

## THE CHURCH IN HARRODSBURG<sup>1</sup>

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THE REV. GABRIEL GERMANN, O.S.B.

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Harrodsburg, Kentucky

January 14, 1948

Dear Father Germann:

I am now an octogenarian, minus a few weeks. Your letter of December 15, 1947, found me in a hospital from which I returned home during the Christmas times, and am now trying to regain my strength. It is coming back very, very slowly. For these reasons, you must not expect too much from me. Years ago I made notes from a number of talks with an old friend, now dead, who as a boy lived in Danville and often accompanied the fathers of Saint Rose's, particularly Father Joseph Thomas Ryan, on their journeys from Danville to Harrodsburg and other places. What I write you now is largely taken from those notes. I could also send you a copy of them, as they might perchance be of some help to you for your proposed good work; but, I think, it will hardly be necessary.

Catholicity in Harrodsburg is an almost untouched field, because, of course, there were long but very few of the faith there and in the vicinity. Bishop Spalding's *Early Catholic Missions in Kentucky*, Father (later Bishop) Maes' *Life of Father Charles Nerinckx*, and Ben Webb's *Centenary of Catholicity in Kentucky* barely mention Harrodsburg. You will find something of a list of the early missions of Kentucky in these three works. One is also given on pages 78-79 of my *Life of Bishop Edward Dominic Fenwick, O.P.* You probably have access to these books. I am sure you can find them at Nazareth. Spalding, early in his book, and Webb (pages 44 ff) say Doctor George Hart and William Coomes were at Harrodsburg at an early date, and were the first Catholics in Kentucky.

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<sup>1</sup> The following letter was written by the author in reply to a request from Fr. Germann for information as to the history of the Church in the Kentucky community.

However, a list of early settlers at Harrodsburg given on page 624 of volume 2 of Richard H. Collins' *History of Kentucky* (Covington, 1882) shows several distinctly Catholic names—Bowman, Coffey, Callihan, Hogan, Pendergast, Gordon, Worthington. Perhaps they had lost the faith before going to Kentucky, or their descendants lost it there because of the lack of priests. Webb (page 24), justly I think, maintains there were many, many such defections in the state for the same reason. On page 98 Webb quotes a letter of Father (later Bishop and Archbishop) Francis Patrick Kenrick in 1827 showing that he made at least one missionary trip to Harrodsburg. I note this, for it may be of interest to you.

In the early days Fathers Stephen Theodore Badin and Charles Nerinckx built a brick church (Saint Patrick's) in Danville, Kentucky, which was opened sometime in 1810. Some have said that this was the first brick Catholic Church in Kentucky. But I have documentary proof in Father Badin's own handwriting that Saint Rose's, near Springfield, was the first blessed and used in the state. Webb, page 576, shows that the Danville church was soon lost. Daniel McIlvoy, who had neglected to execute a deed to the land on which it stood, failed in business, and all was sold to pay his debts. It is said that the building still exists, and is used for dwelling purposes.

In view of the lack of records, it would now perhaps be impossible to determine the precise date, but it seems quite certain that not long after the above catastrophe the fathers of Saint Rose's took charge of the few faithful in and around Danville, and administered to them as best they could with their own limited numbers and their work at home. The traditions of Saint Rose's and all other indications bear out such a conclusion so clearly and so strongly as to preclude any doubt. At least, a lifelong study leaves none in the mind of the writer. In 1824 Father William Raymond Tuite, then provincial of the Dominicans in Kentucky, was obliged by the exigencies of the College of Saint Thomas of Aquin run in connection with Saint Rose's to relinquish Danville and other missions. He thereby incurred the displeasure of Bishop Benedict Joseph Flaget. This is responsible for not a little of the misrepresentation of the Dominicans in Kentucky found here and there, and enhanced by Father (later Bishop) Maes' life of Father Nerinckx.

Saint Rose's baptismal records down to 1830 have disappeared in some way. I often saw them years and years ago. Those still extant combine with the distinct traditions of Saint Joseph's Province to show that not long after the close of the College of Saint Thomas of Aquin, 1828, the fathers of Saint Rose's again took over the mission

of Boyle, Mercer, Garrard, and possibly other counties. Now and then the books show a baptism in those places. But because the locality is not always noted, and some (perhaps not a few) of the slips of paper on which the records were made were lost by the priests in their long and painful journeys, it is not possible to determine the precise date when the Dominicans resumed their heroic apostolate in those parts of the state.

Father Joseph Thomas Ryan, after his ordination in 1848, seems certainly to have been the priest who principally cultivated the spiritual fields of which we have spoken. Some years ago there lived here in Washington a clear-headed old gentleman with a splendid memory who was brought up in Danville from infancy, John J. Stretch. From 1856 to 1859 he attended the college temporarily reopened at Saint Rose's. (See his letter in *An American Apostle: Father Matthew Anthony O'Brien, O.P.*, which I send you, pages 188-190.) Later he served on the northern side of the Civil War, afterwards getting a governmental position in the National Capital. I met him often, and we became intimate friends. He knew the missionaries, especially Father Ryan, who went to Danville in his day. He loved Saint Rose's, where he had studied, and liked to talk about the place and the fathers and brothers whom he met there.

Father Ryan, he often said, was a veritable apostle and the priest who nearly always attended Danville. His visits to the town were not frequent, not more than once a month, if that often; but, under the circumstances of the time, he could not do more. He always notified the Catholics when to expect him. From the time he was big enough young Stretch almost unfailingly accompanied Father Ryan from Danville, his first halting place, on to Harrodsburg, Shakertown, then known as Pleasant Hill or Union Village, about seven miles above Harrodsburg, and other places, or wherever he could find one of the faith. Everyone liked the gentle, kindly, and zealous Friar Preacher. The Catholics idolized him and ever received him almost as they would an angel. After the loss of the church in Danville, Mr. Stretch used frequently to say, Father Ryan and the other priests said mass there in private houses. Father Ryan did the same in Harrodsburg and wherever Stretch accompanied him. It was a case of necessity, and not an altogether unusual thing in those days.

We may now turn to a few brief records which are not without interest, and throw some light on Catholicity in Harrodsburg. But, first, it may be well to note that, after the war between Mexico and the United States, and with the approbation of Congress. General Winfield Scott used the money he procured from the southern coun-

try for the establishment of the well known National Soldiers' Home in the District of Columbia. It is one of our best institutions of the kind. At first, it was called the Military Asylum. From the start it has sought to have Catholic chaplains for the inmates of that faith as well as ministers for those of other creeds. In other words, it has been conducted on broad lines free from religious bias, in keeping with our national constitution.

On page 66 of volume 1 of the revised and enlarged edition of the *History of Kentucky* by his father, Lewis Collins, Richard H. Collins says: "May 8 [1853]—U.S. military asylum located at Harrodsburg Springs, which are purchased for that purpose from Dr. C. [Christopher Columbus] Graham at \$100,000." Page 69 of the same volume tells us that the state legislature, February "23, [1854] cedes to the U.S. jurisdiction over the Harrodsburg Springs for a military asylum." And page 81 of that volume notes: "October 19 [1858]—U.S. military asylum at Harrodsburg discontinued, and inmates removed to the asylum at Washington City." Finally, facing page 602 of volume 2 of his history, Collins gives a nice illustration. Under the picture is the following printed information: "HARRODSBURG SPRINGS, KY. (Became U.S. Military Asylum, May 8, 1853; Destroyed by fire)."

Unfortunately, Collins does not give the date of the conflagration; and we have not found it elsewhere. As will be seen later, Doctor Christopher Columbus Graham, from whom the National Soldiers' Home purchased the Harrodsburg property, was a benevolent friend of Father Ryan. Mr. Stretch often spoke of him. He was an outstanding man of Harrodsburg in his day. Collins refers to him several times in his history. Volume 2, page 87, shows him living in Louisville in 1876 in the ninetieth year of his age.

The National Soldiers' Home was not much more than in its incipient stages when it extended its patronage to the first state west of the Alleghany Mountains. Evidently it wished to see its broad spirit carried out there also. Possibly this combined with the friendship between Colonel, later General, Robert Anderson and Father Ryan and the facts that there were some invalid retired Catholic soldiers in the diminutive Kentucky institution and that there was sufficient room in it for them and the few faithful in Harrodsburg and the immediate neighborhood to gather for divine services without too much inconvenience may explain the following two records in the archives of the National Soldiers' Home:

"January 30, 1854. The Governor of the Branch Asylum at Harrodsburg, Ky., inquires if the Catholics may be permitted to erect an

altar in the rear of the room used for worship." And the Home's Letter Book, page 258, notes that "the Board informed him that there was no objection to Roman Catholic worship at the Asylum, provided it did not interfere with other denominations."

To this we may add that the Home in Washington freely permitted the Catholics of the neighborhood to assist at the services of its Catholic chaplain until its inmates of the faith became so numerous that there was not room enough for all in the chapel. It may also be noted that Collins' history speaks of General Robert Anderson in several places. Pages 218-220 of volume 1 give an outline of his life. He is another of whose friendship with Father Ryan Mr. Stretch used to speak. Father Ryan had a small altar erected in the "Branch Asylum" at Harrodsburg shortly after its opening, the aged but still physically and mentally spry former union soldier often told us. He served mass at it more than once. However, it was not long before it was destroyed by a little fire that did practically no damage to the building. Possibly through fear of a greater disaster, it was not replaced by another. I have seen a statement in some paper or letter about the destruction of this altar, but can not now lay hands on the document. After its loss the Dominican continued to say mass in private houses again, but prayed for the time to come when he could have a church for his diminutive but faithful flock. Mr. Stretch has been dead twenty years or more, but the delightful talks with him are still vivid in our memory. The following letter shows that the apostolic missionary did not delay much before beginning his efforts to have a Catholic house of prayer in Harrodsburg.

"Zanesville, Ohio.,  
March 3rd/56.

"Right Rev. Father :

"On my return from St. Rose's to this place I accompanied Fr. Ryan on a mission to Harrodsburg. On the morning of the 25th inst. we assembled as many Catholics as we could from the vicinity. From what I learn we could have a congregation of about 200 in that place. Were there a small chapel built and divine services occasionally on Sundays, a great deal might be effected for the good of religion, particularly for the rising generation. I made arrangements with Fr. Ryan to have mass in Harrodsburg on the first Sunday of June so that everyone who bears the name of a Catholic may be able to be present. The people are willing and anxious to purchase a little lot and erect a small edifice; and I think it can easily be done. There is

apparently less bigotry and prejudice among the non-Catholic population than perhaps in any other part of Kentucky.

"With your permission, Rt. Rev. F.[ather], we will be able to plant the holy cross in the oldest settlement of Kentucky. The lot may be secured and a little congregation formed, subject to whatever disposition you may be pleased hereafter to make. On my way to St. Rose's in about two weeks from this I will be in Harrodsburg and encourage the good people in the undertaking, provided you, Right Rev. Sir, deem it prudent to give your sanction to such a proceeding. A few lines from you on the subject will find me in a few days at the Most Rev. Archbishop's in Cincinnati.

"Asking your blessing and recommending myself to your prayers,

Believe me

Yours obediently in Xt.

James Whelan,

Prov. [incial], O.S.D."

"Rt. Rev. M. J. Spalding, D.D.,  
Bishop of Louisville, Ky."

There can be no question but that Bishop Martin John Spalding wrote a sympathetic and favorable reply to the above beautiful letter, although it seems to be no longer extant. However, the erection of a Catholic church in Harrodsburg at that day was a hard, slow, and tedious task. While there must have been further correspondence on the subject, the next letter referring to it we have found is dated more than nine months after that of Father, later Bishop, Whelan produced above. Father Matthew Anthony O'Brien, prior and pastor at Saint Rose's at that time, wrote the bishop on December 16, 1856, about a matrimonial case. At the end of his brief epistle he says: "The Rev. Father Ryan has been lately at Harrodsburg, and I am happy to inform you that matters there look very flattering. The people of the town and vicinity have subscribed liberally, indeed beyond his expectations."

Father O'Brien's roseate view, we are inclined to think, was in great measure due to his unusually optimistic spirit. There were still not a few difficulties to be met and overcome. This combined with the distance of Harrodsburg from Saint Rose's, the necessity of questing for means in Louisville, and Father Ryan's other work, whether at home or on the missions, to delay the erection of a Catholic church in Kentucky's oldest town. This may be seen from a letter of Father Ryan to Bishop Spalding which is now made public for the first time.

“Saint Rose’s Convent  
Sept. 10/57.

“Right Revd. Bishop:

“I received your kind favour of the 4th inst. by the last mail. Major Alexander left me a check for a \$100 before leaving Harrodsburg for Louisville on the 28th August, with the understanding that I might use it if necessary in case yours did not reach me in time, which the Major considered would not probably [happen] by reason of your absence. I used the check on the 31st of August left me by the Major. And he now retains the check for a \$100 which you, Bishop, of your kindness were pleased to send me. This makes matters even. I am under many obligations to the good Major and his family for their many acts of kindness, etc. I am also much indebted to Mr. Ben Trapnall for his kind attentions and to Dr. Graham and his family for their benevolence. The Dr. subscribed and paid \$50. The majority of [the] citizens in town and country are seemingly well pleased with the purchase, so far as I could learn and judge, with the exception of some of the K.N. [Know-nothing] family.

“My constant desire and wish, in the event of my succeeding in attaining the object in view, has ever been to name the place [the church in Harrodsburg] in honor of the Blessed Virgin, placing it under her maternal patronage after it has been once purchased for [the] good of religion and the greater glory of God. For this reason I asked Father Provincial for the privilege and permission to name the place, in case I should buy it. Father Provincial freely granted what I asked and petitioned for. But I did [not] then specify the name I intended, as I had not yet bought the place. The name of my choice always has been, and now is, Saint Mary’s, Harrodsburg, Ky. And this name I hope and humbly supplicate will, Right Revd. Bishop, meet your kind and paternal approbation.

“In reference to the time of giving church I might, I suppose, say once a month, but not oftener. It may not be this often for a few months, though I wish it could be. One of the houses, and the one most suitable for the chapel, is yet occupied by one Mr. Graham and may be until the 1st of next January, 1858, at which time the lease will expire. He will not leave it before that time, as he holds it on lease until then. So far as he himself is concerned, Mr. Graham is now a teacher in that town, and a thorough-going K. Nothing [Know-nothing]. The poor devil takes it hard that the Pope has now got him. As far as knowing who the Holy Father is, the poor man has no idea whatever. He was soon very troublesome in the clerk’s office to Mrs.

Sutton from his repeated expressions and solicitude for having been disappointed [by my] buying the property, etc. The good madame gave him to understand that he had now to behave himself.

"I would probably have secured the place before leaving, but I had not the means to do so for a few months, least [obsolete for lest] it should seem to them to throw suspicion on the whole community, which was, and is, remote from my thoughts. There are some, only a few others, very few even of the K.N. [know-nothing] family, whose temper would require this precaution. Some of them, with the present occupant, Graham, even, of course, [are included to make trouble]."

This letter of Father Joseph Thomas Ryan is the longest of the very few we have seen from his pen. Partly because of its length we pause here in its reproduction in order to lay before the reader a few appropriate facts and some information that he might wish to have before proceeding further. No one can have failed to note that it is delightfully quaint and interesting as well as full of history pertinent to Catholicity in Harrodsburg. Unfortunately, the missionary's handwriting is sometimes difficult to decipher, and the photostat we were obliged to use is not as clear and distinct as one would like to have it. That explains, in part, why a number of words are put in brackets. The last five at the end of the document so far given certainly represent its meaning, although the original there is too illegible to be made out with accuracy. And it may be well to note that all the letters used in this little history were photostats. Their value is enhanced by the fact that the originals, formerly in a large trunkful of documents at the old Saint Thomas' Orphan Asylum, once a seminary, Louisville, Kentucky, we are informed were destroyed by fire while Father James Patrick Cronin was administrator of the diocese. We can only thank God that those we needed had been photostated. Luckily, they are all marked "Louisville Archives," which shows their source.

The document is a clear proof in Father Ryan's own handwriting of the close friendship that existed between him and at least some of the leading people of Harrodsburg. Major Alexander, the governor of the "Branch Asylum" of the National Soldiers' Home in the town, was probably the Colonel Francis N. Alexander mentioned on pages 142 and 150 of volume 2 of Collins' *History of Kentucky*. Doctor Christopher C. Graham, as has been seen, was the gentleman from whom the Soldiers' Home purchased the property in Harrodsburg. Page 604 of volume 2 of Collins' history shows that Benjamin C. Trapnall was a member of the state's legislature about the time he lent money to Father Ryan in the interest of a Catholic church in its

oldest settlement. About Mrs. Sutton, who was evidently a friend, and Mr. Graham, the schoolteacher and a Know-nothing, who was an antagonist, we have learned nothing more than is given in the missionary's letter. However, one feels inclined to think that the trouble maker was no connection of the amiable Doctor Graham. As Know-nothingism was then rampant in the state, the document is something of a confirmation of Father (later Bishop) Whelan's statement, which the reader has seen, in his communication with Bishop M. J. Spalding on March 3, 1856: "There is apparently less bigotry and prejudice among the non-Catholic population [in and around Harrodsburg] than perhaps in any other part of Kentucky."

Let's now return to Father Ryan's letter to Bishop Spalding on September 10, 1857, which was interrupted for the sake of notes and comments that appeared pertinent and appropriate to help the reader about what he had seen. Only the postscript, which is of no moment, will be omitted. In this paragraph, which is the last of the document, the zealous hard-working Friar Preacher tells his chief pastor:

"Work of every description is so high there, as is usual in all our country towns, that it would take nearly, if not more than, \$200 to put the place in proper fix for church purposes. And I have not the first dollar to meet the subsequent payment of \$800 in one and two years. Some there are in Louisville who have subscribed, having met them in my travels. Were I then to find time and permission to go down to Louisville to collect these few scattered items, I most respectfully ask permission, Bishop, to call on some others, there being but few I would ask or trouble.

"Requesting the aid of your pious prayers and Episcopal blessing for all, I remain, Right Revd. Bishop,

"Your most humble and obedient servant in J.C.  
Br. Jos. Thos. Ryan, O.S.D."

Apparently the model missionary was not much given to writing letters; and none of those that he must have received have been preserved. For this reason, we have no further correspondence about the church of Harrodsburg. However, the spirit and forthright candor of the document reproduced above combine with what we have now to note to show that Bishop Spalding certainly did not delay in granting all its proposals and petitions, and that Father Ryan hurried along with his work as rapidly as he well could. A record in his own handwriting in the Council Book of Saint Rose's, bearing the date of September 18, 1866, tells us that he closed the deal for the property in Harrodsburg in 1857, and that he purchased it in the name of the

Literary Society of Saint Rose's—evidently with the willing and ready approval of the bishop. On May 1, 1858, the Hon. Benjamin J. Webb, the noted historian, at the instigation of Bishop Spalding, brought out the first issue of *The Catholic Guardian*, Louisville. The purpose of the publication was to counteract the influence of Know-nothingism then prevalent in the state. The learned bishop himself was a frequent contributor to its columns. The paper continued its good work until July, 1862, when it was discontinued because of financial and other difficulties that arose from the Civil War. Its fourth issue, on May 29, 1858, gives a nice account of the blessing and opening of the Catholic church in Harrodsburg on Sunday, May 16, 1858. Father Ryan himself said the mass. Father Matthew Francis McGrath, his nephew and a noted orator, delivered an eloquent sermon, in which he clearly explained the credentials of Catholicity, largely for the sake of the non-Catholics among his audience.

For the sake of brevity, we refrain from giving *The Catholic Guardian's* interesting description of the occasion. Suffice it here to say that the ceremony took place eight months after Father Ryan's letter to Bishop Spalding which the reader has seen, and that it was attended by large numbers of both Catholics and non-Catholics. All displayed "the nicest decorum and the most respectful attention." Before his mass Father Ryan received a convert into the Church, Miss Anna M. Taylor, giving her the first baptism administered in the little new house of prayer. *The Catholic Guardian's* correspondent tells us of the joy and delight of the "devoted pastor" and all his flock on that memorable day for Catholicity in Harrodsburg. Indeed, it would be easier to imagine than to depict in writing the spiritual exultation of the pious missionary and the faithful under his charge over that event. We may call it the crowning work of his great labors in Mercer County. Possibly, next to his priestly ordination, it was the happiest day of his life.

Although it is a slight anticipation of a few things yet to be told, and somewhat interrupts the continuity of our story, this seems to be the best place to give a pertinent excerpt from a letter of Father Ryan to Archbishop John Baptist Purcell of Cincinnati, Ohio. On October 27, 1862, he wrote from Saint Rose's to that metropolitan to tell him of the death and will of one Daniel Cahill, a union soldier of the northern diocese, to whom he had administered in Kentucky. Then he says:

"Little did I think 14 years ago, when appointed by our Very Rev. Superior, Father Joseph Sadoc Alemany, to serve the missions in Kentucky, that I would now myself be administering and see other

Rev. Clergymen administering in Protestant meeting houses in these parts the Holy Sacraments to the faithful and to all those seeking their salvation—where at our backs might be seen rifles with bayonets, and medicines for the body. . . . Too much cannot be said in praise of the good people and families of Perryville, Harrodsburg, and Danville, in Boyle and Mercer Counties, for the constant kind attention, benevolence and Christian charity they daily extend to all the wounded, suffering and afflicted. It is truly edifying to see the charity of the one and the Christian patience of the other. I have scarcely in any one instance heard a bad word or complaint in any of the hospitals, though much pain, want and suffering prevail in all. The sight seems enough to make one weep bitterly and regret in his heart and soul to see such once happy and benevolent people dragged into such a horrid and horrible war.

“Asking your prayers and your Archiepiscopal blessing for all,  
“I remain, Archbishop,

Your most humble and obedient servant

in Domino,

Br. Jos. T. Ryan, O.S.D.”

The foregoing document gives a picture of the trials, toils, and hardships of Father Ryan and his brethren at Saint Rose's during the Civil War which one might seek in vain elsewhere. With that before the reader, we may proceed with our little history. The old *Catholic Almanac*, now succeeded by the *Catholic Directory*, which was often incorrect and behind with its information, does not mention Harrodsburg until its issue for 1861. Then it notes the place as a mission attended from Saint Rose's, but says nothing about a church there, although, as has been seen, the small house of prayer was blessed and opened for divine services on May 6, 1858, and had been in use for more than two years.

Because of the dread Civil War no *Catholic Almanac* was published for 1862 or 1863. That for 1864 gives Saint Peter's, Harrodsburg, attended from Saint Rose's once a month, which was certainly of a Sunday. The church is here called Saint Peter's, albeit, it will be recalled from Father Ryan's letter of September 10, 1857, to Bishop Spalding, that the missionary had obtained from Father James Whelan, then provincial, permission to choose whatever name he should prefer for the proposed fane, that he ardently wished to place it under the patronage of the Blessed Virgin, and that his heart was set on Saint Mary's. However, the *Catholic Almanacs* from 1864 and on show conclusively that Saint Peter's was eventually chosen. As

Father Whelan was still provincial at the time of the blessing and opening of the house of prayer in 1858, and was a close friend of its builder, one can but see that the change was made amicably. There seems to have been some outside influence in the matter. Quite possibly Bishop Spalding himself suggested it because Saint Peter of Verona, often called Saint Peter Martyr, was a Dominican; and a hint from him would be as good as a command for Father Ryan.

Be that as it may, the *Catholic Almanacs* for 1865, 1866, and 1867 all note Saint Peter's, Harrodsburg, attended from Saint Rose's once a month. That for 1868, retaining the name, shows the place attended from Lebanon once in two months. It is quite possible that Saint Peter's was turned over to the care of the clergy of the diocese in 1866, and the publisher of the *Catholic Almanac* did not get the information in time for the issue of 1867. It is at least the tradition of the province that Father William Dominic O'Carroll, who persuaded Bishop Peter Joseph Lavialle of Louisville to relieve Saint Rose's of the charge of the bordering parish of Holy Rosary, Manton, in 1866, was also responsible for the relinquishment of Saint Peter's, Harrodsburg. The mission of Danville, it seems quite certain, was given up at the same time, and for the same reason.

Father O'Carroll belonged to the Province of Ireland, where things were different. In 1865 he was sent to Saint Joseph's Province as provincial. He was not used to the missionary work of the Dominicans in the United States. Accordingly, from the start, although he knew that he was not acting in accordance with the wishes and spirit of his American brethren, he began to throw a damper on that apostolate. Later he went to Trinidad, British West Indies, where he died coadjutor bishop of the Archdiocese of the Port of Spain.

Since Harrodsburg, and also Danville, passed from under the administration of the Friars Preacher at that time, our little history is completed, as far as Saint Rose's is concerned. The writer has never had time to trace the subject further. At this juncture, he is rather too old and incapacitated to undertake to do so. Besides, there are other matters that demand all his remaining strength and attention. Suffice it then to say here that the present church in Harrodsburg is named after Saint Andrew, and that the one in Danville is placed under the patronage of Saints Peter and Paul. Just when and by whom they were erected he can not say. The Benedictines are now cultivating the spiritual field that was long tilled by the Dominicans in bygone years.

As he might be called the father of the Church in Harrodsburg; a brief outline of the life of the Rev. Joseph Thomas Ryan, O.P.,

seems appropriate for the phase of the Catholicity of Kentucky that has just been laid before the public for the first time. For the life of us, one can not understand how the Hon. Benjamin J. Webb happened to overlook the remarkable missionary in his splendid work entitled *The Centenary of Catholicity in Kentucky*. Doubtless it is to be explained by the fact that we all make slips now and then. "Optimus Homerus quandoque dormitat." Father Ryan was born in Nensh, County Tipperary, Ireland, December 21, 1819. His parents were Timothy and Judith (McGrath) Ryan. He made his religious profession as a Dominican at Saint Rose's, near Springfield, Kentucky, August 3, 1839. Archbishop Samuel Eccleston of Baltimore, Maryland, the first metropolitan of that mother see of the country to visit the then west, ordained him at Saint Joseph's, near Somerset, Ohio, June 18, 1848. Very shortly afterwards the young priest was returned to Saint Rose's, where he had entered the Order, and at once began the extraordinary apostolic career which the reader has seen.

In 1863, after fifteen years of arduous and fruitful labor in Kentucky, he was given a few months vacation in his native Ireland that he might visit his parents whom he had not seen for a quarter of a century. It was the only time he ever went outside the confines of his Province of Saint Joseph. Returning home, he continued at Saint Rose's until after the place, through an Irish Provincial, Father William Dominic O'Carroll, relinquished Harrodsburg and its other missions. About that time, as he was an eloquent and effective preacher, Father Ryan was associated with those of his brethren engaged in giving parochial missions in New York and other parts of the east. Although they shone in that ministry, he held his own with the best. But the Kentucky priory remained his home for a while longer. From sometime in 1867 to 1868 he was assigned to Saint Thomas', Zanesville, Ohio, that he might not have so far to travel for his labors. Then, for he loved the venerable mother-house of the province, where he had entered the Order, he was again domiciled at Saint Rose's. However, he was often away helping on the parochial missions. Everywhere he won friends and ardent admirers. In 1876, as his health was beginning to wane, the holy man was appointed chaplain of the Dominican Sisters of Saint Mary's of the Springs, Columbus, Ohio. There he died rather suddenly during the night of November 25, 1877, when he was preparing to go back to his alma mater, where he wished to end his days. Happily, he received the last sacraments of the church in his final moments.

It is not often that even a priest's death causes such profound

and universal sorrow as did that of Father Ryan. At the request of good Bishop Sylvester Horton Rosecrans, the first chief pastor of the diocese, the body of the beloved missionary was taken to the cathedral of Columbus, where a solemn requiem mass was celebrated for the repose of his soul. The stately edifice was filled with mourners. A classmate, Father James Vincent Edelen, P.G., delivered a touching sermon. The remains were then taken to Saint Rose's that the dead Dominican might be laid to rest in the cemetery of the house that he preferred above all others, and from which he had served God far and wide through nearly all his priestly life. There another solemn requiem was sung for him. Both Catholics and non-Catholics came from the extensive country-side in large numbers to pay their last respects to the faithful and beloved Friar Preacher. The old mother church and priory has had few such numerously attended funerals. Father John Ambrose Durkin, S.T.Lr., then a young but rarely brilliant and eloquent priest, delivered a eulogy that brought tears to all eyes.

In its issue of December 1, 1877, *The Catholic Columbian* of Columbus, Ohio, paid splendid tribute to Father Joseph T. Ryan as a true priest and apostle. On December 8, 1877, *The Freeman's Journal*, of New York, gave an account of his life and merits which was so beautiful that *The Catholic Columbian* copied it in its issue of December 15, 1877, although it had already given one of its own. The resurrected *Catholic Advocate* of Louisville, Kentucky, on December 6, 1877, apparently while waiting for another it had under preparation for itself, largely reproduced the article that appeared in *The Catholic Columbian* the previous week. Then, on December 13, 1877, *The Catholic Advocate* published its special eulogy, which is both longer and more laudatory than the others. That was only natural, for the Diocese, now Archdiocese, of Louisville was the principal field of the saintly Friar Preacher's fruitful and endless labors. In Kentucky, indeed, he practically lived in the saddle for years, hearing confessions on his long journeys wherever he could find a Catholic, not infrequently effecting conversions, and using the broad faculties of that day to say mass in private houses and on all sorts of improvised altars.

All three of the Catholic papers mentioned above lay stress on Father Ryan's zeal, humility, spirit of religious obedience, model priestly life, and thirst for the salvation of souls. They do not hesitate to say that his native land, though "the Isle of Saints," has given the United States no more exemplary, tireless, or efficient harvester in the vineyard of the Lord. One can but regret that his life has not

been written. But, because sufficient documents have not been preserved, a biography that would do him full justice would now be all but impossible. His memory will never die in Saint Joseph's Province or in central Kentucky, where he was one of that state's veritable apostles. The venerable John J. Stretch, who has been often mentioned in these pages, and who knew whereof he spoke, ever maintained that whatever there is of Catholicity in Boyle and Mercer counties and adjacent parts of Kentucky is largely due to the zealous administrations of the Dominicans from Saint Rose's, and especially of Father Joseph Thomas Ryan, in bygone years.

Victor Francis O'Daniel, O.P.

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