Recollections of the Establishment of the Congregation of the Mission in the United States, Part 5

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The American mission had suffered a staggering blow with the death of Felix de Andreis on 15 October 1820. Despite this and other setbacks the Vincentian Community continued to grow. In this installment Bishop Rosati gives a detailed account of the personnel and their activities, including his own elevation to the episcopate.

The growth experienced by the Congregation in America in the midst of all these vicissitudes was truly amazing. There was already a nice community with a good novitiate, a seminary, and the beginning of a college at the Barrens. There were missions or residences at Vincennes and in Louisiana. Those of the priests who had not yet been permanently incorporated into the Congregation by vows and who were on the missions, apart from the Community, persevered in their vocations and showed themselves to be filled with the spirit of their state and asked to make their vows. Of this number were Mr. Ferrari, who lived at Vincennes with Mr. Dahmen, and Mr. Tichitoli, who lived in Louisiana. Mr. Rosati first summoned Mr. Ferrari, whose health was in an alarming condition and who in the state of poverty and destitution in which he found himself in Vincennes was threatened by hydropsy.¹ This holy priest returned to the seminary in spite of his weakness and made his vows after having

¹ An early name for edema.
prepared himself for them by a retreat at the beginning of November. Neither the Superior nor Msgr. Dubourg wanted to let him go back to Vincennes because of his health. He was sent to Saint Louis where he could find in the Bishop’s house a better means for regaining his health than at the seminary. He stayed there until the month of August, working zealously at the instruction of the faithful in the Cathedral Church and at the same time teaching in the college. Mr. Potini and Mr. De Neckere had returned to the seminary after the beginning of the month of November. The former carried out his holy ministry in the parish and the latter, while continuing his novitiate and his theology courses, taught very many classes to the seminarians and the boys in the college.

For, although the principal object of the establishment was the ecclesiastical education of students destined for the sanctuary, still they were obliged to accept other boys for whom there was no other means of education in the area. It had been necessary to entrust them to teachers who had not given them any idea of religion. If they were sent far away, when they returned at a certain age, they were ashamed to be instructed in their faith. Not having made their First Communion, they remained away from the Sacraments and they did not practice their religion. And what is worse, sometimes even their principles were shaken and their spirit filled with prejudices that unbelief or heresy delighted in spreading against the Catholic Church. Some fathers of families who saw this beautiful establishment being raised in the region had always hoped that it would offer them the means of educating their

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2 It is clear that in this and the following paragraphs Bishop Rosati is being defensive about the fact that the Vincentians were conducting a college for lay students in conjunction with the seminary at the Barrens. The reason for his apologetic attitude is that just five years before the Superiors in Paris had attempted to suppress the lay college as being incompatible with traditional Vincentian apostolates and because of the mingling of lay and ecclesiastical students.
children in religion as well as in learning. When they saw the building ready to be lived in, they hurried to ask that their sons be taken in, generously offering to pay all the expenses. The refusal that was given to them at first, on the grounds that it was an ecclesiastical establishment, hurt them, without, however, discouraging them. They often returned to the attack. Even the Protestants were shocked by this refusal and began to look on the establishment as an institution that had no involvement with the public good. Nevertheless, the legislative assembly had given it recognition and had granted it a legal existence by a formal law as an educational institution.\(^3\) People were shocked by this resistance that they encountered on the part of those who were at the head of the establishment.

Msgr. Dubourg and the Superior thought it necessary to give in to these repeated insistences and they agreed to admit the small number of boys that the building could hold. Messrs. Joseph Pratte, Ferdinand Rozier, and Stephen Roussain and Fr[ançois] Vallé were delighted by this decision. They took advantage of it and were the first to send their sons there. A special rule was drawn up for them. Their number increased in proportion as the building was enlarged. They were immediately and completely separated from the clerics and at length that part of the establishment took on the form of a regular college. The legislature granted the institution all the privileges of a university.\(^4\) The formal consent of the Superiors who approved the establishment was obtained and they recog-

\(^3\) The reference is to the incorporation of the college, the first such in the state of Missouri. It was passed by the state legislature on 28 November 1822 and took effect the following 1 January.

\(^4\) The law empowering the seminary to confer all the degrees ordinarily given by institutions of higher learning was passed by the state legislature on 13 December 1830 and became effective the following 1 January. It was passed at the request of the seminary which hoped in that way to become eligible for the public money that was distributed to public educational institutions. Saint Mary’s was the first college in Missouri to be granted this privilege.
nized it as forming part of the work of the missions, with which the members of the Congregation were entrusted in this country.

As a matter of act, by this means they were carrying out the principal end of their Institute, which is to work for the conversion of souls and the education of clerics. When one takes into consideration the large number of boys and young Catholic students at the College of Saint Mary's of the Barrens who were instructed in religion, who learned not only dogmas but also moral practice, and who were prompted to carry out its obligations and to observe its precepts, when one counts the large number of those who made their First Communions there, who were Confirmed there, who were accustomed to frequent the Sacraments there, does not one find that there are few missions, few parishes, in which the works of the Missionaries have produced equal fruit? And still, a large part of these young people, if they had not had the good fortune of being educated at the Barrens, would not have had such advantages. If they had been sent to non-Catholic establishments, they would probably have been shaken in their beliefs, would perhaps have adopted the principles and prejudices of their teachers. And as for the Protestants, how many of them have embraced the Catholic religion, even with the permission of their parents! The number is not small and one can affirm without fear that there was not a parish in which the works of the Missionaries had been crowned with as much success as at the College of Saint Mary's.

Had, then, the purpose of the Institute been abandoned by working for the conversion of souls, and even of heretics, in the college? Certainly not. Doing this was in accord with the views of Saint Vincent who had the Missionaries whom he sent to foreign countries learn and practice medicine. They were following the example of his worthy successors who had the Missionaries whom they sent to China learn mathematics, horology, and mechanical
arts. Those Missionaries did not believe that they were leaving the sphere of occupations that conformed to their vocation when they busied themselves with working at the sciences and arts, and they were accorded the honor of becoming members of the tribunals that dealt with those arts. What had been done for the good of religion in Italy and in France before and after the French Revolution was done here, when the Superiors took charge of colleges which they regarded as the means of doing good and saving souls. Finally, what was done in America was what the Superiors General of the Congregation judged expedient to do in Constantinople and in the Levant, where the good of religion demanded that the Priests of the Mission should apply themselves to these latter [that is, colleges], which multiplied in the different missions in those countries.

Furthermore, by means of the College of Saint Mary’s of the Barrens a means was found to support the young clerics who in this way were able to make their clerical studies and to be formed for the functions of the holy ministry. Without that they could not have been either accepted or supported. Finally, all of this furnished the Congregation with a goodly number of excellent personnel who would never have thought of asking to join the number of its members if they had not first been accepted among the number of seminarians who were supported by the college.

The success of the seminary and the college encouraged Msgr. Dubourg very much, as well as his clergy, especially those who lived in Louisiana and who at his solicitation gave and obtained a great deal of help for this establishment.

Provisions, fabrics, books, vestments were sent from

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5 One of the early Vincentian missionaries to China, Father Nicholas Raux, was raised to the rank of mandarin by the Emperor and made a member of the tribunal of mathematics, the first Frenchman to receive that honor.

6 For Vincentian educational work in the Islamic world, see the article by Professor Charles Frazee in this volume.
New Orleans. Mr. Portier, who had been ordained a priest in Saint Louis in 1818 and had said his First Mass at the Barrens a few days before the seminarians arrived from Kentucky, often visited the establishment during the stay of several months that he made with Mrs. Fenwick at Brazeau. He had close ties with the Superior and had a special affection for the seminary which he had seen at its birth and whose gradual growth he had followed during its first infancy. He knew all of its needs. After he had gone down to New Orleans and settled in that city at the parish where he was the first of Msgr. Dubourg's priests to work with so much success for religion and the salvation of souls, he took it upon himself to provide for their needs. He was their agent, their treasurer, their commissary and thus he became one of the seminary's most outstanding benefactors. Some time later, Mr. Borgna did the same.

When Msgr. Dubourg went down to New Orleans for the first time after his elevation to the episcopate at the end of November 1820, he received a welcome that surpassed all his hopes. He assembled his clergy in a synod for five days and made some very useful rules for his diocese. He recommended the work of the seminary to his priests and in that way he shared with it the powerful resources that took it out of its straitened condition in which the needs of that establishment and the necessity of providing for it had plunged him. It cannot be imagined how much this venerable prelate had suffered up to that time as a result of his fatherly solicitude. He experienced the sufferings and privations and needs of all his dear children. He made the greatest sacrifices to relieve them, not being afraid, when there were no means, of borrowing to obtain for them what was necessary. The letters that he wrote on those occasions are the faithful expression of his heart's feelings, so beautiful, so generous, so affectionate, so fatherly. One saw the pleasure that he felt when he gave something, the pain that he experienced when he had to refuse, the fear that he had of hurting. Sometimes, after
having explained the difficulties that were pressing in on him, he in a certain sense retraced his steps and softened his expressions with a correction. "Excuse me, my dear friend, for abrupt tone of my letter. I am suffering and in great difficulty. Pray for me."

When Mr. Tichitoli had also finished the time of his novitiate, he asked to make his vows. To enable him to go up to the seminary, it was necessary to replace him at Assumption. So Mr. Potini was asked to go there in the month of May 1821 and Mr. Tichitoli returned with Msgr. Dubourg at the end of the same month. Before going to the seminary, he was put in charge of giving a mission at Ville-poche [sic for Vide-poche] or Carondelet. It produced marvelous results. There had not yet been a resident priest in that parish and the practice of religion had been neglected in it. They had a passion and a sort of rage for dances.7

When Mr. Tichitoli presented himself at the church for the first time, there was almost no one who wanted to go there. This good priest made use of the same means that Saint Francis Xavier used to employ in similar situations. First of all, he turned his attention to the children. He went out to find them in the streets, he assembled them in the church, he soon had a large number of them. First, he taught them their prayers, he gave them catechism lessons, he gave them practice in singing hymns which they quickly learned. Their diligence in church and the change wrought in their conduct amazed their parents very much. They wanted to see for themselves what their children were doing in church and, after having gone to the instructions and catechisms out of curiosity at first, they began to enjoy them. They came in large numbers, they lent their ears to the sermons. The moment of grace had come, they prepared to make their confessions. They all came to the

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7The American passion for dances and balls was something that the early Vincentians viewed as morally dangerous. They had been forewarned about this by the Sulpicians who held similar views.
tribunal of Penance, they approached the Holy Table and there was a very large number of Confirmations of persons of every age. The change was complete, it was solid. A long time afterwards, an educated man, but one without religion, manifested to one of our priests his great amazement over it. He did not think that such a reform was possible in the village, especially with regard to the dances.

So it was that Mr. Tichitoli prepared himself by his apostolic functions to join the Congregation of the Mission irrevocably by vows. He had the happiness of pronouncing them at the seminary, after the customary retreat, toward the end of July.

At the beginning of the month of August, Mr. Ferrari was sent to Louisiana. Msgr. Dubourg absolutely wanted to have two of our priests at New Orleans to act as vicars of the parish. Mr. Borgna was already there. Mr. Ferrari was sent there, having been appointed Superior by Mr. Rosati, and Mr. Borgna was appointed treasurer. Msgr. Dubourg thought that Mr. Borgna was ideally suited to the position. "He has talent," he wrote to Mr. Rosati, "charm, learning and very much a spirit of recollection, regularity and piety." He went with the Religious of the Sacred Heart who were going to found a house in Opelousas. As soon as the dangers of the epidemic season were over, he went to take up his post in New Orleans.

Mr. Rosati was invited to Saint Louis by Msgr. Dubourg for the feast of the Patron Saint of the diocese. When he got there, he was detained by this Prelate to supervise and direct the printing of a collection of proper offices that the Holy Father had granted at Msgr. Dubourg's request and which were used in the diocese. This task took more time than had been anticipated. During his stay in Saint Louis he had the opportunity to see the good that Mr. Acquaroni was doing in the parish at Portage des Sioux, where he lead a truly apostolic life. Msgr. Dubourg, whom Mr. Rosati accompanied there on the trip that he
made to administer Confirmation, was amazed at it and
could not believe his eyes.

All the parishioners seemed to form one big family,
with Mr. Acquaroni as the father. They were poor and Mr.
Acquaroni shared with them the little that he had, the
fruits and vegetables of the garden that he cultivated with
his own hands. He had a very special concern for the
children, to whom he not only diligently taught catechism
but also school lessons. He had taught ceremonies and
chant to a goodly number of these children. He had them
dress in cassocks and albs and in this way the divine service
in his church was carried out with an admirable decency,
majesty and exactitude. His church was made of wood, but
it was tastefully decorated with hangings of unpainted cloth
that covered the roughness of the walls and, with some
nice draperies of red silk arranged with symmetry and
grace, made a charming sight to see. But what was
especially enchanting was the voices of the children, boys
and girls, who were divided into two choirs and sang the
High Mass, Vespers, and very nice hymns with great
precision, taste and harmony, and formed a very nice
ensemble. The special ceremonies of Christmas, the Purifi-
cation, Ash Wednesday, Palm Sunday, and Holy Week, the
processions, especially on Corpus Christi, were carried out
there with such care and splendor that not only the
parishioners took pleasure in attending them but a large
number of strangers came from a distance and went home
edified. The instructions, given with simplicity but also with
solid content, never failed to crown the solemnity on every
Sunday and Feastday. The Sacraments were frequented
there and religion understood and practiced. Up to the
present time, that is, after more than eighteen years, one
still experiences at the Portage the good that Mr. Acqu-
aroni did there. The Reverend Jesuit Fathers, who have
since then served in that parish, have given creditable

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8 This sentence is confused in the original.
witness to the zeal of the good Mr. Acquaroni, whose memory will always be held in blessing among the people at the Portage.

On is return to Saint Louis Mr. Rosati was totally occupied with the edition of the proper offices of the diocese. He preached in the Cathedral, sometimes in French and sometimes in English. He heard confessions and especially visited the sick who in the last months of the summer and in the autumn were very numerous in the city. On these occasions he had the happiness of receiving some Protestants into the bosom of the Church. Toward mid-October, after having been called to visit a sick person who lived about four miles from Saint Louis and after having ministered to him, while he was returning to town, his horse became frightened, took the bit in his teeth, went down an embankment and threw him to the ground. That accident kept him in Saint Louis until the month of November. There was little need for him to have avoided death because in his eagerness to return to his post, when the bandages were applied in order to put his arm in a sling, they were tightened to such a degree that the circulation of the blood was stopped. Happily, because he asked the doctor to remove the bandages because of the unbearable pain that he was suffering, it was just in time to prevent gangrene which was on the point of setting in. The arm had already turned almost completely black. So he was able to catch a steamboat and go down to Sainte Genevieve, where he was taken to the Barrens.

Msgr. Dubourg had been there a few days before and then had embarked at Sainte Genevieve in order to go down to New Orleans, accompanied by Mr. de Angelis and Mr. Tichitoli. The latter was returning to his post at the parish of the Assumption, with Mr. Bigeschi. Mr. Potini was stationed at Thibodeauxville or Bayou-la-Fourche, as pastor of Saint Joseph’s parish.

That part of the Bayou gave great consolation to those who worked in it. Religion and piety made great progress
because of the dedication of Mr. Bigeschi, the pastor of Assumption, and who was in charge of the entire back country of the Bayou, and of Mr. Vallezano, pastor of Ascension near Donaldsonville. These gentlemen had put their parishes on a footing equal to the most regular in Europe. They had built very beautiful brick churches which Msgr. Dubourg had solemnly consecrated. They had made use of a very strong means for reviving piety and faith among their parishioners. This was very successful and all the pastors in charge of far-flung parishes ought to use it in order to do good.

Since a large number of persons found it impossible to go regularly to church on Sundays because it was necessary to travel a long distance, it happened that because of this the elderly, mothers of families with children, the children themselves, the domestics were deprived of necessary instructions. They rarely heard the word of God and did not approach the Sacraments as often as the good of their souls demanded. They were exposed to the danger of falling into neglect of their duties and indifference to their salvation. These gentlemen, animated by a truly apostolic spirit, concluded that it was part of their duty to go in search of their sheep in the different reaches, even the most remote of the area that had been confided to them and bring there those means of salvation that they could not come to church to find. They set up in these different sections of their parish what are called mission stations. Having chosen a house and set the day when all were to assemble there, they did not fail to go there, no matter what the cost. They heard confessions, celebrated Holy Mass, gave solid instructions according to the Gospel, and then gave a good catechism lesson to the children, from which adults also profited often enough. The pastors' zeal and punctuality aroused and sustained the same zeal and the same punctuality in their sheep who gathered in

9“Domestics” was a euphemism for black slaves.
crowds at the rural chapels on workdays and put to profit the graces that the Soveriegn Pastor of souls thus caused to rain down on them. These parishes also became the model and example for others, from which they always stood out. It was a field that was open to the labors of the Priests of the Mission.

Msgr. Dubourg sent them there all the more willingly because he had always had this part of his diocese in mind for an establishment of the Congregation of the Mission. In the beginning he had chosen it as the site for his seminary, before deciding to make his residence in Saint Louis. He always hoped to found a second house there. With that intention he asked and obtained from the Superior as many personnel as could be placed in the area.

A new reinforcement for the clergy of the diocese had just arrived in the month of August 1822. Six young clerics who had already finished their theology courses or were about to do so — Messrs. Odin and Jean-Baptiste Blanc from the Diocese of Lyons, Mr. Eugene Michaud from Annecy, and Messrs. Audisio, Peyretti and Caretta from Turin — were immediately sent to the seminary to learn English and finish their studies and prepare themselves to receive Orders in their turn. It was a very nice addition and the Congregation had its share of them for some time later Mr. Odin asked to be received and was admitted into the number of its members. They all remained at the seminary with the exception of Mr. Michaud who was sent to Saint Louis and put to work in the college until his advancement to the Priesthood. By this means Providence had arranged to make up for the losses that the diocese and the Congregation were about to suffer.

When these gentlemen arrived at Sainte Genevieve on the [blank] of the month of [blank] 1822, they found the pastor on his deathbed. They brought this sad news to Mr. Rosati and informed him of Mr. Pratte's wish to see him, even though the venerable Mr. Olivier, pastor of Prairie du
Rocher, had already visited him and heard his confession. Without losing an instant he went to the side of his good friend, who manifested a genuine pleasure on seeing him but who [blank] always more and more, received from his hand the Last Sacraments and died in his arms on a Sunday while all his parishioners, gathered together in the church which had been the theater of his zeal, offered their sobs, their prayers, and vows to the Master of life and death for their beloved pastor. Mr. Rosati, himself plunged in grief, could scarcely offer any consolation to his numerous and tearful family. Bursting into tears, he visited the father who during the pastor’s agony had retired to prayer in a neighboring room. This venerable old man, heir to the faith of the patriarchs, with a heroism that only religion can give cried out on seeing him, “Ah, I understand, now we must pray for the repose of his soul.” He threw himself on his knees, renewed his sacrifice, took out his rosary and began to pray for his dear, beloved deceased. Mr. Rosati, after having fulfilled his final obligations to this benefactor of the seminary, went back there with the sad news of his death.

It was not long before he received the news of that of Mr. Ferrari, which pierced him to the heart and which was deeply felt by all his confreres. We have already spoken of his trip to Louisiana and of the position that had been assigned to him in the parish, where he lived with Mr. Borgna. In a very short time he had won the affection, esteem, and respect of his confreres and of the people in general. In the midst of the continual occupations of the ministry and the distractions of a large city, Mr. Ferrari faithfully followed the plan of life that had been outlined for him in conformity with the Rules of the Congregation. He was exact in all his exercises of piety. He loved study and seclusions and at the same time he enjoyed the company of his confreres during the time of recreation. Up to the end of the month of August 1822 the yellow fever had not yet appeared in New Orleans and people were
already flattering themselves that for that year it would not. But at the beginning of September it broke out all at once and with such violence that it carried off forty to fifty persons a day. Mr. Ferrari, although not yet acclimated, was not afraid to risk his life in order to go carry the helps of religion to the victims of this terrible scourge. He went to visit them night and day, without interruption and without rest. Occupied without relief in the heroic functions of charity toward his brothers and sisters, he forgot himself and did not give his body the rest necessary for regaining his strength. Finally, exhausted by his labor, he himself fell victim to his charity and died after some days of illness, fortified by the Sacraments, in the arms of the Lord, 3 November 1822.

Although it was impossible to make up for these losses immediately, nevertheless the empty places they left had to be filled. Mr. Acquaroni briefly replaced the pastor at Sainte Genevieve. This good Missionary, who had done so much good at the Portage, had suffered a considerable loss of strength and his health could not sustain him in the midst of the labors and privations that he was obliged to undergo in that parish. He was recalled and, after his stay at Sainte Genevieve, he was sent to replace Mr. Ferrari in New Orleans. Mr. Dahmen was recalled from Vincennes, where his health had been completely exhausted. He came to make his vows at the seminary and was stationed in Sainte Genevieve. At that time this parish was regarded as a sort of waystation for the seminary. It was thought necessary to put a priest of the Congregation there who, at a distance of twenty-four miles (considered a mere trifle in America) from the Motherhouse, was still in a certain sense in the bosom of his Community. Besides his confreres would never be hampered or stopped by the fear of being a burden to their host whenever the business of their Community obliged them to go to Sainte Genevieve.

Msgr. Dubourg received the unhappy news of Mr. Ferrari’s death in Washington. Some important business
had determined him to undertake this trip, which was very useful to the diocese and brought to it the establishment of the Jesuits and was also the occasion for the establishment of the Sisters of Loretto at the Barrens. So it was that he left Saint Louis toward the end of September 1822, visited his venerable confrere Msgr. Flaget at Bardstown. Here is how he wrote to Mr. Rosati:

I am enthralled by everything that I see in this diocese. The establishment at Bardstown is a wonder. I have noticed the great advantage that Monseigneur receives from the sisters, especially those of Mr. Nerinckx, and it has occurred to me to ask for some for the Barrens. These girls would be a treasure of edification. They would instruct the young people and still more they would provide the seminary with clothing without, so to speak, costing it anything, because they also farm the land. I did not want to do anything without consulting you. If you wish, speak about it to the congregation (to the parishioners) and write Mr. Nerinckx about it. There would be question of building some buildings for which, I think, the parish would be happy to help you. It is something to think about.

It is clear from this how this great bishop was continually concerned with the good of his diocese and his seminary, which he never had out of his sight and to whose profit he turned everything that he observed, even on his trips. Nothing escaped him. He went into the smallest detail about anything that could be useful to his beloved seminary. In the same letter he announced the shipment that he had sent out from Louisville: two hundred young apple trees grafted with the best kinds of fruit for the seminary. He did not hesitate even to stoop to designating the place where they were to be planted, the method of planting them, the precautions that were to be taken, etc. Is it not beautiful to see a man of this stature, raised so high by his virtues, his talents, and the high esteem that he enjoyed with the Sovereign Pontiff and royalty, reach down that far and in a certain way imitate the Providence
of the Heavenly Father, Whose perfections ought to be our model, which embraces in its admirable dispositions the greatest and the smallest things?

While Msgr. Dubourg thus dedicated all his efforts to the good of his diocese, there loomed an event that was to alarm and plunge into affliction and sorrow the one who after Mr. Deandrei's death found himself at the head of our establishments in America.

The Archbishop of Baltimore, Msgr. Marechal, had made a trip to Rome on the business of his diocese. He had resigned into the hands of the Holy Father, Pius VII, the jurisdiction and spiritual care of the territories of Mississippi and Alabama which were attached to his See. He suggested to the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda the erection of a Vicariate Apostolic for this region and proposed Mr. Rosati for that position. The Sacred Congregation asked the Holy Father to grant the request that it made for carrying out the plans suggested by the Archbishop. By his Apostolic Letters in the form of Brief of 13 August 1822, he erected a Vicariate Apostolic for Mississippi and Alabama and named Mr. Rosati to this place and Bishop of Tenagra in partibus infidelium.

This brief with the powers that the Pope granted him and the letters of the Cardinal Prefect of Propaganda, when they reached him in the month of November, were like a bolt from the blue for Mr. Rosati and were also very painful for Msgr. Dubourg, who learned about it on his arrival in Baltimore.

Mr. Rosati did not hesitate for a moment and immediately sent an answer to His Eminence, refusing to accept this appointment and to strengthen his refusal he earnestly begged him to intercede on his behalf with the Holy Father and have him agree to his refusal. At the same time he wrote to Mr. Baccari so that he would support at Propaganda the reasons that he had for not accepting this appointment. He also informed Msgr. Dubourg who, before receiving this letter had written him two or three
times on the matter and let him know of his apprehension:

I learned on my arrival here, my dear Mr. Rosati, of your nomination to the bishopric of Tenagra and the administration of the two states of Alabama and Mississippi. This news would drive me out of my mind if I could for one moment believe that you would accept. I have written to Propaganda about it and I am sending you a copy of my letter. I have also written to Mr. Baccari. I pray that God may direct you in your response but in my opinion everything will be lost in Louisiana if this goes through. And besides the harm done to religion, what injustice toward me? What reason for discouragement for all bishops? God preserve me from believing that this business will be brought to completion. If I believed that, I would not return to my diocese but I would go hand in my resignation at the feet of the Pope. Answer me immediately and take me out of my anxiety. God has greatly tested us with the death of the virtuous Mr. Ferrari. My soul is drowned in sorrow. Nevertheless, let us not let ourselves be beaten down. *Ipse vulnerat et medetur, deducit ad inferos et reducit.*

In another letter he wrote, "I am waiting for your answer which will decide my fate and that of Louisiana. I am confident that everything will turn out for the best, etc."

Here is the letter that this same Prelate wrote to the Cardinal Prefect of the S[acred C[ongregation] of Propa-
ganda:

**Most Eminent Cardinals:**

Having recently been called to Baltimore on very urgent business of my diocese, with greatest sorrow of my heart I heard from the Archbishop on his return that the Reverend Mr. Rosati had been nominated by the Sacred Congregation to the administration of the states of Alabama and Mississippi with the episcopal title. Since I am at a long distance from him, I do not know what his attitude of mind will be when this news reaches him. But I

10 "He wounds and he heals," (Job 5:18 in the Vulgate). "He leads down to the lower world and brings back," (Paraphrase of Tobit 13:2, Vulgate).

11 The original of this letter is in Latin.
know very well what will be the effect of his acceptance of it. In all of Louisiana it will ruin the Congregation of the Mission which up to now has begun to flourish greatly under his direction and which no one but him has been able to take charge of up to now. It will ruin the seminary for clerics, the only hope for that immense region. Driven to that ruin, the priests and students whom I have brought together at such great expense will be scattered everywhere.

As for me, seeing my efforts frustrated, if I am not destroyed by sorrow, I shall certainly languish in despair. Oh, Most Eminent Fathers, what have you done? Who has given you this advice that you would take away from a very poor bishop the final and only anchor of his hope? I accepted the episcopacy on this one condition: that the priests of the Congregation of the Mission would be given to me as help. I received only two who could [text garbled] in my diocese: de Andreis and Rosati. One has been taken away by death and now you snatch the other from me after I have expended immense labors and great sums for the foundation of their Community. In one day the sweat and efforts of seven years perish. Now it is enough. If that nomination goes into effect, I have no further hope, nothing further to strive for. I shall sit and weep for the ruin of the building which up to now, with God's help, has begun to grow with such great labor of mine. But why should I not hope that Your Eminences will be moved by my most humble supplications and profuse tears? Certain when there was question in Rome of removing from the Most Reverend Bishop of Bardstown his friend and principal coadjutor, the Most Reverend Mr. David, whom they wished to promote to the See of Philadelphia, the Venerable Prelate's complaints were heard, the mind of the Sacred Congregation was changed, and the one they had intended to remove from him they gave to him as a coadjutor. Thus by bringing together those two men the diocese of Bardstown is flourishing every day. Most Eminent Fathers, agree in the same way to my requests. Behold, I am prostrate at your feet, weeping over the sorrow of the daughters of my people12 and I will not rise until you have withdrawn that

12 Paraphrase of Lamentations 2:11 in the Vulgate.
nomination. Give me this same Mr. Rosati as my coadjutor and provide in any other way you want for the states of Mississippi and Alabama. Why should Louisiana be destroyed in order to cultivate elsewhere a church that perhaps when it has begun to grow will be choked off in the same way while still in the womb?

I would wish, however, that Your Eminences note the following observations.

Beyond doubt Florida needs an Episcopal See. It is, however, appropriate that the state of Alabama, in which there are very few Catholics at this time, almost all in the city of Mobile, be joined with it because of its nearness. In the State of Mississippi there is only one congregation of Catholics, that is, in the city of Natchez, with thirty families at the most. Since it is only two days journey from New Orleans, it can very easily be administered by the Bishop of this city or his Vicar General. I have already provided for the above mentioned two congregations, whether in Natchez or Mobile, and a very good priest has been appointed to each. What more could an administrator clothed with the episcopal dignity do? And where will he find his daily food, not to mention the maintenance of his dignity, when these two priests can scarcely be supported by those Catholics?

The Sacred Congregation has already contacted me several times about erecting a See in Florida. I not only agreed to this proposal but quite often suggested it myself, as various communications of mine show. Perhaps these have been kept among the records of the Sacred Congregation. Not so long ago I gave my opinion on various questions concerning the erection of this See and I proposed a priest to fill it, namely, the Reverend Mr. Enoch Fenwick of Maryland, a Jesuit, formerly Vicar General to the Most Reverend Archibishop John Carroll and now president of Georgetown College. When all this was done, I thought that the business would soon be finished. But I am greatly amazed by what I now hear from the Most Reverend Archbishop Marechal, namely, that doubts had arisen in Rome as to whether Florida belonged to my See or the See of Havana, since it is evident from the Bull of erection of the See of New Orleans (27 April 1793) that at the request of the King of Spain, "having weighed the opinion of the Bishop of
Havana," it was joined to it. Certainly after the cession of Louisiana to the United States and after the Spanish Bishop D. de Penalveret [sic for Penalver] had been transferred from it by order of the King of Spain, the Bishop of Havana, being closer, resumed jurisdiction over Florida by virtue of, in my opinion, the concordat between that crown and the Holy See by which it was agreed that no foreign bishop could ever have jurisdiction over any part of the Spanish domains. But as soon as the Floridas were joined to the United States, the above mentioned Prelate renounced them and withdrew his priests from them. Therefore there is nothing that can raise the slightest doubt or that should delay the erection of that See since I, the sole ordinary of those places, assent to it with all my heart.

With matters settled in this way, the further division of my diocese into two parts, namely upper and lower Louisiana, remains to be done. Overwhelmed by importunities, I had given my consent to this but a little later I retracted. Relying on the most serious of reasons, I persevere in this final attitude of mind, namely, that because the foundations that I have begun to lay in each section have not yet been consolidated, the division seems to me to be premature and very much opposed to the good of religion. I explained this more at length in my last letter, asking that I be given a coadjutor for part of my immense labor. If the Sacred Congregation agrees to this, I promise that within five years everything will be prepared for the proposed division. Otherwise, the Sacred Congregation must surely know that everything will fall into a state of confusion.

I have already asked for Mr. Brute, a most deserving priest of Saint Sulpice, as my coadjutor out of fear that Mr. Rosati, if he were chosen for this duty, would be removed from the government of his Community. Now, however, since he has already been nominated bishop, I ask that Mr. Brute be removed from consideration and Mr. Rosati himself be assigned as my coadjutor and that at the same time he continue to be in charge of his Congregation until another is ready who can succeed him in that office. Thus all things will be settled by a simple move.

Msgr. Dubourg was not content to make these repre-
sentations but he earnestly begged Msgr. Flaget to join him and even got Msgr. Marechal, who was now better informed on the state of affairs, to write in his favor to the S[acred] C[ongregation] of Propaganda. Mr. Baccari received Msgr. Dubourg’s messages and was asked to go to the Cardinal Prefect and beg His Eminence to consider the matter. For his part Mr. Rosati had also used the mediation of the Vicar General of his Congregation. All these steps gave cause for hope and they did hope that they would succeed in calming the storm.

That good old man made great efforts at Rome. He spoke several times to the Secretary and to the Cardinal Prefect of Propaganda. He made all possible representations to them. The decision in this matter was long drawn out but in the end, even though they did not succeed in getting Mr. Rosati exempted from the burden of the episcopate, he still obtained the modifications that Msgr. Dubourg had requested and that he himself had been obliged by circumstances to solicit, given that it was impossible to do better. Here is what he wrote to Mr. Rosati on 25 June 1823:

I am writing a few quick words to inform you of Propaganda’s decision concerning the matter of your nomination to the episcopate. This morning, Msgr. Capran, the Secretary of the Congregation, told me that the Sacred Congregation had taken into consideration Msgr. Dubourg’s representations and those that I had made myself, and had decided that you would not be removed from the area where you are, that you would continue to be in charge of our house and mission until told otherwise, and that at the same time, as Msgr. Dubourg’s Vicar General and Bishop in partibus, you would exercise episcopal functions there and that thus you would live in Louisiana. It is all that I could obtain and under the present circumstances it is not possible to do more. So resign yourself to the Will of God. Do not be discouraged. Jacta super Dominum curam tuam.  

clear. Choose an assistant and a sub-assistant among the best of your personnel. Carry on your classes as long as possible. In the meantime, I will do my best to send you someone who can help you.

In another letter of 7 August, he instructed him:

It was no small matter to be able to get Propaganda to withdraw the Brief by which you were named Vicar Apostolic for Mississippi and to leave you where you are as Bishop in Partibus and Vicar General of the most worthy Bishop of Louisiana. In this way you can continue to govern our house. I realize that this burden is heavy enough but the Apostolic Letters have already been sent. God’s Will seems as clear as one could want. You must submit to it and be assured of the Lord’s special help. I have already spoken to you in another letter of mine about your election to the episcopate. There will be no refusal of any kind.

Msgr. Dubourg had already received the letters from Propaganda and he had reached the summit of his hopes. “Monseigneur and well beloved brother,” thus he wrote to Mr. Rosati on 22 November 1823,14

the die is cast and the Divine Goodness has finally granted my wishes. I have just received the Mandatum Apostolicum for your episcopal consecration as my coadjutor under the title of Tenagra. I am sending you one of Cardinal Consalvi’s letters that came with this title in order to give it a double authentication. So there is no more question of drawing back for the document is binding and whatever dread may seize you at the thought of the episcopate, a very proper dread to be sure, and one that I would be very careful to ward off, knowing for my part as I do both the perils and the difficulties of this burden, still you have no choice but to bow your head under the yoke that has been laid on you. Mr. Baccari knows this arrangement and he has supported it. His letter that I sent to you continues without any doubt, in spite of your promotion, your powers as Superior of your Congregation,

14 From the time of Rosati’s nomination as bishop, this became Dubourg’s standard form of addressing him.
a clause clear enough in the rescript. This document is all the more precious and sacred because it is like a last will of Our Holy Father who lived only thirty-five days after it was sent.\textsuperscript{15} Have a service celebrated for him in all the churches in upper [Louisiana]. Farewell. My heart is quite relieved. I had great need of it. You know the attachment of your good brother.

Mr. Rosati himself had just received the letters of Cardinal Consalvi together with the Briefs of Our Holy Father Pius VII. The first was the same as he had sent back to Rome, dated 13 August 1822, and by which he was named Bishop of Tenagra \textit{in partibus}. The other, dated 14 July 1823, named him coadjutor of the Bishop of New Orleans. He was to exercise these functions with the right of succession for three years, after which the present diocese of New Orleans was to be divided in two, with the present Bishop having the right to stay in the one he would choose and the other would be conferred by new Apostolic Letters on Mr. Rosati. It was also stipulated that if during these first three years the present bishop should die, his coadjutor would succeed him by right in the See.

So poor Mr. Rosati was obliged to bow his head and submit. In the meantime he had sent Mr. Acquaroni to Louisiana. He was appointed as assistant in the parish in New Orleans. Mr. Cellini had been appointed to Grand Couteau in Opellousas. He was sent to the parish of Saint Joseph near Thibaud. Mr. Borgna had permission, because of his health, to make a trip to Europe and he had left during the course of that year.

In that year he had received Messrs. Odin and Timon into the Congregation. A new expedition also received from Rome. The tireless Mr. Baccari was always at work for the good of our mission and obtained new help for it. The expedition of which we are going to speak cost him more than twelve hundred piasters. Mention has already been

\textsuperscript{15}Pope Pius VII died on 20 August 1823.
made of the need to build a church. A request was made at first for a plan, then for some brothers who were masons by profession for the construction, finally for financial assistance for the expenses of construction. This admirable old gentleman never rebuffed the continual requests that were made to him. Whereas others, tired of so many importunities, would have treated them as extravagances, he always welcomed them with kindness and made all possible efforts to find what was asked of him. Mr. Colucci, a priest of our Congregation who spent the revenues from his rich inheritance on good works, also contributed much of his own money to it and he found many more resources in the generosity of the faithful. Among the benefactors of the house must be numbered the Marquis Massimi, Mr. Louis Giorgi, and a number of others whose names are not known.

Providence favored the wishes of the Missionaries and the good will of Mr. Baccari. He found a good brother who had been a stonecutter before entering the Congregation and who knew his craft thoroughly. In addition he was very intelligent and had a prudence and virtue that were out of the ordinary. Mr. Baccari called Brother [Angelo] Oliva from the house at Oria in the Kingdom of Naples where he was living, had him go to Rome, and kept him with him for a long time in order to have him relearn the practice of his craft and to learn the way to supervise construction. During that time he had him design a nice plan for the church and had a cardboard model made by the same brother, who received from Mr. Baccari himself, who knew architecture perfectly, and from other experts all the instruction necessary for carrying out the object of his mission. He was joined by Brother Sargiano, still a novice and a shoemaker by trade, and by a young man, Valerio Faina, a layman who at first manifested some desire to be a brother and with whom a contract was made that obliged him to work as a mason in the construction of the church for a set period of time in order to pay back
the expenses of his journey. 

This good brother was received like an angel sent from heaven. Everyone was charmed by his piety and virtues. He was given complete charge of the construction. After his arrival he set about making the necessary preparations. He explored the whole countryside to find stone suitable for the building and after a great deal of work and effort, he finally succeeded in discovering three very nice quarries with stone which, though a bit too hard, still lent itself to the chisel. They began to work these quarries. He himself worked with an untiring perseverance. On holidays he asked for and obtained the help of the seminarians and novices, all of whom considered it a pleasure to help him. They succeeded in transporting enormous blocks of stone that brother Oliva intended for the facade and for the frameworks of the doors and windows. There was amazement throughout the countryside over the first results of his work and everyone would admire the magnificent stones thirteen or fourteen feet long and of a proportionate thickness that he cut with beautiful moldings for the main door.

But what was more amazing was a proof of his great virtue that he gave at the beginning of his work. After he had finished the second of these large pieces for the church door, he asked a certain number of seminarians to help him take it out of the workshop. He put it on some rollers in order to have it slide gently toward the spot where he wanted to place it. These young men pushed so strongly that it hit against the first, already finished, and broke it in two. The good brother did not say one impatient word nor make any complaint. He shrugged his shoulders, raised his eyes to heaven and said very quietly, "God be blessed! I don't know if it is possible to do another." We owe to the perseverance, zeal, and concern of this good brother the

16 Faina did not become a brother but settled in Perry County, married and raised a family. He frequently worked for the seminary.
superb church that is now seen at the seminary, all of whose chiseled stones passed through his hands and cost him ten years of labor.

Alas! He did not have the consolation of seeing it finished. He died on the vigil, as it were, of the day that should have crowned his efforts. His memory will last as long as that beautiful building that he raised for the glory of God and the honor of religion in that countryside, which he had found covered with forests and woods. It is to be hoped that his grave will not be forgotten in the midst of the others, with which it is now mingled and that gratitude will raise at least one stone that will hand on to posterity the name of the humble brothers whose ashes it will cover.\(^{17}\)

That year also saw the establishment at the Barrens of the Sisters of Loretto. Immediately after Msgr. Dubourg's letter that suggested it to him, Mr. Rosati spoke to the parishioners about the advantages that it would obtain for them for the education of their daughters. Mr. Joseph Manning gave two acres of land for this purpose, on which there was a good spring, near the old church. On land adjacent to the seminary a suitable site was chosen and a poor "log-house" built on it. Its framework was immediately erected with the help of the inhabitants and it was then finished by the gentlemen from the seminary who worked on it with their own hands. At the same time Rosati wrote to the venerable Founder of those good Sisters to ask him for a group of them. That holy man sent twelve and when they arrived in the month of May of that year 1823, their poor lodging was not yet ready to receive them. The generous widow who had given up her house to

\(^{17}\)Brother Oliva died on 21 January 1839. In addition to his work on the seminary church, he also did the stonecutting for the old church at Sainte Genevieve (no longer extant) and the Old Cathedral in Saint Louis. The reference to the mingling of graves is an early indication that the gravesites in the Vincentian cemetery at the Barrens had become jumbled together. The present gravestones are not necessarily situated over the original sites.
Msgr. Dubourg so that his seminary could be received there, also gave it to Mr. Rosati for the use of those good Sisters, among whom there was one of her own daughters. In that way Mrs. Hayden’s home was the cradle of Saint Mary’s Seminary and Bethlehem Convent. Efforts and work were redoubled to finish their own house.

Those good young ladies were the subject of the highest edification because of their piety, mortification, and modesty. They dressed in poor black cotton cloth that they made themselves. They went barefoot. A large veil of the same coarse material as their habit covered their heads and almost all the face. Their only bed was a straw mattress and a poor blanket on the floor where they took their short rest, dressed in the same habit that they had worn during the day. Their food was of the same simplicity and poverty as their habit and their time during the day and most of the night was constantly occupied with meditation, prayer, and other numerous exercises of piety and wearisome work of every kind in the house and in the field. Such examples could not fail to touch all hearts. Since Mr. Rosati was in charge of their direction, he frequently went to Mrs. Hayden’s to say Mass for them and at the same time he heard their confessions and gave them regular instructions. Some time later they went to their convent, which was called Bethlehem. It was certainly worthy of that name. They opened a school for girls and were of great service not only to the parish but also to the seminary.¹⁸

That same year saw the arrival of another colony that was very much more important for the diocese, that of the sons of Saint Ignatius. Msgr. Dubourg had obtained them from the Reverend Father Neale, Superior of the Reverend Jesuit Fathers in Maryland. It was led by one of those men

¹⁸The original rule drawn up by Nerinckx for the Sisters of Loretto was of almost Jasenistic severity. For this and other reasons there was a long history of delay and controversy in its approval by Rome.
whom Providence raises up to form new establishments, the Reverend Father [Charles Felix] van Quickenborne. Those who made up the colony were still only novices but very well chosen. After having persevered in their holy vocation in the midst of the extraordinary difficulties of their first establishment, they are now the honor and support of their Holy Company and render great services to the diocese. Their first establishment was near Florissant on a farm that Msgr. Dubourg had given them. Mr. Rosati wrote to their Superior to congratulate him on their arrival and to manifest to him the joy that he felt on seeing the arrival of such workers in the vast field that they were all called to cultivate for the profit of souls and the glory of their common Master.

Msgr. Dubourg was in Louisiana when he received the Apostolic Letters nominating his coadjutor. He wrote to Mr. Rosati that he wanted to consecrate him in that part of the country that then contained the greatest number of priests of the diocese, to whom he wanted to make his coadjutor known. In addition he hoped that on this occasion new efforts could be made to help the seminary. The rite was fixed for 25 March 1824 and it was to take place in the church of the Ascension near Donaldsonville.

So Mr. Rosati went down to Louisiana and after having visited the Bishop who was at the home of Mr. Bringier, his nephew, he went to make his retreat at the parish of the Assumption, with Mr. Bigeschi. The clergy had been convoked for the designated day and all those who could leave their parishes without inconvenience went to Donaldsonville and assisted joyfully at the rite which took place on 25 March.

The consecrating Bishop, Msgr. Dubourg, was assisted, for lack of two bishops who could not be had without difficulty, by Mr. Louis Sibourd, Vicar General of the diocese, and the Reverend Father Antoine de Sedella, Capuchin and pastor of the parish of New Orleans, in accord with the concession made by the Pope in the Briefs
of nomination. A very beautiful sermon adapted to the circumstances was preached by Mr. Aucluze to an extraordinary gathering of people who had come from afar to attend this impressive ceremony, the first of that kind that had been done in that part of the country. A collection, which was quite abundant, was taken up for the seminary.

To be concluded.

The works of God are done by degrees, both in their beginnings and through the course of their progress. It is not expedient to wish to accomplish everything suddenly and at once, and to think that everything is lost unless everyone is eager to cooperate with the little good will that we have. What then should be done? We should proceed gently, praying earnestly to God, and acting in concord.

St. Vincent de Paul

\[19\] Sedella was the famous Pere Antoine of New Orleans church history. His virtual control of the diocese was one reason why Dubourg chose to settle in Saint Louis, though the two later made peace.
If the Community follows my advice, it shall be firmly grounded in the maxim of never seeking an establishment, either directly or indirectly; if we are good, we shall never lack establishments, and if we are not good, then we already have too many.

St. Vincent de Paul

It is God Himself Who chose you to be the instigator and as it were the soul of this undertaking; He gave you the inclination to make a beginning, and He has blessed your line of action in an admirable manner, for you have even surpassed our hopes.

St. Vincent de Paul

If we had worked for forty-nine years and stopped work in the fiftieth within which God would call us, we would have done nothing all our lives... Perseverance must be the last gem of our crown since, by the grace and love of God, it is gained at the last moment of life.

Sr. Louise de Marillac