

THE NOVITIATES AND HOUSES OF STUDY OF SAINT JOSEPH'S PROVINCE

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IS universally known and admitted, the very heart of every province of a religious order or congregation is its novitiate and house of studies, for it is in them that its young men are formed, trained, and prepared for their future lives. Saint Joseph's Province, founded in 1805 and including the entire United States of the time, obtained and opened its first house in December, 1806—Saint Rose's, Washington County, Kentucky. The great and learned Father Samuel Thomas Wilson had already gathered a few boys or young men at Henry Boone's, a pious and exemplary pioneer who lived in the Cartwright's Creek Catholic Settlement and some two miles from the present Saint Rose's Priory, that he might begin to prepare them for entrance into the Order. When the first Saint Rose's was opened in a brick residence purchased from one John Waller, Father, later Bishop, Edward Dominic Fenwick, the leader of the little band of Friars Preacher, had Father Wilson bring his pupils there. This was not a novitiate in the strict sense of the term, but a postulancy, for the youthful candidates were not ready for the reception of the habit of the Order.

Work was at once begun and hastened on the second Saint Rose's in the immediate vicinity. Through the willing and earnest assistance of the good people of that Catholic settlement, the building rose with remarkable rapidity. Indeed, it was completed, blessed, and opened on March 19, 1807, for there was no "let-up" in its construction. How well the task was done may be judged by the fact that the greater part of the structure still stands in good condition, some of it having been torn down to help the Dominican Sisters in erecting the present Saint Catherine's Academy nearby. Fathers Wilson and William Tuite then gave themselves heart and soul to preparing the bright young aspirants for the reception of the Order's distinctive garb. Father Fenwick, still superior, devoted his energies to the temporal affairs of the place and ministerial labors in the parish or on the missions here and there.

For about two years Saint Rose's remained merely a postulancy. Meanwhile, Father Fenwick, having, at his own request, stepped

down to the ranks, Father Wilson had become the first provincial. That was in the fall of 1807. The exact date can not now be found, but sometime in the spring of 1809 there took place under the provincial's administration the first reception of the habit in Saint Joseph's Province. The first instance of the religious profession in the province was on May 13, 1810. We get this information from a letter of Father Samuel Louis Montgomery, who was one of those who then bound themselves to the service of God in the Order of Saint Dominic. The document is worth more than its weight in gold, for the history of the province, because it gives us positive knowledge of the precise date of one of its most important events.

Those who are at all acquainted with the history of the Dominicans in the United States know that four of those who made their religious professions on that memorable occasion, the first of its kind in the country, were Fathers Samuel Louis Montgomery, William Thomas Willett, the first native Kentuckian to become a priest, Stephen Hyacinth Montgomery and Richard Pius Miles. All of them did splendid work for our youthful Church. Miles became the first bishop of Nashville and "The Father of the Church in Tennessee." Still another who then bound himself to the service of God in the Order was Brother Robert Young, an elder brother of the celebrated Father Nicholas Dominic Young, who took his vows of religion at Saint Rose's the following year (1810) and became a co-apostle of Ohio. Brother Robert Young did not live to be ordained.

Thus it was in 1809 that Saint Rose's became a formal novitiate. In 1810 it also became a house of studies. That was through a papal dispensation, given because of necessity and the circumstances of the times, which permitted the simple novitiate and the house of studies to be in the same priory. As is generally known, the College of Saint Thomas of Aquin, an alma mater of Jefferson Davis, the president of the States of the Confederacy, was run in connection with Saint Rose's until 1828. It was unfortunately closed by Father Raphael Muñoz, a Spaniard who was appointed superior at Saint Rose's. His prejudiced ideas prevented him from realizing the needs of the country.

Saint Rose's remained both the simple novitiate and house of studies for the province until 1839. In December, 1834, through another papal dispensation, Father Nicholas Dominic Young, provincial at the time and nephew of Bishop Edward D. Fenwick, obtained permission to erect Saint Joseph's, Perry County, Ohio, into a priory—and also into a simple novitiate and house of studies. However, as the execution of this dispensation was delayed for sev-

eral years, it was feared that it may have lapsed. Accordingly, another appeal was made to Rome for such a dispensation. It was granted on January 18, 1839, evidently with the understanding that it could be put into operation whenever the provincial should judge it expedient.

Father Charles Pius Montgomery, the provincial, and who afterwards humbly declined his appointment as bishop of Monterey, California, obtained the above second dispensation. Apparently it was during the summer of 1841 that he opened Saint Joseph's as a simple novitiate. The next year (1842), using the same faculties, he made it what the constitutions of the Order call a "formal house of studies" with the authority of conferring the degree of Dominican Lectorate in Sacred Theology. Father Augustine Osmond Peter Walker was the first cleric to make his religious profession at Saint Joseph's, Perry County, Ohio, near which he was born. That was on October 3, 1842. Three lay brothers took their vows along with him—Brothers Paul Doyle, Simon Gough, and Dominic Crowley. It was noteworthy that Brother Paul Doyle, who had taken his vows at the same place on April 11, 1838, repeated his religious profession at this time. That, it seems certain, was because the fathers feared his first binding himself to the service of God by religious vows might have been unlawful, if not even invalid, because of the delay in putting into execution the dispensation of 1834 for making Saint Joseph's a simple novitiate.

The authorization for having a simple novitiate and house of studies in the same priory, and two of each in the same province, remained in force for forty years. During nearly all this time there were novices, both simple and professed, in each place, but the greater number of the professed was in the Ohio institution. However, we must note a break at Saint Joseph's from 1866 to 1870. In 1866 its simple novices and professed students were sent to Saint Rose's, Washington County, Kentucky, in order to provide a temporary roof for the Dominican Sisters, whose convent and academy in Somerset, Ohio, had been totally destroyed by fire. Then, from 1867 to late 1869, or early 1870, there was the premature and consequently unsuccessful attempt of Father William Dominic O'Carroll, a provincial from Ireland, to make Saint Louis Bertrand's, Louisville, Kentucky, the province's house of studies. This was closed almost at once by Father James Francis Dunn who became provincial in the fall of 1860. However, a few young men near ordination were left there to complete their studies; and a few others were sent there later in order to help with the choral duties while finishing their the-

ology—as the authority to use Saint Louis Bertrand's as a house of studies had not been recalled by the Master General of the Order.

Because of the small number of fathers in the province at that period and their frequent absence for apostolic work, the above-mentioned division of both students and simple novices between Saint Rose's and Saint Joseph's was really necessary in order to carry out properly the choral duties required in the priories of the Order. In 1879, as the number of brethren had sufficiently increased, the papal dispensations of which we have told were withdrawn. Saint Joseph's was then made the province's only house of studies and Saint Rose's its only simple novitiate. As a consequence, two novices who had received the habit at Saint Joseph's were sent to Saint Rose's to complete their year of probation. There they made their religious professions on August 16, 1880. They were Fathers Edward Alphonsus Ashfield and John Clement Gilroy.

As has been told, Saint Joseph's was made a formal house of studies in 1842. Although the authority to confer the degree of the Dominican Lectorate in Sacred Theology was very seldom used because of the great pressure of apostolic work and the few fathers, only those scantily acquainted with the history of the province would be tempted to imagine that the course of studies was not up to par. As a matter of fact it was excellent. There was none better in the country. Indeed some of the greatest men the province has had were products of it. They were among the outstanding scholars and apostles, in our American Church.

From 1879, Saint Rose's, Washington County, Kentucky, continued to be the province's simple novitiate and Saint Joseph's, Perry County, Ohio, its house of studies until 1905. During the summer of this latter year (1905), the Priory of the Immaculate Conception, Washington, D. C., was opened and made the province's house of studies, and Saint Joseph's its simple novitiate. What may be called the mother-house in Kentucky, Saint Rose's, then became a home for aging and invalid fathers and a center of missionary activity. The same year (1905) Aquinas College was initiated in Columbus, Ohio, and to it was soon attached a preparatory school for aspirants to the Order.

Saint Rose's and Saint Joseph's in open and beautiful country localities, were and are still ideal locations for a novitiate, simple or professed. They were the best and most promising places that could be obtained at the time they came into the possession of the Order. The first was recommended to the founders of the province by Archbishop John Carroll of Baltimore, Maryland, then the only Catholic

prelate in the United States; the latter by Bishop Benedict Joseph Flaget of Bardstown, Kentucky, the first Catholic ordinary west of the Alleghany Mountains. At that period the whole country was predominantly agricultural. Beyond the Alleghanies it was almost completely given to husbandry. Cities were rather eschewed for education institutions. Saint Rose's was long the largest parish or congregation in Kentucky. Saint Joseph's held the same honor in Ohio. Thus they were both proffers for which the best judgment would urge a ready acceptance.

However, with the rise and development of towns and cities, the two places were gradually left in the backwoods of Kentucky and Ohio. That, quite naturally, stood in the way of growth and progress, for young men were loath and slow to leave their municipal homes for such retired refuges. Because of this the fathers, in the course of time, turned their thoughts towards obtaining a house of studies in some populous center—preferably in the more thickly settled east. But poverty and the ties that bound them to the good people they had long served stood in the way of a realization of their wish. Some, too, had become enamoured with their old homes and rural life. In this way, it was not until 1905 that they could open the House of Studies in Washington, D. C., and Aquinas College in Columbus, Ohio. An increase in the number of members and vocations was greatly accelerated by these two new institutions. As a consequence, in 1917 Saint Rose's was made a subsidiary for the House of Studies in Washington, D. C., and the first-year philosophers were placed there.

In 1919 Providence College, Providence, Rhode Island, began and soon had its attached school for aspirants to the Order. In 1925 Saint Thomas', River Forest, Illinois, was opened as a house of Studies auxiliary to that in the National Capital. At the same time (1925) Saint Rose's, Washington County, Kentucky, was again made the province's simple novitiate. Saint Joseph's, Perry County, Ohio, with only a few fathers living there, was held in abeyance, so to express it, for a necessity which all felt could not be far distant. This emergency was hastened by the opening of Fenwick High School, Oak Park, Illinois, with its preparatory adjunct for aspirants to the Order in 1929. Indeed, this same year (1929) Saint Joseph's began to be used for the first-year theologians. As Saint Rose's had done twenty-four years before, it now came back to its former glory.

Thus things went along for ten years, with the exception that at times, and as circumstances suggested, we find theologians as well

as philosophers at Saint Thomas', River Forest, Illinois. As places of study Saint Joseph's and the studium in River Forest were subsidiary to the House of Studies, Washington, D. C., which, according to the constitutions of the Order, was *par excellence* the province's house of studies. At the close of the scholastic years of 1933-1934 the preparatory school for aspirants to the Order attached to Aquinas College, Columbus, Ohio, was closed. That was because the one run in connection with Providence College, Providence, Rhode Island, was deemed sufficient for the needs of the province. Besides, it was all but impossible to find suitable and convenient accommodations for such students in Columbus.

This situation as regards students, whether of the Order or preparing for it, continued until the end of 1939. Then occurred an event for which many had longed and prayed for years—the division of Saint Joseph's Province, which they felt was too extensive to receive the proper care from one head. They believed that another province in the watershed of the Mississippi River would be decidedly for the greater good of the Church and the Order in the United States. The question had been seriously discussed for some time—even the way prepared for such an action. Accordingly, late in 1939 the Master General, Father Martin Stanislaus Gillet, severed the western portion of the parent province and established that of Saint Albert the Great. Saint Thomas', River Forest, Illinois, was made the House of Studies of Saint Albert's Province. Fenwick High School, Oak Park, Illinois, also went to the new jurisdiction.

Saint Rose's, Washington County, Kentucky, remained in the old province, and was continued as its simple novitiate. Saint Joseph's, Perry County, Ohio, also remained in it, and was set aside as a studium for its philosophers. The House of Studies, Washington, D. C., was reserved for the courses in theology, although it might at times be necessary to domicile a class of philosophy in it. As is generally known, from the start many of the students of this latter institution have gone to the Catholic University, just across the street, for special subjects. This happy custom, of course, will not be discontinued. It means too much for the province, especially for its colleges and the teachers it has in other educational institutions not under the jurisdiction of the Order. In November, 1941, on the feast of Saint Albert The Great, the present Holy Father, Pius XII, erected the House of Studies, Washington, D. C., into a Pontifical Theological Institute.

The period of tertianship, so called because they were members of the Third Order, which was required for lay brothers until the

promulgation of the new code of canon law (1918), could be passed in any priory. But their simple novitiate, in which they were prepared for the First Order, had to be made in a house specifically designated for that purpose. To have more than one such place required a dispensation, just as in the case of clerical novices. This, as has been seen, had been obtained for Saint Rose's and Saint Joseph's; and both continued to be used as simple novitiates for lay brothers until 1879. There seems to have been a third simple novitiate for them at Saint Dominic's, Sinsinawa, Wisconsin, from about 1850 to 1863 or 1864. From 1879 to 1905 Saint Rose's was the province's only simple novitiate for lay brothers.

At that time (1905) Saint Joseph's took the place of Saint Rose's for that important purpose. But about 1915 the House of Studies, Washington, D. C., became a second simple novitiate for lay brothers. In 1925 Saint Joseph's was dropped as a simple novitiate for the brothers, and the House of Studies, River Forest, Illinois, was substituted for it. In 1926 or 1927 the River Forest house became the sole simple novitiate for them, and held that honor until the establishment of the Province of Saint Albert The Great, late in 1939. Then venerable old Saint Rose's, Washington County, Kentucky, became and still remains the province's only simple novitiate for lay brothers as well as for clerics. While the lay brothers of the province have always been too few in numbers, they are, and have ever been, as good as the best in any part of the world. Visitors from abroad, as well as other foreigners spending a while in the province, have not failed to notice this fact, and even to comment upon it. Nor should one in this connection forget the old saying: "If the lay brothers are exemplary religious, it may be taken for granted that those in the priesthood are verily worthy clergymen."

It is not too much to say that everyone is greatly rejoiced that the parent stems of the province, Saint Rose's, near Springfield, Washington County, Kentucky, and St. Joseph's, near Somerset, Perry County, Ohio, have not only been preserved in active use, but have also retained their pristine glory and fruition. As is but natural, everyone regards them as sanctuaries hallowed and sanctified by their contact with the founders of the province, by the part they played in its spirit and upbuilding, and by the apostolic men who have gone forth from them to sow the seeds of the Gospel, to increase the glory of God, and to garner souls for heaven. Everyone considers the two places precious gems in the crown of Saint Joseph's Province that should be loved and treasured. "Believe it or not," to borrow a caption presently popular with some of our newspapers,

quite a few who have made or completed their curriculum at the House of Studies in the National Capital sincerely regretted that they could not have their entire course at one or the other of these quiet rural institutions. With the good roads and means of travel and transportation of today, they are no longer considered remote places as they were some years ago. Indeed, they are almost as accessible as the cities.

Perhaps our readers are not generally aware that those two priories have been the homes, at one time or another, of three archbishops and four bishops. The former were Archbishop Joseph Sadoc Alemany, the first chief pastor and metropolitan of San Francisco, California; Archbishop Langdon Thomas Grace who, after resigning the See of Saint Paul, Minnesota, was appointed titular archbishop of Siunia, Armenia; and the present Archbishop McNicholas of Cincinnati, Ohio. The bishops were the Most Rev. Edward Dominic Fenwick, the first to occupy the See of Cincinnati, Ohio; the Most Rev. Richard Pius Miles, "The Father of the Church in Tennessee," and the first to wear the episcopal miter of Nashville; the Most Rev. John Thomas Hynes who, after extraordinary missionary work in British Guiana, South America, was consecrated titular bishop of Leros and coadjutor of Zante and Cephalonia, all in the Ionian islands off the western coast of Greece—and who, after the English refused to let him take up his duties in those parts, returned to British Guiana and resumed his apostolic labors there as administrator apostolic; the Most Rev. James Whelan, the brilliant and scholarly second bishop of Nashville, Tennessee; and the Most Rev. William Dominic O'Carroll, titular bishop of Alabanda, Asia Minor, and coadjutor of Archbishop Joachim Louis Gonin, O.P., the metropolitan of the Port of Spain, Trinidad, the British West Indies.

As has been seen, Father Charles Pius Montgomery avoided the miter of Monterey, California, only through his deep humility. There were several others who were proposed and seriously considered for the episcopal dignity. But it is not necessary to give their names here. However, it may be well to state, in conclusion, that erudite Father Richard Luke Concanen, who was consecrated (in Rome) the first Bishop of New York and died while trying to reach his See, took such an active part and interest in the beginnings of the province and Saint Rose's that he deserves to be placed among their founders. In his will he left Saint Rose's his fine library and a sum of money which aided greatly in the completion of the College of Saint Thomas of Aquin.