buffalo skins. General Pratte, the pastor's brother, wanted Msgr. Flaget to stay with him, but he did not wish to leave the missionaries. It was he who sent
breakfast to the rectory every morning and offered his table for the other meals during the stay that they made in Saint Louis.

On Sunday, October 19, Msgr. Flaget sang Mass and preached in French. After Vespers he preached in English. Msgr. Flaget, who was well known and very much esteemed in Saint Louis as well as in all the territory that he had visited while he was pastor of Vincennes and after he was Bishop of Bardstown, called together an assembly of inhabitants and spoke to them of the motive that had brought him to visit them. In general, they showed a great desire to have the Bishop in their town. They commissioned Msgr. Flaget to request that of him on their behalf and promised to cooperate to the best of their abilities with the establishments that he was proposing to make. There was, in truth, some one person who gave a long talk by which, while appearing to view with pleasure the establishment of a bishop in Saint Louis, he strained to prove that the inhabitants of that parish ought not for that reason do any more than all the others in the territory, who had an equal interest in it; that before supporting a bishop and the establishments that he wished to make, the land adjacent to the church, together with the house that was there, because they were for the use of the pastor of the parish, ought not and could not be given to the Bishop. This man was allowed to talk on. He was known as a person who had no religious feelings. Msgr. Flaget contented himself with saying that the Bishop was not coming in order to ask them for a livelihood; that neither he nor the establishments that he would make would be at the expense of the inhabitants; that since he had been commissioned by Msgr. Dubourg to make whatever determination he might judge most suitable as to the residence and the location of the establishments to be made, he saw with pleasure their good dispositions, he
accepted their offer in the name of Msgr. Dubourg, and he assured them that Saint Louis would be the place of residence of Msgr. Dubourg and the center of his principal establishments. It was decided that there should be some immediate repairs on the parish house in order to make it livable. Msgr. Flaget directed Pastor Pratte to supervise and encourage the work and asked him to stay in Saint Louis for that purpose. Mr. Deandreis replaced him at Sainte Genevieve. At the same time, some zealous Catholics, at whose head were Messrs. Jeremie and Cannor, took up a subscription to help the new Bishop meet the considerable travel expenses of his numerous company. A thousand dollars was collected and given to Msgr. Flaget to be forwarded to the new Bishop.

Msgr. Flaget left for Sainte Genevieve with Messrs. Deandreis and Rosati and Brother Blanka. Mr. Deandreis stayed there with the Brother and Msgr. Flaget, accompanied by Mr. Rosati, left for Kentucky. They had very many difficulties on their trip. In Illinois, as the result of long and heavy rains, they found very many small rivers swollen and the territory they crossed flooded. One night, they were obliged to camp on the bank of one of these rivers that they did not have the means of crossing. They had no other bed then the ground, stretched out by a large fire under the stars and without any nourishment. A wagoner had allowed them to enjoy the fire that he had made on condition that they would go cut and carry the wood. Neither the holy Bishop nor his companion were very skilled at wielding an axe. One had to be content with their services in hauling the wood. On another night, having been stopped in the same way by a small river that had overflowed, they were forced to stay in a small cabin with about thirty other persons, some of whom were drunk, others were blaspheming and swearing horribly. All were making a frightful noise. One could not even go
outside, the rain was falling in sheets. There was no choice but to remain with them and to witness their dances and their orgies during a large part of the night. Finally, on November 4, 1817, they arrived safely at Saint Thomas Seminary, where they impatiently awaited the arrival of Msgr. Dubourg.

Finally, on December 1, this prelate landed at Louisville with his numerous company and from there went to Saint Thomas Seminary. He had with him five priests, that is, Messrs. Vallesano, Blanc, Janvier, Bertrand, and de la Croix; a deacon, Mr. Jeanjean; two subdeacons, Valentin and Brassac; and nine ecclesiastics: Desmoulins, Kosten, Deparçq, Perroden, De Neckere, Degeister, Barrou, Neil, and Maechaut; in addition, three brothers of the Christian Schools, Brother Aubin, the Superior, [and] Brothers Antonin and Fulgence; finally, five Flemings who were devoted to the mission and who intended to form a community of brothers. Mr. de la Croix had been named their Superior. It should be noted that Msgr. Dubourg had sent Mr. de Crugy, his Vicar General, and Mr. Portier, a deacon, from Baltimore to New Orleans by sea. Also, while he was in Europe, he had sent to Louisiana Messrs. Moni, Mina, Bigeschi, Bighi, Reboul, Oder, and Richard. Finally, two young ecclesiastics, Magne and Duprat, who had come with him to America, left the mission at Baltimore.  

5 Most of the persons mentioned played important roles in the life of the Church in upper and lower Louisiana. Antoine Blanc became Bishop and first Archbishop of New Orleans. De la Croix was for many years in various parishes in lower Louisiana. Hercule Brassac became a close friend of Rosati's and was for several years a vicar in Europe for the American bishops. Leo de Neckere became Bishop of New Orleans in 1830. The Brothers of the Christian schools mentioned by Rosati later (1819) founded an academy at Ste Geneiveve. Michael Portier became the Bishop of Mobile, Alabama. The Flemish Brothers later helped to build the first college building of Saint Mary's Seminary and they are occasionally mentioned in Dubourg's letters. Very little is known about them.
We believe that we owe it to the memory of Msgr. Dubourg to preserve here the memory of this great undertaking of populating the barren lands of his vast diocese of Saint Louis with ecclesiastics and religious communities, [an undertaking] that no one but him could have conceived and much less carried out. On his arrival there were only four priests, two in Illinois and two in Missouri, that is, Mr. Olivier at Prairie du Rocher, and Mr. Savine at Cahokia in Illinois, Mr. Pratte at Sainte Genevieve and Father Marie-Joseph Dunand at Florissant in Missouri. 

Mr. Deandreis, during his stay in Sainte Genevieve, not only busied himself with parish business but also, because he had been appointed Vicar General by Msgr. Dubourg, considered it his duty to gather the necessary information about the current state of that part of the diocese and, according to what he could put together from different sources, he made out the following table that he then presented to the Bishop.

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6 Father Dunand was a survivor of an ill-fated attempt to found a Trappist monastery in the Mississippi Valley. Part of his pastoral labor was directed to the settlers at the Barrens, which he visited from time to time. He was instrumental in encouraging the Catholics there to offer Bishop Dubourg the land for Saint Mary's Seminary.
Part of the Diocese in Upper Louisiana in 1817
Table of parishes or congregations
established or that could be established

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Names of the districts</th>
<th>Their location</th>
<th>Number of Catholic families</th>
<th>Means of support and remarks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>St. Louis</td>
<td>at 39° latitude</td>
<td>about 125</td>
<td>It would be necessary to unite them together; all these districts together at the very most can support one priest. There is a good rectory and 144 arpents of land. These could also support another.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Florissant or St. Ferdinand</td>
<td>15 miles northwest</td>
<td>about 56</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Carondelet or Videpoche</td>
<td>6 miles to the southwest</td>
<td>about 55</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cote sans Dessein</td>
<td>140 miles to the west</td>
<td>about 30</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Saint Charles</td>
<td>20 miles to the west</td>
<td>about 40</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Portage des Sioux</td>
<td>27 miles northwest</td>
<td>about 65</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sainte-Genevieve New Bourbon</td>
<td>60 miles to the southeast</td>
<td>about 140</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(continued on next page)

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7 Apparently it was intended that the total number of parishes and settlements be inserted here but it was not.

8 "Empty Pocket," a nickname for Carondelet, apparently because a racetrack was located there.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Distance</th>
<th>Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Barrens</td>
<td>81 miles southwest</td>
<td>about 80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mine a Breton</td>
<td>70 miles to the southwest</td>
<td>about 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mine Lamotte</td>
<td>55 miles to the southwest</td>
<td>about 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mine Richwood</td>
<td>55 miles to the southwest</td>
<td>about 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apple Creek</td>
<td>90 miles to the southwest</td>
<td>about 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cape Girardeau</td>
<td>125 miles to the southeast</td>
<td>about 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Madrid or L’Anse de la Graisse⁹</td>
<td>225 miles southeast</td>
<td>about 15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arkansas</td>
<td>750 miles southeast</td>
<td>about 20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Church and the priests of the Barrens have sufficient support. Nevertheless, at this moment, I have no one to tell me precisely what it is. The church has been built there (a log cabin) and dedicated to Assumption of the B.V.M., and they have begun to build a rectory in the form of a small seminary. In truth, it would be too much work for one priest. It would be necessary to put a community there.¹⁰

This last place would be better suited to the priest to be placed in Natchez, since it is only 300 miles from Natchez.

Thus the entire diocese can be served by 5 priests. At this time there cannot be support for a larger number.

⁹ A nickname meaning “Greasy Cove.”

¹⁰ Apparently this was written before the Catholics at the Barrens settlement made their offer of land to Bishop Dubourg, but also it indicates that Deandreis may already have been aware of the proposal. It seems that he may have been preparing Dubourg for it in this report. In all probability, however, no work had yet been done on a rectory or college building.

Deandreis’ comment about the log cabin church is the earliest indication that the Barrens parish was dedicated to the Assumption. It has often been assumed that the name was given to the church at a later date because of the large mural of the Assumption behind the main altar.
OBSERVATIONS. What a pleasant change has taken place between 1817 and 1840! Today the Catholic population totals more than fifty thousand souls. In the diocese there are 74 priests, and there is need for many others, 55 churches and chapels, 12 communities of religious, one seminary, two colleges, two orphanages, one for the deaf and mute, two flourishing communities of Jesuits and Lazarists, almost two hundred students of both sexes in religious institutions, 34 young seminarians, 121 religious, etc, etc.

One must thank God for so many benefits.

After Msgr. Dubourg had conferred with the holy Bishop of Bardstown about what course to take with his whole group and, because the winter was advanced, he decided to leave his second colony in Kentucky with the first and to leave immediately for Saint Louis in the company of Msgr. Flaget and Mr. Badin. Mr. Neil, who was indisposed, was the only one whom he took with him. They left from Saint Thomas some days later and at Louisville they embarked on a steamboat, on which they were obliged to spend the Christmas holidays because their journey was very much delayed by the ice. They landed at Brazeau at Mr. Femvick [sic for Fenwick, later known as Widow Fenwick’s landing], where they planted a Cross and on their knees thanked God with fervent prayers for the success of the labors that the new Bishop and his co-workers were going to undertake for the glory of God and the salvation of souls in the lands that they were going to cultivate. From there they went to Sainte Genevieve where Mr. Deandreis, who was taking the pastor’s place at that time, received them at the head of the parishioners who were delighted to see their first shepherd.

In Saint Louis he was received, in Mr. Deandreis’ words, in triumph and his talents, his piety, his gentleness, and his eloquence won all spirits and all hearts. Msgr.
Dubourg wanted to have Mr. Deandreis near him, not only as his Vicar General, but also to have charge of the parish of Saint Louis. This holy man [i.e., Deandreis] then set to work with a zeal, a dedication, and a success that astonished everyone. Instructions, confessions, visits to the sick, sermons in English and French, he embraced them all. What aroused the admiration of the inhabitants of Saint Louis and especially of those who knew and appreciated his talents and learning was to see a scholar of the first order applying himself with a special ardor, dedication, and pleasure to the instruction of the poor negroes, to teaching them prayers and the basic elements of religion, without being repelled by their coarseness.

While the Superior of our Missionaries was thus working in Saint Louis, his confrères in Kentucky continued to learn English and French and regretted their separation from their leader. Mr. Rosati had been given charge of them and of all the Missionaries of Msgr. Dubourg's diocese. He also replaced Mr. Deandries in the chair of theology which he discharged for the seminarists of the two dioceses. Mr. David continued his lessons in English, which were attended by the new arrivals who remained at the seminary. Most of this number were young ecclesiastics. The Reverend Dominican Fathers took Messrs. Jeanjean, Desmoulins, Janvier, and Vallesano into their house of Saint Rose. Mr. Badin extended hospitality to the Flemish Brothers and to Mr. de la Croix, their Superior. The Brothers of Christian Schools stayed at Saint Thomas Seminary. Some of the priests were placed in Catholic homes. Everyone applied himself with more or less ardor and success to learning English and everyone also longed for the moment that would reunite them with their prelate and bring them to the end of their journey. They received the letters that came from Saint Louis with joy and obvious pleasure. In the midst of his numerous
occupations, their venerable Bishop did not forget them and encouraged and supported them. But it was, in a special way, Mr. Deandreis who was charged with interpreting the sentiments of affection of their common father and he added to those the consoling news of the progress that religion was making in the diocese and he kept them abreast of all that could be of interest to them.

It was at Bardstown that some of the priests and ecclesiastics of Msgr. Dubourg’s diocese began to feel an inclination toward our Congregation and to give quite clear signs of their vocation. Of this number were Mr. Ferrari and Mr. Carretti, priests, and Messrs. Dahmen and Tichitoli, ecclesiastics. In this regard the priests, and especially the Superiors of the Congregation, had followed the maxims and examples of their Holy Founder. They had always avoided saying a single word to attract to their Community any recruits, whether priests or seminarians, for they believed that it belonged to God to call us to the state to which He destines us and that when He calls us He knows well how to find the means to make us know and follow our vocation, without any meddling by interested parties. This is the course that, by the mercy of God, has always been followed in America. And also the bishops have not had any difficulty in permitting their subjects to follow their vocation. Msgr. Dubourg made known to these gentlemen that he was not opposed to their joining the sons of Saint Vincent. It was hoped that Mr. Ferrari would be kept in Kentucky and a request to this effect was made to Msgr. Dubourg, but, when he made representation that he wanted to enter the Congregation of the Mission, Msgr. Dubourg refused to grant the request.11 Thus these

11 Rosati’s somewhat confused text does state that Dubourg was both willing to have his priests join the Vincentians and also refused.
gentlemen regarded themselves as belonging already to the Congregation and thought with joy of the happy moment when their desire would be fulfilled.

Msgr. Dubourg had already chosen the spot which, under the circumstances, seemed most suitable for the seminary. It had been impossible in the beginning, when everything was yet to be done, after the enormous expenses of gathering together in Europe [and] transporting to America those numerous colonies of ecclesiastics and supporting them after their arrival, it had been impossible [sic] to situate the seminary in a town, to build a building there large enough to receive the seminarians and those who were to direct them and to meet the expenses of a quite costly upkeep. The rural areas presented, under all these aspects, the fewest difficulties. Providence appeared to make known Its views on the subject of this establishment and to designate the place where it was to be situated.

A number of good Catholics, natives of Maryland [and] descendants of those first confessors of the faith who in order to preserve the religion of their fathers had left their homeland and taken refuge in the land granted to Lord Baltimore, emigrated first to Kentucky, then passed into that land known under the name of Upper Louisiana and settled on the lands that the Spanish government gave them. They preferred to the incalculable advantages of a richer soil that they had found in some regions\(^\text{12}\) and they chose a region called the Barrens (that is, \textit{sterile}) because of its nearness to the village of Sainte Genevieve whose pastor, Mr. Maxwell, spoke English. Since it was at a distance of twenty or thirty miles, they could sometimes

\(^{12}\)This sentence is garbled in the original. The apparent meaning is that they preferred the advantage of religious freedom and practice in an area whose soil was not so rich to that of better lands without religion.
go to the church, have their children baptized and have the hope of receiving the Last Sacraments before passing to the next life. There were at that time some thirty or forty Catholic families at the Barrens.

When Father Marie-Joseph Dunand, a Trappist who lived at Florissant, at a distance of almost one hundred miles, passed through this region by chance, he was asked to visit it at some time or another. He encouraged them to build a church and promised to go there to offer Mass three or four times a year. This was carried out by both parties. The church was a log building (log house) with a ceiling. It had a small sacristy with a chimney. That was where confessions were heard. These visits, although rare, served to support in these good people not only faith but also piety which, together with a simplicity of patriarchal customs, drew to them the esteem and confidence of their neighbors.

As soon as they learned of Bishop Dubourg's determination to establish himself in Saint Louis, they took up a subscription among themselves and in that way got together enough money to buy a section of land, that is, six hundred and forty acres, and on the arrival of this prelate in their territory they sent him a deputation composed of some of the most respected heads of families in their parish. They offered him this land, asking him to be pleased to make use of it for the kind of establishment that would assure them the advantage of a resident pastor in their midst and the means of having their children instructed and, at the same time, they promised him to help build the necessary buildings and to support those whom he would send to begin the establishment. He was given the titles to this property according to the forms prescribed by the laws of the territory. Msgr. Dubourg went in person to the Barrens, was charmed by the area whose soil, without being extremely rich and of the first
quality, was nevertheless good and fertile, the climate very healthy, and the people of pure and simple habits and very attached to religion, all the duties of which they carried out with edification. He thought that Providence was declaring Itself clearly in favor of that spot, which he thus designated as the locale for the seminary. The necessary preparations were then begun and Msgr. Dubourg had Mr. de la Croix come from Kentucky with that community of young Flemings who had devoted themselves to the mission under the name of Brothers and under the immediate authority of the Bishop. They arrived at the Barrens on [blank].

It was also in the spring of that same year, 1818, that Messrs. Acquaroni and Carretti were called to Saint Louis. The latter, an excellent recruit, a Canon of the famous collegiate church of Porto Maurizio, an excellent musician, had already learned French and English with a great deal of ease. He had also decided to enter the Congregation of the Mission. His health, however, was very delicate. He was threatened by consumption. Msgr. Dubourg kept him at his residence in Saint Louis and Mr. Acquaroni was given charge of serving the parishes of Saint Charles, Portage des Sioux, and La Dardenne, almost all of whose Catholic inhabitants spoke French.

In 1818 Msgr. Flaget was the only bishop in all the west on this side of the Allegheny Mountains. Although his diocese of Bardstown was, strictly speaking, composed of the States of Kentucky and Tennessee, he nevertheless took care of the whole country. He visited it in person and he sent missionaries there when he could. He asked Msgr. Dubourg, at least temporarily, for some of his priests in order to station them in Detroit, in Michigan, and at Vincennes, in Indiana. He [Dubourg] agreed all the more

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13 The date is left blank in the original.
because in those missions they spoke French, the language of the Catholics who lived there. He agreed to make this sacrifice for the general good of religion. Mr. Jeanjean was ordained to the priesthood at Saint Thomas by the holy Bishop of Bardstown and some time later went with Mr. Blanc to Vincennes. Messrs. Janvier and Bertrand accompanied Msgr. Flaget to Detroit and were left in Michigan. The other priests and clerics, having remained in Kentucky, waited impatiently for the moment of their departure for Saint Louis. Finally, although it was scarcely possible to prepare and build a residence to receive such a crowd, Msgr. Dubourg decided to have them come to Missouri, counting on Providence and hoping that his missionaries would voluntarily subject themselves to the painful sacrifices asked by the circumstances that they were in. He then wrote to Mr. Rosati to come with the entire group that was in Kentucky and recommended to them the greatest possible economy.

Mr. Vallesano, one of the priests of the diocese, went overland by horseback and was directed to go straight to the Barrens where Msgr. Dubourg was supposed to be, as he had forewarned them, in order to wait for them. Mr. Rosati together with the others, that is, Mr. Ferrari, priest; Messrs. Dahmen, Tichitoli, Deys, Gonzalez, Brassac, Desmoulin, Valentine, Perrodin, Maenhaut, Kosten, Deparq, De Neckere, Degeister, and Barrou, clerics; Brothers Aubin, Antonin, and Fulgence of the Christian Schools, and Medard and Francois Baranwaschi, postulant brothers of our Congregation. These gentlemen went to Louisville where passage had been booked on a small chaland (Flat-boat) that belonged to Mr. Borgere, a

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14 In this and the following paragraph Rosati is again inconsistent in his use and spelling of proper names. In each instance the names are spelled as they are found in the text.
Frenchman who was going down to New Madrid with some merchandise. The boat was divided by a partition into two rooms. The smaller was occupied by Mr. Borgerac and his wife, the other was for the use of the missionaries. Nevertheless the boat was no more than eighteen feet long and it was relatively wide. It was loaded with all the baggage and there was scarcely room enough for twenty-three persons to be able to stand upright. It was also in very poor condition and, although repairs had been made in Louisville, it always took on a large amount of water and more than once it ran the risk of sinking to the bottom. Mr. Borgerac, the ship’s master, was also its captain and the missionaries formed the crew. They were divided into several groups and everyone rowed, not excepting even the Superior, who by right had to encourage the others by his example.

As we have already remarked, the boat could scarcely contain everyone when standing. Thus it was impossible to find enough space to sleep. Necessity makes men industrious. They set about, then, to making a tent on the deck for the entire length of the boat. Some poles and bedsheets served as the materials. They stood during the day and in the evening stretched out the mattresses to make one large bed. They congratulated themselves on this invention that had in a certain way doubled the available space on the boat. And in fact for some days it went very well. Soon, however, some rain fell in sheets for several days. There was no way to protect themselves and on the deck and in the boat everything was drenched. The poor navigators, all soaked to the skin, had no way of drying their clothes before the return of good weather. Nevertheless, this evil brought them a rather rapid journey. The Ohio, which was low at their departure, rose more than twenty feet and they were swept along by the rapid current of the water on that lovely river all the way to
its mouth. During this trip, as during the others that were made previously, the same rule, the same exercises of piety were followed: meditation, reading, prayers, etc. Holy Mass every day, the High Mass and Solemn Vespers every Sunday and feast day, etc.

When they reached the mouth of the Ohio, they had a great deal of difficulty in crossing the Mississippi and after very strenuous efforts, they touched land on the right bank of that great river, in the State (then the territory) of Missouri. In that way they arrived in the diocese to which they had been called to work for the glory of God and the salvation of souls. It was for them a solemn moment. They had to sanctify it by prayer in order to draw down the blessings of heaven on that great undertaking. First they knelt. A crude cross was made from some young trees that were cut in the nearby wood. It was planted on the highest spot on the riverbank and, falling on their knees in front of the triumphal sign of our redemption, they intoned the *Vexilla Regis Prodeunt* and chanted it solemnly in three part harmony. Tears of joy and tenderness fell at the same time from the eyes of our young missionaries and moistened that earth that had fallen to their share. In truth, those who after twenty-two years are still here and to whom God in His Mercy has granted the grace of living to the time when we are writing these recollections (1840) and seeing what one sees there now can say with reason, *Funes ceciderunt mihi in praecellaris, etenim haereditas mea praclara es mihi. Soli Deo honor et gloria. Nam neque qui plantat neque qui rigat est aliquid, sed qui incrementum dat, Deus. Nisi Dominus aedificaverit domum, in vanum laboraverunt qui aedificant eam.* ["For me the measuring lines have fallen on pleasant sites; fair to me is my inheritance" (Psalm 15:6). "To God alone be honor and glory." "So then neither he who plants is anything, nor he who waters, but God gives the growth" (1 Corinthians 3:7).
“Unless the Lord builds the house, they labor in vain who build it” (Psalm 126:1).]

The Chaland or flatboat had to leave our missionaries there. The owner, Mr. Bergerac, had to go down to New Madrid. Besides, that kind of boat, which has neither keel nor prow, because it is square and in the shape of a trunk, cannot go against the current or return up river. Msgr. Dubourg had ordered them in the instructions that he had sent to them in Kentucky prior to their departure to wait at the mouth of the Ohio until he had sent them some horses from the Barrens or some other means of continuing their journey by land, which was more than one hundred and twenty miles. Mr. Bergerac agreed to stop there with his boat, which contained their baggage and served as their lodging. Tree branches were cut and a cabin was built to give them shelter, a kitchen and dining room were set up on the ground by the riverbank, even a bed was brought there for Mr. De Neckere who had fallen ill with a very bad fever and who could no longer stand the unpleasant and close air of the boat, and it was placed at the foot of the cross under a tent. They had already been there for some days. Their provisions were reaching their end. There was no way to buy anything, not even corn meal. There was a small farm about a mile away, but it was devoid of everything. The owner gave the missionaries permission to go to the orchard as often as they wanted and to gather some peaches. They lived there for some days. Mr. Brassac was dispatched to the Barrens to ask for some provisions and to hurry on the horses.

In the midst of these privations Providence provided our missionaries with some consolations that compensated them for their sufferings. One day some of them, while walking along the riverbank, saw two canoes close to shore and not far from the canoes a number of children of both sexes and different ages, but poor, pale, and some
stretched out on the ground, trembling with fever. They learned that it was a large family that, already poor in their own country and hoping to better their condition, had made a trip of many hundreds of miles down the fair river and intended to go to Missouri. The only possession that they had left was the two canoes in which they had made their trip. They had no more provisions except some ears of corn that they had roasted, and, to add to their troubles, some of them had been attacked by tertian fever. The missionaries, on seeing this, were moved to tears and shared with them the little that remained of their own provisions.

They learned at the same time that this family was not Catholic and they found by the questions that they asked them that they had no idea whatever of religion. They began to instruct them and discovered in them a good foundation, a great desire to learn and even the facility for retaining the instructions given them. An effort was made on both sides and it succeeded in having them learn what was necessary for Baptism, together with the prayers that they were encouraged to recite every day. In the same way, they prepared eight or nine children of this family, so happy in their misfortunes to find in the true Church a haven of salvation, and they were destined for their solemn reception [of Baptism] on September 27, the day of Saint Vincent de Paul's death, which Pope Pius VII of happy memory had granted to our Missionaries in America to celebrate with the proper office of the Saint under a double rite. Therefore, all the preparations were made that were possible under the existing circumstances to celebrate it with the greatest solemnity. A field chapel was built out of tree branches and decorated with tastefully arranged foliage. Under a canopy suspended from the branches they

\footnote{A form of malaria.}
erected a lovely altar that was decorated with some curtains and whatever suitable things were available. Before this, a collection had been made of linen and clothes sufficient to dress the catechumens and to put them in a condition to present themselves to receive Baptism with decency. Mme. Bergerac, wife of the boat owner, very pious, had not only furnished what was necessary to dress the little girls, but had also worked constantly for several days on the linen and the clothes given by the missionaries to put them into condition to serve the little boys. Then, on September 27, because Mr. Rosati was indisposed, Mr. Ferrari was appointed to officiate. He celebrated a High Mass, which was sung in unison by many voices, gave a very beautiful sermon, and administered the Sacrament of Baptism to the young neophytes, who were very touched by it. Mme. Bergerac acted as their godmother and some of the missionaries as godfathers. The solemnity was concluded with Solemn Vespers and they did not fail to regale the newly baptized family with a meal, which was not splendid nor even abundant, but which was in no way inferior to that of the missionaries, who had no more provisions.

At that time the banks of the Mississippi were uninhabited. The steamboats were beginning to go up this river, but very rarely. Commerce, which was not at all what it is now, was carried on by going down on flat boats or chalands and, on the return trip, by keel boats, called in French berges and in English “reed boats.” They were powered by oar and it was necessary to drag them against the current by rope. On the return trip, when one made ten or fifteen miles a day, it was considered a good trip. There was always worry about baggage. It was out of the question to ship it by land. Msgr. Dubourg had sent some horses and a wagon loaded with provisions from the Barrens. However, the latter could not come to the
Mississippi through the forests, where there was no route that was cut through or opened. In the meantime, they saw one of these berges and signaled it. It came to land and a bargain was struck with the captain who took charge of carrying the baggage to Sainte Genevieve. It was put on board and one of the postulant brothers accompanied it. Now they were ready to leave the banks of the Mississippi where they had lived for ten days. They took leave of Mr. Bergerac and his estimable wife. They bade tender farewells to the dear neophytes. There was only a small number of horses, which were loaded for the most part with boxes of linens and with blankets which each of the travelers had been instructed to carry. Half of the group left immediately with Mr. Ferrari. The other half remained still another day on the Mississippi and left in the morning with some horses that served principally to carry their little baggage and those who were more fatigued than the others. They left almost without eating and counted on reaching some farm or dwelling by evening. But the difficulty of the roads, the fatigue of the march which was almost always done on foot, took them a very long time. Night overtook them. They were obliged to stop near an old cabin without a roof. They tied the horses to the trees, made a large fire, and had no more supper than water from a nearby swamp. They spent the night sleeping near the fire under the blankets they they had had the foresight to bring with them.

They did not wait for sunrise in order to get up. At the break of day they set out on the road and, after some hours of travel, they saw the fences of a field and, an instant later, they discovered a thatched cottage. They stopped, asked for lunch (we remark that in the country, especially at the time when it was little inhabited, each house served as an inn. One was obliged to receive strangers who paid for their meals). The poor people who
lived there said that they would give us as much food as one would want. They had two freshly killed deer, but they had neither bread nor vegetables nor anything else. While they were cooking the meat, the wagon sent by Msgr. Dubourg arrived. There was some flour, some potatoes, and lard. Thus, after very many days, it was possible to have a meal, recoup one's strength and continue the journey. It happened shortly after that the second group stopped to ask for a meal at the same house where the first had been on the evening before. They were told that there was nothing, that a dozen young men had consumed everything in the house on the previous day. Our missionaries laughed a long time over that and happily continued their trip to another house where at last they found some cornbread and lard. These particulars are reported in order to give an idea of the condition of the country in 1818.

At last they arrived at the Barrens.

(To be continued)

It is a maxim of the Saints that a thing of importance concerning the glory of God and the good of the Church which has been done, after serious prayer and consultation, must be regarded as having been well done.

ST. VINCENT de PAUL