Beginnings of the Civil War

Even before 1860 the wall of division between North and South was growing, stone by stone. The topics might vary: “abolition versus slavery,” “states’ rights versus federal Union,” or even “plantation South versus industrial North”; but the frenzy and the fury of the arguments only increased with time. Voices speaking of wisdom and compromise, of solutions just to all, went unheeded. Inflammatory prose filled the newspapers; blows were exchanged in the Senate chamber; and John Brown attempted to lead a slave uprising at Harper’s Ferry, Virginia, without having consulted or notified the slaves he planned to lead.

Among the voices counseling moderation were those of the Catholic bishops of the United States. United in their detestation of slavery, yet trained to look at both sides before passing judgment, they advised the faithful to be guided by the principles of justice and charity in particular situations, being careful not to identify the Faith with the fortunes and goals of any party. Many of the bishops favored gradual, planned emancipation of slaves, with provision for their future as part of the planning. Some had gone on record asking for government compensation for slaveholders who would voluntarily free their slaves. Others urged Catholics who inherited slaves to give freedom to as many as could provide for themselves and their families. Catholic institutions which had received slaves in payment of tuition or debts had already done this.

The practice of voluntary emancipation was spreading in parts of the nation. In the 1860 census some slave states showed a decrease in the number of slaves. In Frederick County, Maryland, for example, where Emmitsburg was located, more than 60 percent of the blacks were free. Washington itself—a southern town between two slave states, Maryland and Virginia—counted eighteen hundred
slaves and nine thousand free blacks within the city. Nevertheless, the practice of slavery was a persistent and often cruel evil in American society.

Secession rather than slavery was the issue which began the war. In November 1860 Abraham Lincoln was elected president; four days later, South Carolina seceded from the Union. By March 1861 the cotton states—Mississippi, Florida, Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, and Texas—had followed. The shelling of Fort Sumter in April destroyed any hopes that still remained for a peaceful compromise. Virginia too seceded, and Richmond became the capital of the Confederate States of America. Colonel Robert E. Lee, the most promising officer in the United States Army, resigned his commission and offered his services to his native Virginia. His beautiful home across the Potomac from Washington became part of the battleground that separated the two capitals—only about one hundred miles apart.

The secession of Virginia—in which both the naval yards at Norfolk and the arsenal at Harper's Ferry were located—left Washington undefended and open to invasion. Its other neighbor, Maryland, after a long and tense delay, voted in December to remain loyal to the Union; but there was much secessionist agitation and unrest, particularly in the city of Baltimore. Archbishop Francis Patrick Kenrick of that city wrote on 10 May 1861:

Our state is changed to the appearance of a great encampment, and our city, in peril of a siege in the spirit of revenge.¹

Again on 7 September 1861 he wrote:

It has been determined to destroy this city if the confederate soldiers come here; we are surrounded by the military, and they are raising ramparts from which to throw shells into the city.²

By October, however, a defending force had been assembled and the threat of invasion had been turned aside. For the time being, the battleground was to be the Shenandoah Valley in Virginia.

The Daughters of Charity Volunteer to Serve the Armies

In early June 1861 Dorothea Dix, appointed by her brother,
Major-General John Dix, to gather a corps of female nurses, issued her first call for volunteers. On 5 June the *Washington National Intelligencer* printed this news item:

We learn that two hundred Sisters of Charity are ready to ‘enlist’ in the cause of the sick and wounded of the army, at any moment the Government may signify to them a desire to avail itself of their services, to take charge of hospitals, ambulances for conveying the sick or wounded, or any post far or near, where the cause of humanity can be served.

It was true that Mother Ann Simeon Norris had made such an offer to the President, acting in the spirit of Saint Vincent de Paul, who said to Daughters of Charity of seventeenth-century France:

Men go to war to kill one another, and you, Sisters, you go to repair the harm they have done...Men kill the body and very often the soul, and you go to restore life, or at least by your care to assist in preserving it.

The number of sisters in the Community had reached approximately eight hundred by this time. Superiors were willing to send two hundred or more of them to serve in the ambulances and military hospitals for as long as needed. The salary of $12 a month paid to lay nurses was not asked for the sisters, but the Council of the Community laid down five specific conditions to be observed wherever the sisters were to serve:

1. That no lady volunteers be associated with the Sisters in their duties, as such an association would be rather an encumbrance than a help.

2. That the Sisters have entire charge of the hospitals and ambulances they serve.

3. That the Government pay the traveling expenses of the Sisters, furnish their board and other actual necessities during the war; clothing also, in case it should be protracted.

4. That a Catholic Chaplain be in attendance.

5. Of course, no compensation is required by the Sisters for their services.
That the Council could make such stipulations and expect them to be honored is not surprising. Nursing care in public hospitals at that time was given by inmates of the institution or members of the pauper class. Some women had developed competence through home nursing or assisting doctors to whom they were related; some were treasures of competence and caring; but they were not available in large numbers. Catholic sisters were the only organized groups in the United States who could pass on a heritage of knowledge, skills and management ability within an organized system of nursing. There were five hundred seventy sisters sent from twelve communities to nurse in the Civil War; four of these communities had previous hospital experience in the United States. These formed the backbone of the nursing corps during the war. But none had the composite experience of Daughters of Charity, covering more than three decades of nursing in both North and South, in epidemics and catastrophes, in seven public hospitals and twelve Catholic ones administered by the Community. Their system of pairing the young and inexperienced with the skilled and competent guaranteed a uniform standard of service. Besides, their Vincentian Rule specified obedience to the doctor as well as to the sister servant, thus promising harmonious cooperation on the teams serving the wounded.

Again and again demands were made for Daughters of Charity, demands that could not always be referred to Emmitsburg because communication was cut off. Foreseeing this problem, superiors had authorized local sister servants to discern the needs and make decisions about sending sisters. Records were not always kept of how many or who were sent. Attempts to compile data later from fragmentary sources yielded over two hundred thirty-two names of sisters who are definitely known to have served as war nurses. Names added later from local sources, particularly in the South and Midwest, bring the number to almost two hundred seventy. But there are gaps that can never be filled, since names have been forgotten and records are incomplete. Yet the composite picture reveals a magnificent panorama of a Community mobilized in unity to serve Christ in those who suffer, ready to respond to the calls of the Church or military leaders without regard to recompense or political ties. The same Vincentian charity inspired those who did the work of three to continue the care of the poor at home, or those who left at an hour's notice to serve in ambulances, transports and military hospitals on both sides of the conflict.
Serving Both Armies in Virginia

Early requests to serve in federal hospitals and prisons came from local rather than national leaders: Generals John F. Rathbone in Albany, John C. Fremont in Saint Louis. Even before the First Battle of Bull Run, men were admitted to sisters' hospitals in New York and Saint Louis to be treated for dysentery, typhoid and other fevers. Similar requests came from Confederate Generals Braxton Bragg and A.G. Blanchard in the Deep South.

But a telegram had also come to Emmitsburg in May 1861 from Confederate headquarters in Richmond, asking that sisters be assigned specifically to care for wounded soldiers in hospitals already conducted by the sisters in Richmond and Norfolk. A second telegram on 7 June requested sister-nurses for an “ambulance” or mobile field hospital near Harper’s Ferry to serve with the Confederate Army. All these requests were answered affirmatively. The sisters made their way through the Union lines, served on the battlefield at Manassas, retreated with the army to Winchester, and in July staffed the general hospital in Richmond, which cared for both Confederate and Union soldiers.

The federal military leaders did not seem to understand at first that the Daughters of Charity were prepared to nurse impartially the wounded of both sides, serving the person rather than the cause. The trips back and forth across the lines were attracting attention. In December 1861 Father Francis Burlando, C.M., director of the American Province of Daughters of Charity, received a letter from Archbishop Kenrick of Baltimore:

Major General Dix has just apprized me that a letter has been referred to him by the Government, charging that ladies dressed in the costume of Sisters of Charity furnished by the convent at Emmitsburg, have passed the lines into Virginia, for the purpose of keeping up communication with the Confederate States. He professes himself unwilling to believe that they have been guilty of so gross an infidelity to the Government... I have replied without delay, stating that the Sisters were stationed at Richmond and Norfolk for many years and they have extended their services to the sick and wounded... I also stated that their journeys were open and with formal passports from the Government at Washington, and wholly unconnected with politics, and not intended in any way to aid rebellion.

It may be proper for the Superior of the Sisters to draw up a sort
of statement to the same effect and have it signed by three or more of the Council, and, lastly by yourself. It will be well even to bring it to Baltimore and present it to the General. It is proper that all suspicion should be at once removed. 6

In response to the Arcbishop's warning, the Council immediately drew up a letter stating, among other explanations, that:

...at no time, under no circumstances, directly or indirectly, have any Sisters belonging to said Community gone to Virginia or any other state for political purposes, or carried documents or messages having political tendencies. The only object for which the Sisters were sent to Virginia was to nurse the sick and wounded soldiers. The Sisters now in Richmond passed lines at various times via Harper's Ferry, or by Bay to Norfolk, but furnished with passports either by General Banks, Major General Scott, or the Secretary of State. The first two bands that crossed at Harper's Ferry had no pass, none being then required...

The fact that the Sisters went to nurse soldiers in the South could not be interpreted as disaffection for the Government, since Sisters from the same society were, at the request of General Rathbone, sent to Albany where they took charge of the sick soldiers and remained at the hospital until their services were no longer required. At the request of General Fremont, the Sisters went to attend and are still attending the sick soldiers at the Military Hospital in Saint Louis. They also gave their attendance to the sick and wounded soldiers at the Infirmary in Baltimore, until they were removed to some other locality; also at the Troy Hospital, Milwaukee, and other places. In a word: the Sisters have responded to every call without distinction of creed or politics, and are ready at the moment to give their services if asked by the proper authority; nay, they are willing to suspend their schools and diminish their number in hospitals and orphan asylums for the purpose of nursing the sick and the wounded. Of about eight hundred Sisters of Charity, there is not one but would readily obey the first summons for the same work of charity...

We take the liberty to remark that the duty of the Sisters of Charity is to strive to save their souls by the exercise of charity towards their fellow-creatures, the poor and suffering of every nation, independent of creed or politics.

(Signed) Sister M. Othelia Marshall, Procuratrix
Sister Julia Dyer, Treasurer
No further questions were raised about the sisters’ crossings into Virginia to care for the wounded of both armies there. This service was extensive. In addition to nursing Confederate wounded in hospitals already conducted by the sisters in Richmond and Norfolk, they also staffed the Marine Hospital at Portsmouth for Union soldiers; the general hospital in Richmond which served the wounded of both armies; and various temporary field hospitals in Virginia:

1861: Winchester. Six sisters; Confederate wounded.
1861: Harper's Ferry. Three sisters; Confederate wounded.
1862: Danville. Ten sisters; Confederate wounded.
1862: Manassas. Five sisters; wounded of both armies.
1862: Gordonville. Three sisters; both armies.
1862-65: Lynchburg. Five sisters in both a hospital and a factory, serving the wounded of both armies.

Sister Angela Heath, who served in field hospitals with the Army of Northern Virginia from January 1862 to 13 April 1865, kept a brief account of the experiences of the sisters with whom she served:

Left Richmond for Manasses on the 9th of January 1862, at the solicitation of Dr. Williams, Medical Director of the Army of the Potomac. We were five in number, & found, on taking possession, 500 patients, sick and wounded of both armies. Mortality was very great, as the sick poor had been very much neglected. The wards were in a most deplorable condition, & strongly resisted all efforts of the broom to which they had long been strangers, & the aid of a shovel was found necessary. At best, they were but poor protection against the inclemency of the season & being scattered, we were often obliged to go through snow over a foot deep to wait on the sick... On an average, ten died every day, & of this number, I think I may safely say, four were baptized... On the 13th of March we received orders from Gen. Johnson to pack up quietly & be ready to leave on six hours’ notice, as it was found necessary to retreat from
that quarter. Oh the horrors of war! We had scarcely left our post than the whole camp was one mass of flame, & the bodies of those who died that day, were consumed. Our next field of labor was the military hospital at Gordonsville. We were but three in number & found 200 patients very sick—pneumonia and typhoid fever prevailing. Here again privations were not wanting. The sick were very poorly provided for, although the mortality was not as great as at Manassas. The approach of the Federals compelled us to leave Gordonsville on Easter Sunday & we retreated in good order to Danville. Here we found 400 sick much better provided for than in M. In Nov. the Medical Director removed our hospital to Lynchburg as there was no means of heating that in Danville. Our number had increased to five as the hospital was larger and contained 1000 patients, whom we found in a most pitiful condition. 

The approach of the Federals placed our hospital in imminent danger & it was decided to move the sick & hospital stores to Richmond. The Surgeon General of the Confederate Army begged that we would take charge of the Stuart Hospital in that city which we did on the 13th of Feb. 1865. We were then 10 in number, & as usual, we found plenty to do to place the sick in a comfortable situation, which we had just accomplished when the city was evacuated, & on the 13th of April, the hospital being dispensed with, we left R. for our sweet valley home. 

Service with the Transports

There was no Red Cross and no ambulance corps in the armies of the Civil War. The wounded were carried from the field by teamsters more accustomed to handling lumber or grain sacks. Ambulances were often requisitioned farm carts without springs, horse-drawn over bumpy fields and rutted roads. After emergency care was given at a first aid station, the wounded, even amputees, were bounced to the nearest railroad or river for transport to a military hospital. The need for haste led to severe crowding in railroad freight cars or the holds and decks of ships. Some died along the way; others arrived with fevers, gangrene, infections, exhausted from thirst and suffering.

The surgeon general requested one hundred sisters to nurse the wounded aboard the transports on the Potomac River and the seaports north of it. Burlando described the beginning of this service in a letter to Mother Gilberte-Elise Montcellet in Paris 6 July 1862:
For the last two months I have been constantly travelling about: a
great number of Sisters are asked for to attend on the sick and
wounded. A good many are already at work. Twenty-nine are at
present in the large hospital of Philadelphia. This hospital is a whole
league in circumference, and contains three thousand beds; the chief
surgeon wants fifty Sisters to wait on the patients, and even they
would hardly be enough.

In several others we have been able to send fifteen at a time; twenty
are employed in the hospital of St. Louis. Besides these numerous
bands, the surgeon general wants one hundred for the transports: we
managed to find eighty, but you may imagine the state of our other
works and our poor houses. I accompanied the first colony,
consisting of thirty-three Sisters, to the place where they were
expected for this novel sort of service; they had just found a tempo­
rary lodging when a sudden movement of the adverse army obliged
every one to take flight. Through the care of the general in
command, our Sisters were placed in safety and sent to the trans­
ports with the wounded...

They called it White House Landing, that graceful green slope
on the Virginia side of the Potomac opposite Washington, where
the wounded waited for hospital boats that would carry them
north. Before the war was ended it would become Arlington
National Cemetery. The white house for which it was named was
the Custis Lee mansion, the confiscated home of Robert E. Lee.
This was the temporary shelter provided for the sisters mentioned
in Burlando's letter; it later was converted to a hospital.

Throughout the summer of 1862 the sisters served on the hospital
ships or transports. Some of their names have come down to us:
Sister Ophelia Marshall, who led the group taking the wounded to
New York on board the Commodore; Sisters Clara Moloney and
Consolata Conlon, for whom the war was their first mission; Sister
Henrietta Casey, whose selfless dedication was an inspiration to the
doctor in charge; Sister Euphrasia Mattingly, who portrayed graphi­
cally in her account the misery of patients stacked on the floors on
all decks, the airlessness of the lower cabins, lit by lamps and
candles day and night; and the ship so overloaded that it was “more
like sinking than sailing.”

Other sisters served on transports on the Mississippi carrying the
wounded north to Saint Louis. For them the sacraments were
readily available; but continued deprivation of spiritual oppor-
tunities led superiors to withdraw those serving the transports on the Potomac to serve instead on land. Burlando described this in a letter of 1 September 1862:

Those floating hospitals were, however, very frightful: more than four or five hundred sick and wounded lay heaped on one another; the bottom, middle and hold of the ships were filled with sufferers. Willingly would we have continued our services, but our Sisters were deprived of all spiritual assistance; no mass or communion; even when they entered the port, it was hard for them to go to church, either because they did not know where there was one, or because the distance would not allow them. We were therefore obliged to remove and place them in the organized hospitals on land, where they can at least rely on the assistance of a priest...

The spectacle presented by our Sisters on these floating hospitals was an object of surprise and admiration amid so much wretchedness and suffering. Everyone is struck likewise by the good order which reigns in the hospitals and ambulances which they attend. If we had a thousand Sisters at our disposal, we should have more than sufficient work for them, merely in attending the poor wounded. The Sisters of Charity are now known everywhere, they can go to any place without a passport, and are everywhere respected. I think that amid all these disturbances I foresee a brilliant future for our province; but we must learn to suffer in the transition. We will let God do his own work, while we pray and fix our eyes on the divine will, holding ourselves ready to follow it in all.¹⁰

Temporary Hospitals in Maryland

As the war moved across the Potomac with the invasion of the North, battles were fought on Maryland soil; field hospitals similar to those of Virginia were served by the sisters there. Boonsboro and Frederick, Antietam and the nearby town of Sharpsburg were all scenes of temporary hospitals where Daughters of Charity nursed. At Frederick they had care of the United States General Hospital situated outside the city, which housed one thousand patients. On 4 July four hundred more men were brought in, most of them with typhoid. Public buildings were requisitioned as hospitals and more sisters requested.

A tent hospital at Point Lookout, at the southern tip of Maryland between the Potomac and Chesapeake Bay, offered the
wounded relief from the summer heat in the cool Atlantic breezes. The camp housed many Confederate prisoners also. Some of the sisters who had been serving on the transports were sent to nurse there. Sister Mary Clare Kelly, sister servant of the group, described the situation as most primitive, with no conveniences of any kind. The sisters had only a few boxes to serve as chairs for all of them.

Doctor S.P. Duffield, the surgeon in charge, admired the fidelity of the sisters to their trust, which included serving under quarantine at the contagious hospital when typhoid broke out in the camp. He later cited Sister Henrietta Casey’s devotion to the sick as the example and inspiration that led him to investigate and join the Catholic Church. Sister Consolata Conlon, not yet twenty years of age, died of typhoid fever and was buried among the soldiers at Point Lookout.

**Hospital Service in Washington, D.C.**

Before the war there was only one hospital in Washington, the Infirmary on E Street. After the fall of Fort Sumter it was requisitioned as a military hospital and the Daughters of Charity were again asked to staff it. This they did, caring for the wounded there through most of 1861 until the building was destroyed by fire 4 November of that year.

Providence Hospital was begun at the request of Washington doctors because there was no other hospital for civilians. Throughout the war it continued to serve the civilian population; but even before the first civilian patient was discharged, the wards were filled with wounded Union soldiers and Confederate prisoners from the Battle of Bull Run, fought just twenty-five miles from Washington. The hospital soon had a marine ward tended by a Navy surgeon, and tents filled with wounded and dying men clustered all around the hospital and in the opposite square. The four sisters were in need of reinforcements to nurse in these indoor and outdoor wards.

Barrack and tent hospitals were soon being set up all over Washington. Warehouses, schools and private homes were turned into hospitals as train-and boatloads of wounded continued to pour into the city. Conditions in some of these makeshift stations were deplorable. Before long Daughters of Charity were requested to staff three other military hospitals in Washington: Eckington
Hospital, where nine sisters under the direction of Sister Camilla Bowden cared for about four hundred patients at a time; Cliffburn Hospital, consisting of tents and sheds which housed from twelve hundred to sixteen hundred wounded at a time, tended by fourteen sisters; and finally the Lincoln Hospital, in use from December 1862 until August 1866. During that time over twenty-two thousand Union soldiers were cared for there.

In a letter to Paris Sister Camilla described the Eckington Hospital:

We have generally about four hundred patients, the greater number of whom are wounded; and we are nine Sisters to attend upon them. The head surgeon is a protestant; but his respect for the Sisters is very great, and he wishes all those under his charge to show the same... We have a great many servants and infirmarians; the Sisters have charge of distributing the medicines, of superintending the wards, and preserving good order and cleanliness, and in general of everything that concerns the welfare of the sick, their food, and the little delicacies for the patients... 11

From Cliffburn Hospital Sister Helen Ryan, newly arrived from the hospital in Portsmouth, wrote to Mother Montcellet 22 September 1862 describing Cliffburn:

It is indeed a real military hospital, composed of tents and sheds; we have but a plank to shelter us; and in going from one tent to another we have nothing above us but the sky. The Sisters are lodged pretty much like the soldiers... We have about twelve hundred sick and wounded; tents are constructing to receive those who are continually coming; it is expected that we shall soon have sixteen hundred. We are only fourteen Sisters, and I am afraid we shall have to give up two to a house still more overburdened than we are...

Yesterday a young methodist, seriously wounded, was continually calling out for a priest. The Sister who had charge of the ward, thinking at first that he wanted a minister, at last asked him if he wanted a Catholic priest. “I do not know what you call him,” replied the patient, “but I want one of those belonging to your religion of white bonnets.” Our greatest difficulty is to get a priest when we need one. Two have the sole charge of twenty hospitals, and their parishes to attend to besides, while each of these hospitals has its own protestant chaplain... 12
The Lincoln Military Hospital, completed in December 1862, consisted of thirty large buildings besides many small structures and hundreds of tents. There were also isolation camps for contagious diseases. Doctor Webster Lindsley, executive officer, was the assistant surgeon general of the United States Army. Sister Helen Ryan was brought from Cliffburn to take charge at Lincoln, with thirty sisters to assist her. President Lincoln liked to visit the Union soldiers in this hospital named for him. Lincoln Hospital remained open after the war until the last of the men were able to return home.

In a report on the Lincoln Hospital dated January 1865, the Surgeon General of the United States Army wrote:

Twenty-eight Sisters of Charity were on duty and I must bear evidence to their efficiency and superiority as nurses. The extra diet kitchen is under the care of a Sister, and one is detailed by the superior to each ward. They administer medicine, diet and stimulants under the orders of a ward surgeon and are responsible to him alone. They have been beloved and respected by the men.13

Nursing Service in Pennsylvania

On the Battlefield of Gettysburg

As the war moved north into Maryland and Pennsylvania during the summer of 1863, the peaceful valley of Emmitsburg, so near the Pennsylvania border, became the scene of a bivouac, and almost of a battle. In a letter written 8 July 1863 Burlando described in detail what happened:

You have doubtless learned through the newspapers that we have been visited by the Army of the Potomac, and that quite near us a terrible battle has been fought—the most disastrous since the beginning of hostilities. Saint Joseph took good care of his house, and Saint Vincent of his Daughters. We have not been troubled, or at least, we suffered only by foraging parties and the destruction of the fences enclosing our grounds.

On the afternoon of June twenty-seventh the troops appeared on the slight elevation a short distance from Saint Joseph's; regiment after
regiment, division after division advanced with artillery and cavalry and took possession of all the heights, encamping in order of battle. On the twenty-eighth and twenty-ninth, we were completely surrounded; on the thirtieth, Saint Joseph’s and the town of Emmitsburg were in the midst of a section of the Army about 80,000 strong.

General Howard with his staff took up lodging in our house at Emmitsburg; General Shurtz and his officers were on Saint Joseph’s grounds, occupying the house which formerly served for an orphan asylum.* The other Generals had Quarters along the Army lines. Our locality had been selected because it was known that the Southern Army was a few miles to the west of Emmitsburg.

For the protection of Saint Joseph’s, General Shurtz stationed guards at every point. General Howard did in like manner with regard to our little property in Emmitsburg. Several of the officers asked permission to visit the institution; all conducted themselves with the greatest respect and expressed their gratitude for the services rendered by the Sisters to the soldiers in the military hospitals. On Monday this portion of the Army moved off and was succeeded by another equally numerous, ranged in line of battle like the former... During these days I heard many confessions and the Sisters distributed among the soldiers a large number of medals, chaplets and Agnus Deis: bread, milk and coffee were generously supplied. 14

From the pen of Sister Mary Jane Stokes, who had charge of the farm at Saint Joseph’s, comes another graphic description of the visit of the army and the response of the sisters:

When the army was on its way to Gettysburg (I mean the Federals) they paid a visit to St. Joseph’s, which caused much terror. The poor soldiers had been on the march for many days, and they were of the color of smoked herring; they were also very weak. Our dear Mother Ann Simeon sent word we were to do all in our power for them, and each one tried to do her best. The church was opened and many went to confession, then sisters and employees served the men with tea, coffee, milk and bread from the kitchen. The distribution began about three, and lasted until the bugle sounded for the men to go to the camp below the barn. The men were ordered not to go near the house or to disturb the sisters, and next day they were called

*This was the White House. The general mentioned is Carl Schurz.
away. We believed a real miracle was operated at this time because having distributed food to so large a number, Mother thought none would be left for the Community, however the supper bell rang as usual...We thought all the bread was gone, but when we went to look, that day's baking had not been touched.\footnote{15}

Shortly after the Federal regiments departed, divisions of Confederate soldiers passed along the Fredericktown Road, to the great delight of several boarders from the South, who had been without news of their families since the beginning of the war.

Gettysburg is only twelve miles from Emmitsburg, and the battle-field covered several miles. Some of the fighting was a mere nine miles away. The roar of the cannon could be heard as far as Saint Joseph's Valley, and a constant vigil of prayer and adoration was kept in the chapel as long as the guns could be heard, with sisters leaving their duties by turns to pray for the dead and the dying. When silence suggested that the battle might be over, Father Burlando took the farm wagon loaded with sisters and provisions to the battlefield. His own description follows:

On Sunday, the day after the battle, I accompanied to the scene of action eight Sisters who were supplied with remedies and provisions for the wounded. Having completed six miles of the journey we found a barricade to intercept all communication and at a considerable distance another. At this second station was a band of Federal soldiers. I alighted and fastening a white pocket handkerchief to my cane, I approached the barricade and explained the object of our coming. Immediately several soldiers were told to open the way so that our two vehicles continued without difficulty. However, having gone some distance we found ourselves in the presence of a new barricade; this obliged us to take a new direction. Finally we reached the scene of combat. What a frightful spectacle met our gaze! Houses burnt, dead bodies of both Armies strewn here and there, an immense number of slain horses, thousands of bayonets, sabres, wagons, wheels, projectiles of all dimensions, blankets, caps, clothing of every color covered the woods and fields. We were compelled to drive very cautiously to avoid passing over the dead. Our terrified horses drew back or darted forward reeling from one side to the other. The farther we advanced the more harrowing was the scene; we could not restrain our tears. At last we reached the city of Gettysburg. Here a large portion of the Army was guarding the battlefield. All the avenues and environs of the city were encumbered with soldiers, horses, wagons, and artillery carts. The inhabitants
were just emerging from the cellars to which they had fled for safety during the combat; terror was depicted on every countenance; all was confusion. Every house, every temple, the courthouse, the Protestant Seminary, the Catholic Church—all were filled with the wounded; and yet there were thousands still stretched on the battlefield with scarcely any assistance, it being impossible to provide for all.

I placed two of our Sisters in each of the three largest improvised hospitals, heard some confessions, and then returned to Saint Joseph’s. The following day I set out with other Sisters and other remedies and provisions. In the meantime supplies were sent by the government and the poor wounded soldiers were assisted. The people recovering from their fright united in administering to the suffering thousands and the dying. Eleven Sisters are now employed in this city which is converted into a vast hospital to comfort and relieve suffering humanity. Sister Ann Simeon, Visitatrix, went to the city this morning but will return tonight.

Tomorrow, if possible, we shall send other Sisters and some remedies. While I am writing to you, the roar of the cannonballs tells us of death and destruction in another battle to the west. O my God! when wilt Thou give peace to our unhappy country! We deserve this frightful chastisement which will cease only when we shall have been profoundly humbled!

Assist us by your prayers, for the American does not pray; and yet, how can we appease the anger of God without prayer?

In the love of our Lord and his Immaculate Mother,
Your most humble and devoted son,
Burlando
U.P. o.t.M.16

In the days immediately following the battle, one hundred thirteen hospitals were set up in Gettysburg in churches, private homes, the protestant seminary, wherever possible. Thousands of the wounded were sent by train to Satterlee Hospital in Philadelphia. As the number was reduced either by death or transfers to other hospitals, the number of hospitals in the town was reduced also. By mid-July there were seven remaining: four for Federal wounded, three for Confederates.

Outside the town sisters were also serving in makeshift hospitals within a three-mile radius of Gettysburg: barns, tents made by fastening blankets to posts, farmhouses, even in open fields with no other resource than water from the stream. Some who served in
these outlying stations described the stench of dead horses gathered into heaps for burning; the ditches dug for mass burial of the dead, marked only by a post showing the number of dead and their regiment. To get from one farm “hospital” to another the sisters had to pass these trenches and climb over the piled-up debris of battle.

As many as one hundred Daughters of Charity from Emmitsburg and Baltimore may have served temporarily in the fields and hospitals of Gettysburg. Among them were Mother Ann Simeon Norris; Sister Euphemia Blenkinsop, her assistant; Sisters Camilla O’Keefe and Marie Louise Caulfield, treasurer and secretary; Sisters Raphael Smith, Felix McQuaid and Maria Landry of the academy; Sister Genevieve McDonough, London-born directress of the seminary who had served in hospitals at Metz in France and Alexandria in Egypt; Sister Mary David Salomon, the kitchen sister; Sister Adele Durm, the infirmary; Sister Matilda Coskery, who had shared her knowledge of nursing with so many; and many of the young sisters. Some served a few days or weeks; some remained for many months; and at least one group continued to nurse in Gettysburg until August 1865, more than two years after the battle, when the last of the wounded and sick veterans were discharged from the hospital.

Satterlee Hospital, Philadelphia

On 25 May 1862 Surgeon-General William Hammond, through Doctor I.J. Hayes, requested twenty-five Sisters of Charity to nurse the sick and wounded soldiers in the West Philadelphia Hospital, afterwards known as Satterlee. The hospital covered an area of fifteen acres. The plan was for thirty-three wards, each built to accommodate seventy-five patients comfortably with bed, table and chair. Two small rooms attached to each ward provided a place where nurses could store and prepare delicacies, medicines and other remedies.

When the first sisters arrived 9 June 1862, only eight of the planned wards were completed. The sick began to arrive the same day—one hundred fifty at first, but the number soon reached nine hundred, many with severe cases of typhoid, camp fever, chronic dysentery and other ailments. On 16 August over fifteen hundred more sick and wounded were brought in, most from the Battle of Bull Run (Manassas). Sister Gonzaga Grace, who had charge of the hospital throughout the war, described the situation in her journal:
The wards being now crowded, tents were erected to accommodate over one thousand. We had at one time not less than four thousand five hundred in the hospital.\footnote{17}

When smallpox broke out, the surgeon in charge set up an isolation camp on the grounds at some distance from the hospital. Sister Josephine Edelin offered to go into isolation with these men to care for them. When she became ill, Sister Gonzaga took her place, putting to good use her knowledge of medicinal plants. One of her favorite remedies was a tea made from \textit{Saracenia purpura}, the pitcher plant. From November 1864 to May 1865 about ninety smallpox cases were cared for; of these only nine or ten died—an exceptional record for the time.

Sister Gonzaga’s journal records many baptisms, among them a soldier from one of the Indian units and three Negro soldiers: James Simmons, William Hopkins, and Joseph White. Samplings from this journal give a straightforward account of the service at Satterlee:

\begin{quote}
After the battle of Gettysburg, we received a large number of patients who were very badly wounded—in all we had about 6000. The wards were densely crowded and there were three hundred tents erected on the grounds. Additional physicians and nurses were on duty, but a considerable number died from their wounds...The greatest number of Sisters in the Hospital, when we had so many sick, was forty-three.\footnote{18}
\end{quote}

1864 May 23. We now have nearly three thousand four hundred patients in our hospital. Indeed, it is as if we were in the midst of a little city. Everywhere we turn, we meet crowds of the maimed, the lame, and the blind, going through the corridors and yards as best they can. The wards are quickly filling up with rows of beds in the centre, as new arrivals are coming in every day from the recent battles. Many more are dying this summer than last summer.\footnote{19}

From our taking charge of hospital June the ninth, 1862, until we left it on August 3, 1865, ninety-one Sisters had been on duty there. The war being over in April, 1865, the Government only desired our service, after that, until the convalescents could obtain their discharge. The physicians, however, requested us to remain until all the sick were removed to the Soldiers’ Home, or returned to their own homes. I am happy to be able to state that, during our whole
sojourn at Satterlee Hospital, there never was an unpleasant word between the physicians or officers and the Sisters.\textsuperscript{20}

During their three years at Satterlee the sisters attended more than eighty thousand sick and wounded soldiers. Reverend Nathaniel West, protestant chaplain of Satterlee, published in 1863, an historical sketch of the hospital in which he paid tribute to the sisters:

It is most firmly believed that better nurses, better attendants on the sick, more noiseless, ceaseless performers of services in the hospital than these Sisters could not be found...No matter what the character of their services is, they are ever at their post. The work assigned must be done, whoever does it; and it must be done in the manner required. And it will be hard to find any establishment of equal magnitude to the Satterlee United States Army General Hospital where neatness, cleanliness, arrangement, order and adaptation to the end designed are better contrived and observed; and by all employed, irrespective of religious creeds and ceremonies. This is what has raised the character of the hospital, and of him who holds the charge of it, to their present exalted elevation. The Sisters were placed in the hospital by order of the Surgeon General on the reception of the first patients, and there is probably not a hospital in the public service that would not be glad to have them, if the supply was equal to the demand.\textsuperscript{21}

More pleasing to the sisters were the expressions of appreciation from the men, particularly those who were not Catholics and had never known sisters before. One day after the war Generals W.A. Hammond and Franz Sigel visited the hospital. Sigel, who had lost a leg at Gettysburg, was just mastering the art of getting about on crutches. The convalescent patients, eager to see them, crowded into the corridors as best they could. When a sister commiserated with one boy, still too sick to leave his bed, that he was missing out on all the excitement, he replied:

I would any time rather see a Sister than a general, for it was a Sister who came to me when I was unable to help myself, in an old barn near Gettysburg, where I was. She dressed my wounds and gave me a drink and took care of me until I came here.\textsuperscript{22}
Care of War Veterans in New York State

Early in the war, enlistments were for six months or a year. Many of the wounded were brought back to their home states because they were being mustered out as soon as they recovered. In 1861 General J.F. Rathbone asked for sisters to nurse in a temporary hospital in Albany until other arrangements could be made for men returning from the battlefront. In Troy, where the sisters already operated a hospital, they cared for all types of patients, city or private, civilian or military. When the mayor of Utica inquired about these arrangements, W.D. Van Alstyne, mayor of Troy, replied enthusiastically:

The Hospital was never under the direction of the City authorities, but from the commencement has been under city patronage in this way. Worthy poor people... have been sent to the Hospital when sick or meeting with sudden accidents, the city paying the Sisters $1.50 per week for their care and medical attendance, the sum they would pay if they were sent to the County House... Persons of all creeds and color are admitted, the only qualifications of a candidate is to be sick. When they are no longer sick they must go away. Six of the Sisters are employed in the management of the Hospital in various departments assisted by the necessary servants: from study long practice and otherwise some of the Sisters have become excellent apothecaries and also acquired a considerable knowledge of the medical profession: while one and all of them are the best of nurses. The general management of the Hospital is said to be excellent, neatness and order prevail, while the Sisters’ attendance to the sick no matter who they are or what the disease is untiring and devoted. With what is paid the Hospital by the city and county and what is received from private patients it is self sustaining. I feel assured that whatever encouragement your city may afford to the Sisters of Charity will not be regretted in the future...23

In January 1864, when this letter was written, the sisters had been serving in Saint John’s School and Asylum in Utica for thirty years. If the mayor did ask for sisters for a hospital, none could be spared at this time when more than one-fourth of the sisters were in the service of the armies.

Saint Mary’s Hospital in Rochester had a soldiers’ ward very early in the war. By March 1863, however, it became officially designated a military hospital; civilian patients were still nursed by the sisters, but in a building across the street. During 1864 there were
as many as three hundred soldier patients at a time; tents on the
grounds provided for the overflow. In 1865 occupancy went as high
as seven hundred, including some survivors of the notorious prison
camp in Andersonville, Georgia, weighing on arrival as little as sixty
pounds and suffering from scurvy, malnutrition and weakness. The
hospital archives preserves the register of patients from those days,
giving name, rank, regiment, date of discharge, and “remarks.” A
sample page from 1864 lists under “Remarks” one death, one
discharge, ten transfers back to active service, and thirteen who were
granted furloughs (of whom two deserted instead of returning).

The sister servant of the hospital was the indomitable Sister
Hieronymo O’Brien. Convalescent soldiers were under army disci-
pline. A cocky lieutenant punished one who returned intoxicated by
ordering him to be hung up by the thumbs. When Sister
Hieronymo discovered this, she had the culprit taken down and
locked in the guardhouse, to which she pocketed the key. The angry
lieutenant complained to his commanding officer, tendering his
resignation if such interference were to be tolerated. Sister replied
simply that a hospital is a place of healing, not of torture. The
lieutenant’s resignation was accepted and he was transferred.

Care of the Wounded in Other Northern States

Throughout the North the services of existing hospitals were util-
ized to care for wounded Union soldiers. Some of these were hospi-
tals operated by the Daughters of Charity.

Carney Hospital in Boston cared for one hundred seventy-five
returning servicemen during 1864-65. A fee of $4.50 per week was
paid by the federal government for each enlisted man; officers were
cared for free of charge.

Saint Joseph’s Hospital in Philadelphia also admitted many
soldiers of both armies during the war years.

In Detroit Sister Mary DeSales Tyler, sister servant of Saint
Mary’s Hospital, was asked to organize a military hospital. On a
farm she had purchased for the mentally ill she had a frame
building erected, large enough to accommodate one hundred
soldiers. The government paid liberally for their support. By dil-
gently cultivating the land around she provided her patients with
vegetables and fruit; the excess was sold and the money saved. After
the war she built Saint Joseph’s Retreat, Dearborn, for her mentally
ill patients with these savings.

Saint Mary's Hospital in Milwaukee was the only hospital in Wisconsin where the returning sick and wounded could be cared for. A daily average of fifty to eighty disabled soldiers stayed at Saint Mary's until other hospitals were built; then the number dropped to twenty or thirty of the most severe cases. Since Camp Sigel was nearby and had few trained nurses, six sisters nursed one hundred twenty patients there. At times the corridors were jammed with cots.

After the war many federal army hospitals closed, increasing the burden of care on private hospitals in the soldiers' home states. Gradually public agencies developed which took over these services; but until that time, many veterans were cared for as charity patients, with no funding from state or federal governments.

Saint Louis: Hospital City of the West

As Ulysses Grant's campaigns to gain control of the Mississippi led to battles in Missouri, Tennessee, Kentucky and Mississippi, Saint Louis became the principal center for care of the Union wounded as well as Confederate prisoners. Major General John C. Fremont, in charge of the Department of the West, requested sister-nurses for several military hospitals and prisons.

The first of these was the House of Refuge beyond the city limits. Built as a detention home for wayward youth, it was requisitioned for the army and opened the 19 August 1861 as Saint Louis Military Hospital. After the Battle of Shiloh, boatloads of wounded were brought up the river to Saint Louis and cared for there. The hospital was in Immaculate Conception Parish, of which Patrick John Ryan, later Archbishop of Philadelphia, was pastor. He offered Mass regularly for the Sisters and patients in the little oratory that had been allotted to them, and served as volunteer chaplain to the hospital. Offered the position of a paid chaplain with the Union, he refused it so that he could continue to minister to the Confederate prisoners. More than five hundred baptisms of patients in the hospital were recorded in the parish records.

Once the sister on duty in a surgical ward found a man in great pain whose hand had been amputated. The doctor had ordered a hot poultice, but the patient had not received it. When sister asked why, she learned it was because there were no hops in the hospital. Going to a bakery across the street, she procured the needed hops
and had the poultice prepared and applied.

When Benton Barracks opened in 1863, the hospital at the House of Refuge was discontinued by the Western Sanitary Commission.* Sister Catherine Mullen was sister servant of the group of sisters who nursed at Benton Barracks.

Throughout the war many wounded were cared for at the Sisters' Hospital on the corner of Fourth and Spruce Streets. The sisters provided nursing care for the soldiers, while their medical and surgical care was in the hands of army physicians assigned to the hospital. A fee of $2.50 a week per patient was paid by the government for care of the Union wounded in the hospital. Sister Walburga Gehring and a companion had charge of two military wards, with seventy to eighty men in one and twenty-five to thirty in the other. Sister Walburga had been struggling for years to master her temper, with such success that when one of the men contemptuously spat his medicine all over her white collar and into her face, she simply wiped it off and returned with a second dose, telling him to swallow this or the doctor would be displeased with him. He did, and his attitude completely changed. Both he and the man in the next bed died fervent Catholics.

In 1862 the provost marshal again tapped the resources of the Community in Saint Louis, ordering that sisters from the hospital be sent to care for the sick and wounded at the Myrtle Street and Gratiot Street Prisons. The Myrtle Street Prison was a terrible place, the former Lynch's Slave Pens on Myrtle and Broadway, where slaves to be sold were chained. It was reserved for Confederate military prisoners and civilian sympathizers. After some months it was closed and the remaining prisoners were transferred to the Gratiot Street Prison. This was the McDowell Medical College, an arched building in grey stone at Eighth and Gratiot Streets, which had been requisitioned for a military prison. Three sisters began the nursing care here; others were added as the numbers grew. The first group of thirteen hundred prisoners arrived on 22 December 1861 in thirty-six railroad cars, so closely packed that there was scarcely standing room. They included both Union and Confederate prisoners. This service continued for the duration of the war.

*The U.S. Sanitary Commission supplemented the medical departments of the Union Army in furnishing medical and surgical aid to temporary hospitals.
In *The Irish in America*, J.F. Maguire tells of a western farmer who interrupted a post-war camp meeting in which a preacher spoke of Catholic priests and sisters in a derogatory way. The farmer stood up and said:

That's a damn lie... I was in the prison at M'Dowall's College; I was there for six months; and I saw the Sisters waiting on the prisoners, and nursing the sick—unpaid and disinterested... I saw the priests too, constant in their attendance... That six months cured me of my folly, and I tell you, and you know me to be a man of truth, that the Catholic Church is not the thing it is represented to be... 

In 1864 Sisters from the Gratiot Street Prison were asked to staff another prison hospital across the Mississippi in nearby Alton, Illinois, in the building that had formerly housed the state penitentiary. Conditions were deplorable, but the help of the townspeople and the determination of the sisters led to needed improvements. A total of four thousand Confederate and one thousand Union prisoners were cared for there. When the last prisoners departed, the people of Alton asked the sisters to remain and open a hospital for the civilian population. Saint Joseph Hospital opened in July 1864 in the house which had formerly been used for Immaculate Conception School.

**The War in the Deep South**

While battles were raging around Richmond and Washington, the Navy was attempting to blockade Southern seaports, and battles were fought along the coast in Georgia and Florida. In March 1861 four sisters were sent from New Orleans to nurse the wounded in Pensacola and Warrington, Florida, at the request of General Braxton Bragg of the Confederate Army. Sisters also nursed in tent hospitals in Atlanta and in a hospital in Marietta, Georgia.

Meanwhile on the Mississippi, U.S. Grant of the Army of the West was winning victories in Missouri, Kentucky and Tennessee, earning the nickname ‘Unconditional Surrender Grant.’ After taking Fort Donelson on the Cumberland River, he moved on to Nashville, then south along the Tennessee River to twenty miles north of Corinth, Mississippi, the most important railroad junction
in the Mississippi Valley. Here the battle of Shiloh was fought near Pittsburgh Landing—the largest and bloodiest battle the war had yet known, with terrible casualties on both sides.

Since October 1861 four Daughters of Charity from New Orleans had been in charge of a military hospital at Holly Springs, Mississippi. In 1862 they and others served also in ambulances at Corinth. Sister Cyril Ward was sister servant of this group. Among her assistants were Sisters Philomena Pitcher and Jeanette Murrin. While Yankee wounded and Confederate prisoners were carried in transports upriver to Saint Louis, the Confederate wounded and Yankee prisoners were cared for by these sisters. To express his thanks for their devoted service to the Confederate wounded, General Bragg presented to them a cross made from a melted-down Yankee cannon, on which was inscribed:

Captured on Santa Rosa by the 5th Georgia Regiment October 9, 1861, where it was abandoned by the Enemy. Presented to the Good Sisters of Charity who had devotedly nursed our Sick and Wounded. By request of the Commanding General Braxton Bragg.25

In the spring of 1863 Grant laid seige to Vicksburg, which surrendered 4 July, the day after the guns were silenced at Gettysburg. By this victory the control of the Mississippi River was restored to the Union. Three sisters who had cared for the wounded in Natchez in 1862—Sisters Martina, Philomena and Scholastica—nursed at Vicksburg during 1863.

City Hospital in Mobile, Alabama, already staffed by Daughters of Charity, cared for Confederate soldiers during 1862 and after. Seven sisters from there were sent to staff a Marine Hospital for men of the Confederacy, also in Mobile in 1862. Other sisters nursed in Montgomery, Alabama, as early as 1861, when five sisters were caring for over three hundred patients, sometimes as many as five hundred men of both armies.

The War in Occupied Louisiana

In 1861 Sister Regina Smith of Charity Hospital, New Orleans sent four sisters to nearby Camp Moore to nurse Confederate wounded and those suffering from malignant fevers. From Natchez Sisters Geraldine, Emerita, and Vincentia went to Monroe, Loui-
siana, early in 1862 to staff a camp hospital for Confederates. Because of the blockade, they crossed the Mississippi by night in a skiff rowed by the chaplain and were met by an ambulance on the opposite shore.

The old Marine Hospital in New Orleans had been converted to a Confederate military hospital. Charity Hospital retained its status as a civilian state hospital for the poor; at the outset of the war it had 891 patients in space for 540. But the cost of war, complicated by the successful blockade of the port of New Orleans, made resources scarce.

On 25 April 1862 New Orleans fell to Admiral David Farragut’s fleet without a shot being fired in its defense. All of southwest Louisiana came under Federal occupation and control, while the rest of the state remained part of the Confederacy. Charity Hospital was in enemy territory, cut off from the administrative guidance and financial support of the legislature. When the city fell, Doctor Ernest Lewis, then only twenty-one, accepted the Confederate wounded from the Marine Hospital into the wards of Charity Hospital, although he had refused Union wounded. He was arrested and compelled to take Union men as well into the hospital.

It was probably due to Sister Regina’s prudence and charity that Charity Hospital was not entirely requisitioned as a Union military facility. As it was, she was told in August to send three sisters immediately to the Marine Hospital, to receive sixteen hundred sick soldiers on the way from Mississippi Swamp, due to arrive shortly with no provisions made to receive them. The sisters went, labored a day and a night without a pause for meals, saw the men settled and dealt with their immediate needs, and then returned home to Charity. An order soon came from the Surgeon General clarifying his intention: they were to be permanently established at the Marine Hospital. Until the end of the war these three served the Marine Hospital and Sister Regina and her sadly depleted staff of sister-nurses did double and triple duty to meet the demands of military and civilian patients at Charity. From 1862 to 1865 they cared for 22,268 patients at Charity Hospital—an annual average of 5,574—in an era when the average hospital stay was measured in months rather than days.

While free blacks were always nursed at Charity, Hotel Dieu had a ward specifically for the care of slaves. It was not a charity ward; service was paid for by the slave-owners, who wished their valuable property restored to health. After the Emancipation Proclamation
of January 1863, this ward was converted into a ward for Union wounded, with fifty severe cases being sent in one night. Sister Ernest Ernst, who had charge of the ward, did her best: carrying up coal and water from the yard, keeping up fires, caring for open wounds, consoling the dying, baptizing those who wished it. By morning eight had died, all having asked for baptism.

The occupation of New Orleans began in May 1862 with a force of fifteen thousand men under the control of General Benjamin Butler. Despised by New Orleanians as coarse, brutal and high-handed—promptly nicknamed “The Beast”—Butler still had a kinder side when dealing with sisters asking for the needs of their poor. For the seven months he remained in this post, Butler provided the chief support for Charity Hospital—$5000 a month. His successors carried on his policies; and so the poor of Louisiana were cared for in Charity Hospital even in the worst months of the war.

When Grant’s armies passed through Mississippi, living off the land and occupying Natchez, Sister Mary Thomas McSwiggan obtained a pass to visit Butler in New Orleans to plead for her orphans and the poor of the city. He gave an order for $400 and provisions sufficient for three months to be entrusted to her for distribution, promising the same amount each month as long as he was in command, and even providing the boat to carry her provisions back to Natchez. Touched by her pleading in the name of Christian charity, he even signed a permit for two sisters to cross the lines carrying food and medicines to the rebel wounded, provided no political information be given.

When the city of Donaldsonville was bombarded and burned by Farragut’s men in retaliation for a sniper attack on his fleet, and General Butler learned that the house of the Sisters of Charity had also been shelled, he wrote an apology, saying:

No one can appreciate more highly than myself the holy, self-sacrificing labors of the Sisters of Charity. To them old soldiers are daily indebted for the kindest of offices. Sisters to all mankind, they know no nation, no kindred, neither war nor peace. Their all-pervading charity is like the love of Him who died for all, Whose servants they are and Whose pure teaching their love illustrates. 26

For almost two years communication had been impossible with either Paris or Emmitsburg. After the occupation of New Orleans by Federal troops, however, communication with Paris became
possible again. In a long letter dated 11 August 1862, Sister Regina Smith recounted to Mother Montcellet the details of the blockade and occupation and reported on the military service of the sisters in the South.

Meanwhile several deaths among sisters in New Orleans made it necessary for her to recall the sisters she had sent to Richmond. With difficulty the sisters made their way to Mobile, and eventually were able to return to New Orleans. In a continuation of the same letter to Mother Montcellet, Sister Regina tells of their arrival and of later developments:

They came just in time, for since then we have had the house full of wounded federals. A great battle took place last week at Baton-Rouge, the capital of Louisiana, situated on the banks of the Mississippi. Sick and wounded are sent hither daily, and are rapidly filling up our hospitals. There are nine hundred at the Naval hospital; it is an immense building scarcely finished, which had to be given up to the victims of the war. Sisters have been asked for, at least to superintend. These poor creatures are generally protestants, and only know Catholicity to despise it. Many of them have not even received baptism. There are a good number of Irishmen among them, all of whom ask for the priest. Our good missionaries gladly accede to their desires; and many souls who have long been estranged from God are reconciled and slumber in the sleep of peace.

Nothing is so distressing as a war of this kind; we find the son armed against the father, and brother against brother. A poor young man told one of our Sisters that he had a twin brother on the other side...27

_Sister Euphemia's Visits to the South_

During these years of deprivation, overwork and anxiety, the sisters of the South had the consolation of several extended visits from Sister Euphemia Blenkinsop, Mother Ann Simeon's assistant. Obtaining passes through the lines, she traveled through all kinds of dangers to get to the sisters wherever they were. In her letters she described the conditions under which the sisters were trying to accomplish the impossible:
Thus, for example, the hospital of Richmond, where I spent some time, contains seven hundred patients and only seven Sisters. It is very extensive, and consequently requires a great deal of time for the service. Besides preparing the remedies, the Sisters are entrusted with the clothes-room, the superintendence of the kitchen, distribution of wine, etc. They are nearly always obliged to cleanse and dress the patients' wounds themselves, for otherwise they would be forgotten. There is so much suffering and so much to be done.

The Louisiana hospital [the former Marine Hospital being used as a military hospital] numbers three hundred and fifty patients; there are six sisters there, who are anything but strong; and the patients are scattered about in small rooms, which render the service very inconvenient. Yet, I must say that all goes on very well there...

During my stay at Richmond, we were for two long days in the very midst of the sounds of war; but incredible calm and tranquility reigned among us... Our poor Sisters, though the shells were flying around them, did not even interrupt their duties, going wherever their presence was needed, under the protection of Heaven. The soldiers seeing this, said with surprise to one another: "How is it that the Sisters do not tremble? As for us, we are used to the noise of cannon and shells, but they are very different, and yet they go about as if nothing were the matter." Others going further, asked what we should do if the enemy should reach us in triumph! "We should remain at our post," replied the Sister who was asked... These words made a deep impression on the poor soldier, and especially consoled those whose wounds, or the violence of disease kept confined to their beds. They exclaimed in a spontaneous transport of joy: "The Sisters will not leave us! Thank God! Thank God!"

It was Sister Euphemia who sent home news of Sister Regina Smith's death in January 1864 and appointed Sister Avellina McDermott to succeed her at Charity Hospital. She livened recreations on her return to Emmitsburg with many anecdotes of the sisters and their patients: of the man who would not believe that his sister-nurse could be a Catholic because he had been told they were vile people and she was so good; of another who asked, "Who pays you? What do you get a month?" and marveled that the sisters who worked so hard and never stopped were working only for the love of God. She told of the soldier brought in to Richmond General Hospital whose wound was putrefying, generating worms as fast as it was possible to remove them. The doctor who saw him
classified him as dying, beyond help; but Sister Valentine Latouraudais, his nurse, told the attendants in what position to place him and then knelt beside him for three hours applying a soothing wash and picking off the worms. The doctors, finding the man greatly improved, ashamedly took over the task, each in turn spending a half hour with the man, who soon recovered. One doctor later referred to Sister's silent example as "the best lecture army surgeons ever had!"

After the Battle of Gettysburg Sister Euphemia took some boarders from Saint Joseph's Academy, Emmitsburg, through the lines and to the South with her in an attempt to reunite them with their families. An explosion occurred on the train; the engineer was killed, cars overturned, and only the coach in which they were riding escaped harm. The frightened girls long remembered Sister Euphemia beside the track among the injured and dying, easing some, comforting others, praying with or baptizing the dying.

In 1863 a fire destroyed much of the town of Emmitsburg. The homeless turned to Saint Joseph's for help. The White House, formerly used as an orphanage, was placed at their disposal and the sisters supplied them with food, bedding, clothing and other necessities. Families remained until their own homes could be rebuilt; but some had no resources with which to build. At least one couple, the elderly parents of Sister Sarah Myers (and of Sister Philomena, deceased) remained for the rest of their lives, visited daily by their daughter and supplied with all their needs.

The End of the War

After U.S. Grant took command of the Army of the Potomac, the number of casualties reached new heights. In one month fifty thousand Union wounded were brought to hospitals behind the lines. A new determination kept them fighting with the ruthlessness that was the price of victory. Events moved swiftly and inexorably towards the end of the war. In February 1865 Lee's supply line was cut off. By the end of March the Confederate Army of Virginia was in flight; a wire was sent advising all to leave Richmond. On 3 April the last Confederates crossed the James River; bridges were destroyed and the ammunition depots torched, causing such explosions and fires that one-third of the city was destroyed. Looting and drunken disorder followed until Federal troops occupied the city,
where few remained except the frightened poor, the wounded too ill to travel and the sisters caring for them.

The climax came during Holy Week. On Palm Sunday, 9 April 1865, Lee surrendered at Appomattox Court House. On Good Friday, 14 April, after a cabinet meeting in which the fiery Secretary of War, Edwin Stanton, opposed the president's fraternal reconstruction plans for the South, Lincoln was shot by John Wilkes Booth in Ford's Theatre in Washington. The war was over; but the silence of the cannons gave place to lamentation as families counted their dead and sifted through the ashes of broken dreams.

For the Community too it was a year of suffering. Burlando must have been thinking of 1865 when he wrote later to a discouraged sister:

Experience must have already taught you that where divine Providence seems to close a window, it opens a large door; and when we think nothing but darkness is to be met, suddenly a big light unexpectedly appears that makes us see our way through the mist.29

During this year Burlando suffered from a nearly fatal case of typhoid fever; Mother Ann Simeon grew progressively weaker as cancer spread and multiplied in her body; and the Community, represented by Sister Euphemia, was brought to trial in the notorious Mount Hope case, to face charges of misleading the public, misrepresenting cures in annual reports, and keeping patients against their will. Burlando recovered. The trial, having dragged on for a year, ended in a glorious vindication of the sisters and doctors who served Mount Hope, the charge being recognized as a bigoted attempt to discredit a Catholic institution which had an exceptionally successful record in the care of the mentally ill. Mother Ann Simeon's suffering ended with her peaceful death in Saint Agnes Hospital, Baltimore. Her body was brought by train as far as Gettysburg—where the sisters were still serving in the military hospitals—and then conveyed by carriage to Emmitsburg for the funeral.

"A good superior is a great grace, and great graces are granted to prayer,"30 Burlando wrote to the sisters throughout the country in announcing Sister Ann Simeon's death and asking prayers for her successor. When Sister Euphemia Blenkinsop was chosen, he was heard to say, "There are many who are capable and worthy of filling the office of visitatrix in the province; but I feel justified in
saying that Almighty God has chosen the most humble." For the next seven years Burlando and Sister Euphemia were to share the leadership of the American province in admirable harmony, ending only with Burlando’s death in 1873. Both of them served the province twenty years in the respective leadership roles of director and visitatrix.

During the four war years (1861-1865) sixty-two sisters had died in the province; another ten died in 1866, most of them worn out by the unparalleled demands of their wartime service. Of the eight hundred sisters in the province in 1861, more than one-fourth—possibly as many as one-third—had nursed the wounded. Many who entered during the war were initiated into the service of the sick on the battlefields. The Community, with a generous offering of its resources, had responded to the greatest crisis the young nation had so far faced.

How quickly what had been offered was restored is evident from the annual report sent to Paris 31 December 1866, which shows a total membership in the province of 951 sisters. During the year 55 had entered, 25 had left, 10 had died, 67 had received the habit and been sent on mission. The Community was conducting 22 hospitals, 4 houses of charity, 32 orphanages, 49 schools and one academy—a total of 108 establishments in the United States. The tree of the American Community was burgeoning with new life!
Father Burlando's skill as an architect saved considerable expense. His plans were used for many new buildings in the province.

In 1875 Bishop Gibbons asked for sisters to teach boys and girls together in a school in Petersburg, Virginia.

In 1894 the Daughters of Charity undertook the care of patients with leprosy isolated at an abandoned plantation in a bend of the river 75 miles above New Orleans.

In the predawn hours of 18 April 1906, an earthquake struck Northern California. Father Sullivan found the sisters nursing the injured in temporary shelters.

By 1867 the sisters at Saint Mary's, Virginia City, Nevada, were caring for 125 orphans and boarders, teaching 250 children in two day schools, and instructing Paiutes, Shoshones, and families of miners who lived nearby. After 1875 they cared for the sick in Nevada's first hospital.