

1820

In his final year of life, 1820, Felix gradually comes to terms with life in frontier America: food, climate, insects, the demands of an active pastoral ministry. He notes that indifferentism in matters of religion is the basic pastoral problem. Despite his maturity, he still is depressed, feeling lonely, isolated, neglected and worthless, a condition expressed in his longest letter (no. 77). He is constrained to purchase a slave for the first time and his justification shows his scrupulous attention to American realities. The mission to the Indians continues to attract him, but he gradually realizes that the time is not ripe, since other work is more pressing. All the while, the work at the Barrens advances and new candidates to the Congregation present themselves. He senses death approaching during his final illness, although others do not. After he died, his reputation for holiness is openly proclaimed. He lived 41 years, 10 months and 3 days, a little more than four of those in America.

73. TO JOSEPH ROSATI, C.M.(?), PRIEST, BARRENS⁷⁰⁸

[January, 1820]
[Saint Louis]

I have crossed and recrossed the Mississippi on foot over the ice in order to go to Illinoistown.⁷⁰⁹

⁷⁰⁸ Letter 73. Sentence from a letter, cited in Joseph Rosati, "Recollections," VH 4:2 (1983): 130. The original letter is no longer extant.

⁷⁰⁹ Illinoistown was a small settlement opposite Saint Louis, laid out in October 1817. The entire month of January, 1820, was noted for its extreme cold.

*Correspondence 1820***74. TO VINCENZO DE ANDREIS, DEMONTE⁷¹⁰**

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Saint Louis
1 January 1820

My dearest brother,

I am well aware that this letter will reach you a little too late to wish you a happy New Year. On the other hand, today is the day in which tradition establishes this custom, not only out of politeness but also cordial friendship. I am observing this custom as much as the great distance by sea and land that separates us allows me to do so. Although it separates us in body, nothing can separate us in spirit, because I always carry you in my heart, together with our father and all the rest of the family and our relatives.

Since one of our priests⁷¹¹ is going to Rome on business concerning the mission, I am taking advantage of this opportunity to send you this letter by way of your brother-in-law Giriodi. You will be able to use the same means to send me your reply. I wrote you last summer, although I do not know if the letter has reached there.⁷¹² You cannot believe what consolation you could give me by a detailed account of all the family news and news of our country, which I love sincerely. It may be difficult for you to believe it when I say how much I love the one and the other, even though I am so far away. Yet, if you could see the spiritual miseries of this enormous country and imagine how important it is to save so many thousands of souls deprived of every help of religion, then far from finding something to laugh at in my conduct you would be the first to advise the sacrifice of all the most tender affections of blood and homeland to offer help to these poor people. From the moment when one state is chosen, a person has to go or stay wherever his state takes him. In this way, once a soldier enlists

⁷¹⁰ **Letter 74.** *Autograph letter, Italian, four pages, with address, in the archives of the province of Turin; copy in the Archives of the General Curia, Rome; De Andreis collection, Volume XVI. Cited in Ricciardelli, Vita, 274.*

⁷¹¹ Angelo Inglesi

⁷¹² This letter is probably not extant.

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in the army, he is no longer free to move about on his own and remain among his "household deities" should duty call him either to war or to garrison a square. You could say the same of me. When I became a missionary I enrolled in the army of Jesus Christ and thus would be a traitor and disloyal if I disobeyed the orders of the one to whom I am consecrated. He makes known his will to me by means of his spokesmen.

For several months in this part of the world my health has been gradually improving, and little by little I am becoming accustomed to the climate and the foods of the region. The difficulties with the weather are abating. I speak and preach in French and in English just like I used to do in Italian when I was in Italy. There is some suffering in this, but also great consolations. They make my position here truly happy and I really would not exchange them with the first monarch of the world. There is work to do here with people of every sort of nation, sect and color. Since the government is republican, it grants liberty to each one to profess whatever religion he pleases, and so every person does good voluntarily and without the motivation of mere human respect. Just as when the sun sheds its rays properly the darkness disappears and shadows vanish, so in the same proper way we make known to these people the beauty of the truth and the divinity of our holy religion. Recognizing their errors, they are converted and give thanks for the truth. On the day of judgment these poor converts will rise up to condemn the negligence and evil of so many Europeans born in the womb of the true Church, brought up in the bosom of religion with all the resources of churches, priests, confessors, preachers and similar persons to live a Christian life, who, with all this, remain only nominal Christians.

Today on my way to lunch I was called to attend a dying man who had no religion at all. I instructed him, baptized him and left him happy. A poor old woman, more than seventy years old, came on foot for eighty miles through dangerous woods to be able to go to confession. There are places where they spend years without seeing a priest, and they make considerable trips just to have the consolation of hearing mass, of listening to the word of God and receiving the sacraments. They have to fast and often they have to return home fasting after receiving communion, even up to the evening, and this is called having faith. What shame for those who have all the means of being good Christians and think only of making money and having a good time, of eating, drinking, sleeping, laughing and entertaining themselves, and who wait until death to admit their sins or perhaps to despair. I hope, dear brother,

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that neither you nor anyone in our family is of this number. Yet, since the French Revolution has indeed made a great ruin of Europe—I am speaking the truth—I fear for those whom I love. You would console me greatly if you would write me in detail about how all our relatives and friends are good Christians, and especially how they frequent the holy sacraments because I assure you that I have no regard for any worldly vanity. Nothing in the world merits esteem save what is related to God, to the soul and to religion.

Give my compliments to the archpriest, whom I know only by reputation. To the Father Prior Nanis, whom I love greatly, and to our Fathers [Placido] Beltriti, [Domenico] Andreis, etc.

I am the vicar general here and my main occupation is to form priests. I teach philosophy and theology. We have young ecclesiastics from every nation and they are all excellent. I have to speak sometimes in Latin, sometimes in English, sometimes in French, and so my Italian is good only for writing letters to Italy. You should see me on horseback, wearing a round hat, a tie at my neck, a colored cape, dressed like seculars in my colored trousers and boots. You would take me for a fop. We have to dress this way at least outside the house, otherwise we would be pointed out and ridiculed, and so goodbye ministry.

It is not impossible for us to meet again. Wish me well, and give my regards to our father and mother, to our brother Giuseppe, to Theresa your wife and the other sister-in-law, with our uncle Spirito, with Aunts Maria and Christina, and the other Maria and Felice and all the nephews and nieces whom I do not know, with our sister Margherita etc., etc. Let me know in a very detailed way the news about everyone, each one in particular, and believe me with all my heart to be your most affectionate brother,

Felix De Andreis,

unworthy priest of the Congregation of the Mission

Addressed: To Monsieur Vincent De Andreis, Demont

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75. TO FILIPPO GIRIODI, C.M., PRIEST, PIACENZA⁷¹³

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Saint Louis
2 January 1820⁷¹⁴

My dear friend,

Please don't ever think that the distance between places, or the constant sight of black Africans or of naked and bronzed Indians or any other strange topic could ever (what a fine expression!⁷¹⁵) cause me to forget my friends in Europe or my near compatriots or near relatives, or even nearly foster brothers!⁷¹⁶ *Absit!* ["Far be it!"] I still recall those wonderful happy times when we used to sing about the babbling little brook as we climbed up Urtica Hill. Who could have said it then? ... But where am I heading? Is this is the style of a shaggy missionary dating his letter from the banks of the Mississippi? Please don't take offence at this; you know me. And why would you ever bridle this fantasy of mine done in my free time, since moments like these have already become very rare, nearly impossible to find? Finally, at the end of this entire prelude, I don't want to say anything besides this: I often think about you and about what you are doing, and I sincerely look forward to embracing you in Paradise.

A strange phenomenon became visible here two days ago, the last day of the year. Our ignorance of nature finds it hard to explain it, and our mystical types are already taking it as a good omen of the imminent conversion of all the Indians, since this phenomenon appeared exactly

⁷¹³ **Letter 75.** *Printed letter, Italian, in A. Bugnini, "Lettera inedita del Servo di Dio Felice De Andreis," Annali della Congregazione della Missione 48 (1941), 262-267. The original is in the archives of Collegio Alberoni, Piacenza, Italy, Giriodi file. Filippo Giriodi (1781-1842) was, in 1820, professor of theology at Piacenza.*

⁷¹⁴ Although the letter was begun on 2 January, it was not finished until at least a week later, 9 January, when the writer celebrated the dedication of DuBourg's cathedral. Bugnini, the original editor of the letter, noted several places at which the ink and the handwriting changed. The train of thought is hard to follow as well, which may signify the points at which the writer resumed his narrative.

⁷¹⁵ A reference to the obsolete Italian term *unquamai*, used here.

⁷¹⁶ Although De Andreis was not directly related to Giriodi, their families were bound by intermarriage.

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over the region where they live, to the north of us. I'm appealing in this to the astronomers of our dear Collegio Alberoni. Exactly at six-thirty, after finishing my usual meditation, I was going over to say Mass, when the novice⁷¹⁷ accompanying me had me look at the moon in the sky. It was about one-third the distance between the horizon and the zenith, and was cut through its center by a magnificent cross formed by four rays extending for quite some way, one to the zenith, the other two to the east and west, with the last losing itself at the horizon. The rays were very vivid and, where the two lateral rays stopped, there arose a magnificent rainbow, which became less apparent as it reached the zenith. The sky was perfectly clear and full of stars; it was also extremely cold. I leave its explanation to you.

I am sending you the enclosed to be sent on to its recipient; please have the answer sent back to me by the same means.⁷¹⁸ As you can get news of me *aliunde* ["elsewhere"], I am going to give you here a description of the Indians. You should understand that it was for a time disputed *utrum* ["whether"] these peoples belonged, yes or no, to the human race. Indeed, when you consider their lifestyle and how they dress and eat, their innate cruelty, their instability, and the huge difficulty of having them rise to spiritual ideas, you might be tempted to consider them as a *quid medium* ["third species"] between man and beast. They live from hunting, wandering through the forests in search of the wild buffalo. The men go about almost entirely naked, and they eat almost nothing but meat, even of humans. They think nothing of killing someone, but they don't finish off their victim without first having him undergo the most frightful tortures.

They are very proud of having many scalps, which they keep as trophies of their bravery. To get them, they know how to give a violent blow to the forehead with a rounded axe, called *tomahak*, by which they cut around the whole head and then pull off the hair completely, what they call scalping. They have no other law than their own wishes and, although each nation has its chief or king, their authority is quite precarious and limited to command in war and to speak for the nation in negotiating with the whites. To attain this level, chiefs have to secure the confidence of the tribe with acts of bravery, with severe fasts, going for days without eating, and with barbarous scars which they make

⁷¹⁷ Francis Xavier Dahmen, the only novice still with him in Saint Louis.

⁷¹⁸ A reference to letter 74, 1 January 1820, addressed to his brother Vincenzo.

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on their body. Besides this, they are supposed to dream, and the outcome should confirm these dreams. On this point, something curious happened. An American general was in his camp on land still belonging to the Indians. The king of that nation came to relate to him that, the previous night, he had dreamed that the general had made him a present of his rich general's uniform. And so, according to custom, the general would have to give it to him. The general agreed and did so. But the next day, the general had a dream himself to relate to the Indian chief. He had dreamed, he claimed, that "you had given me all this land as far as the eye could see." ... The chief then, although with much ill will, had to hand over to the general a very large tract of land. But he added one condition: that from then on, neither of them should have any more dreams.

They have knowledge of a Supreme Being, whom they call the Master of Life. They bring him gifts and offer prayers, but they limit all these to the needs of daily life. Although they recognize good and evil, in practice their moral concepts are quite vague and uncertain. They believe themselves as happy in their wild life, and compassionately judge those who live in civilized society as slaves. They have had some experience of their young men sent to Europe, brought up in schools, educated, some of whom even became priests. Then when they were sent back to their tribe, they forgot everything and returned to their nakedness, to their hunting, and to all their wild customs, just like their fellows. They are very addicted – at least those who trade with whites – to strong drink, which they use to get drunk, and then they kill each other off. Some of them speak some English or French. We baptize some of them now and then, especially at the point of death. There are many, known as *métis* ["half-breeds"], born of a white man and an Indian woman, who come for instruction and baptism, and who then remain in civilized society. When they have learned enough to explain themselves in some language, they come to confession, but when they do not know how ... since the Indian language is extremely difficult because their impoverished tongue lacks any term corresponding to ideas of religion, conscience, law, sin, etc. Also, with the aid of a translator paid by the government to interpret the Indian language, an Iroquois⁷¹⁹ came to me for confession, something he ardently wished to do.

⁷¹⁹ The Iroquois had a long tradition of the Catholic faith, brought to them by the Jesuits.

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I see now that we have to use other means to accomplish anything with them. We need time and patience and, with these two, I firmly hope that one day *pinguescent speciosa deserti et terra deserta erit in stagnum etc.* ["let the beauties of the desert bloom," and "waterless lands into water springs" etc.]⁷²⁰ The greatest obstacle that a missionary would find today among the Indians would be something that at first glance might seem to be a resource for them, namely trade with whites. The reason is that the whites frequently take advantage of their simplicity, and so this would place a missionary in the difficult dilemma either of cooperating in the traders' wicked ways, or of becoming inescapably a target of their resentment. How manifold the mysteries of evil! For one bottle of whiskey they make them hand over skins worth thousands of scudi, and married men wed Indian women, etc. They have to have no conscience about doing such things, and for such people, everything has to wait. *Rogamus in bonum monstra converti.* ["Let us pray that the monsters be converted to doing good."] God has his own plans and times to bring them about. We are here at his orders, like soldiers ready to march at the first sign from the general.

Here a missionary has to be able to say with Saint Paul *in omnibus institutus sum.* ["I have learned how to cope with every circumstance."] ⁷²¹ To be ready to mount a horse at any moment, to ride through unknown areas with a guide, to cross huge rivers on a carved-out tree trunk, what we call pirogues, and to get the horse to swim. Your horse runs off and you have to go for miles and miles to get him back. Sometimes, to eat, you have to get off your horse and hobble his legs to keep him from escaping; and, while he is munching on grass, you have to look for berries to trick your appetite. You have to know how to saddle a horse, how to care for it, to harness it, etc. I saw a bishop⁷²² doing all this by himself. You have to shave yourself, to sew, to wash your own linen, etc. To be ready to sleep on the ground, even in the middle of the woods, with the saddle for a pillow and protection from the rain. At night, in the middle of a dark woods, the tree branches sometimes armed with thorns as long as your hand, constantly lashing at your face (once I figured I had lost both eyes, and for several days I had a wound between both eyes), they knock your hat to the ground and you have to dismount to grope for it in the

⁷²⁰ Ps 65:13; 107:35.

⁷²¹ Phil 4:12.

⁷²² Most probably Bishop Flaget, whom he characterizes in Letter 29 as "one with his horse."

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mud. After such toil, you arrive dead-tired at the place where, instead of any refreshment, you find a cold, meager welcome, with much to tire you, but still sometimes with the consolation of seeing abundant fruit. But I have to speak the truth: the Master we serve is so generous that he pays us back with interest *ineffabiliter* ["beyond all telling"] for all our labors. He makes us discover something superhuman and delicious in poverty, in sufferings, etc., which abundantly repays us for it all. Everything bringing with it some likeness to the Man-God or to the virtues which were his constant companions, has such an aroma of Paradise as to make us delirious and drunk *ab ubertate domus eius*, or better, *Domus eius*. ["from the prime gifts of your house.]"⁷²³

The bishop has deigned to grant to our congregation the honor of blessing the truly magnificent new cathedral, although only the center nave is finished. The other two naves will be completed in due time.⁷²⁴ Consequently, this morning⁷²⁵, with two other of our priests⁷²⁶ and a deacon of our congregation⁷²⁷ and other clerics, I will perform the blessing, to be followed by the bishop's pontifical mass with music and such solemnity as to be noticed even in Rome. Besides twenty large and expensive paintings, many of which were donated by the king of France⁷²⁸, there are a large number of silver-plated candlesticks coming from Paris, the height of a man, reliquaries, flowers, carpets, a canopy, and decoration of the loftiest taste; and twenty-six altar boys, all beautifully vested in the French style. The priestly and episcopal vestments would do honor to any European cathedral, etc. I am going to celebrate mass this morning with the intention that in time the words of the epistle assigned to be read on the current feast⁷²⁹ be correctly applied to this church: *Super te autem orietur Dominus et gloria eius in te videbitur ... quando conversa fuerit ad te multitudo maris...* ["The Lord rises over you, and his glory shines upon you ... for the riches of the sea shall be emptied out before you..."]⁷³⁰ since the Indian hordes

⁷²³ Ps 36:9.

⁷²⁴ In fact, the other naves were never constructed.

⁷²⁵ 9 January.

⁷²⁶ That is, priests of the diocese, since the only other Vincentian priests (Rosati, Acquaroni and Tichitoli) lived outside Saint Louis.

⁷²⁷ Francis Xavier Dahmen.

⁷²⁸ Louis XVIII.

⁷²⁹ The Epiphany, which in those days extended over eight days, and whose readings were repeated daily during the entire octave.

⁷³⁰ Isa 60:1, 5.

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already extend to the Pacific Ocean ... *fortitudo gentium venerit tibi, etc.*, [“the wealth of the nations shall be brought to you,”]⁷³¹ because of the nearly overwhelming opposition they have to the Gospel...

Well, the ceremony has been finished, with much pomp and circumstance. There is no pleasure like seeing the expansion of the worship of God, *ex hoc adipe nempe, ut arbitror, superna satiatur Jerusalem...* [“it is namely from this food, I believe, that the heavenly Jerusalem is nourished.”]

I want to add here some information that I heard from the mouth of a good priest arrived from Canada, about how those missionaries to the Indians travel in winter. They go to visit their congregation in that hard season, which lasts there the greater part of the year, by walking with snowshoes, so as to keep from sinking in the snow. These are made of a kind of net of cords stretched across an oval frame, formed by bent branch attached to the shoes. Indians accustomed to this kind of shoe move like the wind over the snow. Because of the bitter cold, a person can travel only on foot and, since a missionary would not know the way, he is led by an Indian armed with a pole. And seeing that a missionary, no matter what he does, could never move like an Indian, his guide runs and turns around to mark his footsteps. Sometimes he goes back only to find the missionary frozen and lying motionless in the snow. Then, with blows from his stick he revives him, gets his blood running again, then forces him to walk and stay the course, even though they are still quite far from reaching their goal. What a way to wake up!

But look – without realizing it, I am nearly unable to fold the sheet any more for having written so much. My regards to everyone, and let us act in such a way as to be able to meet in Paradise.

I am as ever full of the most affectionate esteem in the love of O[ur] L[ord], your dearest friend

F. De Andreis, i.p.d.C.d.M.

Addressed: Monsieur Philippe Giriodi, Prêtre de la Congrégation de la Mission au College de St. Lazare à Plaisance.

⁷³¹ Literally “strength,” but translated from the Hebrew as “wealth.”

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76. TO GIUSEPPE GIORDANA, C.M., PRIEST, ROME⁷³²

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Saint Louis
1 February 1820

Very Reverend and dear Father,

Would it ever be possible that on this occasion I should forget the breasts that nurtured me at my birth to the Congregation twenty-three years ago?⁷³³ Such remembrance is too precious for me to forget. I still recall with great joy those happy days spent under the serene sky of Mondovi and it would have been good for me had I gathered more fruit from your wise, gentle and zealous direction. What good would I not be able to achieve now? And I would not have to weep all day before God and deplore my lack of zeal for which, unfortunately, I now feel that I have only myself to blame.

I remember how you used to tell me as if foretelling my future: *grandis tibi restat via* ["a long journey is awaiting you"].⁷³⁴ May heaven grant that this long journey conclude with him who is *via, veritas et vita* ["the way, the truth and the life"].⁷³⁵ I still remember that once you gave us a conference on the words *vado ad eum qui misit me* ["I go to him who sent me"];⁷³⁶ and I would never have believed that after twenty-two years I myself would give (almost) the same conference in English to our novices of Louisiana, so lively was the impression that has always remained with me. How happy would I be if I could ever reach the point where I could say *vivo ego, jam non ego, vivit vero in me Christus* ["I live, now not I, but Christ lives in me"].⁷³⁷ Yes, as a true missionary I should not be anything but Jesus Christ and him crucified but, unfortunately, how far I am from being this! In spite of myself, the old disgraced Adam, whom I should have buried in the fervor of the

⁷³² **Letter 76.** *Autograph letter, Italian, two pages, in DRMA, De Andreis papers.*

Giuseppe Giordana had been director of the internal seminary (novitiate) at Mondovi when De Andreis entered, 12 November 1797.

⁷³³ An allusion to Luke 11:27.

⁷³⁴ 1 Kgs 19:7.

⁷³⁵ John 14:6.

⁷³⁶ John 16:5.

⁷³⁷ Gal 2:20.

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novitiate, still lives: *vivit, vivit, imo in senatum venit* ["this man is still alive. Alive? He even attends the Senate"],⁷³⁸ and pretends to make laws and act as a master. Tell me, is this not the greatest of all miseries? Is it not a pity that a missionary who came *in finibus terrae* ["to the ends of the earth"]⁷³⁹ to enlighten those sitting in darkness, to spread the fire of the Gospel everywhere, to dethrone that usurper, self-love, and to enthrone in its place in the hearts of men the legitimate sovereign love of God, should himself still be so far from what he should be? Woe is me, if the support of Jesus Christ should fail me. I have placed all my hope in him through the powerful intercession of the great Mother of Mercy! My present situation would be a real despair, because I have no other support and must support those who support others. My age, my duties and my relationships oblige me to be always on duty to give without receiving, to counsel, direct, give, correct, console, without being able to find someone to counsel me, to direct, encourage or console me, etc., because *aquae aegre retrofluunt* ["the waters do not easily flow backward"]. Accustomed as I was in our Italian houses to take no step without asking advice and to depend on the opinion of those whose authority, wisdom and prudence I respected, now in the extremely difficult steps that I have to take daily, I am lost. I seek advice, but silence prevails everywhere and a monotonous echo brings back to me the words by which I beg direction, saying *bibe de cisterna tua* ["drink from your own cistern"].⁷⁴⁰ This situation sometimes becomes irksome and unbearable and makes me fear that this is the punishment for my sins and pride.

I was pleased to learn that you had returned to your former work as master of novices. I know that you are good at it, although *non est in medico semper relevetur ut aeger* ["it is not always in the physician's power to cure the sick"].⁷⁴¹ I therefore readily recommend myself to the prayers of the master of novices that I may learn to say well the words *quoniam tu es Domine spes mea, altissimum posuisti refugium tuum. Deus meus et omnia. Quis mihi det te fratrem meum*, etc. ["for you, O Lord, are my hope, you have made the Most High your stronghold";⁷⁴² "My God and my all";⁷⁴³ "Oh, that you were my brother,"⁷⁴⁴ etc.]

⁷³⁸ Cicero, Oration against Catiline, 1,2 (Loeb Classical Library, Cicero, vol. X, 32-33).

⁷³⁹ Ps 19:5; more correctly, *in fines orbis terrae*.

⁷⁴⁰ Prov 5:15.

⁷⁴¹ Ovid, Pontica 1.3.17 (Loeb Classical Library, Ovid, 280).

⁷⁴² Ps 91:9.

⁷⁴³ A phrase attributed to Francis of Assisi.

⁷⁴⁴ Cant 8:1.

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The most formidable enemy we have to combat is indifferentism. How many people never give the slightest thought to religion! In a way, it is good that Protestants care little for their sect because in this way they are more accessible and disposed to Catholicism. Several times I have been for dinner or supper in the houses of Protestants when the head of the house invited me to give the blessing before meal and thanksgiving afterwards. This is the common practice when a priest is present. Yesterday I was called to an old dying man who up to that time had no religion; I baptized him and in that same house was the third person I baptized in a like situation. Also, a lady who came to call on me had no religion. Although I tried to persuade her to prepare for baptism, I could not get any other answer but that she was unworthy to die a Catholic because she was too wicked. Thus to have a religion is regarded here almost as a counsel of perfection and supererogation. Is there any more horrible blindness than this? You can say to them whatever you want, they answer: *c'est très vrai, c'est la pure vérité ce que vous dites, c'est la vérité même* ["it is very true, you are in the right, you are perfectly right"]. However, when they should draw the conclusion, they resort to delay, to pretexts, and only a few let themselves be drawn in to the net, considering the large number of those who remain entrenched in their fatal indifference.

In various letters I note down different things as they come to my pen, but I am afraid that in all this writing there is, under plausible pretexts, a great deal of the trash of self-love. But, my God, what shall I do? To escape this sly fellow and his traps it is not enough to penetrate into the deep forest, it is not enough to cut all the dearest bonds, to have trodden underfoot all natural tenderness, to have promised hundreds of thousands of times to cut myself off from all his tyranny, to repeat every day the most formal renunciations. In spite of all this he is always underfoot and at our side, everywhere like a twisting serpent trying to poison everything. Woe to those who do not fear him and, without realizing it, swallow his fatal poison like pure nectar. *Hoc aliquando fui, et utinam non idem sim modo* ["Such was I in the past, and would that I were no longer the same"]. One spark of the true love of God is sufficient to unmask the most subtle self-love and explode it instantly because they are incompatible and cannot tolerate each other ... *Oh, quando absorpta erit mors in victoria* ["When will death be swallowed up in victory"]?⁷⁴⁵ When, when shall we be once and for

⁷⁴⁵ See 1 Cor 15:54.

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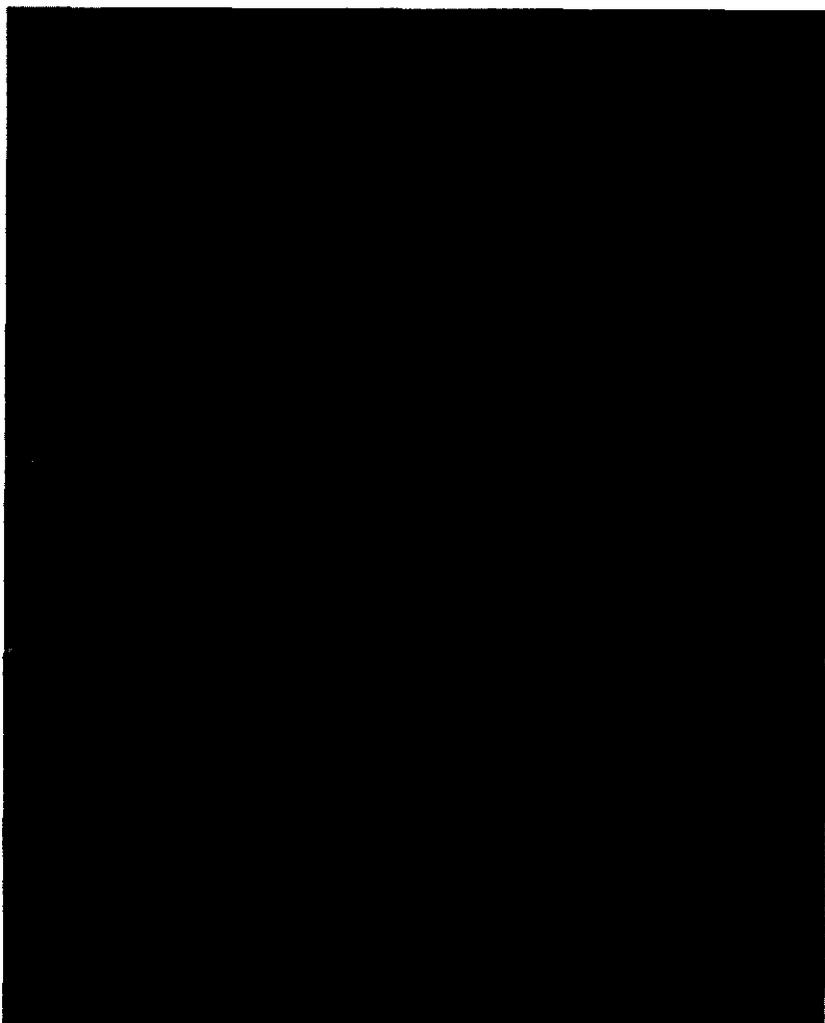
all immovably fixed, lost and absorbed in him who is *Aeterna Veritas, Vera Caritas, Cara Aeternitas* ["Eternal Truth, True Love, Beloved Eternity"]!

I wish to express my compliments to you and all the others. As at other times believe that I am with all respect and veneration your humble and most obedient servant,

Felix De Andreis

unworthy Priest of the Congregation of the Mission

In another hand: To Father Giordana, Director of the internal seminary in Rome

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Excerpt from original of Letter 76, To Giuseppe Giordana, C.M., 1 February 1820.
Collection of the De Andreis-Rosati Memorial Archives

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Our college here is making rapid progress. The number of boarders is growing, so to say, from day to day. The bishop's departure for Natchez has been put off until Father Inglesi sends some news concerning how well the inhabitants are disposed to receive their bishop.

We are in Holy Week and consequently are quite busy. Nevertheless I will tell you the thought which has occupied me the most during this week in order that you might help me with your prayers to obtain what I desire with all my heart—to die to myself in order to live only for Jesus Christ who died for me. Alas, for such a long time I have been like a man who decides to leap without ever leaping, or like a person with a rope around his neck to be strangled and never actually is. What happiness if I could finish all at once. Death to self demands a complete renunciation. By it we resolve to let ourselves die to everything. As regards the body, we refuse it every kind of care and we wish neither to nourish it nor to give it rest, neither to warm it nor obtain any kind of assistance, nor satisfy any of its needs as if it were truly dead. Concerning reputation, we should not care about that anymore because it would deal with a person who is completely unknown. Even with regard to the soul, we would wish only virtue, grace, merit, holiness and perfection precisely for it.

But after we make this absolute renunciation into the hands of God, it is he himself who ordains that the soul, thus dead, should for his glory take a moderate care of the body, as well as of its reputation and sanctification. This is why even after the soul has died that it continues to care for and look out for its body, its reputation, its perfection, but no longer for the natural motives and interests which made it act before, but only for the glory of God, to please him, and to obey him. Thus all his actions, even the least and most natural ones, acquire a degree of elevation and inestimable merit. Yet, one always has to watch out that nature does not come to life again and, without realizing it, that the former reasons creep anew into his intentions and innermost thoughts. This is a matter for prayer and constant vigilance.

When one has arrived at this state, he may say with the sacred spouse *Inveni quem diligit anima mea etc.* ["I have found him whom my soul loves, etc."] ⁸⁰⁶ He is facing paradise. A whole book would not be enough to explain the advantages of such a state. As a result, then, we are ready to accomplish great good for souls. By our ardent desires,

⁸⁰⁶ See Cant 3:2.

Correspondence 1820

we begin to possess it. *Domine, ante te omne desiderium meum* ["Lord, all my desire lies open before you"],⁸⁰⁷ etc.

Let me hear news from you often. Everybody here sends you their compliments and I yield to no one in my devotion for you.

I am, gentlemen and my esteemed confreres, your very humble servant,

Felix De Andreis,
unworthy priest of the Mission.

Addressed: To Rev. Mr. Dahmen, Post-Vincennes, (Indiana)

In another hand: Received 24 April 1820, dated 27 March

Postmark: St. Louis, Apr. 14.

In another hand: Letter of Father De Andreis, Missionary at Saint Louis in the United States, to Father Dahmen, 1820.

80. TO FRANÇOISE VICTOIRE FOURNIER, BORDEAUX⁸⁰⁸

Saint Louis
4 April 1820

God's blessing on this mission and on this vast diocese is very apparent

The most terrible enemy to be conquered is indifference toward religion. On the Sunday after Epiphany⁸⁰⁹ we held the solemn entry into the new cathedral. Your brother, the bishop, celebrated a pontifical mass there. He was attended by a considerable number of priests and clergy, and by about twenty-six magnificently dressed altar boys

The question now is about an establishment for the Vincentians to instruct the Indians at Prairie du Chien, about 700 miles north of here. The government itself is supposed to take charge of building the house and maintaining the missionaries. I long for the moment to run off

⁸⁰⁷ Ps 38:10.

⁸⁰⁸ **Letter 80.** *Excerpts from a letter, French, published in L. Bertrand, Histoire des séminaires de Bordeaux et de Bazas, 3 vols. (Bordeaux, 1894), 2:366.*

⁸⁰⁹ 8 January.

Correspondence 1820

there, if your brother, the bishop, wishes to let me do so. Here we are ten Vincentians, six professed and four novices who, in a few months, will also take their vows⁸¹⁰

For me, I have attained the summit of my hopes, since I find here what I have long been searching for, *an apostolic Chartreuse*.⁸¹¹ In it, without abandoning the work of Martha, we can enjoy the sweet repose of Mary; and, without renown or much responsibility, we can give ourselves to the ministry of sanctifying all sorts of people who are ready to receive it.

I am delighted with the happy success of Father Vincent's [Wlechmans] establishment.⁸¹² Please tell him of my interest.

Addressed: Madame Fournier, rue de l'Eglise Saint-Seurin, Bordeaux.

81. TO SAINT PHILIPPINE DUCHESNE, RELIGIOUS OF THE SACRED HEART, FLORISSANT⁸¹³

Saint Louis, Missouri
26 June 1820

Madame:

You should be attributing to God's grace and to your good dispositions the sweet unction that you experienced on the occasion

⁸¹⁰ The professed were: De Andreis himself, Acquaroni, Rosati, Borgna, Potini and Brother Blanka; the novices were: Ferrari, Cellini, Dahmen and Tichitoli.

⁸¹¹ Saint Vincent is said to have often repeated his conviction that, at Saint Lazare in Paris, his confreres lived as Carthusians at home and missionaries elsewhere. De Andreis also gave this Latin title, *Carthusia apostolica*, to a notebook containing various spiritual reflections.

⁸¹² The Sisters of La Réunion, see Letter 37, 20 July 1817.

⁸¹³ **Letter 81.** Copy, French, in "*Lettres intéressantes—l'Établissement de notre société du Sacré-Coeur à la Louisiane. Paris 1817-1839.*" Manuscript in the General Archives of the Society of the Sacred Heart, Rome, C-VII, 2 c), Box 1, 40-41, no.27.

Rose Philippine Duchesne (1769-1852), born in France, arrived in New Orleans 29 May 1818 with four companions. She opened a school in Saint Charles, Missouri, and moved to Florissant in 1819.

Correspondence 1820

you wrote me about.⁸¹⁴ Every instrument is marvelous in God's hands. He is the sovereign of hearts and moves them as he wills. I regard the heart of Jesus as the universal link joining the hearts of all who cling to him through the sweet bonds of charity. What union, what exchange, what delicious association!

I have established here the Sacred Heart Association, and people are rushing to sign up. I already have a long list of men and women, both French and English. This is the means to move them to frequent the sacraments and practice their religion.

In the love of the Sacred Heart, I have the honor to be respectfully,
Your very humble servant,
De Andreis, unworthy priest [of the Mission].

82. TO JOSEPH ROSATI, C.M., PRIEST, BARRENS⁸¹⁵

[Saint Louis]
[July 1820]⁸¹⁶

Alleluia. Deo gratias ["Thanks be to God"]. At last the [plan for the] mission for the Indians is going to be concluded. I will have the consolation of leaving with the bishop in a little while, etc.⁸¹⁷

⁸¹⁴ De Andreis had been present at Saint Ferdinand, Florissant, from 8-10 June. According to the sisters' journal, he heard confessions, celebrated a solemn mass at which he gave a "touching exhortation before the renewal of vows," and preached at vespers for the feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. ("Journal de la Société du Sacré-Coeur, 1818-1840. 2. à St. Ferdinand." General Archives of the Society of the Sacred Heart, Rome, C-VII, 2-c), Box 1.)

⁸¹⁵ **Letter 82.** *Fragment found in the summary of materials prepared for the cause of beatification. The original letter is no longer extant. Another translation is found in Rosati-Burlando, Sketches of the Life, 158 (1861 ed.), or 205 (1900 ed.)*

⁸¹⁶ This letter can perhaps be dated to July since the writer spoke of a mission to the Indians to be held during the summer (letter 83). It was characterized, in the summary for his cause, to have been the "last sparks of that divine flame of charity." (Rosati, *Summarium*, 107-08.)

⁸¹⁷ The site for the visit may have been Prairie du Chien, Wisconsin, where the bishop hoped to open a school for Indian boys to be run by Vincentians. In fact, the bishop changed his plans, to De Andreis's disappointment.

*Correspondence 1820***83. TO MOTHER OCTAVIE BERTHOLD, RELIGIOUS OF THE SACRED HEART, FLORISSANT⁸¹⁸**

Saint Louis
1 September 1820

Madame:

There is no need to make excuses nor stand on ceremony in writing me. Your letters console me greatly in Our Lord, since they increasingly reveal for me the abundant graces that the heavenly spouse is pleased to shower on that blessed house of yours and on your little community. Even though you judge yourself unworthy, you are nonetheless one of its members. At the beginning of any religious house, when only the most essential elements are present, the smallest loss can injure the entire establishment.

I am very edified by your attachment to your rules and practices, and particularly to cloister. You are carrying it so far as, if needed, to sacrifice your health to it. I do not doubt your sincerity for an instant. It might be that you believe that you are also, for the moment, perfectly recovered. Yet since your former illness might arouse some fears about a relapse, you will have to take some steps to use truly extraordinary precautions to prevent this. In France, where the loss of one member of a community would not harm a house, such precautions might be deemed excessive. However, in this extraordinary case, they become indispensable. God is the supreme law, a law eternal and immutable. All others derive from him, more or less directly. Laws deriving more immediately from God are always to be preferred to others. Thus, when someone cannot observe the one without violating the other,

⁸¹⁸ **Letter 83.** Copy, French, in *“Lettres intéressantes—l’Etablissement de notre société du Sacré-Coeur à la Louisiane, Paris, 1817-1839.”* Manuscript in the General Archives of the Society of the Sacred Heart, Rome, C-VII, 2 c), Box 1, 40-41, no. 28.

The manuscript attributes this letter of spiritual direction first to Mother Octavie, then the copyist wrote in the name of Eugénie Audé. The first name is correct. Mother Octavie Berthold, one of the original band of Sisters to come to the United States under the leadership of Philippine Duchesne, had broken her leg the month previously and had spent the time recuperating in bed. (“Journal de la Société du Sacré-Coeur. 1818-1840, 2. à St. Ferdinand,” entry for 15 September 1820, 16. General Archives of the Society of the Sacred Heart, Rome, C-VII. 2-c). Box 1.)

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Felix De Andreis Street. Rome.

Courtesy of the author

natural law is to be preferred to positive divine law, and divine law to ecclesiastical and civil law, and these latter to particular laws and to the rules and practices of lawfully established societies. To please God, who is order itself, this is the order to which charity and well-regulated piety must always adhere.

Saint Francis de Sales praised Saint Ignatius Loyola, who ate meat on the Wednesday of Holy Week on the simple orders of his doctor. He said that a less enlightened spirit would have had prayers said for three days, but would have ended up by doing nothing about the matter. Nonetheless, this case involved ecclesiastical law of the first order, a very severe one, binding under pain of mortal sin. It was much graver than a mere community practice with no direct obligation.

I hope that the example of one saint commended to you both as father and model, and the opinion of another occupying a first place among teachers of the spiritual life, will lead you finally to set aside your other very laudable concerns. May they bring you to submit to the advice of your spiritual and physical doctors when and if they treat you again. Have no fear that this will become an example and that the others will use it to become lax on this point. Since the others know of the aversion you have always shown in this matter, you will have nothing to fear on this account. I will even go so far as to say that you did well to resist at the beginning; but now I think that you would do better to obey blindly. When I put myself in your place, I am sure that you are suffering from this. Yet, thanks be to God, you know well the art of trampling on your feelings. You know well that we cannot please the worthy object of our love without suffering, without being humbled,

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and without sometimes becoming, like him, a spectacle to the eyes of men and angels.⁸¹⁹

Please accept my sentiments, etc.

Your very humble servant,

F. De Andreis*

* (This holy priest died in the odor of sanctity in Saint Louis in October of the same year, one month after this letter. His body is at the Barrrens.)⁸²⁰

**84. TO FRANCESCO ANTONIO BACCARI, C.M.,
PRO-VICAR GENERAL, ROME⁸²¹**

+

Saint Louis
4 September 1820

Very Reverend and Dear Father,

I suppose that by this time the most worthy count, Father Inglesi, charged with the affairs of our bishop, has reached the City [Rome] and will have brought you the many letters he was carrying. By reading them you will have learned of our situation and our news, yet since between the date of those letters and the date of this present letter there is quite a considerable time, I am bringing you up to date on everything, as is my duty.

I am taking advantage of the occasion of a departing steamboat to report the following to you. I regret that I have not yet received nor have I any notice of the package of letters that you announced to me in your last letter, received about six months ago, and which you had given to the Very Reverend Father Grassi. I would be very interested in knowing where such a treasure might have disappeared. Please be

⁸¹⁹ An allusion to 1 Cor 4:9.

⁸²⁰ Copyist's note.

⁸²¹ **Letter 84.** *Autograph letter, Italian, two pages, in the Archives of the General Curia, Rome; De Andreis collection, Volume I, Part I, Sect. D, #22, 129-30. Cited in Ricciardelli, Vita, 453-54, 482. Also cited partially in a manuscript notice of Father Cellini, De Andreis collection, Part II, appendix, 153.*

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most diligent with Father Grassi to find out where the problem lies, and whether the matter could be handled and confided to the secure hands of Father Inglesi.

Providence continues to singularly bless this mission of ours here. To his and our mutual satisfaction Father Cellini made his vows. He is a priceless subject for this establishment. He already speaks English sufficiently and is exercising the ministry. Besides, he is the only one among us who understands temporal affairs, so I made him our procurator. Next December, three other novice priests will make their vows.⁸²² It is only necessary then to send you according to the custom of the Congregation the attestations of their profession of vows. They are all excellent subjects, and to give you some idea of them I am enclosing the letter of one of them that I received the day before yesterday. I would have been able to send you many other similar edifying letters if I had thought of it before now;⁸²³ meanwhile, our novitiate increases. It is composed of six others, besides the one I mentioned, three clerics⁸²⁴ and three clerical brothers, generally excellent.⁸²⁵ Also, there are already four or five other postulants. The seminary building is coming along and the land is being farmed, but expenses are exorbitant and it is amazing that the bishop does not succumb under the huge weight. Beginnings are always difficult. Perhaps the establishment could be ready to run on its own in another year.

The bishop has proposed founding a new house in lower Louisiana right in the place that serves as our benefice, that is, 1140 miles from

⁸²² Of those, only Ferrari took vows in December 1820. The others waited until later.

⁸²³ The following postscript on page one refers to this sentence: "P.S. If I had time to translate them into Italian, [but] the original is already quite long." The letter in question does not appear in the De Andreis materials among the Archives of the General Curia.

⁸²⁴ Andrew Ferrari, Francis Xavier Dahmen, Joseph Tichitoli, all of whom lived outside of Saint Louis.

⁸²⁵ John Rosti, admitted 31 May 1820; Leo De Neckere, admitted 1 June 1820; Peter Vergani, admitted 13 June 1820. Rosti and Vergani had come from Italy in a band of nine or so candidates, headed by Father John Rossetti. They reached the Barrrens 4 January 1820. Members, as Tichitoli had been, of an informal group from Milan, the Oblates of Saint Charles, they had come to work in Dubourg's diocese. Lack of means to live their own religious life in common led some of them to join the Congregation of the Mission at different times. (Rosati, "Recollections," IV, 129-30.) Because of bad health, Rossetti withdrew 3 June 1821.

Correspondence 1820

here as reckoned in the Italian mile.⁸²⁶ (Judge by this the huge distances in this country.) A great field is opening to ministry as far as the Floridas. During the bishop's absence I had already planned to spend the summer among the Osage Indians to learn their language, translate the shorter catechism, and begin to make some converts. The bishop judged the project premature, however, because the number of priests is still too small for us to be away for a long time from the flock and go in search of those scattered sheep, who are not *ex hoc ovili* ["of this flock"],⁸²⁷ and so I continue still to wait for another time. *Sustine tentationes Dei* ["bear up with trials from God"].⁸²⁸

Father Rosati heads the seminary and enjoys perfect health, but he suffers from the problem of needing temporal goods. Father Acquaroni is often sick but his parishioners adore him. Through some excess of fervor, Brother Borgna has contracted an attack of coughing that makes us fear for his health. He came to visit us since there was a place for him here. His cough has already stopped and he is beginning to improve. He has been a priest for five or six months.⁸²⁹ He is a subject of the greatest hopes. Here with me he has returned to perfect health, but he will have to remain in the warmer climate of lower Louisiana.⁸³⁰ Brother Potini is a deacon. Father Rosati, who came here to spend a few days, assures me that he is ready to be ordained a priest and that this will probably take place next Christmas.⁸³¹ This good young man exceeds in a lack of self-confidence. Brother Blanka is finally consoled by having some brother companions. These are especially one Irishman and another Milanese.⁸³² They are two real saints. There are also excellent postulant brothers, one a Spaniard and the other an American, a convert from Protestantism.⁸³³

⁸²⁶ Now the village of Plattenville on Bayou Lafourche. The usual distance, reckoned by river, was somewhat more than 1200 miles.

⁸²⁷ John 10:16.

⁸²⁸ Sir 2:3.

⁸²⁹ He was ordained 20 March 1820 in Saint Louis.

⁸³⁰ Rosati recalled that Borgna was also put to work teaching in the Academy, replacing De Neckere until his return in September. (Rosati, "Recollections," IV, 135.)

⁸³¹ He was ordained 29 October 1820 in Saint Louis.

⁸³² Brothers Daniel Harrington and Domenico Donati, although the latter was from Rimini, not Milan. John Bosoni and Joseph Pifferi were both from Milan. It is uncertain which one is meant.

⁸³³ A certain Smith, if that is the correct reading of his name, mentioned only once, was probably the American convert; Antonio Perez, the Spaniard. He entered after De Andreis's death, 1 November 1820, but did not persevere.

Correspondence 1820

We have needed copies of the Common Rules in English. I had a translation made into English but it costs an arm and a leg to have them printed here. As the writer, I enjoy good health, not without problems, but these do not keep me from doing my little work. I am embarrassed to say that I am truly swimming in a sea of perfume. I could not be more content in this mortal life. I find myself in my center and I am eager for nothing else than to consume the sacrifice. A few days ago I ran the risk of being torn to pieces by a converted Methodist minister. This month he became violently insane and others could not restrain him. After threatening me, he hurled himself at me with such fury that he could have torn me to pieces; but, thanks to the workings of Providence, five or six holy men were found who jumped on him together and so he succeeded only in throwing my hat to the ground and ripping my clothes.

Please recommend me to the prayers of our good confreres in Italy to help us thank God for our good successes, for which I bless him.

At the beginning when we came there were four of us, and now we have been multiplied from four up to sixteen and more.⁸³⁴ Little by little regularity is being established just like in our Italian houses. My compliments to each and every one of our men over there, to Father Grassi and the Very Reverend Father Inglesi and all those interested in our mission, not to exclude those who by chance might be favorable to it. Why do we love everybody *in visceribus Christi* ["in the affection of Christ"]⁸³⁵ other than to attest to our thanks toward our benefactors? Ah, when will we all be united together in truth and charity and in eternity! We will form nothing else than one single unity in God. I am your most humble, devoted and obedient servant,

Felix De Andreis,
priest of the mission.

In another hand: Final letter from Father De Andreis.

⁸³⁴ The members at his time were: (1) De Andreis, (2) Acquaroni, (3) Rosati, (4) Borgna, (5) Potini, (6) Cellini, (7) Ferrari, (8) Dahmen, (9) Tichitoli, (10) Rosti, (11) De Neckere, (12) Rossetti, (13) Vergani, all priests or clerical students; and (14) Blanka, (15) Harrington, (16) Donati, all lay brothers. Those not numbered were the postulant brothers mentioned above. Of these, Rossetti, Rosti and Vergani arrived at the Barrrens, 4 January 1820, in company with four postulant brothers.

⁸³⁵ Phil 1:8.

*Correspondence 1820***85. TO JOSEPH ROSATI, C.M., PRIEST, BARRENS⁸³⁶**

Saint Louis
7 October 1820

Dear Father,

After embracing you in the sacred hearts of Jesus and Mary I announce to you with sadness that our dear superior is in very weak health. He cannot write by himself, and so he has asked me to write this for him. The bishop, I think, is writing you too, and he will give you more news that I am doing.⁸³⁷

He is sick with a bilious fever accompanied by delirium.⁸³⁸ He is in almost constant confusion, produced by the great weakness of the brain. The brain, in turn, is easily moved by any sort of idea to which the imagination attaches itself. For example, since Sunday he seemed quite struck with the idea of death, and he asked for the sacraments when the doctor and others did not see any danger. His pains and his weakness have done nothing but increase all this week. For this reason

⁸³⁶ **Letter 85.** *Autograph letter, in the hand of Leo De Neckere, French, two pages with address, SLAA, Rosati papers. Cited in Ricciardelli, Vita, 488-89. Copy in DRMA. (Although written by the novice Leo De Neckere, this letter represents De Andreis's wishes.)*

⁸³⁷ The bishop wrote only the following paragraph on this subject:

We have the sadness, my dear Father Rosati, to have Father De Andreis seriously ill, although the doctors assure me that he is in no danger. Nevertheless, we administered holy viaticum to him yesterday. It is a putrid bilious fever, accompanied by a painfully sore throat. The fever has lessened. He is using tonics because of his great weakness, after having been purged for several days.

(Dubourg to Rosati, 7 October 1820, SLAA, Rosati papers. Copy in DRMA.)

⁸³⁸ "Bilious fever," the name given at the time to typhoid fever, had already claimed some victims, including two children of Alexander McNair, future governor of Missouri. They died on 8 and 13 September. Typhoid fever is spread by fecal contamination, such as through water. De Andreis wrote about the putrid water in their well in Letter 64, 27 March 1819, a possible foreshadowing of the cause of his death.

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the bishop administered holy viaticum to him yesterday. I think that the doctor does not find him in great danger.⁸³⁹

Yesterday, he mentioned to me his very ardent wish to see you. I do not know if the bishop will mention it to you for you to come; he did not ask me to handle this. Today is the twelfth day that he has had this fever, and since crises happen every seven days, we are waiting until the fourteenth, and then until the twentieth for the fever to stop. He thinks that he will not be cured.

Nothing more edifying or tender than to see his transports of joy and the outpourings of his heart when the thought of death comes to give him hope of an early union with his creator. I do not need to expand on this, since you know his virtues better than I do.

I conclude by praying the Lord that, in the perfect accomplishment of his holy will, we might be able to find peace of soul in this life and unalterable happiness in the next.

I am sincerely, Father,
Your most humble servant,
L. De Neckere

Addressed: To the Revd. Mr. Rosati, St. Mary's Seminary, Barrens, by St. Genevieve; Kindness of Dr. Williams.

⁸³⁹ Nevertheless, on the following Wednesday, De Andreis was attended by Dr. Bernard Farrar, brought in for a second opinion. Farrar noted: "Mr. Deandres. To visit in consultation, etc." ("Account Book. Dr. Bernard Farrar," Vol. I. Missouri Historical Society, archives, entry for Wednesday, 11 October 1820.) As evidenced in his account books, Farrar was neither De Andreis's nor Dubourg's regular physician. Instead, the bishop went to Dr. George P. Todsen, and brought him several times to Florissant to care for Philippine Duchesne ("Journal de la Société de Sacré-Coeur, 1818-1840. 2. à St. Ferdinand," 16, entry for 15 September 1820 [C-VII, 2-c, Box 1]).

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86. TO FRANCESCO ANTONIO BACCARI, C.M. (?), PRO-VICAR
GENERAL, ROME⁸⁴⁰

Father,

God has visited us in a way most painful to my heart and most terrible for our mission by taking away from us the venerated Father De Andreis. He died on Sunday, the 15th of this month, the day on which we were celebrating the feast of the Holy Guardian Angels. I have no doubt that at the very moment of his death the prayers that we offered for him had their full effect. *Subvenite angeli Dei*, etc. ["Come (to his aid) angels of God, etc."], and *Jubeas eam a sanctis angelis suscepi et ad Patriam Paradisi perducere* ["Have his (soul) brought by your holy angels and led to Paradise, his home"].⁸⁴¹ This precious death has plunged the city and the diocese into universal mourning, because he was commonly venerated as a saint.

I hope that God will glorify him with miracles, since people here are well disposed to believe them. Thus, since a beautiful star⁸⁴² shone in midday in the sky at the very hour of his funeral, and people said aloud that it was the soul of Father De Andreis.⁸⁴³ An elderly woman, my housekeeper, had suffered from stomach pains for three years because of erysipelas. She was suddenly, and I hope forever, freed

⁸⁴⁰ Letter 86. Copy from original by Dubourg. Italian. One sheet, two pages, inserted between sheets 18 and 19, in "*Annales de la Congrégation de la Mission en Italie. Quatrième Époque, de 1815 à 1874.*" Paris, archives of the Congregation of the Mission.

This Italian letter is evidently a translation from French, Dubourg's native language, and was probably written to Baccari. Since the bishop did not sign this copy, and the copyist misspelled the bishop's name (de Bourg, for Dubourg), it was probably copied in Rome for the French vicar general in Paris, Charles Boujard.

⁸⁴¹ Texts taken from the funeral service.

⁸⁴² Examination of star charts displaying the night sky at this period in Saint Louis shows the prominence of the planet Venus in the southeast. Its appearance was not otherwise remarked by Saint Louis observers of the period, nor is a comet known to have been visible at the time. The object seen during the day could have been a meteor.

⁸⁴³ Mrs. Elisabeth Moranville, née Hayden (b. 1822) testified in 1900 that her father, Thomas Hayden, had accompanied Felix's remains to the Barrens, and "that he had witnessed the wonderful star which appeared in the sky just over the house where the body of the servant of God was reposed, and which seemed to accompany the remains on the journey from St. Louis. I also heard Bishops Rosatti [sic], Odin, Timon and De Neckere relate the same occurrence. They all regarded this apparition as an evidence of the great sanctity of Father De Andreis, whom they, with so many others regarded as a saint of God." (DRMA, original notarized document in De Andreis files.)

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from this illness through the application of a piece of cloth belonging to the venerable priest.⁸⁴⁴

I am sending you the notice in English, and the circular letter in Latin⁸⁴⁵ that calls this loss irreparable.

At the point of death, Father De Andreis named Father Rosati as the superior of their men. He is the only one who could be superior since all the others are young. It is very necessary, Father, that you try to send us two subjects of a mature age, with talent and solid virtue, so that they can consolidate their wonderful establishment in Louisiana. If Father Rosati leaves, everything will collapse. He will certainly ask for this. Allow me to add my strongest wishes to his own. Besides the seminary that I have given to their Congregation, I use him as the procurator of yet another retreat house and of missions in one of the most populated places in Lower Louisiana.⁸⁴⁶

The good they will do with two establishments is incalculable. You are well informed that the diocese already has six novices; almost all priests⁸⁴⁷ and for the most part they are subjects remarkable for their talent and virtue.

Saint Louis, Missouri
in the United States of America
19 October 1820

I have the honor of being, etc.
Your very humble and obedient servant,
L[ouis] Wil[liam] de Bourg, Bishop of Louisiana

⁸⁴⁴ This healing is reported in various ways in other letters.

⁸⁴⁵ See 87(b) and 87(c).

⁸⁴⁶ The convent at Grand Coteau, near Opelousas, Louisiana. "Retreat house" likely is a misunderstanding of the bishop's description of the institution as a boarding school for girls run by the Madames of the Sacred Heart.

⁸⁴⁷ More correctly, the bishop should have written that the Congregation, not the diocese, had six novices. They were probably Leo De Neckere, Leo Deys (who joined the diocese), Andrew Ferrari, John Rosti, and Joseph Tichitoli, all priests. Peter Vergani was ordained only in 1826.

*Correspondence 1820***87(a). TO VINCENZO DE ANDREIS, DEMONTE⁸⁴⁸**

From Saint Mary's Seminary
15 November 1820

Dear Sir:

This diocese of Louisiana and the Congregation of the Mission have suffered a loss which is common also to you and to your family. After a very painful illness of about four weeks,⁸⁴⁹ the Lord called your respectable brother and our most worthy superior on 15 October to receive the reward of his apostolic labors and of all the virtues that he practiced heroically during his precious life. I have recovered a little from the sorrow in which his unexpected death plunged me. He was the one person dearest to me and was like a father to me. I believed it my duty to send you this very sad news in this letter, and to add a few things which might offer you some reasons for consolation after you have paid the very proper tribute of tears to the memory of our dear departed. Though we have lost a brother and a father on earth, we have gained a protector in heaven. You know that his life had been the life of a saint, and so it is easy to see that his death was like the death of

⁸⁴⁸ **Letter 87(a).** *Autograph letter, Italian, four pages, with address, in the archives of the province of Turin, De Andreis papers. Letter 87(b).* *Autograph (?) letter, Latin, one page, in the Archives of the General Curia, Rome, De Andreis papers. Another copy, typeset, also exists, addressed to Philip Borgna, New Orleans, in the De Andreis collection, vol. 1, 138. Letter 87(c).* *Original offprint, English, in DRMA, De Andreis papers. From Missouri Gazette & Public Advertiser 13:629 (18 October 1820): 3. Another version, retranslated into English from Italian, is found in his Life, 177-79.*

⁸⁴⁹ Most likely typhoid fever. His constitution was ruined by being dosed with calomel, mercurous chloride, which certainly hastened his death. Besides general debility from a weak stomach, probably chronic colitis, he was commonly spoken of as suffering from consumption. (Rosati, *Summariium*, 213.) The account in *Annales ... Italie* surmises that worrying about being made a bishop "contributed not a little to hastening" his death. (p. 18v.)

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a saint.⁸⁵⁰

The Lord had been preparing him for this with frequent illnesses, constant problems and chronic pains. For several years these tried his heroic patience. Death had always been the goal of his desires. In his last illness he spoke of God with transports of joy, and these aroused the admiration of those who witnessed it. Amid his most terrible sufferings he spoke only of God; the deliriums to which he was at times subject did not keep him away from this topic, always the only object of his thoughts and emotions.

The whole city of Saint Louis, the last scene of his apostolic labors, witnessed a very edifying spectacle. The finest people came to visit him and to offer him even the basest services. All the citizens who wanted to preserve him in this precious life showed their constant worry during his illness. At the end, when they despaired of keeping him, each one sought to visit him to receive his blessing, contemplating in

⁸⁵⁰ Rosati wrote the following to his brother Nicola:

He was a saint, and he lived and died as a saint . . . He united in himself the most beautiful qualities, extraordinary talents, eloquence, learning, holiness, and virtue that made him truly respectable, not only for Catholics but also for all those who had the good fortune to know him, of whatever religion they were.

(Joseph Rosati to Nicola Rosati, from Barrens, 18 [?] October 1820; copy in DRMA, Rosati papers.)

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his face all the features of one predestined.⁸⁵¹

At his death regret and sorrow were universal.⁸⁵² Every class of persons wept over him as a desolate family weeps over the death of a venerated and beloved parent. Protestants were indistinguishable from

⁸⁵¹ The Paris manuscript gives more details about his dying days:

When he arrived at Baltimore, God brought to him, even then, a chosen soul who wanted to put herself under his care. Mrs. [Marie] MacGuire, a very pious woman, advanced in the spiritual life, had for a long time asked God to give her a director capable of leading her in the way of perfection and of fulfilling his designs for her. One day she went to a mass said by Father De Andreis and she knew then, by an interior voice from God, that there was the director destined for her. From that time she placed herself under his care and made great progress in virtue. She later came to Saint Louis where Father De Andreis was, and she gave herself to all sorts of good works. God showed her again the glory that he was preparing for Father De Andreis. He lived at the Bishop's house, about a kilometer from Mrs. MacGuire's house. A hill separated the two quarters of the city. One day Mrs. MacGuire was amazed to see a light appearing in the sky in broad daylight. She looked at it and saw a chariot attached to fiery horses like that in the scripture belonging to the prophet Elijah. The chariot passed above the houses, and she saw it go down beside the hill toward the Bishop's house. Father De Andreis was then in his bed of pain. Mrs. MacGuire did not doubt that God was going to bring him up on the chariot that He had showed her. Some days after, in fact, he died. Only one person witnessed this marvel, which we have just spoken of; the sky looked different to everyone else, and on the day of his funeral a brilliant star appeared in broad daylight above his body and followed it to the tomb. He was laid out in an open coffin, and they brought it throughout the city.

(*Notices VI*, 436, 442.) Mrs. MacGuire died in Saint Louis, 15 October 1828; see also Rosati, *Summarium*, 215.

⁸⁵² Eugénie Audé, Religious of the Sacred Heart, wrote in a similar vein to Madeleine Sophie Barat in Paris, October 1820:

You certainly know, my worthy Mother, that the bishop has just lost Mr. D'Andreis, his vicar general. He [Dubourg] had been so affected by this that for two days he had suffered very violent attacks of nerves. Everyone joined him in this loss, since we are weeping for a saint. He was a person of the greatest merit, and his zeal for the salvation of souls knew no limits. The climax of his last illness was a continuous aspiration toward heaven, where he had fixed his heart and all his thoughts. The world was so foreign to him that he himself used to say that he did not know a single woman, although he heard the confessions of everyone in Saint Louis.

(Paisant, *Les années pionnières*, L. 84, p. 335.)

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Catholics in this. On the same day that he went to heaven our departed received the most solemn funeral honors.⁸⁵³ Contrary to the custom of this country, his body, clad in priestly vestments, was exposed to public view. Although he died in the bishop's house, next to the church, there was a lengthy procession before he was borne into the cathedral. People here had never seen such a large procession. The sacred ceremonies were more like a solemn procession than a funeral. All the priests and the bishop in pontifical vestments preceded the mortal remains of this venerable priest. The priests carried them, but some of them had to give in to the pressure of the main men of the city, to grant them the consolation of bearing his coffin in their turn.

Our worthy bishop pronounced a funeral oration in which he had no need to rely on the artifices of eloquence. He let his heart speak, and he drew tears from the eyes of his many hearers. God has wished to glorify this faithful servant of his by allowing the sincerest honors to be given him after death, a result of the high reputation that everyone had of him.

A large number of people had wanted to have something used by our departed.⁸⁵⁴ The bishop kept some of his hair; I am enclosing some of it for you. At the end, the Lord himself wanted to begin to glorify him in an extraordinary way. During the illness of Father De Andreis, a widow of great piety, troubled for a long time with terrible stomach problems, had many times tried to enter his room to touch his bed or something else in the firm confidence of obtaining a cure from her illness from the Lord through the merits of his servant. She was unable to do so. After his death, she approached his body, touched it, and was healed

⁸⁵³ This probably refers to the wake, since his funeral was celebrated on 16 October, according to the register of funerals signed by Francis Niel: "His funeral was held the next day, and his body has been moved to the Seminary at the Barrrens."

⁸⁵⁴ Bishop Dubourg wrote to Rosati: "I am also having the Rice family bring you his trunks containing his personal effects and papers. There are perhaps still some books here. I do not have the time to worry about them." (From Saint Louis, 19 October 1820; original in SLAA, 1-A-3,1.) A note in Rosati's hand records the following concerning the disposition of some of his manuscripts: "Given to Mr. Calvo at the seminary Father De Andreis's notebook entitled: *Ad Quid Venisti et Europam reliquisti*; to Mr. Mignard the notebook entitled *Carthusia Apostolica*; to Mr. Paquin a notebook of resolutions, etc. These gentlemen are supposed to copy them and return them to me." (Source: Roman Province archives, Rome, Rosati diary 1837-40, 12.5.3.; note inside front cover.)

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in an instant.⁸⁵⁵

Although he did not want to do so, the bishop decided after the



The Jarrot Home, Cahokia, Illinois.
Courtesy of the author

funeral to send the mortal remains of our beloved superior to the seminary at the Barrens. This transport took place with the greatest propriety, although the journey is about 100 miles. The main citizens of Saint Louis and Sainte Genevieve voluntarily accompanied him in great numbers to the seminary.⁸⁵⁶ On 17 October we received this treasure here, accompanied as it was by three priests. We placed him in a well-constructed monument. When the Lord grants us the grace

⁸⁵⁵ The housekeeper is called Zama (page 4), or Zamon (pages 5, 213), in the official inquiry for his cause. On the other hand, De Andreis's friend, James Cummins, asserted that she was Mrs. Charity Hern (elsewhere, Ahern or Hearn), his wife's aunt. While the bishop and others were at their meal, this lady entered the seminary refectory where his body was exposed, and "she pressed his naked foot to her stomach and was relieved." (Cummins to Timon, from Pittsburgh, 20 August 1839; SLAA, Rosati correspondence, I-B-4.3B; also, Rosati, *Summarium*, 111-12, 214, 260.)

⁸⁵⁶ This funeral procession passed through Cahokia, Prairie du Rocher and Kaskaskia before reaching Sainte Genevieve. Testimony for his canonization mentions visits he made to Prairie du Rocher, about 60 miles from Saint Louis (Rosati, *Summarium*, 2, 207). Acquaroni accompanied the body.

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of building a new church, we will move him there. Meanwhile I hope that the Lord will do something more.

You can see that we have motives for our consolation in this loss. I have not yet had the time to gather up all the information to write up an account of his life. You could do me a great service if you would kindly send me the information that you could gather there [and] to address the letter as follows: Mr. Joseph Rosati, Sup[érieur] du S[éminaire] de S[ain]te Marie, Barrens, Conté de S[ainte] Genevieve, état du Missouri, mandé a M[ada]me Fournier, Bordeaux, rue de l'église de [Saint Seurin] n[umér]o 7 [Superior of Saint Mary's Seminary, Barrens, Sainte Genevieve County, Missouri; sent to Madame Fournier, 7, rue de l'église Saint Seurin. Bordeaux].⁸⁵⁷

I am enclosing here the letter in which the bishop informed all the priests of the diocese of the death of Father De Andreis, as well as an extract from the newspaper on the same subject. I have not had time to translate it from English.

Please accept my sincerest expressions of esteem and respect. With these I have the honor of being

Your humble servant

Joseph Rosati

priest of the Congregation of the Mission

Addressed: Monsieur, Mr. V. De Andreis, Demonte, in Piedmont, Italy.

Postmarks: Chambéry, Bordeaux

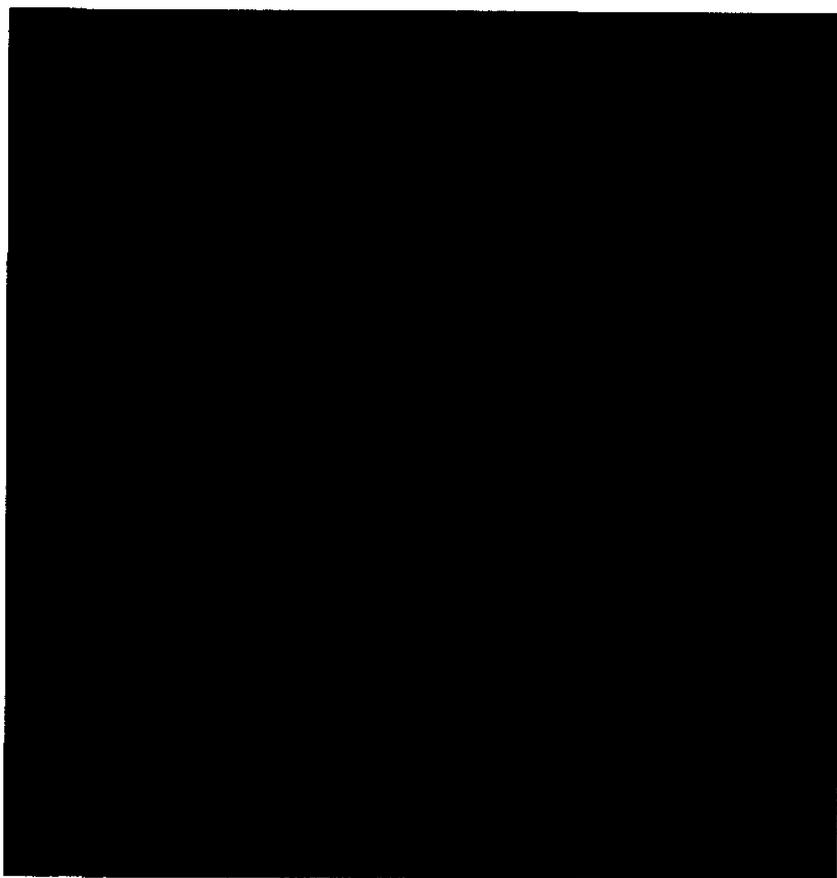
⁸⁵⁷ The material in brackets, marking a missing portion of text, has been restored conjecturally.

*Correspondence 1820***87(b). (TO THE PRIESTS OF THE DIOCESE OF LOUISIANA)**

[Undated]

By order of His Excellency, the Most Reverend Bishop, I send to you the very sad news of the death of the Very Reverend Father Felix De Andreis, vicar general and superior of the Congregation of the Mission in this province of Louisiana. He was a man of outstanding holiness and doctrine, and after suffering a long illness, departed for a better life on 15 October 1820. He bore with his sufferings with admirable meekness, and, strengthened by the sacraments, experienced in advance the delights of heaven. He was about forty-two years old. Alas, he was the light and adornment of our clergy, a powerful preacher of the Gospel, a lover of the poor, the hope and support of the mission of Louisiana! The bishop experienced the death of this venerable priest with inexpressible sorrow, and men of all ranks lament it. May the God of all consolation, moved by so many groans, raise up for us heirs to such great virtue.

Your very obedient,
Charles De Lacroix
Secretary of the bishop of Louisiana



Obituary.

Collection of the DeAndreis-Rosati Memorial Archives

*Correspondence 1820***87(c). OBITUARY**

From the *Missouri Gazette*, St. Louis, October 18th 1820.⁸⁵⁸

DIED — On the 15th instant, in this town, after a painful and lingering illness, in the 43 year of his age, the Reverend FELIX DE ANDREIS, Vicar General of Louisiana, and superior of the Congregation of the Mission. This venerable Priest was born in Piedmont, (Italy,) of reputable and wealthy parents, and early engaged in the ecclesiastical career.

His youth spent in perfect innocence and marked by the most distinguished proficiency, portended the man of God and the Apostle. The comforts of domestic affluence, and the endearments of a dearly beloved family were the first ties which the heavenly voice called him to break, to devote himself to the humble and arduous labours of country Missions, and to the practice of the evangelical counsels of poverty and obedience, in that truly Apostolic Congregation established two hundred years since by Saint Vincent of Paul.

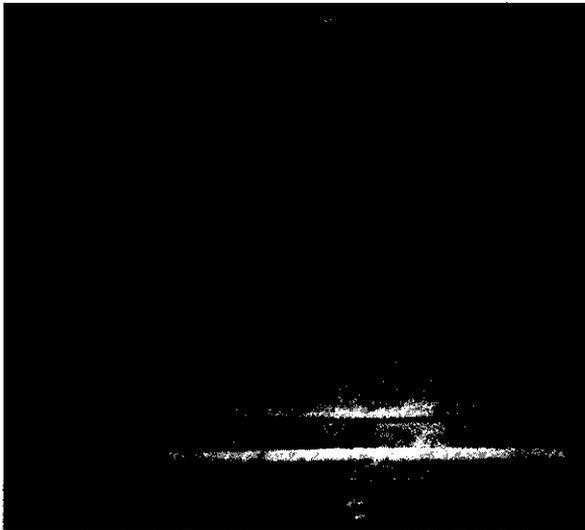
The various states and provinces of Italy were successively the theatre of his zeal, and the animated strains of his divine eloquence brought to his feet thousands of poor sinners, who found relief and comfort in his indulgent tenderness. Called to Rome, as to a scene of action better suited to his noble talent and extensive learning, he soon became the oracle of the clergy of that capital of the Catholic world, and drew upon himself the admiration of its most eminent prelates. But his humility sickened under the weight of a consideration, which paved before him the way to the highest honours, and his zeal, too

⁸⁵⁸ The text has been set into paragraphs for easier reading, but the spelling has been kept as in the original. Such obituary notices were very rare, the only previous one being for Daniel Boone (1820). James C. Cummins related that Dubourg had written the text. Since he was a close friend of the deceased, Cummins published it, which may account for its unusual length and prominence in his newspaper. In 1838 he recalled for John Timon that he also published it "afterwards in handbill form to be distributed to the various clergymen throughout the diocese etc." (Cummins to Timon, from Pittsburgh, 20 August 1839, original in SLAA, Rosati correspondence, I-B-4.3B.) One of these handbills reached Ireland, sent home by Hugh Quin, then an ecclesiastical student in Saint Louis. (Hugh Quin to his father, from Saint Louis College, 30 October 1820; copy in DRMA, De Andreis papers.) The same notice also appeared in the only other Saint Louis newspaper of the period, the *Saint Louis Enquirer* 3:221 (Saturday, 21 October 1820): 3. For some reason it was also summarized in the *Rochester Telegraph*, Rochester, New York, 9 January 1821. The obituary mentioned as appearing in the New Orleans papers has not been located.

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confined, sought after a more extensive and desolate field.

Long had he solicited the favour of being sent on a Foreign Mission. China was his first object; but Providence, by frustrating his views on that side, turned them towards America. Great were the obstacles he had to overcome to obtain his favourite wishes. His superiors, assisted by a combination of the most influential characters in Rome, strenuously opposed his departure. It was represented to the sovereign Pontiff himself as a calamity, against which they succeeded in enlisting for a moment his supreme authority. But at last persuaded by the fervent entreaties of the humble Priest, he silenced the opposition and granted his request. In 1816, the venerable man sailed for America, accompanied by several members of his Congregation, over whom he had been regularly appointed superior; and after a residence of about one year in Kentucky, where he left a most precious remembrance, he arrived in this Territory with the Rev. Bishop who had long made him his Vicar General and the soul of his councils.



The tomb of Felix De Andreis. Saint Mary's of the Barrens Church.
Courtesy of the author

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The three short years he lived among us were wholly spent in the most active and charitable exercise of his divine functions, and have sufficed to embalm his memory in the hearts of all the classes of our citizens. Long will his fervent piety, his unaffected humility, his indulgence to others and severity to himself, his indefatigable solicitude for the sanctification of souls, his tender and industrious charity to the poor be the theme of common conversations.

Long will his frequent and pathetic exhortations from the Pulpit vibrate in the hearts of his hearers, to be a melting reproach to the negligent, and an encouragement to the faithful. His last moments were those of the just, who has every day of his life studied and improved the great lesson of Death. The news of his approaching dissolution not only found him resigned and contented, but excited in him rapturous joys.

Heaven with all its glories brightened on his emaciated countenance. His last words were in favour of his spiritual children, whom he recommended to the peculiar solicitude of the Bishop. His death is universally lamented; every one seems to have lost a Father; and the immense concourse, that graced with their tears the solemn pomp of his funeral, proclaimed him to be the beloved of God and men, whose memory is in benediction⁸⁵⁹

His earthly remains have been conveyed, under a pious escort, to the Seminary at the Barrens, county of St. Genevieve, kept by the gentlemen of his Congregation.

⁸⁵⁹ Sir 45:1.