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Origins of Black Catholic Parishes in the Archdiocese of New Orleans, 1718-1920.

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ORIGINS OF BLACK CATHOLIC PARISHES
IN THE ARCHDIOCESE OF NEW ORLEANS, 1718-1920

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

in

The Department of History

by

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B.A., Louisiana State University, 1987
M.A., University of New Orleans, 1990
December 1998

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ABSTRACT

During the early eighteenth century, Capuchin missionaries as well as Ursuline nuns built and maintained churches and schools for all people in south Louisiana, no matter their race or social status. Under French and Spanish colonial rule, black Catholics supported all efforts toward interracial worship. After 1803, the diocese's inclusive practices continued. By 1861 proselytization of large numbers of free people of color and slaves resulted in Catholic congregations with roughly equal numbers of blacks and whites. When parishes were officially created in 1861, they had an integrated membership.

Interracial parishes survived the traumas of the Civil War and persisted until 1920 because the Catholic Church ministered to all races while other denominations excluded blacks. The use of the French language united congregations at a time when the use of English prevailed in society. The rough balance between blacks and whites also prevented racial supremacy. But the system had problems. Irish and German Catholics built exclusive "national" parishes and did not participate in the archdiocese's interracial "territorial" parishes. All parishes maintained segregated schools. In addition, national church authorities tried to link the availability of money to the creation of racially segregated parishes.

In 1895, an archbishop built the diocese's first exclusively black church. After 1900, as the interracial congregations divided along racial lines, dark-skinned Sicilians replaced the former free people of color as the "inbetween" group in Louisiana's

racial system. Blacks and whites struggled for resources to fund schools, and the common bond provided by the French language disappeared as almost all church services were conducted in English. The racial balance within congregations also changed as African Americans migrated out of Louisiana. By 1915, black Catholics had been forced out of parish churches and schools for blacks were closed. Only in these desperate years, faced with white supremacy and loss of their religion, did black Catholics support exclusive black parishes and, in particular, parochial schools. By 1920, resistance to separate racial parishes ended.

INTRODUCTION

The organization of the Roman Catholic Church into dioceses and parishes has evolved as a social structure within the Church. From 30 C.E., the activities of the people and clergy shaped the formation of the Church, as its hierarchy struggled to define the "living entity" called the parish. The term "parochia," used by the earliest Christians, denoted a fixed territory, usually in cities, ruled by a bishop whose people lived near the church or place where the ecclesiastical ruler held services. The usage of the word "parochia" changed as the church spread over a wider territory, in particular, to Greece, where the word "diocese," rather than "parochia," designated the territory regulated by a bishop. By the middle of the third century, the bishop of the city of Alexandria in Egypt had deputized priests to say Mass and administer the sacraments. These rural locations ruled by priests became known as "parochia" as well. The hierarchy felt the growing church needed uniformity and a way to distinguish between the territories ruled by bishops and those directed by priests. In the fourth century, church officials confirmed that the priests who worked in the rural chapels were subordinates of the bishops and their domain a subdivision of the bishop's realm. From the end of the sixth century and the reign of Pope Gregory I, the seat of a bishop in an urban center was referred to as a "diocese" while the "parish" designated a rural district with certain defined limits in which a specially appointed priest took care of the religious needs of the faithful living within the territory. In 787, at the Seventh Ecumenical Council of Nicaea, church officials

formally recognized parishes and their pastors as a structure within the church but did not clarify the relationship between the "parish" and "diocese." During late Antiquity and the early Middle Ages, the church developed more rapidly in rural rather than in urban areas, and parishes rather than dioceses became more numerous and larger throughout Europe.¹

By the early Middle Ages, the rural priests became powerful and influential. They and the people created parishes. In the eleventh century a movement by rural pastors urged the division of all cities into parishes. Except for the ancient city of Rome, bishops, who had formal power over the cities, resisted the division of urban centers. The struggle to introduce parishes into cities, therefore, lasted for centuries. During the sixteenth century, the bishops triumphed over the priests, however. In 1563, the Council of Trent prescribed as a universal law that bishops divide all cities into parishes and appoint pastors to manage the subdivisions. In the seventeenth century, the last urban centers to hold out were several large cities in Italy, but they too eventually adopted the parochial system. The Council also enforced the bishops' control of the diocese, which included both the urban and rural parishes. The tradition that the diocese was a bishop's parish stopped. Rather the diocese became

¹Jim Castelli and Joseph Gremillon, The Emerging Parish: The Notre Dame Study of Catholic Life Since Vatican II (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1987), p. 1; John J. Harbrecht, The Lay Apostolate: A Social Ethical Study of Parish Charity Organization for Large City Parishes (St. Louis, Missouri and London: B. Herder Book Co., 1929), pp. 10-20; Philip M. Hannan, "The Development of the Form of the Modern Parish," ed. C. J. Nuesse and Thomas Harte, The Sociology of the Parish: An Introductory Symposium (Milwaukee: The Bruce Publishing Company, 1951), pp. 18-20.

the territory governed by a bishop as well as a "curia," consisting of vicar general, chancellor, promoter of justice, and other officials. The diocese had to be divided into parishes and deaneries. In Europe, the bishop's responsibility for creating all parishes, however, had removed the parishioners and pastors from the process. In the rest of the world, particularly in North America, the Sacred Consistorial Congregation, with the Pope as its prefect, created dioceses. In 1622, Pope Gregory XV established the Sacred Congregation de Propaganda Fide with powers (patronado real) equal to those of the Sacred Consistorial Congregation but with jurisdiction over missionary countries and districts. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, while bishops established parishes throughout Europe, colonists and missionaries, appointed by the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith in Rome, established missions in the English, Spanish, and French colonies of America. Because the United States officially remained mission territory until 1908 and therefore under the Propagation of the Faith rather than under the general disciplinary law of the Church, under canon law the parishes in the United States were in effect "quasi-parishes" between 1700 and 1908.²

In the mid-nineteenth century, the bishops establishment of dioceses in the United States proceeded smoothly, but in the effort to establish parishes. Archbishop John Hughes of New York observed that the Catholic Church in the United States was

²Fergus MacDonald, "The Development of Parishes in the United States," ed. Nuesse and Harte, The Sociology of the Parish, p. 46; Joseph H. Fichter, Dynamics of a City Church (Chicago, Illinois: The University of Chicago Press, 1951), pp. 11-12.

unique because the people came before the church. Indeed, in contrast to Europe where Catholic institutions had existed for centuries, Catholics in the United States had to build churches and quasi-parishes from the ground up. Joseph Fichter, a Harvard educated Jesuit priest and sociologist, pioneered the study of parishes as social institutions in the United States. Fichter divided the establishment of parishes in America into two phases: the first, occurring between 1800 and 1920, emanated from the will of the people, and the second, during the remainder of the twentieth century, centered on the will of the bishops. In the first phase, much of the influence came from Europe, as Irish, German, Italian, Polish, and other immigrants arrived in American cities where they usually recreated the parish with a national identity. In the nineteenth century, the immigrants' national parishes served several important functions having been thrust into an alien, English-speaking, often Protestant environment, immigrants used the familiar parish structure as a haven. The established parishes assimilated European immigrants and their children into American society and culture. Urban parishes also served to assimilate Americans into urban life during the nineteenth century as the Industrial Revolution transformed a rural nation into an urban one. To do so, the Catholic people and their pastors built grand churches and meeting halls. They established and ran parochial schools to educate children in the family's religion and to help them adjust to being Catholic in a non-Catholic country.

In the early twentieth century, with the passage of the 1918 Code of Canon Law, which included strict guidelines defining parishes, the evolution of the parish

system entered its second phase as Catholic authorities formalized the experience accumulated over two thousand years. The Pope retained the power of granting parish rights and required all parishes to have the same rights and privileges. Despite the formalization of the parish in church law, the individual parishes remained what Fichter called "human institutions" because the parochial system developed centuries after Jesus's time and could not lay claim of origin in Christ the way that the papacy and episcopacy did. Rather, parishes were man-made institutions developed for practical purposes of administration.³

The 1918 Code of Canon Law required that four criteria be met before the Vatican gave a canonical decree to a parish: (a) an appointed pastor, (b) a church or rectory, (c) certain territorial limits, and (d) a designated group of persons. The new code of Canon Law also made it an absolute law that all dioceses have both their rural and urban territories be uniform. Across the United States, the bishops, pastors, and lay Catholics had to transform their traditional "quasi-parishes" into formal Vatican-approved parishes. Although the process of creating canonical parishes involved little more than the filing of documents to prove the petitioners' compliance with the rules, lay people had been removed from the process.⁴

³Gremillion and Castelli, The Emerging Parish, pp. 9-29; Fichter, Dynamics of a City Church, pp. 11-12; Bernard J. Meiring, Educational Aspects of the Legislation of the Councils of Baltimore, 1829-1884 (New York: Arno Press, 1978), pp. 215-227.

⁴Joseph Fichter, Social Relations in the Urban Parish (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1954), p. 9; quote in Harbrecht, The Lay Apostolate, p. 20.

In 1918, the segregation of black and white Catholics into racial parishes conformed to the Jim Crow that legislated race relations in the South. Officials recognized the color line between parishes. In south Louisiana, black and white members of the archdiocese of New Orleans lamented the Church's recognition of segregated parishes. The parishes had only recently emerged, after two hundred years of a different tradition, when Catholics in south Louisiana had capitulated to the white supremacy that increasingly defined secular society. The segregated parishes soon became fixed. Most observers concurred with an international Church historian's conclusion that the parochial system legalized in 1918 seemed to be "the last stage in the evolution of the local organization of Catholicism, and it is likely that no new form will evolve out of the changed conditions of modern times. For the church seems convinced at present that fifteen centuries of experience have fully shown that the parish organization has successfully met every condition, crisis, and problem when the processes, institutions, and relations held in custody by the Universal Church, have been applied to the individual unit." After 1920, because the conception of parishes reached their ultimate development, generations of Catholics would belong to a universal church with black and white branches.

The ecclesiastical parishes in south Louisiana (a term necessary to distinguish them from the civil parishes that in every other state were called counties) did not appear "spontaneously" after sufficient numbers of Catholics settled in a given location. In other words, a congregation of Catholics as a body of people in Louisiana never constituted a parish. Rather the Catholic Church's parishes developed

gradually in south Louisiana. Of the three major human elements constituting a parish--hierarchy, clergy, and congregation--the first to appear was the clergy. In the absence of the parish structure, the unifying force of Catholicism in the new territory had been the universal church, the ideal that any and all people were allowed membership in the church. When parishes were created, the interracial tradition was to be preserved.

In the early eighteenth century, the French Capuchins and colonists built Catholic churches in south Louisiana and individual missionaries established rudimentary boundaries of their area of responsibility. The missionaries established congregations centered on their churches. Only in the early 1790s did the Vatican appoint a bishop, stationed in Havana, to oversee Louisiana and to replace the missionaries as the ecclesiastical authority. Because Louisiana's territory was vast but its urban center of New Orleans too small for a traditional European-style diocese, the first permanent bishop did not actually arrive in Louisiana until the first decades of the nineteenth century. By no means comparable in size to other seats of dioceses, New Orleans was just one of the quasi-parishes in southern Louisiana, except that it had the status of being the location of the Cathedral and office of the bishop as head of the diocese. During the period from the 1830s to the 1850s, however, the influx of European immigrants and American migrants into New Orleans made the city one of the largest in the United States with a population that made it more distinctive than the other "quasi-parishes" in the bishop's territory.

In 1862, attempting to consolidate the urban and rural parishes of the archdiocese, Archbishop Jean Marie Odin asserted his authority and placed geographical boundaries around New Orleans' churches and congregations. Urban clergy questioned these new jurisdictions, and lay people disliked being told to which parish they had to belong. English and German speakers resisted having to be members of their new territorial parishes if their neighborhood parish operated in a language different from their own. Odin acquiesced and created parishes with language boundaries as well as geographical boundaries. Odin's limited success in consolidating the parishes under a uniform system of geographical boundaries left the issue of parish membership unresolved.

In the late nineteenth century, use of the English language steadily supplanted the use of French among Louisiana natives in all the parishes, but did so more quickly in urban than in rural parishes. In the late 1880s, with a local tradition of establishing parishes by language and culture rather than by territory, a request from lay Catholics prompted the archbishop to work toward creating racial parishes. His actions were revolutionary. Pastors and black Catholics resisted the imposition of racial parishes because doing so violated the congregations' practice of the universal ideal. In 1895, however, Francis Janssens added a parish with racial jurisdiction to the archdiocese's unique milieu of quasi-parishes.⁵

⁵The first territorial limits appeared to prevent mass being performed in private residences within a five mile radius of the church. See Roger Baudier, St. Peter's Church of New Iberia: A Historical Sketch of the Church Parish of New Iberia, 1836-1953 (New Orleans: Archdiocese of New Orleans, 1953), p. 21; Bette B. Bornside, ed., Sesquicentennial of Sts. Peter and Paul Parish, 1848-1998 (New Orleans:

Previous scholarly works about the establishment of parishes in the Archdiocese of New Orleans have focused on the efforts of the hierarchy and religious orders. Despite the importance of lay Catholics in the creation and operation of quasi-parishes before the successful implementation of Canon Law in 1918, most works present the hierarchy's perspective rather than that of the diocesan parish priests and congregations. Biographies of individual bishops, such as Anne Marie Castile's Francis Janssens, 1843-1897: A Dutch-American Prelate, (Lafayette: The Center for Louisiana Studies, University of Southwestern Louisiana, 1992) present the archdiocese's views on the creation of parishes. Other scholars have explored the influence of the various ethnic groups that made up Louisiana's Catholic Church. The French-speakers have received the least attention, even though until the early twentieth century, the majority of the hierarchy, clergy, and congregants in Louisiana spoke French. The study of the Irish and how their brand of Catholicism in a French archdiocese influenced parish development has received treatment from both the diocesan and Irish immigrant perspectives. The Germans, too, have been studied from the point of view of the bishops as well as the immigrants. More work can be done on the Italians' perspective. Religious orders of priests and nuns who sent members to serve in Louisiana have mentioned their service in histories of the orders. All these studies, as well as general studies of the archdiocese of New Orleans, give little attention, however, to the role of African American Catholics in establishing the Catholic Church in Louisiana, despite the fact that most were French-speaking and

Committee of Sts. Peter and Paul, 1998), p. 10.

belonged in significant numbers to every territorial parish. African Americans constituted a majority of many parishes and never less than one quarter the total number of Catholics in the archdiocese.⁶

Black Catholicism, of course, has not been totally neglected by historians. In 1971, Dolores Egger Labbé presented the struggle to create black "Jim Crow" parishes in Jim Crow Comes to Church: The Establishment of Segregated Catholic Parishes in South Louisiana, but like the other accounts it told the story from the perspective of church authorities. Labbé explained why the Church hierarchy considered imposing racial parishes and how the local hierarchy worked to implement its ideas. Under the assumption that both the national hierarchy and Louisiana Catholics wanted segregated parishes, similar to the segregated Protestant churches of the South, she found that the Catholic Church took longer to accept racial segregation than the other denominations in the region because of race pride, white benign neglect, as well as a shortage of priests and money. She concluded that ultimately the Catholic Church achieved the results that "pleased" both races. Yet the French, German, and Italian Catholics who predominated in Louisiana viewed matters of race and segregation differently than did their predominately Irish national

⁶Annemarie Kasteel, Francis Janssens, 1843-1897: A Dutch-American Prelate (Lafayette, Louisiana: The Center for Louisiana Studies, University of Southwestern Louisiana, 1992); Glenn R. Conrad, ed, Cross, Crozier, and Crucible: A Volume Celebrating the Bicentennial of a Catholic Diocese in Louisiana (Lafayette, Louisiana: The Roman Catholic Church of the Archdiocese of New Orleans, 1993). During the 1930s and 1950s, Roger Baudier, the official historian of the archdiocese and editor of the diocesan newspaper, published nearly 300 monographs on the history of the Catholic Church in Louisiana, including his articles. Most have been reviewed by the author, but some were not available for use.

hierarchy and English speaking Catholics and perhaps even than the Protestant denominations as well. Between 1866 and 1906, the native French archbishops, clergy and French-speaking laity actively resisted national attempts to impose racial parishes. More adamantly than their bishops, African Americans resisted the segregation of congregations by race until too poor and too few to prevent being removed from the territorial parishes. Even with the enticement of parochial schools and Catholic higher education, some black members continued to worship in their original territorial parishes.⁷

In an 1996 article on the first all-black parish in New Orleans, "Segregated Catholicism: The Origins of St. Katherine's Parish, New Orleans," Douglas Slawson balanced Labbé's hierarchical perspective with the American, but not southern, point of view of the Vincentian priests who built it. He showed that English-speaking Vincentian priests, natives of Ireland or America, had a greater role than first determined. In both Labbé's and Slawson's studies, the motivations of a few of the Catholic clergy were explored. They emphasized the role of bishops and male religious orders at work in a period when the will of the people prevailed in parish development.⁸

⁷Dolores Egger Labbé, Jim Crow Comes to Church: The Establishment of Segregated Catholic Parishes in Southern Louisiana (Lafayette, Louisiana: University of Southwestern Louisiana, 1971).

⁸Douglas J. Slawson, "Segregated Catholicism: The Origins of Saint Katherine's Parish, New Orleans." Vincentian Heritage XVII [Fall, 1996]: 141-184.

Rather than coming from the hierarchy, the push for segregation came from multi-ethnic and multi-language congregations and French, along with a few Dutch, German, and Irish, diocesan clergy struggling over assimilation of their religion, language, class, and ethnicity into American society. The Catholic laity, when mentioned at all, have been presented in earlier works as monolithic white and black groups that either supported their ministers or resisted them out of ignorance. Yet Catholics were divided by language, ethnicity, and culture. Even when one language prevailed and race, rather than ethnicity, became the chief division within the diocese, black Catholics still were divided over segregation. This study seeks to give a fuller portrait of the role of the parish clergy and their members, but especially of black Catholics in the process of establishing segregation at the parish level. The hierarchy's rhetoric, statements, and actions were very important in determining the origin of all parishes. But resistance to the American hierarchy's demands occurred throughout the period from 1866 to 1906. The New Orleans hierarchy reacted to problems faced by pastors and parishioners as often as they implemented directives from the Vatican or bishop's decisions reached at Plenary Councils.

Published announcements and articles by the archbishops of New Orleans contained the official explanations on the activities of the archdiocese. Yet a review of all territorial, "national" language, and racial parish correspondence, for the period 1718-1920, yielded letters, petitions, postcards from both priests and lay persons to the archbishop on all matters of church life and even included the archbishop's responses, which were less rhetorical than official explanations. A log and record of

all the parishes' statistics in annual reports in the archdiocese of New Orleans produced data on population figures, economic status, and racial make-up of the congregations. The role of black Catholics was pieced together through this material and that of the Josephites, a religious order devoted exclusively to work among African Americans. Founded in Mill Hill, England in 1866, the Josephites arrived in Louisiana in 1897 and meticulously recorded their work there. Correspondence from the hierarchy to the Josephites was plentiful. The Blessed Sacrament and Holy Family Sisters also kept correspondence from their communities on the work done on behalf of African Americans. A record of black Catholic opinion can be found in all these sources as well as the Charles Rousseve and A.P. Tureaud collections at the Amistad Research Center in New Orleans. Newspapers and journals, both religious and secular, provided facts on events and a chronology.

These records make clear that black Catholics contributed to the creation of nearly every parish, but least of all to the all-black parishes, in the archdiocese of New Orleans. From the establishment of the Catholic church in Louisiana, missionaries admitted black Catholics as members of congregations. Because of the universal ideal, there was no black Catholicism or white Catholicism, but Catholicism. From 1718, Catholics in the archdiocese viewed their churches as places of worship open to all races--yet paradoxically, throughout the history of the Catholic Church in south Louisiana, Catholic education was divided by race. When European immigrants arrived, they built churches for the exclusive use of their own countrymen, but the original churches of Louisiana remained inclusive. The ascendancy of bishops

anxious to follow church law and create parishes did not eliminate the inclusive churches, but enclosed them in boundaries that resulted in a greater sense of interracialism. In the 1870s, the parishes built more segregated schools for all the congregation's children. By the late 1880s, however, clergy sensed the stirring of white congregants who, with language divisions disappearing as English gained the ascendancy, saw themselves as "white" and American. They began to question the value of interracial worship and multi-racial ownership of churches and schools. Black Catholics learned that as the "national" language church congregations assimilated into American society, they, too, preferred to remain exclusive and racially segregated. The universal ideal was threatened. At the same time, traditional bonds of unity between blacks and whites, such as language and mutual property ownership, decayed. By 1917, racial parishes were growing in number. After 1918, following the will of all but a few people, bishops accepted Canon Law and made the existing parishes, black and white, legal under church rules.

CHAPTER 1

ESTABLISHING THE UNIVERSAL CHURCH IN THE COLONIAL ERA

From the establishment of the Roman Catholic Church in Louisiana until the arrival of American officials after the United States' takeover of Louisiana, black and white Catholics shared all church facilities. Brought to America by the Company of the Indies, members of the clergy, the creators and administrators of these facilities, ministered to Catholics no matter their color. Soon after the arrival of missionaries, the King of France extended the Code Noir to Louisiana which required that slaves be converted to the Catholic religion but did not dictate to church officials and slaveholders that special provisions be made for slaves. Throughout the French colonial period, missionaries administered the sacraments and provided education to both black and white people in inclusive facilities. Lay Catholics, too, brought black slaves and free persons of color into the church. The practice of interracialism in the churches, therefore, fostered the Catholic universal ideal--the doctrine of the Church as an institution in which all people are equal before God--in south Louisiana. The practice of the universal ideal by French missionaries and colonists persisted under Spanish rule. The Spanish missionaries continued to baptize imported African slaves and to accept free people of color as nearly equal to European colonists and officials. After a century of offering the sacraments without discrimination and inclusive privileges within the Catholic Church in south Louisiana, black members provided at least half of the membership of the Diocese of New Orleans. The white clergy

together with the multi-national, multi-racial Louisiana congregations relied on their black members' assistance and support to maintain the Catholic faith in south Louisiana. By 1803, the diocese of New Orleans had nurtured a long period of unique interracial development.

* * *

Catholics and Catholic missionaries arrived in south Louisiana with the earliest discoverer, but the foothold achieved by the Church in 1699 was tenuous, at best. The Catholic church was established through the efforts of the King of France and the Company of the Indies. Enmeshed with political interests of European monarchies, the organization of the Roman Catholic Church took nearly a century in south Louisiana and occurred under the auspices of secular authority. During the colonial period, the religious orders provided all of the clergy sent to minister the Roman religion in Louisiana. Although the parishes were not fully in place until they were officially created in south Louisiana in 1861, their basic components--clergy, hierarchy, and congregations--appeared after 1718. Throughout the French and Spanish colonial periods, the clergy survived with support from national governments despite frequently tense relations with these governments.

The Church initially relied on the efforts of a few priests or brothers, operating independently, to spread the faith, but by 1700 the Company of the Indies, charterholders to the Louisiana territory, sought better means to meet the religious needs of the colonists and the requirements of the King of France for religious stability in the colony. Obligated by its charter to build chapels and to provide priests

in its settlements, the company sought the most efficient means to fulfill its legal commitment. The first attempt to serve colonists by sending company missionaries to Louisiana and assigning them to the various plantations as chaplains did not work. The first two chaplains, a Franciscan and a secular priest, were to minister to Catholics on the immense plantations, or concessions (areas ruled by the Company of the Indies as granted by the King), established along the Mississippi river, but instead they sought conversions among the Native American population. Although anxious to convert the natives, the Company felt a greater responsibility for its colonists and blamed the missionaries for failure to minister to the settlers, the job expected of them. Rather than continue to spend the time and expense to recruit individual priests and brothers for service in Louisiana, the Company decided it could achieve greater reliability and save money by obtaining organized groups of priests and abandoning the recruitment of individual clergy. The Company of the Indies, therefore, asked several missionary orders to provide priests to serve the colonists and natives of Louisiana.¹

With the promise of assistance from three major missionary orders, the company in 1722 oversaw the division of the colony into three ecclesiastical districts. The company planned for the French branches of the Capuchins, the Carmelites, and the Jesuits each to have jurisdiction over one of the three districts. Within a year, the

¹Roger Baudier, The Eighth National Eucharistic Congress (Marrero, Louisiana: Hope Haven Press, 1941), p. 10; Charles Edwards O'Neill, Church and State in French Colonial Louisiana (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1966), pp. 13-101.

Capuchins and Jesuits arrived to take possession of their respective territories. Already in Mobile attempting to attract Native Americans into political alliances with France, the Carmelites had received an order of recall that prevented their taking on the new assignment. The Carmelites' district quickly became consolidated with that of the Capuchins. With two-thirds of the total territory, the Capuchins failed in the first year to furnish sufficient personnel to satisfy the Company. In response, the Company reduced the size of their district and extended the area overseen by the Jesuits. This second reapportionment was not final; the Company made a further abridgement of the Capuchin territory in February of 1726 since the Capuchins did not have enough ordained men available to send to Louisiana. Moreover, the Company felt that the Capuchins appeared far less fitted than the Jesuits for the missions among the Native Americans--a ministry the Company did not want to neglect. As a result, yet another reorganization placed the Capuchins in all the French posts, while the Jesuits were charged with the spiritual care of the Native Americans. From 1725 through 1763, the Capuchin district included all churches and missions in the areas along the Mississippi River up to and encompassing the confluence of the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers, inclusive of all tributaries of this waterway below the Ohio River, and over all the other waterways that flowed to the sea. The Jesuit area included the Illinois settlements and the territory along the Missouri River. With their

territory clearly demarcated, the Company of the Indies then turned over all religious responsibilities to the religious orders.²

The Company's effort to retain the services of missionary orders proved successful for the Church. Motivated more by religious beliefs, particularly the universal ideal, than secular incentives to establish a lucrative plantation economy, the religious orders became the new colony's clergy--the first permanent element of the Catholic church in south Louisiana. The religious orders ministered to everyone regardless of national origin, social status or skin color and established churches and schools for the well-being of colonists and slaves. The structures they built provided a physical legacy of their religious labors and composed a basic element of parishes and the Catholic Church's future in Louisiana.

The subtle shift in their primary function from French political agents to church missionaries suited the religious orders. Established in 1529, the Order of Friars Minor, as the Capuchins were officially called, nurtured an austere life devoted to missionary works and preaching. The Capuchins were readily distinguishable by their brown, hooded cloaks fastened by a crude rope, worn in combination with a large crucifix. The Jesuits, founded as the Society of Jesus in 1534 by Ignatius Loyola, undertook a commitment to perform missionary and educational work. In the seventeenth century, both orders traveled to the Americas to convert the African

²Mary Ethel Booker Siefken, ed., A Century of Pioneering: A History of The Ursuline Nuns in New Orleans (1727-1827) (New Orleans: Ursuline Sisters of New Orleans, 1993), pp. 25-26; Roger Baudier, The Catholic Church in Louisiana (New Orleans: Roger Baudier, 1939), p. 66.

slaves in Haiti. From the early 1700s, however, the Jesuits gradually supplanted the Capuchins in the West Indies. In the late 1720s, with a reduction of their commitment in the West Indies, the Capuchins shifted a few more missionaries to their new territory across the Gulf of Mexico in Louisiana. In North America, the Capuchins anticipated preaching to Africans as well as Europeans. Although the Jesuits and Capuchins performed missionary duties before pastoral work, both orders remained in Louisiana long after pastoral duties supplanted their missionary responsibilities.³

The Capuchins, members of the Franciscan order, commanded religious affairs in south Louisiana. The original Capuchins assigned to Louisiana were all natives of France. Upon arrival in the new territory, Father Bruno de Langres, Father Christophe de Chaumont, Father Philibert de Viauden, and Brother Esuebe de Chaumont established New Orleans as their settlement. New Orleans, therefore, became the center from which the Capuchin missionaries planted French Catholicism in Louisiana. In general, eighteenth-century French Catholicism, often called Gallicanism, was characterized by its view of the limited role of the pope and his authority. It was a theology that stressed that the final authority in church affairs lay not with popes but with the councils of the church. As a consequence, Gallicanism was characterized by self-government instead of Vatican-sponsored government. In

³Donald Attwater, ed., A Catholic Dictionary: The Catholic Encyclopedic Dictionary, 2d. edition, (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1956), pp. 74, 266-267; George Breathett, ed., The Catholic Church in Haiti, 1704-1785: Selected Letters, Memoirs, and Documents (Salisbury, North Carolina: Documentary Productions, 1982), pp. 1-25.

Louisiana the Capuchins recognized the Crown's control over the church, which scholars have called royal Gallicanism.⁴

After 1722, the Capuchins ministered to an ever changing ethnic and racial population within their jurisdiction, as new settlers came to Louisiana from countries other than France. By May 1721, after over-speculation and economic ruin led to the collapse of the financier John Law and his venture, emigrants signed up by Law had transferred their obligations to the Company of the Indies. Among them were almost nine hundred German and Swiss colonists, not all of whom were Roman Catholic. In addition, the number of slaves imported from Africa had increased annually, and among them, obviously, were no Roman Catholics. The new arrivals therefore changed the proportion of Catholics to non-Catholics within the colony. By 1723, estimates on the size of the civilian population of the Louisiana colony varied from 1,500 to 5,400 people of European origin. In addition, France stationed 800 soldiers of various nationalities in Louisiana. Between 1722 and 1724, the Louisiana slave population more than doubled from an estimated 700 to 1,540; all slaves arrived directly from Africa, particularly from Dahomey. By the mid-1720s, nevertheless, Roman Catholics still constituted nearly 80 percent of people in the Louisiana colony.⁵

⁴Baudier, Church in Louisiana, p. 69; Jay P. Dolan, The American Catholic Experience: A History from Colonial Times to the Present (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, 1985), p. 34.

⁵O'Neill, Church and State, p. 281. Slave population figures are found in Thomas Marc Fiehrer, "The African Presence in Colonial Louisiana: An Essay on the Continuity of Caribbean Culture" in Louisiana Black Heritage, Robert R. McDonald,

Although still small, the growing number of non-Catholics in the colonies worried the King of France. Rather than rely on the zeal of the Company to maintain Catholicism, the King in 1724 issued a royal order to all French colonies. the Code Noir. to insure that all residents belonged to the Roman Catholic Church. First promulgated in 1695 in the West Indies, the Code was a series of prescriptions concerning slave discipline and a set of rules addressing the religion of the colonists. The Code required that all residents of a French colony belong to the Roman Catholic Church, the religion of the King. Another provision, which influenced the role of Africans in the Church, required that all slaves be baptized. In addition, the Code offered protection for slaves. It forbade the separation of a married slave couple from their children who were under fourteen years of age and prohibited slaves from laboring on Sundays and other Catholic holy days. The French royal court created the Code Noir to prevent the Jesuit's loss of control of the slave population in Haiti--according to the Jesuits--to tavern keepers, undesirable women, and Jews. In response to the Jesuits' complaints, Louis XIV expelled all Jews from Haiti and suppressed the religious practices of Huguenots and other French Protestants. In 1724, the King initiated the imposition of the Code Noir in Louisiana, where he wanted his subjects, even if far away in Louisiana, to be assured of his interest and protection. In turn, he expected total loyalty from them. The two groups covered by the Code Noir were considered the most likely to be disloyal: Europeans of a different religion and slaves

John R. Kemp, Edward F. Haas, eds. (New Orleans: Louisiana State Museum, 1979), p. 12.

who had no ethnic or historical ties to the King of France. The King did not want the former in his colony; the latter he would bind to himself by a common faith. The Louisiana colony had few Protestants and no Jews, hence most of the articles relating to Europeans did not apply there.⁶

On the other hand, the Capuchins in Louisiana found the Code's provisions regarding African slaves pertinent. The Catholic Church did not oppose slavery as a social system and the Capuchins entered into the system as slaveholders and missionaries. The Catholic clergy accepted the system of slavery with the justification that it was not sinful. They believed African slavery was a consequence of the original sin borne by unbaptized Africans. Catholic missionaries embraced slavery as implemented by the Company of the Indies. Both the Capuchins and the Jesuits owned slaves and derived benefits from being slaveholders because Africans' labor on company-provided plantations provided the resources and freedom for the missionaries to build facilities and pursue their ministry. In their role as missionaries of the Catholic faith, the Capuchins viewed the Code Noir as an important humanitarian development. Since it required slave baptism and sanctioned the Catholic principles that proclaimed the equality before God of all members of the human race, the

⁶O'Neill, Church and State, pp. 269-270; Breathett, The Catholic Church in Haiti, p. 5.

missionaries in Louisiana endorsed the Code Noir. Black Catholics eventually pointed out the contradiction between this principle and the missionaries' slaveholding.⁷

The Capuchins had baptized slaves prior to the promulgation of the Code Noir, but its slave provisions enhanced their responsibilities and activities among the slaves. The prospect of baptizing all slaves, as more and more Africans arrived, stretched the capabilities of the few Capuchins working in Louisiana. The placement of facilities throughout the territory, regularly visited rather than permanently staffed, alleviated the shortage of priests somewhat, but the overworked priests performed only the most basic religious duties at the outposts. Another problem originated from theological dilemmas posed by the secular Code Noir. The Code Noir contained certain provisions that violated church law. For example, general Church law directed that two baptized parties, not canonically impeded, had a right to the sacrament of marriage, even if they were slaves; Louisiana's secular authority prohibited the clergy from performing marriage ceremonies for slaves. In the cases where the Capuchins felt they should perform a slave marriage ceremony, they faced a quandary, caught between their roles as missionaries and Company contractors. In practice, faced with recognizing the right of a baptized slave to receive the sacrament of marriage and the government's refusal to grant the slave the privilege of marrying another person, slave

⁷Breathett also discussed the flaws in the Church's position; see The Catholic Church in Haiti, p. 5. The theological roots of the French Catholic view of slavery is touched upon in Elizabeth Shown Mills and Gary B. Mills, "Missionaries Compromised: Early Evangelization of Slaves and Free People of Color in Northern Louisiana" in Cross, Crozier and Crucible, Glenn R. Conrad, ed. (Lafayette: Archdiocese of New Orleans, 1993), p. 31.

or free, the Gallicanist Capuchins compromised on the status of slaves in the Catholic church. They upheld the section of the Code's sixth article that forbade marriage between slaves and freepeople and seldom performed marriage between two slaves. They ignored the section that forbade master-slave concubinage, although concubinage was not a state of grace in the Catholic Church.

Another recurring problem in treating slaves equally in the church was the recalcitrance of slaveholders. The clergy experienced great difficulty getting slaveholders to cooperate with the second article of the Code Noir that obliged all slaveholders to baptize slaves in the Catholic faith and to have them instructed in religion "at the proper time." Because so many slaveholders did not allow the Capuchins to minister among their slaves, the order's superior, Father Raphael de Luxembourg, complained in 1725 that vast distances and, particularly, slaveholders' negligence and ill will meant that "three fourths of the slaves received no religious instruction." During the French colonial period, the Capuchins' unequal treatment of slaves contributed to a racially mixed society with variant degrees of church rights.⁸

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⁸Code Noir (1724) in Benjamin J. French, Historical Collections of Louisiana, 5 volumes (New York, 1851), 3:89-95. Slave marriages were not recorded by the Capuchins. Father Raphael quoted in O'Neill, Church and State, p. 270. Later, Bishop Dubourg (1815-1826) expressed concern over the validity of slave marriages. His problem had been that the American civil law, rather than the Code Noir, forbade the marriage of slaves without the consent of the owners. Dubourg found slaveholders unwilling to give consent. Hence, valid marriage became impossible. Under the Council of Trent, unmarried slaves were constrained to celibacy or concubinage. See Cyprian Davis, The History of Black Catholics (New York: Crossroad Publishing, 1993), p. 42.

Despite the problems secular authorities presented to the missionary orders, Company officials and slaveholders appeared satisfied that the religious orders in Louisiana upheld the Code Noir and contractual obligations and therefore they left the religious orders to their work. The Capuchins built churches to pursue religious goals of ministering the sacraments. After the Council of Trent, the main objective of a church was to glorify God through the liturgy and to work for the salvation of all people. Guided in their practices of interracialism by the Catechism of the Council of Trent, Catholic missionaries in Louisiana followed the provisions that specified the relationship between the churches and members:

for the unity of the Spirit, by which the church is governed, brings it about that whatsoever has been given to the church is held as a common possession by all her members. The fruit of all the sacraments is common to all the faithful, and the Sacraments, particularly baptism, the door, as it were, by which we are admitted into the church, are so many sacred bonds which bind and unite them to Christ.

Open to everyone, anywhere in the world, Catholic church-buildings were facilities set apart, eternally, from other buildings for public worship. In them priests offered up the Holy Sacrifice of Mass, the sang of the Divine Office, and administered of the sacraments. In layout, the church needed a single altar that had to be oriented on the east end of the sanctuary, based on the east/west axis. Churches were required to have a partition, usually a railing or steps, between the accomodations for worshippers

and the sanctuary for the altar and ministers. Catholic churches were also required to contain a baptismal font and a confessional.⁹

To serve an extensive territory such as Louisiana with limited staff, the religious orders created a network of churches--the second permanent element of the Catholic church in Louisiana and a component of ecclesiastical parishes. Established in 1718, St. Louis Church, in New Orleans, was the principal Catholic church in the Mississippi Valley. There resided the Vicar-General of the Bishop of Quebec, the religious official charged with spiritual jurisdiction over the whole colony as well as administrative control over Church offices. The Capuchins operated their Louisiana ministry from St. Louis Church as well. Most Catholics, however, were spread out hundreds of miles from New Orleans and so were too distant from St. Louis Church to fulfill their religious obligations there, particularly that of attending mass on the sabbath. Practices such as baptizing infants (called *ondoyees* by the colonists) in homes and using residences as makeshift chapels concerned the missionaries and the Bishop in Quebec. The Capuchins determined to build permanent chapels nearer to the concentrations of people stretched along Bayou Lafourche, Bayou Teche and the other waterways in Louisiana that they could reach from the Mississippi River. Of the first six chapels erected by the Capuchins in Louisiana, only three were located in the territory that became the archdiocese of New Orleans (and all thrive to the present day): St. Louis Church in New Orleans; St. Charles Borromeo (Red Church)

⁹Staale Sinding-Larsen, Iconography and Ritual: A Study of Analytical Perspectives, (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget As, 1985), pp. 15-29, 88-132; Gaspar Lefebvre, The Spirit of Worship, (New York: Hawthorne Books, 1959), pp. 11-24, 88-100.

in Des Allemands, Louisiana; and Pointe Coupee Church in Pointe Coupee, Louisiana. The other chapels were built in Natchez, Mississippi; Mobile, Alabama; and Mexico.¹⁰

The outpost locations allowed the Capuchins to administer the sacraments efficiently and to enforce the Code Noir capably. The French Capuchins opened each and every church they established in their territory to all races and classes who settled in Louisiana. For example, the Catholics among the German emigrés who arrived after John Law's failed settlement in Des Allemands worshipped with the French-speakers in St. Charles Church. Plantation owners attended the same facilities as small farmers and bondspeople. The Capuchin rectors of the newly constructed churches did not allow separate institutions for black slaves and free people, but rather incorporated all black Louisianans into the structures of the Church. They administered the sacraments of baptism, communion, confession and burial to blacks in the same facilities as they did whites. The secular support of the Code Noir proved crucial to the Capuchins' efforts to form racially and socially inclusive membership because it gave the church authorities the freedom to practice its universal ideal of human equality. But the Capuchins acted also out of Catholicism's doctrinal commitment to the spiritual needs of all people. Exceptions were made only for the

¹⁰The first St. Louis church was a storehouse, but the Capuchins quickly converted the facility to a proper church before building a new structure by 1721. James Augustin, Sketch of the Catholic Church in Louisiana on the Occasion of the Centenary of the Erection of the See of New Orleans, (New Orleans: By the author, 1893), p.50; Baudier, Congress, pp. 10-11; Claude C. Vogel, The Capuchins In French Louisiana (1722-1766) (New York: AMS Press, 1974; reprint of author's thesis, Catholic University of America, 1928), pp. 25-100.

sacrament of marriage. Enslaved blacks could not be married in the churches, although free people of color could. On August 14, 1725, for example, Father Raphael performed the wedding sacrament between Marie Gaspar, a free woman of color and the daughter of a drummer in Bienville's army, and Jean Baptiste Raphael, a free man of color from Martinique. The rights and privileges granted by the Capuchins to the free people of color, thereby, differentiated them from enslaved black members within the church.¹¹

The sacramental books, where the Capuchins recorded Marie Gaspar's and Jean Baptiste's marriage sacrament along with those of whites, formed another elemental part or component of every Catholic church. Throughout the French colonial period, the performance of the sacraments were recorded in a single book regardless of race or social status. Some, but not all, slaveholders allowed their slaves to receive the sacraments. Capuchin friars baptized "negritte" and "negrillon" (French terms for male and female black children) slave infants while their white slaveholding godparents bore witness to the sacred rites. In a baptismal ceremony in the late 1720s at St. Louis Church in New Orleans, some of the city's most prominent

¹¹French Fr. Philibert de Viauden ministered to the Germans at St. Charles Borromeo, Raymond N. Calvert, "The German Catholic Churches of New Orleans, 1836-1898," (Master's thesis, Graduate School of Notre Dame Seminary, 1986), p.6. That the missionaries were natives of France rather than England helps explain their inclusiveness and assimilationist tendencies. For the impact of the French on Louisiana's unique race relations, see Jerah Johnson, "Colonial New Orleans: A Fragment of Eighteenth-Century French Ethos," in Creole New Orleans: Race and Americanization, eds. Arnold R. Hirsch and Joseph Logsdon (Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State University Press, 1992), p. 41; Roulhac Toledano and Mary Louise Christovich, ed., New Orleans Architecture vol. VI Faubourg Tremé and the Bayou Road (Gretna: Pelican Publishing, 1980), p. 90; Vogel, Capuchins, pp. 42-67.

leaders, including Bienville and De La Chaise, appeared as sponsors for their adult slaves. The Capuchins in Louisiana even followed universal missionary custom and recorded a detailed description of the parents of illegitimate children born to mixed racial liaisons, contrary to the rules of secular officials. In Louisiana, however, the name of the father appeared only with his consent. Slaves were recorded by their name as well as the name of their masters, but not by their parents. The participation of all Catholics, recorded by the missionaries in the sacramental books, indicated the major role lay Catholics had in proselytizing black Louisianians to the Catholic faith. Louisianians paid for the sacraments of slaves and actively served as sponsors. Sponsorship, which was voluntary, was an overlooked element of interracialism during the period when the Code Noir controlled race relations.¹²

Around the churches, the Capuchins formed multiracial congregations from among the white settlers, soldiers, Native Americans, free people of color, and the slaves who composed Louisiana's society. In the early 1720s, New Orleans alone had a population of 514 black slaves, which was nearly as large as the white population of 448 men and 140 women. The scarcity of white women led the predominately male population of French soldiers and adventurers to establish extramarital liaisons with slave women. By the summer of 1726, the concerned rector of the Capuchins in Louisiana, Father Raphael, wrote to the ecclesiastical director of the Company of

¹²Breathett, Church in Haiti, p. 14; Sacramental records, Father Bruns Abstracts Book III, New Orleans Archdiocesan Archives, New Orleans, Louisiana (AANO); Roger Baudier, A Historical Sketch of the St. Louis Cathedral of New Orleans, The First Ursuline Convent, and the Mortuary Chapel (New Orleans: Archdiocese of New Orleans, 1943), pp. 5-10.

the Indies in Paris. Abbe' Gilles Bernard Raguet, that the Code Noir needed to be stressed in the churches to protect slave women from "immoral purposes." Doing so in sermons did little to stop the immorality, and Capuchins accepted the resulting offspring into the church unhindered by clear regulations. By the middle of the eighteenth century, interracial liaisons were commonplace and parish registers filled with terms such as "mulato", "quarteron," and "griffo" that indicated the church's tolerance of interracial sexual relationships within the city. Such relationships and their offspring did not challenge the practice of the universal ideal in the churches. The "in-between" social status of children from mixed racial parentage resulted from the legal condition that one parent was held in bondage while the other was free rather than from concerns over skin color. Moreover, the Church's recognition of the interracial offspring produced among them a loyal group of Louisiana Catholics.¹³

From the beginning, slaveholders and government officials exercised the greatest influence in the colony and involved themselves in ecclesiastical affairs. Not all hindered the work of missionaries. Although during the French slave regime, interracial worship was a requirement for black Catholics, white members freely participated in the practice of the universal ideal. Civil officials also influenced the religious lives of black Catholics. In New Orleans, for example, the Capuchins auctioned St. Louis Church's pews to the highest bidders, who turned out to be

¹³Caryn Cossé Bell, Revolution, Romanticism, and the Afro-Creole Protest Tradition in Louisiana (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1997), pp. 11-15; Vogel, Capuchins, p. 106; Daniel H. Usner, Jr., Indians, Settlers, & Slaves in a Frontier Exchange Economy: The Lower Mississippi Valley Before 1783 (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1992), pp. 50, 235.

French military officers and officials of the Company of the Indies. As church pewholders, they had a voice in who attended services and where they would be seated. The pewholders permitted black attendance. Indeed, most black baptisms were recorded with military officers or French officials as sponsors or godparents, a unique way pewholders welcomed black people into the universal church. Although open to everyone throughout the colonial period, the small number of and size of churches made it impossible for all the baptized Catholics in southern Louisiana to be seated during church services. According to reports, on a feast day such as Easter overflowing crowds lacked available seating. So many members would attend Easter services that many rectors rented pews just for this single service--a practice that infuriated regular pew holders who were charged twice for their pews. Seating was in such demand because all Catholic Louisianians attended. Despite harsh conditions in a colonial plantation society, and if only for paschal (Easter) duties, all Catholics in Louisiana practiced the universal ideal at least twice a year, Holy Thursday and Easter Sunday.¹⁴

Throughout the colonial period, racially integrated worship in Louisiana's churches fulfilled adherence to the Catholic teaching that mass, rituals, devotions, and spiritual exercises brought believers together "physically in the church and spiritually in the sacraments." By allowing slaves into the liturgical service with whites and free people of color, the Capuchins and the congregations had united white and black.

¹⁴Baudier, St. Louis Cathedral, pp. 7-8; Roger Baudier, St. Peter's Church of New Iberia: A Historical Sketch of the Church Parish of New Iberia, 1836-1953 (New Orleans: Archdiocese of New Orleans, 1953), p. 18.

slave and free, in a time and place and together with worshippers everywhere in the Catholic universe. The Capuchins brought large numbers of slaves to the Catholic churches to celebrate mass and to receive the sacraments. Black baptisms annually exceeded those of whites. From 1731 to 1733, the Capuchins registered 425 slave baptisms. For accommodation of large numbers of people and convenience, the St. Louis Church developed the practice of holding the baptism of black slaves on Holy Saturday and on the Vigil of the Pentecost.¹⁵

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The Code Noir prohibited other religions in the colony from proselytizing among the African slaves. Slaves, therefore, had no choice in the matter of being baptized. Although the Capuchins considered any and all baptized persons as Catholics, they appealed to the African slave differently than they did white Europeans and even native free people of color. In contacts with Africans, the missionaries presented Catholicism in its most primitive form. Pere le Pers, a veteran missionary who reported regularly to superiors at the Company of Indies, recorded his methods: "when they arrive in my quarter I have them make the sign of the cross as I demonstrate, in order to take possession of them in the name of Jesus Christ and His Church. They do not understand what they are doing, but through an interpreter I repeat the words of Saint Peter, 'You will know in time'." A somewhat more

¹⁵Randall M. Miller, "A Church in Cultural Captivity: Some Speculations on Catholic Identity in the Old South," in Catholics in the Old South, Randall M. Miller and Jon Wakelyn, eds. (Macon, Georgia: Mercer University Press, 1982), p. 31; Jerah Johnson, "A Fragment of the Eighteenth-Century French Ethos," p. 41.

reflective contemporary observed that "the missionary is not always scientific about instruction, that is to say, theologians may disagree with his methods." But in any case, the African had little choice in the matter. After capture and the horrific ocean journey, the African captives saw a white missionary crossing himself and uttering foreign scriptures. The missionaries assured themselves that at the least slaves would die with their soul saved.¹⁶

Once slaves were baptized, however, whether they would practice Catholicism rested with their owner. The missionary could do little to educate or minister to slaves beyond baptism unless the slaveholders allowed slaves to attend mass. Overwork, language differences, and prejudice also interfered with religious instruction. The strength of a slave's faith was out of the missionaries' hands. Slaves either adopted the Catholic faith, adapted it, or rejected it totally. From the church's perspective, the ideal black Catholic had adopted the Europeans' languages and demeanor. Missionaries discovered that their most successful converts had been instructed in the faith and could speak French well. Evidence that some slaves adopted French, attended services, and practiced Catholicism exists in the survival of "cantiques," folk songs that modern descendants of French black Catholics sang as late as the 1930s. The songs were in neither Creole (signature of black Catholics from Haiti) nor English. Andre' Prevos, a cultural anthropologist, has argued that

¹⁶George S. Tyack, The Cross in Ritual, Architecture and Art, (London: William Andrews and Co., 1900), pp. 34-66; Breathett, Church in Haiti, p. 10; Gwendolyn Midlo Hall, "The Formation of Afro-Creole Culture" in Creole New Orleans, pp. 67-68.

black "cantiques" and black spirituals exhibited African and Afro-American characteristics and revealed African influence on the universal churches. Few early slaves, however, adopted the French language or Catholic religion to the extent that they were completely Europeanized.¹⁷

Many slaves mixed the European Catholic rituals of the missionaries with their native African practices. Scholars have discovered the influence of the Catholic faith among the many mixtures of religions and innovative practices found in the Louisiana culture that resulted from the collision of European and African people. Voodoo and hoodoo emerged as a popular legacy. The African influence dominated, but still absorbed elements of Catholicism.¹⁸

Still other African slaves retained their original religious orientation after baptism. In Louisiana their practices originated from the "ouanga" or medicine of Dahomey. This medicine was based on a knowledge of the effects of plant drugs and vegetable dyes on the psyche, a knowledge far more advanced in tropical Africa than in the apothecaries of Europe at the time. Whites often resorted to violence to repress these practices and rituals, in part out of fear of African sorcery and its deadly effects--unexplained poisonings and accidents--and of belief in the supernatural being used by those in bondage to undermine authority. Though most of these supernatural rituals

¹⁷André Prévos, "Afro-French Spirituals About Mary Magdalene," Louisiana Folklore Miscellany IV (1976-1980): 41-53.

¹⁸See Gwendolyn Midlo Hall, Africans in Colonial Louisiana: The Development of Afro-Creole Culture in the Eighteenth Century (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1992).

were practiced out of sight of the authorities, the criminal proceedings of colonial Louisiana revealed a large number of cases where the Africans practiced their medicine on Europeans. Europeans also worried about other practices of the Africans who rejected Catholic religious beliefs. Unconventional splitting into dancing groups and the playing of exotic music evoked slaveholders' concerns that slaves who segregated themselves from the community could be conspiring against the established order. Interracialism had social as well as religious impacts; it served to reinforce white control.¹⁹

The Africans were never powerless; slaves influenced the development of the Catholic church. Because all Africans arriving in Louisiana were baptized, churches became centers of acculturation. Scholars have discovered that the European culture carried within the Catholic religion became a permanent feature of the black community in Louisiana, even though slaves were infrequent churchgoers. Missionaries discovered that the Africans readily related to the symbolism of the Catholic church's sacraments (rites of passage), clerical attire (formal vesture), and litany of saints (African icons). The Catholic liturgy appealed to captive Africans, scholars have argued, because of a mentality similar to that of early European pagans. On the other hand, the traditional African animism appealed to the colonial Europeans. A contemporary link between the two groups was the popular belief in both Africa and southern Europe in witchcraft or occult powers. In Africa, as in

¹⁹Thomas Marc Fiehrer, "African Presence," p. 28; Laura L. Porteous, "The Gris-Gris Case: A Criminal Trial in Louisiana During the Spanish Regime, 1773," Louisiana Historical Quarterly 17 (January, 1934): 48-63.

France and Spain during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, witchcraft flourished in society to such an extent that, although never officially recognized, the authorities tolerated it.²⁰

Black Catholics derived restricted benefit from membership in the universal church. Without the freedom of movement allowed white colonists, however, black Catholics more commonly became attached to particular churches. They often remained their entire lives as members of the church where they received their baptism. The Catholic church became a haven for many free people of color and even slaves because their lack of wealth or social status had no bearing on church attendance. If they could not afford to rent a pew, they could still attend services. The Capuchins did not have to rely on blacks for financial support because the French government funded the churches. Under the "la fabrique" system, a government official handled the church's finances, not the missionaries. Throughout the colonial period, because secular officials limited the movement of slaves and free people of color, they were becoming the most stable members of the Louisiana churches. The universal church was becoming a part of their identity.²¹

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²⁰Fiehrer, "African Presence," p. 28; Thomas Fiehrer, "St. Domingue/Haiti: Louisiana's Caribbean Connection," Louisiana History 30 (Fall, 1989): 420-421; Elizabeth Rees, Christian Symbols, Ancient Roots, (London and Philadelphia: Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 1992), pp. 11-87.

²¹For a description of French "la fabrique" and Spanish and "fabrica," see Roger Baudier, St. Gabriel of Iberville, 1773-1953 (New Orleans: Archdiocese of New Orleans, 1953), p. 20.

Throughout the New World in the early eighteenth century, the religious needs of slaves concerned the missionary orders. In Louisiana, as in the Catholic missions of Haiti, the missionary orders felt their efforts were insufficient and sought religious women for the work because more workers, particularly teachers, were needed. Nuns were interested as well. The Jesuits and Capuchins could not agree on an order, however. More precisely, the Jesuits were anti-Gallicanists who supported the Governor Jean Baptiste Le Moyne Bienville while the Capuchins were Gallicanists who supported Jacques de la Chaise in the fight for control of Louisiana's resources. The Jesuits prepared the Ursulines for service in the colony but waited for the results of the political battle to be determined while the Capuchins did not pursue an order. In 1727, the appointment of a neutral governor removed the factionalism and allowed the already-prepared Ursuline nuns to be cleared for service in New Orleans. The Capuchins resented the Jesuit intrusion into their territory of nuns who would not even allow the friars into their house. Nevertheless, both the Company and Jesuits looked to the Ursulines to undertake work in Louisiana.²²

In 1535, when the Company of St. Ursula (or Ursulines) had first formed in Italy, its founder Angela Merici and her companions chose as their vocation the education of young girls. In the early seventeenth century, the original twenty-seven member congregation grew to one hundred fifty members, and its schools expanded out of Italy into all of Europe. In France, the Ursulines built six convents. With its

²²Hilton L. Rivet, History of the Immaculate Conception Church (Jesuit Church), in New Orleans, (New Orleans: By the Author, 1978), pp. 3-5.

territorial expansion and growth, the Ursulines changed their name from Company of St. Ursula to the Order of St. Ursula. In 1632, the order arrived in Quebec. While in Canada, the Ursulines adopted the care of the sick as another of their vocations. It was their dual ministry of educating girls and nursing that had attracted the interest of Jesuits and the Company of the Indies.²³

In September, 1726, the Company of the Indies negotiated with the French Ursuline Sisters to provide nuns to serve as nurses in the Louisiana colony. In return, the Company agreed to pay the Ursulines in land and slaves rather than through an annual subsidy or salary, an arrangement similar to that made with the male orders. The nuns could use the proceeds from the produce of the land and labor of the slaves to support their ministry. The first band, six nuns, arrived in New Orleans in August of 1727. Although contracted to the hospital to care for the sick, the nuns found the hospital was quite a distance across town from their assigned residence. Because of their rule of cloister, they could not travel to the hospital. Undeterred at being unable to fulfill their legal contract and encouraged by the Jesuits, the Ursulines put all their efforts into education. In a letter to Abbe Gilles Raguet, Mother Augustine Tranchepain, superior of the first nuns in the colony, reported shortly after her arrival, "we have at last the happiness of having a large number of boarders and day pupils with whose education the parents appear satisfied, and they hope it will produce in a few years great benefits for the colony where religion is little known and still less practiced." Colonists were excited about having the Ursulines educate their children.

²³Siefken, Century, pp. 1-22; Attwater, Catholic Dictionary, p. 508.

But the Capuchins grew suspicious of Jesuit motives in recruiting the nuns for New Orleans. To further complicate matters among the clergy, the Ursulines wanted a Jesuit priest as their spiritual director. After this snub, the Capuchins left the Ursulines to develop their own ministry.²⁴

The Ursulines operated their school on a segregated basis. The nuns taught black and Native American girls apart from European girls. Workers constructed a small house adjacent to their residence to provide quarters for the boarders and classrooms for the day students. On November 17, 1727, the first boarders arrived. Day classes began a few days later. Boarders and day students were predominately French, children of plantation owners from across the region. The classes for African-American and Native American girls were held every afternoon from one to two-thirty or later. Sister Stanislaus, one of the original six Ursulines reported that the school had eight boarders and a large number of day pupils, including a large number of black or native girls who appeared daily for instruction.²⁵

The Ursulines' first residence proved ineffective for their needs, particularly after dozens of girls arrived as orphans following the November 1729 massacre of colonists by Native Americans at the Natchez Post. In 1734, the sisters moved to their first convent, a permanent building that the French government built for them. In it, they continued to teach girls of all races on a segregated basis. In the 1730s,

²⁴Quoted in Joan Marie Aycock, "The Ursuline School in New Orleans, 1727-1771" in Cross Crozier and Crucible, p. 210.

²⁵Seifken, Century, p. 60; Aycock, "Ursuline School," p. 210.

one of the nuns reported to her parents that there were two hundred pupils. Later research placed the number at 169 white girls and 74 "negresses."²⁶

Although a small beginning, the Ursulines' school started a long tradition of separate education but also a tradition of Catholic religious providing education that came to be an important part of the story in the development of black Catholic parishes in south Louisiana. Boys and young men did not receive any education in the colony apart from instruction provided by priests in a small school, probably in segregated classes.²⁷

Even though both the missionaries' schools and the missionary churches were sponsored by the Catholic Church, no single official had the authority to oversee them all. During the colonial period, the schools developed in isolation from the churches. The Catholic Church's contact with the majority of Louisiana Catholics was through the churches, where the membership was nearly fifty percent black.

After the first half century of interracial churches, the cessation of the African slave trade in Louisiana meant fewer blacks were baptized and the proportion of white baptisms increased in the registers. Black baptisms continued to predominate because a greater number of free people of color were recorded. Apart from baptisms, attempts to cultivate the Catholic faith among enslaved black Catholics left the missionaries frustrated. The Capuchins, in their role as church missionaries, had

²⁶Siefken, Century, pp. 72, 335.

²⁷Alfred E. Lemmon, "Te Deum Laudamus: Music in St. Louis Cathedral from 1725 to 1844," in Cross Crozier Crucible, p. 490.

attempted to achieve the goal of bringing every possible adherent into the Catholic fold without losing any converts. But converts proved difficult to keep because of inadequate staff and too few schools. In addition, Catholic evangelization of Native Americans and slaves declined late in the French period. Since the 1720s, the Jesuit Fathers had operated out of a headquarters located on a large piece of property purchased from Bienville situated upriver from New Orleans (which would become known as the American sector in nineteenth century). There they developed a model plantation, the revenues of which enabled them to help maintain missionaries among the Native American tribes. However, in 1763 the Louisiana Superior Council, following the example of the Parliament in France, suppressed the Jesuits in Louisiana and confiscated their property, including their slaves. The Capuchins, with half a dozen missionaries, were left to minister to the settlers in the Jesuits former territory as well as their own.²⁸

Soon after the removal of the Jesuits, French rule in Louisiana ended. Church authorities had achieved some success in planting Catholicism in Louisiana and giving it an identity and structure separate from the King of France. During French control, the Catholic clergy and churches had been firmly established across the Louisiana territory. The universal ideal survived even in the face of the challenge of accommodating the German-speaking settlers in Des Allemands, Louisiana. By 1763, as more German colonists arrived in St. Charles Borromeo (Red Church) located near the German settlement, the Capuchins continued to minister in one inclusive church

²⁸Baudier, Congress, p. 11.

to African slaves, German farmers, and French slaveholders. Throughout Louisiana, the Code Noir remained in effect. The Ursulines continued to keep their school open to all girls. Because of the success of the missionaries in ministering to all without regard to language, class or color, in creating churches, and in nurturing multi-racial congregations, the Catholic church in Louisiana had brought thousands of Africans into its congregations.

* * *

In 1763, France ceded the Louisiana colony to Spain, although formal transfer did not take place until 1766. Upon cession, most of the French Capuchins withdrew, and in 1772 six Spanish Capuchins took their place. The Ursulines also recruited Spanish sisters for service in Louisiana, yet many of the French nuns remained. The change in civil power posed little challenge to the clergy and churches. Indeed, compared to the French, the Spanish developed a closer relationship with the remaining and new Capuchins and Ursulines and their superiors in Europe, which effectively increased the church's influence on society. Throughout their tenure, Spanish missionaries performed sacraments and mass for integrated congregations in French, Spanish, and English. Unlike France, Spain possessed a special papal right: the Pope allowed the Spanish crown the real patronato, a privilege granting the Spanish King power to rule in ecclesiastical affairs. In 1795, the Spanish made colonial Louisiana a diocese and appointed a bishop, thus establishing a hierarchy, the third element of the Catholic Church in south Louisiana.²⁹

²⁹Baudier, St. Gabriel, p. 8.

Spanish officials continued to implement the Code Noir, but the Siete Partidas (the law of seven parts, compiled by the court of Alfonso the Wise in the thirteenth century). Spain's encoded law, extended the social rights of free people of color in Spanish Louisiana. The French Capuchins had always baptized persons of racially mixed parentage but never recognized the right of marriage between whites and people of mixed racial parentage. An example of the change in status of free people of color under Spanish rule was the wedding that took place between Jean Paillet and Catherine Villeray. Under French control, Paillet, a white man, had been unable to marry Villeray because her mother had been a mulatto. Soon after the Spanish takeover, however, on November 16, 1769, the Frenchman, a native of Martigue, signed the contract to marry Catherine, natural daughter of Charlotte, a free mulatress, and the late Sieur Roy Villeray, a white man. Paillet and Villeray had clearly benefitted by the change in government. The more lenient Spanish policy on race relations, however, did not extend to marriages between slaves and free people of color. Although in some ways more liberal than the French, because a white and black could marry, the Spanish rules widened the gap between the rights available to free people of color who could enter into an interracial marriage and their enslaved black brethren who could seldom marry in the church or marry free people of color or whites.³⁰

Spanish rule brought changes not only for individual members such as Paillet and Villeray but to the congregations as well. The Capuchins continued to baptize

³⁰Toledano, Architecture, p. 90; Kimberly S. Hanger, Bounded Lives, Bounded Places: Free Black Society in Colonial New Orleans, 1769-1803 (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1997), p. 24.

slaves even as their manpower was stretched further after the loss of Jesuit missionaries and the arrival of more white settlers. In the mid-1760s, after Acadians descended from Nova Scotia into the Attakapa territory of southwest Louisiana (an area nearest Point Coupee and St. Gabriel Churches and present day Lafayette) and the area farther east around Donaldsonville, the Capuchins had more people to minister to. They built two new interracial churches for the new arrivals and natives (Creoles)--Ascension of Our Lord in 1772 near Donaldsonville, and Church of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary in 1793 near Plattenville. The established churches did not expand under the new circumstances of a multiplying Catholic population. During 1780, over 410 people, mostly children, received baptism in the St. Louis Church. Of this number, approximately 300 were slaves or free persons of color; the rest were white children. In 1790, the Capuchins baptized 585 persons. The majority, 450, were slaves or free persons of color. Ten years later, in 1800, 52 percent of the people baptized in the St. Louis Church were slaves, 31 percent white, and 17 percent free persons of color. Eighty percent of the mothers were natives of Louisiana, while only forty-five percent of their fathers were. Of the 242 individuals whose death was recorded, 111 were slaves, 76 white, and 45 free people of color. By 1795, the number of slaves in colonial Louisiana totaled an estimated 25,000 persons. The renewal of the African slave trade contributed to the increase, especially during the last two decades of the eighteenth century when the Spanish government

had reopened the traffic to Louisiana from Senegambia, the Bight of Benin, the Bight of Biafra, Central Africa, Cuba, and Saint-Domingue.³¹

As more slaves entered Louisiana, growth in church facilities to serve the larger population did not keep pace. The Capuchins baptized more and more slaves, but they did not build or enlarge the churches to provide seating for the burgeoning Catholic population. Nevertheless, Louisianians never considered separate racial churches. Firm adherents to the universal ideal, the Spanish sought to accommodate a growing membership while pursuing interracialism in other ways. Church crowding could be reduced, for example, by a "feria" or fair. In 1796, during the last two Sundays of Lent in New Orleans, the bishop held such "ferias" for the free and enslaved population. The purpose of each "feria" was to "provide salvation for the soul" and to direct moral behavior, for the "hordes" of people that could not fit under one roof during mass. But the "feria" was a poor substitute for church attendance. Church seating, however, became a concern during the Spanish period because the population of free people of color increased rapidly. Throughout the late eighteenth century in south Louisiana, as more black Catholics were manumitted and had the freedom to attend mass, they occupied a larger section of the churches, not just on feast days, but on Sundays as well.³²

³¹Gwendolyn Midlo Hall, "The Formation of Afro-Creole Culture," in Creole New Orleans, ed. Logsdon and Hirsch, pp. 67-69.

³²Congregation of St. Francis de Sales, St. Francis de Sales, 1847-1972, (Houma: By the Congregation, 1972), pp. 10-15; Alfred E. Lemmon, "Spanish Louisiana: In the Service of God and His Most Catholic Majesty" in Cross Crozier and Crucible, ed. Glenn R. Conrad, p. 28; Hanger, Bounded, pp. 140-142; Baudier, St. Louis, pp. 14-

By the beginning of the nineteenth century, the Spanish Capuchins served a Catholic population in New Orleans composed of equal numbers of blacks and whites. The recognition of interracial marriages had increased the role and participation of black Catholics in the churches along with their numerical presence. In the Spanish period, one contemporary observer noted, "women, Negroes, and officers of the governor's staff are almost the only people who go to church." In New Orleans, the free and enslaved black Catholics even provided financial resources that rivaled the wealthier white members; free blacks had joined the ranks of pew renters. As a result of numerical equality, black Catholics assumed a greater financial role in support of the churches and therefore increased their power and influence in New Orleans' churches. The ability to rent pews distinguished free people of color from enslaved members and gave free blacks rights equal to whites. The reaction of a priest illustrates the prominent role of black members. After his performance of the baptism of the natural daughter of Don Juan Antonio Lugar and free person of color Maria Juana Prudhome on 24 June 1793, the priest reported his surprise that twenty to thirty individuals attended the ceremony, including government officials. A banquet following the church ceremony was so boisterous that it attracted a crowd of onlookers. The priest expected such attention only for the ruling class, but because of a white transient population that never settled long enough to dominate the

membership in the Catholic churches. free people of color in the city were the ruling class in the Catholic congregations.³³

In all the rural areas of Louisiana, unlike New Orleans, black Catholics did not outnumber white members, but interracial worship thrived whether white or black members were the congregation's majority. In southwest Louisiana along Bayou Teche, the immigration of people from Spain and Acadians from Nova Scotia balanced the racial mix on the plantations. For instance, among the four churches--Point Coupee, Iberville, Ascension, Assumption of Iberville--whites outnumbered blacks. In Iberville's church the free persons of color totaled only fourteen members out of over a thousand. A July 8, 1797, report gave a precise account of the congregation of la Yglesia Parroquial de San Gabriel de Yberville. It had a total population of 1,057 souls, 674 were white and 373 were black: "white men, under 15 yrs., 168; over 15 yrs., 213; mulattoes and blacks, free, 2 adults; male slaves, under 15 yrs., 45; over 15 yrs., 193; white women under 15 yrs., 126; over 15 yrs., 167; female mulattoes and blacks, free, under 15 yrs., 7; over 15 yrs., 5; female slaves, under 15 yrs., 58; over 15 yrs., 77." Although the racial balance in churches across the diocese varied, black members increased in number and authority under Spanish rule. The growing Spanish, Acadian, and black Catholic population had not led

³³Ralph Gibson, Social History of French Catholicism, 1789-1914 (New York: Routledge, 1989), pp. 161-165; Hanger, Bounded, pp. 141-142.

authorities to build additional churches, but it did prompt them to alter the structure of the Catholic Church in south Louisiana.³⁴

During the Spanish period, the Catholic authorities' addition of the third element of the Catholic church in Louisiana, a diocese, together with missionaries and churches completed the establishment of the Church in Louisiana. Prior to the beginning of Spanish rule, the Pope had little influence in Louisiana. Under the Spanish, however, Rome pushed for greater Roman organization: the creation of a diocese with a bishop in charge. In an attempt to improve conditions in Louisiana and its interracial churches, church authorities and secular officials agreed to make the area independent of the Havana diocese. In 1785, Father Cirillo de Barcelona, a Spanish Capuchin Friar, Superior of the Capuchin mission of Louisiana, was appointed Auxiliary of the Bishop of Santiago de Cuba to be in charge of the church in Louisiana. Cirillo became Louisiana's first bishop. With the appointment of an auxiliary bishop for the Louisiana territory, the church made its first attempt to remove it from missionary status and to implement regular church organization and structure in the area.

In early 1793 the Royal Council of Spain decided to go a step further and create a new diocese. King Charles IV of Spain instructed his ambassador in Rome to approach the Holy See with a request to create a diocese. In Rome, Spain's ambassador to the Holy See, José Nicolás de Azara, sent the King's request to Pietro

³⁴Baudier, St. Gabriel, p. 25; Baudier, St. Louis, pp. 16-20; Gilbert C. Din, The Canary Islanders of Louisiana (Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State University, 1988), pp. 75-80.

Maria Negroni, the secretary of the Consistorial Congregation, the papal commission of cardinals charged by Pope Pius VI to form new dioceses. The Consistorial Congregation sliced a portion of St. Christopher of Havana and designated New Orleans as the see city, with St. Louis parish church its cathedral. The colonists supported the process, pointing out the subsidy the Spanish government would provide as all the necessary inducement, and ultimately gave its approval. Charles IV had his request confirmed. The Pope ordered the decree to set up the diocese and appoint a subject of the king to be its archbishop. The royal court selected Luis Penalver y Cárdenas to be the first bishop of an independent New Orleans diocese, and on September 6, 1793, the king appointed the forty-four year old Cuban-born priest to the new see. Both the Council of the Indies and Holy See concurred. Pope Pius IV provided a sealed papal letter of appointment to Penalver dated September 12, 1794.³⁵

Penalver was consecrated as bishop in his native Havana on April 26, 1795. The new bishop arrived in New Orleans three months later, and on the July 24, 1795 assumed possession of his diocese in a formal ceremony. His new diocese consisted of a reported 60,000 souls ministered to by Spanish Capuchins, a few Irish-born English-speaking independent priests (not members of a religious order), and French nuns. The territory of the new Diocese of Louisiana and Florida covered a vast area:

³⁵James Augustin, Sketch of Catholic Church, pp. 9-35; Charles E. O'Neill, "A Bishop for Louisiana," in Cross Crozier and Crucible, ed. Glenn R. Conrad, pp. 96-104.

it extended from the Atlantic Ocean west to the Rocky Mountains and from the Gulf of Mexico north to Canada and included all of the Florida panhandle.³⁶

The new Louisiana and Florida diocese soon proved a problem for Spain. The creation of a separate diocese for the Louisiana colony neither attracted needed clergy and capital nor soothed tensions between the Spanish Capuchins and French colonials. On July 20, 1801, Penalver departed New Orleans, to assume new responsibilities after promotion to archbishop of Guatemala. To replace him, King Charles IV selected Francisco Porro y Reinodo, a Spanish-born priest who served as superior general of the Clerks Regular Minor, the order of St. Francis Caracciolo. Before assumption of his new post in Louisiana, however, he discovered that the Spanish government planned to retrocede the colony to France. Porro stayed in Spain. Porro was the last crown-appointed bishop of colonial Louisiana--and he never even saw his diocese. In fact, the colony had been absorbed by the United States. The church structures in Louisiana would have to endure another change in civil governments.³⁷

* * *

From the beginning until the end of the colonial period, the composition of membership of the Catholic congregations in Louisiana, with few exceptions, included nearly equal numbers of blacks and whites. While the colonial population had a white majority, the smaller proportion of white baptisms performed by the Capuchins indicated that the earliest white colonists received the sacrament in their place of

³⁶Roger Baudier, Catholic Church in Louisiana, p. 267.

³⁷O'Neill, "Bishop," p. 105.

origin, usually France but also the West Indies. The sacramental records indicated a majority of baptisms were slaves and free people of color. In fact, during the French colonial period black Catholics were the actual native Catholics of Louisiana. This numerical majority of the Catholic church did not translate into significant black influence. The free people of color were few in number, and most black Catholics were slaves. Slaveholders and officials shaped the role of religion in black people's lives. Even the outnumbered Capuchins had limited input. The government funded their church, and the Capuchins relied on the white colonists to fund the ministry among the slaves because they simply could not afford to provide the sacraments for free.³⁸

The Spanish period exhibited a unique black presence in the Catholic churches and the universal ideal in full flourish. After 1718, the religious orders administered to colonists and slaves in the inclusive churches. The efforts of the ministers to baptize all people had spread the religion throughout the colony. As black Catholics assumed a more dominant position, however, most black Catholics faced greater

³⁸Toledano, New Orleans Architecture VI:90; Earl C. Woods and Charles F. Nolan, Sacramental Records of the Roman Catholic Church of the Archdiocese of New Orleans, 12 volumes., (New Orleans: Catholic Church of the Archdiocese of New Orleans, 1987-cont.); Sacramental records, Father Bruns' Abstracts, Book III. AANO. See Mary Veronica Miceli, O.P., "The Influence of the Roman Catholic Church on Slavery in Colonial Louisiana under French Domination, 1718-1763" (Ph.D. dissertation, Tulane University, 1979); Mary Veronica Miceli, "The Christianization of French Colonial Louisiana: A General View of Church and State in the Context of Eighteenth Century French Colonization and a Theory of Mission," Southern Studies 21 (Winter 1982): 1384-97; James T. McGowan, "Creation of a Slave Society: Louisiana Plantations in the Eighteenth Century" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Rochester, 1976); Breathett, Church in Haiti, p. 10; Eugene Genovese, Roll Jordan Roll; The World the Slaveholders Made (New York: Pantheon, 1974).

inequalities in the churches since Spanish laws recognized the right of free people of color and not slaves to marry free people of color or white people. Slaves were still prohibited from marrying whites, free people of color, or other slaves. Yet, the status of free people of color increased in the churches. Among the freedoms that manumitted Catholics had that black slaves did not, the choice to attend mass affected church development the most. Authorities had not built churches to accommodate the largest number of Catholics, slaves, because slaveholders still controlled their church attendance. Even as blacks assumed a greater role in the churches, improving the conditions of slaves lay beyond their power, and the imposition of United States laws offered little prospect of relief from the slave regime. The ascendancy of the power and authority of blacks in south Louisiana, indeed of all lay people, had been partly curtailed with the establishment of the diocese and the appointment of a bishop. After the success of the American Revolution, however, the United States bought the Louisiana colony and incorporated the land and its people into the new nation. As the new United States worked to assimilate the various people of south Louisiana into a nation united by common statutes, much of the efforts of the Catholic hierarchy in Louisiana focused on adapting the international Roman Catholic organization and structure--clergy, churches, hierarchy--to conditions within the United States. Then the creation of parishes would be attempted.

CHAPTER 2

CHALLENGES TO THE UNIVERSAL IDEAL, 1803-1861

By 1803, when the United States took possession of Louisiana, the interracial institutions of the diocese had been firmly established in south Louisiana. The American's potential effect on the Catholic Church, however, unsettled Catholics in the diocese of New Orleans. Many of its French and Spanish clergy resented the loss of a monarch as secular leader. The newly created hierarchy was uncertain how the American government would treat its authority. The congregations worried about the legal status of their churches and property. The challenge to the universal ideal did not come from the American government, however. Rather, the establishment of Louisiana as the eighteenth state in the United States of America attracted non-Catholic American migrants as well as immigrants from the West Indies and Europe, many of whom were Catholic. During the period from 1803 to 1861, the population of the diocese quadrupled as Catholics by the tens of thousands immigrated into south Louisiana. French-speaking Catholics integrated into the churches and congregations and strengthened interracial practices. Assimilation of English and German-speaking immigrant Catholics into the congregations, however, faced a major obstacle: a battle between lay trustees and the bishop over ownership and authority of church property that resulted in overcrowded churches and delayed construction of new facilities. Dissatisfied with services conducted in English and the practices of Latin Catholicism, English and German speakers formed their own congregations and built their own

churches. In the 1850s, after resolution of the trustee controversy, the number of interracial churches expanded rapidly. Despite black members being included in all churches, however, separation of immigrants from traditional churches became a threat to the universal ideal. The choice of Irish and Germans to remain separate from mainstream congregations isolated the traditional churches and reflected that the Irish and Germans had assimilated into American religious practices--Protestant and Catholic--rather than preserve traditional Latin Catholic culture. Although the challenges of race and language tested the strength of the universal ideal, they did not destroy it. Despite initial fears of the consequences the American takeover would have on their diocese in Louisiana, the French clergy, congregations, and hierarchy worked to preserve their unique interracialism against any threat.

* * *

The American takeover concerned Catholics in Louisiana, especially the religious orders in Louisiana. With a few exceptions, the new civil authorities were not Catholics and did not even speak the same language as the colonists. The Americans, the Spanish and French clergy believed, were less humane toward their slaves, denying them the sacrament of baptism as well as religious instruction. American slaveholders, therefore, posed a greater problem for Catholic missionaries than the already troublesome Catholic masters. Moreover, whereas the changeover from French to Spanish rule had caused little disruption to relations between clergy, laity, and hierarchy, the shift to American control created new problems. The Capuchins and Ursulines did not have American subjects to staff their institutions.

Nor was there an American clergy to fill positions in the church. Clergy and nuns already in Louisiana feared for their status under the new government. In addition, without the "fabrica" system of government finance for the churches as well as military officers and government officials to rent pews, the Spanish and French clergy feared for the status of their interracial institutions. The future of the traditional Catholic Church in Louisiana appeared in jeopardy.

Survival became bleaker in 1803. Within the new Louisiana territory, most of the clergy did not even wait to consult with their new secular officials. Seventeen of twenty-one Capuchins left Louisiana. Despite their anxiety, the remaining clergy and nuns worked without hindrance from the new government officials, however. To their relief, Governor William C. C. Claiborne even became a friend to the Ursulines and relieved fears that had led to nuns leaving New Orleans. Although American officials during the transition period proved not to be the enemy many had feared, the United States government did not actively support the congregations with stipends to pay for church upkeep, ministers, and purchase of new properties--as the French and Spanish had. In the vacuum of government assistance, Louisianians took possession of the churches while the religious orders assumed ownership of the schools. The French and Spanish clergy and nuns who stayed became a vital source of Catholicism. They and the other Catholics in south Louisiana were on their own to nurture their traditional practices except for the American Catholic hierarchy who assumed control

of the diocese from the Spanish crown amidst an influx of resourceful and wealthy American Protestants.¹

The orphaned diocese of New Orleans received aid rather quickly. When European monarchs abandoned Louisiana, guidance from Baltimore and financial aid from Europe filled some voids. The American bishop sought to guide the development of the diocese down in south Louisiana, aiming their efforts toward the creation of a self-sufficient American Catholic Church free from reliance on Europe. To the Vatican, the United States was a Protestant country designated as missionary territory. Hence, the Society for the Propagation of the Faith, an organization of the Vatican charged with spreading the Catholic faith throughout the world, stepped up its activity in Louisiana after the former Catholic colony was purchased by the United States. After 1808, however, the interests of American bishops and the Society were frequently at odds. Internecine politics between northern dioceses and the Vatican left the Catholics and clergy in south Louisiana remarkably free to nurture their own forms of worship.

In the diocese of New Orleans, the process of Americanization began on December 20, 1803, when the United States took possession of the Louisiana territory from France. The diocese needed a bishop. In the absence of a monarch to appoint one, John Carroll of Baltimore, the bishop assigned by Rome to preside over the Catholic church in all of the United States, referred his dilemma about the vacant bishopric in New Orleans to the United States Secretary of State. Secretary James

¹Siefken, Century, pp. 219-234.

Madison replied that because the matter was ecclesiastical, he could not intervene. Madison did express his personal preference that Carroll, a popular prelate, assume permanent authority over Louisiana. Carroll did not have the authority to do so, however, because the Society for the Propagation of the Faith did not give him jurisdiction over Louisiana. Moreover, though a part of the United States, Louisiana already had an ecclesiastical diocese created under the laws of the church, and Carroll could not be bishop of more than one diocese at the same time. Carroll, therefore, arranged for the diocese to be operated by an Apostolic Administrator, whose office was vicar-general. Under the vicar-general, church authorities first partitioned the diocese which at the time of the Louisiana Purchase covered the entire Mississippi Valley region then worked to consolidate their authority in the diocese.²

Since the American revolution American Catholic officials had acknowledged the authority of the United States when they re-aligned colonial bishops' jurisdictions and adopted the territory bounded by civil borders for their dioceses, and they continued this practice in Louisiana. In 1804 the United States Congress had divided the huge territory purchased from France into two parts to make such a vast geographic area easier to govern. One part became the Territory of Orleans, which covered nearly the same area as the present state of Louisiana. The other part became the District of Louisiana; in 1805, it was renamed the Territory of Louisiana and in 1812 the Territory of Missouri. On April 30, 1812, the Territory of Orleans became

²The process of partitioning, begun with the American takeover, would continue into the twentieth century. Baudier, Catholic Church, pp. 226, 267, 270; Siefken, Century, pp. 219-239.

the eighteenth state of the Union. Catholic leaders tailored their ecclesiastical boundaries to secular boundaries and the shape of the redrawn diocese of New Orleans conformed to the civil boundaries defined by Congress.

Through the Apostolic Administrator, William Dubourg, the American hierarchy then proceeded with the incorporation of Louisiana into the pattern of dioceses already initiated in the United States. After the American Revolution, bishop Carroll (a second bishop was not appointed in the United States until 1808) worked to remove the Vatican's designation of America as missionary territory. Missionary status required the bishop to rely on distant European authority, resources, and control. To achieve independence from the Society for the Propagation of the Faith, the American bishop's first step was to build an infrastructure capable of supplying the diocese and churches with money and religious vocations. To expend resources on an infrastructure meant shifting efforts from missionary work to pastoral duties. Unlike other areas, the shift in emphasis posed another problem because religious orders in Louisiana had taken vows to evangelize, not to perform pastoral work.

Nonetheless, in the early nineteenth century American bishops focused their efforts and resources on the creation and maintenance of structures, grand churches and seminaries, rather than on missionary work and evangelization. Under the direction of John Carroll, the American bishops established the Roman Catholic Church's program of operating dioceses and parishes in the United States. Standardization included recruitment of secular clergy (priests who answered to the bishop and the diocese rather than to a religious order) as well as the development of

a native clergy. Another element of the program was suppression of lay authority. From the early nineteenth century, American bishops pursued a national church policy of legally (through civil law) removing lay trustees as the owners of Catholic churches. In assuming ownership of church property, however, bishops faced resistance across the United States. South Louisiana was no different in that respect; French-speaking lay Catholics, by far the preponderant part of the Catholic population, together with Spanish speakers, opposed the bishops. The time span and consequences of resistance in Louisiana meant that Americanization of the New Orleans diocese--the establishment of the bishop's authority over lay trustees, development of a native clergy, and the creation of parishes--came to a halt and Latin colonial practices persisted until 1861, long after other dioceses had developed an American Catholic Church with native pastors ministering in jurisdictions determined either by geographical boundaries, nationality of congregation, or race of the members--often called territorial, ethnic and racial parishes, respectively. Rather than a revolution in the operation of the New Orleans diocese, French Louisiana continued to rely on the Society for the Propagation of the Faith that pushed clergy and nuns to pursue missionary work.³

Throughout the antebellum period, the American hierarchy incorporated the New Orleans' hierarchy into their ranks. For example, it included New Orleans'

³A recently published description of the Louisiana populations response to Americanization by the Catholic hierarchy can be found in Annabelle Melville, Louis William DuBourg: Bishop of Louisiana and the Floridas, Bishop of Montauban, and Archbishop of Besanion, 1766-1833 (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1986), pp. 282-291, 303-327.

bishops in Plenary Councils and Provincial Councils working to remove the United States' missionary status. New Orleans' hierarchy and clergy participated in American church councils but, except for agreeing that trusteeism needed to be suppressed, they seldom followed the council's directions. The New Orleans clergy looked to Europe for direction. In contrast to American officials, the Society for the Propagation of the Faith required far more time and evidence before it agreed that the New Orleans diocese could survive without financial and personnel support from Europe. In large measure because the diocese of New Orleans' Latin Catholicism was so different from that in other American dioceses, the United States did not lose missionary status until 1908.

* * *

New Orleans officials followed national policy on one issue: the ascendancy of the bishop's authority over lay trustees. The battle over authority between trustees and hierarchy in the diocese of New Orleans lasted nearly the entire first half of the nineteenth century. English colonial and early American laws had not recognized the Catholic Church as a legal entity, hence trusteeism provided a means for Catholic congregations to own property. In Louisiana, trusteeism developed in the absence of a diocesan organization; in the early nineteenth century, structures built by the Company of the Indies and monarchies were inherited by the congregations, not the diocese. A corporation was formed, composed of laymen selected by the parishioners and designated as trustees, that held legal title to the local church property. This

nascent system had the potential to function well if the parishioners, trustees, priests, and bishops worked together. Such was not the case, however.⁴

While Louisianians continued to operate churches under the colonial-style trustee system between 1803 and 1844, rectors came to be treated as employees of the trustees and parishioners. From the hierarchy's perspective, abuses developed. In some cases, trustees refused to accept a rector chosen by the bishop. In the St. Louis Cathedral, parishioners selected their own rector without the consent of the bishop. There and at St. Martin de Tours Church in St. Martinville, trustees wielded control by their right to withhold priests' salaries. Indeed, the boards of trustees of many churches became the real directors of some facilities, and the rectors had practically no input into their affairs. Trustees also extended control by setting the hours for masses, regulating the charges for funerals, and assuming control of the cemeteries. Because the church property legally belonged to the members and the wardens, parishioners felt that they could do just what they wanted with it, even sell it, without consulting the clergy. Further complicating matters were accusations by the clergy that trustees were often Masons. Masons were in the forefront of anticlericalism (an early nineteenth century movement that erupted in France) and sought by civil law to secularize schools, churches, hospitals, to suppress religious orders, to forbid public demonstrations of Christianity, and in general, to curtail the authority of clergy.⁵

⁴Baudier, Church in Louisiana, pp. 256-60.

⁵Baudier, Church in Louisiana, pp. 345-346; Baudier, St. Louis Cathedral, pp. 15-20.

The trustee system did have many advantages for maintaining the Roman Catholic Church throughout the United States, particularly the Latin Louisianians' attempt to achieve the universal ideal. It freed the rectors of temporal responsibilities and allowed them to focus on spiritual matters, which in large measure in south Louisiana had been the evangelization of slaves. It also gave legal security to the property in environments where Catholics felt persecuted. Trusteeism also provided lay people an active and responsible voice in the administration of the church. These advantages had proved especially beneficial under Louisiana's colonial conditions when there had been no local bishop or a strong organizational structure. After alignment with other American dioceses, consolidation of the hierarchy's powers, and the assertion of the bishop's authority, Louisiana's clergy had to choose sides. The French and Spanish clergy were torn between the wishes of their French membership and their responsibility to their vows as clerics within the hierarchy. French clergy excelled at missionary work, particularly among slaves, and did not want to shift to the American emphasis on pastoral work. Also at stake in the struggle were the unique interracial practices in the New Orleans diocese which had the largest black Catholic population in the United States. The trend in other dioceses with black members had been toward racial segregation in the churches.⁶

⁶Fergus MacDonald, C.P., "The Development of Parishes in the United States," in The Sociology of the Parish: An Introductory Symposium, eds. C.J. Nuesse and Thomas J. Harte, C.S.S.R., (Milwaukee: Bruce Publishing Co., 1951), pp. 45-49; Baudier, Church in Louisiana, p. 342; Brother Alfonso Comeau, C.S.C., "A Study of the Trustee Problem in the St. Louis Cathedral Church of New Orleans, Louisiana, 1842-1844," Louisiana Historical Quarterly 31 (January-October, 1948): 897-972; Melville, Dubourg, pp. 282-285; Davis, Black Catholics, pp. 67-97.

Although each side had its merits, the controversy stunted the growth of churches in the diocese of New Orleans during a period when the arrival of Americans, Haitians, Irish, and Germans in Louisiana created a need for additional religious facilities. Opposition to the hierarchy was eventually suppressed by the secular courts, but only after the struggle had lasted for decades and delayed the creation of parishes. Latin Catholics had resisted until the bishop, Antoine Blanc, took the trustees of St. Louis Cathedral to court in 1844 and won his case. Despite the bishop's unwillingness to create more churches under the trustee system, the influx of Catholics by the tens of thousands, speaking different languages, forced religious leaders, rectors, and nuns to remedy the overcrowded colonial infrastructure. During the struggle over authority in the diocese, the universal church ideal faced two additional challenges that threatened the unique interracial practices of south Louisiana: expansion of separate racial institutions and large scale immigration of non-Gallic Catholics. The effects of these challenges on the diocese were minimized for decades, however, because Gallic Catholics from Haiti and France integrated into the interracial churches and congregations and strengthened the traditional Latin practices. These reinforcements for the Latin Catholic population made Americanization of the diocese a much more extended process.

* * *

Between 1803 and 1844, the period marked by the fight for control of ecclesiastical authority, immigrants from Haiti and France reinforced Latin Catholicism's colonial structures in the face of American settlement. The French-

speaking immigrants supported French clerics in the churches and schools but also formed independent Catholic congregations apart from the hierarchy. The Haitians, most of whom were black, extended the Roman Catholic Church's universalism by proselytizing slaves and increased the number of interracial congregations as Protestant denominations made inroads in formerly all-Catholic Louisiana. Because the French-speakers' impact was so subtle, and in the easy integration into the language, customs, and practices in the diocese of New Orleans so extensive, it would be difficult to overestimate how much French-speaking Haitian immigrants strengthened the universal ideal in Louisiana by accepting interracialism and proselytizing slaves at a time when interracial practices were vulnerable to forces inside and outside of the Church.⁷

The Catholic churches in the West Indies had developed much like those in the Louisiana colony. But there were variations. Among the most significant differences was the ratio of blacks to whites. Throughout colonial history, Haiti had an overwhelmingly black population, whereas south Louisiana had near equal proportions of black and white. Consequently, the Catholic Church in Haiti was blacker than the Church in south Louisiana. Nonetheless, the similarities were more striking. The establishment of the Church and its three basic elements--clergy, hierarchy, and congregations--were parallel. There was also no Protestant influence. The Company

⁷Raymond Calvert, "The German Catholic Churches of New Orleans," p. 10. For a history of the Irish in New Orleans, see Earl F. Niehaus, The Irish in New Orleans: 1800-1860 (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University, 1965); on the Haitians, see George Breathet, "Religious Protectionism and the Slave in Haiti," Catholic Historical Review 60 [April, 1969-January, 1970]: 26-39.

of Indies had settled Haiti and recruited Capuchin and Jesuit missionaries, though the Jesuits soon assumed control from Capuchins who had then put greater effort into Louisiana. Catholics in both areas used French in their interracial churches, and in both missionaries supported the slave regime. Black Catholic immigrants from Haiti and Cuba, many of whom were free people of color, therefore, found New Orleans' interracial congregations ministered by French clergy and open to slaves similar to those in their homeland.

The Haitians arrived in Louisiana between 1800 and 1810. They were culturally Gallic and French-speaking, most were black, some slave and some free. The influx of Haitians into Louisiana followed a revolution on the island in 1791. Over a hundred Haitians arrived between 1791 and 1797, two hundred more entered between 1797 and 1802, and an additional thousand had disembarked by 1804. The free black Catholic population of Louisiana then increased dramatically between May 1809 and January 1810 when the Spanish government expelled thousands of Dominican refugees from Cuba. Forced to seek asylum in New Orleans, over 10,000 white, free black, and slave exiles doubled the city's population. The latter two groups bolstered the black membership of interracial church congregations. The Cathedral in New Orleans had a congregation of more than 16,000, with 6,000 white, 5,000 free people of color, and 6,000 slaves. Two thirds of the St. Louis Cathedral congregation was black.⁸

⁸Paul Lachance, "Intermarriage and French Cultural Persistence in Late Spanish and Early American New Orleans," Histoire Sociale-Social History, 15 (1982): 47-81; Bell, Revolution, pp. 37-38.

The Jesuit missionaries who had dominated Haiti from the seventeenth century had, like the Capuchins in Louisiana, operated integrated churches for interracial congregations and ministered to all races and classes without exclusion. All clergy and religious orders--diocesan, Capuchins, Ursulines--welcomed the Haitians into their ministry, and the congregations accepted the Haitians as well. The immigrants were often wealthier, better educated, and more independent than other Louisiana Catholics. Many of the white and black refugees owned slaves, and the established congregations appreciated their wealth.

Despite acceptance by the locals, however, the black immigrants still had difficulty adjusting to the larger number of white members and the stricter racial laws of the Americans. The transition to the new racial environment was eased, no doubt, by the existence of a large population of free people of color. In Haiti, because of the huge numbers of slaves, the shortage of priests had necessitated the use of black persons in designated instructional capacities as catechists. Although some church officials became concerned about these "slave priests" and complained that insufficiently educated black catechists misunderstood Catholic teachings and rituals, more often missionaries admired the zeal of their converts in the pursuit of their mutual faith. Such practices were only tolerated in Louisiana by civil and ecclesiastical officials under white supervision. Black teachers, though free, Catholic,

and as capable of teaching religion and the catechism, had difficulty obtaining white students.⁹

Nonetheless, buoyed by the reception and their status in the diocese, Haitians added to overcrowding of church facilities that had persisted from colonial days. With their resources and commitment, they complemented the established religious orders and diocesan clergy by building schools and ministering to slaves. By 1810 over 35,000 slaves were held in bondage in Louisiana. The Catholic facilities (colonial churches) and clergy (Capuchins together with Ursuline nuns) were stretched thin in meeting the demand. The black Catholic population, particularly the Haitians, attempted to meet shortfalls in the diocesan effort toward slaves. In 1813, The *Congrégation Unioniste de Bienfaisance* approached the civil authorities to obtain a charter as a Catholic charitable organization "to serve religious and benevolent purposes" for the free population and also the slaves. In 1818, a different group of black Catholics and the New Orleans church hierarchy established the Christian Doctrine Society of New Orleans, a group of clergy and free black men and women interested in working together for the spiritual and temporal welfare of less fortunate free and enslaved black people in the city. In 1823, black Catholics assisted Sister Marthe Fortiér of the Dames Hospitalier in establishing a school in New Orleans for

⁹Baudier, *Church in Louisiana*, pp. 268-272; J. Edgar Bruns, "One Step at a Time: The Growing Pains of the Church in Louisiana," *Cross Crozier and Crucible*, pp. 92-93. For population figures see Paul F. Lachance, "The Foreign French," in *Creole New Orleans: Race and Americanization* eds. Hirsch and Logsdon, pp. 101-130; Paul F. Lachance, "The 1809 Immigration of Saint-Domingue Refugees to New Orleans: Reception, Integration, and Impact," *Louisiana History*, 29 (Spring 1988): 109-141.

free black girls. Black girls, educated at this school--taken over by Ursulines in 1833. then Mount Carmel Sisters in 1838--became sponsors and godparents of slaves at baptism. In 1831, black Catholics continued the effort of proselytization and instruction with the formation of the Societé de Bienfaisance des Arts and Metiers, which provided support and money for Catholic educational efforts among blacks. These organizations and others similar to them, started by native Louisianian free people of color and black immigrants, failed to attract many white participants.¹⁰

Haitian immigrants' assimilation into the New Orleans diocese had the effect of expanding the universal ideal by supporting established churches and attracting slaves--by 1820 approaching half of Louisiana's population--to the Church. Although newcomers to the United States, Haitians refused assimilation into American culture. At the time American bishops were attempting to incorporate the New Orleans diocese into the pattern of other American dioceses, the Haitians arriving in south Louisiana reinforced lay independence in forming independent Catholic congregations, followed Louisiana's traditional interracial practices in churches, and supported French clergy in missionary efforts.

Nonetheless, the Latin clergy's support of black Catholics spreading the faith among slaves risked endangering the universal ideal through the development of black

¹⁰Original Charter in City of New Orleans Mortgage Office, MOB 7, folio 5; Kenneth J. Zanca, ed., American Catholics and Slavery: 1789-1866: An Anthology of Primary Documents (Baltimore, Md.: Janham, 1994), p. 155; original Charter in New Orleans Mortgage Office MOB 3, folio 307; Baudier, Church in Louisiana, pp. 364-365; research of Dr. Emily Clark on Ursuline nuns reported in, "An 1838 Baptism," Servant of the Poor, I (Spring, 1998): 2.

Catholic independence and possible alienation from whites. French clergy and black Catholics worked to be in the mainstream of the diocese, however. By the 1820s, personnel and money had arrived from Europe to help Louisiana Catholics. Vatican officials appointed a French bishop for the New Orleans diocese, who in turn recruited French priests and nuns. Dependence on religious orders ceased. The recruitment of individual clergy for careers in the New Orleans diocese curtailed the slave ministry, which became the exclusive domain of black Catholics. By the 1830s and 1840s missionary work became more difficult because the existence of a racial slave regime necessitated that Catholics continually adjust their practices to maintain interracialism.

* * *

On September 18, 1815, the Propaganda promoted Apostolic Administrator Louis William Dubourg to Bishop of Louisiana, the first bishop under the American government. Born in Saint-Domingue to white parents, Dubourg had been raised in France. At the time of the French Revolution, Dubourg, a monarchist, fled France for Baltimore. In Baltimore, he worked closely with Bishop Carroll, who had appointed him president of Georgetown College. When he settled in New Orleans, the diplomatic and well-traveled Bishop faced a great challenge--a Catholic population composed of large numbers of slaves along with a smaller number of free people of color who possessed significant economic resources but faced social subordination to whites. Dubourg became an ally of Louisiana natives and the Gallic immigrants and nurtured their vocations. He worked to integrate black Catholic women into the

Church as nuns rather than only as members of congregations. French monarchists, Haitian refugees, and Bishop Dubourg headed the challenge of asserting Catholic principles and morals in a democracy, the state of Louisiana.¹¹

At the time of his accession to bishop, Dubourg, who had never ventured to New Orleans during his tenure as Apostolic Administrator, reported that his entire diocese possessed only twelve priests, not enough to staff its more than twenty churches. He described north Louisiana above the Red River as hopelessly deficient in facilities, with only one church in Natchitoches to serve such a vast area. In southwest Louisiana, he said there was not a church beyond St. Martinville. The only educational institution within his diocese, the Ursuline convent, had to serve the entire Mississippi Valley west of the Mississippi River. The city of New Orleans had just one church, the Cathedral, for thousands of Catholics, and it was in the hands of trustees who refused to acknowledge his authority. Given the situation within the diocese, Dubourg concluded that the lack of clergy, churches, and schools allowed migrating white Protestant Americans and their ministers to win many converts from among the large Catholic community. Other Louisianians, he believed, had become Masons. Added to his troubles was a diocese dominated by black Catholics, the majority of whom were poverty-stricken slaves.¹²

¹¹Bruns, "One Step at a Time," pp. 90-93. See Bell's description of how one Spanish priest, Capuchin friar Antonio de Sedella, called Pere Antoine, had an exceptional influence on race relations in New Orleans between the 1780s and 1820s while stationed at the St. Louis Cathedral. He was especially popular with the free people of color. Bell, Revolution, pp. 65-72.

¹²Baudier, Church in Louisiana, p. 267.

Inhibited from expanding church facilities by the trustee controversy, Dubourg focused his efforts on schools. Establishing schools avoided conflicts over authority and alleviated the shortage of Catholic institutions. Educational facilities in Louisiana had a tradition distinct from that of the interracial churches--segregated classes--that undermined the universal ideal. Dubourg did not alter this tradition. Rather, he recruited additional clergy and nuns along with the Dames Hospitaliers (who trained black girls in New Orleans to proselytize slaves) to serve the Catholics of Louisiana without regard for ethnicity, race, or social status. Although he could obtain men individually for service as diocesan priests, Dubourg relied on the female religious orders to obtain nuns. While other dioceses established a native clergy to staff their diocese, Dubourg obtained clergy almost exclusively from France. French clerics, however, arrived in Louisiana anxious to perform missionary work and evangelization rather than pastoral work and parish building.¹³

In 1821, the French bishop successfully expanded the educational ministry among young girls in New Orleans conducted by the Ursulines and Dames Hospitaliers by sending sisters of the Society of Sacred Heart to work in Grand Coteau. Dubourg was displeased with the Sacred Heart order because they ministered

¹³Two important examples were from the Grand Seminaire in Lyon, France. Michael Portier, a seminarian ordained in New Orleans in 1818, and Etienne Rousselon, a seminary director who wanted to work on the missions. Rousselon will be discussed below. Portier was only in Louisiana until 1826, but in his short stint he formed a confraternity of young black men and women who met "nightly" to pray and read the gospel. The confraternity also taught prayer, catechized, instructed other Catholics. Virginia Meacham Gould and Charles E. Nolan, Henriette Delille: "Servant of Slaves" (New Orleans: Sisters of the Holy Family, 1998), pp. 6-11.

only to the upper classes. More concerned for the poor farmers and slaves in the rural areas and the working classes, including free people of color in New Orleans, Dubourg asked the Sacred Heart order to adjust its ministry. Dubourg also located an order in Kentucky unconcerned about class and race. In 1822, the Daughters of the Cross (Sisters of Loretto) arrived from Kentucky to work near Assumption church on Bayou Lafourche in Plattenville. Unlike the Sacred Heart nuns who spoke French, the Daughters of the Cross struggled because most spoke only English. To overcome language barriers, Dubourg suggested the Daughters accept French-speaking black women into their congregation in Louisiana. Hence, the Daughters would have religious women who spoke the language of the people and could continue to instruct "poor girls in the rural districts." Dubourg's suggestion was not heeded; black postulants were not accepted. The Daughters of the Cross ministry, however, did not disappear. In 1828, the few Daughters serving in Louisiana who had learned French were accepted into the Society of the Sacred Heart; the rest returned to Kentucky. The Sacred Heart order furnished French speakers to teach lower-class girls at Plattenville, adjusted their ministry to conditions in Louisiana, and ministered to all classes and races at Grand Coteau and Plattenville.¹⁴

The Sacred Heart nuns were not the only Europeans and Catholics in south Louisiana who had to adjust to new conditions--all Catholics had. One of the new

¹⁴Louise Callan, The Society of the Sacred Heart in North America (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1937), pp. 164-169, 179-180; Anna C. Minogue, Loretto, Annals of the Century (New York: The America Press, 1912), pp. 80-81, 95; Baudier, Church in Louisiana, pp. 353-354.

conditions was the ascendancy of American culture. By 1830, the Catholic population was a bare majority of the total population because of the influx of English-speaking Americans. In his visit to New Orleans in the mid-1830s, Alexis de Tocqueville observed that the French in Louisiana "are not, as in Canada, a vanquished people. On the contrary, they live on a basis of real and complete equality." Maintaining equality and fighting oppression became difficult after Tocqueville's visit, however. Although native to Louisiana or Haiti, French-speaking and Spanish-speaking white and black Catholics (part of a group called Creoles) were essentially immigrants after the United States "Americanized" Louisiana. Like other immigrant groups, they acted to preserve the preaching of sermons in their mother tongue; to practice the festivals, feast days and customs of their "old country"; and to raise their children in the faith of their fathers and mothers. The pressures on them that came with being Roman Catholics in a hostile, Protestant country blurred distinctions in the churches between black and white, slave and free. Still, modifications to religious ideals in the face of racism had to be made or risk loss of all practices. To function in an oppressive slave regime, black Catholics of south Louisiana altered the interracial diocese in three ways: they produced vocations for an order of religious black women, they built segregated schools, and they made accommodations to the slave regime.¹⁵

¹⁵Dolan, American Catholic Experience, p. 162; Alexis de Tocqueville, Democracy in America, ed. Philip Bradley, tran. Henry Reeve, 2 volumes (New York: Knopf, 1945), pp. 101-103, 380-383; Joseph G. Tregle, "Early New Orleans Society: A Reappraisal," Journal of Southern History, 18 (February, 1952): 21-36.

In New Orleans, Marthe Fortière's school on Rue Barracks produced a large group of young black women interested in becoming nuns. By 1836, Henriette Delille, descended from an enslaved African woman baptized at St. Louis Cathedral in 1745 but whose ancestors were free people of color, organized the women. After attending school, Delille and Juliette Gaudin--descended from black Haitian refugees--worked among the poor and slaves. Like her father, Pierre, who operated a school for free people of color, Gaudin devoted herself to the education of others. In November Delille, Gaudin, Marie Jean Aliquot, a young Frenchwoman and the only white member, Josephine Charles, and six other unnamed women formed the La Congrégation des Souers de la Présentation de la Saint Vierge Marie (The Congregation of the Sisters of Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary), established at the Treme plantation house in New Orleans. Despite the women expanding their charitable work when they formed an interracial community living under the same roof, they had actually created a problem for the hierarchy. Faced with enforcement of the 1830 state law that threatened to jail any whites and blacks working in conspiracy, the diocese removed the only white member, Marie Aliquot, from the community and sent her to minister in Plattenville, away from the women's congregation. Despite the setback to interracialism, the black women continued working so successfully among the sick, caring for the dying, and teaching the young

that they gained the recognition of the Vatican. In appreciation for their service, the Pope affiliated the Louisiana group to the Sodality of the Blessed Virgin Mary.¹⁶

On November 21, 1842, Henriette Delille and Juliette Gaudin incorporated the Soeurs de la Ste Famille and dropped the old name of Sisters of the Presentation. Although not reorganized as a religious order of nuns under the rules of Rome, these black women operated--within the restrictive racial laws of Louisiana--under the sanction of Father J. W. A. Janssen, a diocesan priest, until forced to disband in 1847. Cecile Edouarde Lacroix then helped gather enough men and women to form the Association of the Holy Family, which thereafter raised funds for the work formerly undertaken by the sisters. Officers included Etienne Cordeviolle, Armand Richard Clague, Joseph LaVigne, Francois Broutin, and Chazel Thomas. However, an 1850 state law revoked the status of religious societies incorporated by free persons of color, and the loss of the vital support of resources from the free black community threatened to end the Associations helping the black women's work unless the hierarchy and clergy protected them. As a result, Delille and her associates were officially recognized as religious women by the diocese. In October of 1852, the three remaining members--Delille, Gaudin, and Charles--continued their ministry

¹⁶Father F. L. Gassler maintained that the Holy Family Sisters started in the rural areas; "the real founder of the Sisters of the Holy Family, was Father Francois Raymond who started them in Opelousas where their original buildings still stand." Gassler to Baudier, 31 August 1941, "Josephite Fathers Correspondence," AANO. Although accurate about Father Raymond's efforts, the more recent scholarship attributed the founding to the efforts of black Catholics rather than the white clergy. For Raymond's role see, The Colored Harvest I (June, 1897): 193-194. For an excellent treatment of the creation of Holy Family Sisters see, Bell, Revolution, pp. 127-134.

when they obtained official sanction from the diocesan hierarchy as postulants. That same year the women took their final vows as Roman Catholic nuns at St. Augustine's Church.¹⁷

The second concession to the harsh slave regime was separate black schools. In the diocese, the most successful school, biracial in design but established and operated by black Catholics and the Catholic Church, was the Couvant School.¹⁸ Upon his death on May 22, 1829, Gabriel Bernard Couvant, a free person of color and carpenter, left his wife Justine Firmin Couvant, a former slave and native of Guinea, a considerable estate. Justine planned to establish a black Catholic school for slaves and free people of color but had difficulty putting her plan into effect. In the wake of public outrage over the 1829 uprising scare that originated just forty miles from New Orleans, the Louisiana legislature passed laws that curtailed the right of free people of color to work with slaves. A separate 1830 law prevented free people

¹⁷Gould, "Liberty," pp. 282-284; Toledano, Architecture, pp. 94-100; M. Boniface Adams, "The Gift of Religious Leadership: Henriette Delille and the Foundation of the Holy Family Sisters," in Cross, Crozier, and Crucible, pp. 360-373; see Mary Francis Borgia Hart, Violets in King's Garden (New Orleans: Sisters of the Holy Family, 1976). For detailed biography of Delille derived from new research in French archives; see Gould and Nolan, Henriette Delille, pp. 1-19.

¹⁸Other schools were opened by individuals who, although Catholic, operated secular schools. The story of the Couvant School can be found in many sources, including Lois Virginia Meacham Gould, "In Full Enjoyment of Their Liberty: The Free Women of Color of the Gulf Ports of New Orleans, Mobile and Pensacola, 1769-1860," [Ph.D. dissertation, Emory University 1991], p. 273; Barnsley Brown, "Marie Bernard Couvent (c. 1757-1837)" in Notable Black American Women, ed. Jesse Carney (Detroit and London: Gale Research, Inc., 1992), pp. 235-236; and Rudolph Lucien Desdunes, Our People and Our History (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1973), pp. 97-108.

of color from entering Louisiana and forced those who had moved to the state after 1825 to leave within sixty days. Both laws contained a clause forbidding communication by blacks or whites that incited unrest among slaves or free people. The law even banned conversations that caused the free people of color to forget their place. These restrictions prevented Justine Couvant, a devout Catholic, from accomplishing her goal of opening a universal school. She therefore entrusted her plans to others: in her will, she named Henry Fletcher, a free man of color, as executor and Father Constantine Maenhaut as supervisor of the will.

Upon Justine Couvant's death in June 1837, Fletcher took control of her estate. Like Couvant, he could accomplish little in an era when public officials passed ordinances that prohibited the building of a school for free African Americans and excluded African Americans from the new free city-wide public school system. Even a white priest could do little to educate black people. Father Constantine Maenhaut enlisted powerful civic leaders such as Francoix Lacroix to fulfill Couvant's bequest. Lacroix, a prominent free person of color, slaveholder, and wealthy philanthropist, spread the message about the problems in fulfilling Couvant's will. Led by Lacroix, Barthelemy Rey, Maximilien Brule, Armand Lanusse, Nelson Fouche, and Adolphe Duhart--all Creole businessmen and intellectuals--many of New Orleans' free people of color formed the Societé Catholique pour l'instruction des Orphelins dans l'indégence. Upon incorporation of the Institute, Rey and the other men filed lawsuits to obtain from Fletcher control of the Couvant estate by charging that he owed thousands of dollars in back rents. In 1848 the society's case won in court and they

assumed authority to execute the terms of the widow's bequest: Rey and his associates hastily established a makeshift facility with Felicie Callioux, a free woman of color, as principal. By 1852, a permanent facility had been completed and opened for all children.¹⁹

Repressive legislation forced black Catholics to rely on their church hierarchy to maintain the school. An 1850 amendment to the earlier act of the Louisiana legislature provided that "in no case shall the provisions of this [act] be construed to apply to free persons of color in this State incorporated for religious purpose or secret associations, and any corporations that may have been organized by such persons under this act, for religious purposes or secret associations are hereby annulled and revoked." In 1855, the ban on the incorporation of religious and secret associations had been broadened to all charitable, scientific, or literary societies. The established societies were left alone, however. The slave regime could not destroy a school supported by an interracial alliance. The school remained active throughout the antebellum period because the Catholic church and Father Maenhaut prevented the facility from closing.²⁰

Black Catholic accommodation to the slave regime required allowing fellow church members to hold other members in bondage. Indeed, such tolerance was shared by all Catholics. Black and white members of the interracial congregations

¹⁹Copy of Constitution of Société Catholique, 20 June 1849, Charles B. Rousseve Collection, folder 22, Box 1, Amistad Research Center, New Orleans, Louisiana, (ARC).

²⁰Bell, Revolution, pp. 127-134.

owned slaves and supported the slave regime. Some black members, such as the Metoyer family in Isle Brevelle, Louisiana, near Natchitoches, owned large plantations with dozens of slaves. Others did not possess plantations and owned few slaves, but participated in the slave trade. The church's complacency on the slavery issue involved the hierarchy, clergy, religious, black and white members. In July 1840, Father Etienne Rousselon, who helped establish the Holy Family Sisters and worked closely with free people of color, many of whom owned slaves, wrote to the editor of the Propagation of the Faith newsletter in Lyon on the correlation between race and slavery. To attack the Catholic church for supporting slavery, especially if the protestors were black, Rousselon reported, would bring "certain deplorable excesses" upon the abolitionist. For Catholics in south Louisiana, opposing slavery was out of the question because for the Catholic religion in the Protestant slaveholding south, speaking out was in Rousselon's words a "matter of life and death." Although slavery was morally wrong, the clergy and hierarchy feared criticizing the slave regime because of the reaction of slaveholders to the diocese and fellow Catholics who would be placed in harm's way if the Church officially opposed the slave system. Rousselon requested that the Propagation of the Faith cease publishing tracts against slavery and sending the literature to south Louisiana. Rather, Rousselon urged obedience to all laws. The non-slaveholding members of the interracial congregations did not challenge slavery or eject slaveholding members from the churches or congregations.

Nevertheless. Catholics continued the tradition of all races and classes worshipping in the same churches.²¹

Most black Catholics did not own slaves and many had themselves recently obtained freedom, but they did not withdraw and create independent churches apart from those who owned slaves or supported the slave regime. They could have done so; there were no legal prescriptions against the worship of free people of color and slaves as long as there was white supervision--and all priests were white. Black Catholics had the resources to form their own churches, as they had the Couvant school and the Grimble Bell school near Opelousas. Black leaders in other churches had chosen segregation. Black Catholics rejected separation. More precisely, black Catholics rejected the imposition on their churches of a black racial identity imposed by the slave regime. The universal church as practiced in the New Orleans diocese tolerated language and social but not racial differences. Black Catholics spoke French and shared a culture with the many French-speaking white Catholics. For the French-speaking free people of color, attendance at an interracial Catholic service was an escape from a race conscious society. The independence and freedoms once possessed in colonial Louisiana society persisted in the Catholic churches. The social restrictions imposed by the Louisiana legislature made the Catholic church--the place

²¹Original and translation of Rousselon, New Orleans to the editor [pub. of Prof. of Faith, Lyon], 16 July 1840, #2799, AANO. For discussions of black Catholics as slave owners, see Gary B. Mills, "Piety and Prejudice: A Colored Catholic Community," in Catholics in the Old South, eds. Miller and Wakelyn, pp. 171-194; Elizabeth Shawn Mills and Gary B. Mills, "Missionaries Compromised," pp. 30-47.

of baptism, confirmation, and marriage--part of a universal identity that transcended the slaveholder's world. Catholics had not pushed for separation.

Establishment of the Holy Family Sisters and the creation of separate schools illustrated the success of black Catholics in the New Orleans diocese even within a slave regime. Free people of color, Haitian immigrants, and white clergy worked together to promote the universal ideal. But the achievements of the nuns and black schools fell short of the interracialism found in churches. Even the tradition of white nuns educating both black and white children posed a problem for the Louisiana legislature that feared any interracialism. Black teachers worked exclusively with blacks. In the 1830s, universalism became difficult because New Orleans' Catholic population had fallen to a bare majority in a city and larger society hostile to Catholicism, and especially to its interracial practices. Between 1850 and 1852, the repressive regulations of the Louisiana legislature to restrict interracialism inaugurated a period that free people of color recalled, in a characterization by scholars of the colonial and antebellum periods, as the years in which their sheltered and privileged order broke down. The story of the creation of a religious-oriented school with money from a dark-skinned, black, Catholic, female ex-slave through Father Maenhaut and the time and energy of light-skinned men and women during the period of increased racial oppression was not unique, however. After 1844, dozens more interracial churches were created by black and white Catholics.²²

²²Joseph Logsdon and Caryn Bell, "The Americanization of Black New Orleans," in Creole New Orleans, p. 208.

* * *

In the mid-1840s, Catholic adjustment of the universal ideal to the slave regime reached a point where it pushed Louisiana's French clergy and population closer to the American hierarchy against pro-slavery trustees and ended with church trustees losing their authority. The assertion of social distinctions within the universal churches drew a sharp reaction from the French hierarchy and clergy. After 1843, the movement of trustees to arrange church seating and worship according to their rules and not the doctrines of the Church forced clergy to choose the side of the national hierarchy in the trustee controversy. Members of the interracial congregations were taken aback by the challenge from fellow members of the congregation to long-held traditions. Although the battle against the national hierarchy had been rooted in the resistance to changing the old ways, the new challenge by trustees posed a greater danger and provided the impetus for a shift toward the position of the hierarchy. The settlement of the controversy in the courts followed soon after and initiated a rapid expansion of the number of interracial churches. Slaves had greater access to the faith with a larger number of churches, but the compromise with the slave regime cost the adherents of traditional practices something as well. The practice of keeping separate sacramental books for blacks and whites began in some of the new churches.

By 1841, throughout the diocese, trustees began to assert social distinctions during worship and informed the clergy that they would follow such plans. For example, in St. Martinville, located in the heart of the Acadian settlement, trustees

began to impose separate seating arrangements in church based on the various levels of society. Whites were seated nearest the altar, free people of color stationed behind the white members, and slaves placed in the aisles. In addition, a protocol evolved during the mass for the receipt of communion: whites first, free people of color next, slaves last. The imposition of such practices was similar to some Protestant churches where black members had to sit in galleries and receive communion separately. Some churches initiated the use of one sacramental book for blacks and another one for whites. The slaves suffered most of all because in addition to needing permission from owners to attend mass, they also had to fight for space at church. These actions by the trustees challenging the universal ideal in the churches helped bring the trustee controversy to a resolution after four decades of dispute. French clerics sided with the hierarchy and with many of their French-speaking members, particularly blacks, against trustees who asserted the color line within the churches.²³

In New Orleans, the attempts by the Cathedral trustees to adopt American-style practices proved too much for universalists--even among the slaveholders. In 1841, for example, in part because of political differences with the trustees and in part because of overcrowding, black and white Catholics put their money and talents into the design and construction of St. Augustine Church. Under Father Etienne

²³Clipping of open letter from trustees of Eglise St. Martin to Curé Martin, dated 19 June 1843, original and translations in AANO. This letter describes seating arrangements in the church. Roger Baudier, St. Theresa of Avila's Parish (New Orleans: Archdiocese of New Orleans, 1948), pp. 10-11; Roger Baudier, St. John the Baptist Church, New Orleans: A Century of Catholic Parochial Service (New Orleans: Archdiocese of New Orleans, 1952), pp. 9-11; Niehaus, Irish, p. 23; Baudier, One Hundred Years, Arnaudville, p. 18.

Rousselon, vicar-general to Bishop Antoine Blanc, the congregation originally met at the St. Claude Chapel. The new church opened in October, 1842, with a mass by Father Constantine Maenhaut. Free people of color initially rented half of the pews, and all of the small pews in the sides were reserved for the slaves. Nevertheless, the actions of Rousselon and Maenhaut, French clergy who were also in the hierarchy, had little impact in preserving the universal heritage. Many new churches were needed, but before they could be built the power of the trustees not just in New Orleans but throughout the diocese had to be removed.²⁴

In 1844, the Louisiana Supreme Court ruled in favor of the bishop in his fight with the trustees. The effort to make the diocese self-sufficient began with the consolidation of the bishop's authority, but south Louisiana still did not follow the practices of other American dioceses. Rather, Blanc relied on the resources of the Society for the Propagation of the Faith and continued to stress missionary activities over pastoral work and the creation of parishes. With the bishop's authority confirmed and trusteeism abolished, the number of churches in south Louisiana grew rapidly. Altogether, over forty-seven churches or chapels in which black Catholics were among the founding members were built in the antebellum period; prominent churches included St. Vincent de Paul (1838), St. Maurice (1844), Annunciation (1846), St. Francis de Sales, Houma, (1847), St. Theresa (1849), St. John the

²⁴Baudier, Catholic Church, p. 365; Charles E. Nolan, Bayou Carmel: Sisters of Mount Carmel of Louisiana 1833-1903 (Kenner, Louisiana: Pelican, 1977), p. 23; George Gurtner and Frank Methe, Historic Churches of Old New Orleans (New Orleans: Friends of St. Alphonsus, 1997), pp. 16-17.

Evangelist (1850), St. Ann (1852), Immaculate Conception (1856), and St. Rose de Lima (1858). The property that St. Rose was built had been purchased by a free woman of color. The slave regime did not divide the French congregations.²⁵

In these new churches the commitment to interracial worship among French-speaking Catholics remained strong. As had been the case since 1718, throughout the antebellum period, the clergy in the archdiocese (in 1850 Rome raised New Orleans to the status of an archdiocese) steadfastly ministered to black and white Catholics. From the beginning, the St. Louis Cathedral had been the most public symbol of the Catholic Church's presence in the New Orleans diocese. Contemporaries frequently noted the interracial worship in the Cathedral before and after attempts by the trustees to alter its practices in the early 1840s. In part their attention had been grabbed because it differed so much from the practice among the Protestants. In 1833, the British visitor Thomas Hamilton observed:

Both Catholic and Protestant agree in the tenet that all men are equal in the sight of God, but the former alone gives practical exemplification of this creed. In a Catholic Church. . . the slave and master, kneel before the same altar in temporary oblivion of all worldly distinctions But in Protestant churches different rule prevails. People of colour are either excluded altogether or are mewed up in some remote

²⁵Roger Baudier, Centennial: St. Rose de Lima Parish, 1857-1957 (New Orleans: Edward C. Prendergast, 1957), p. 13. Copy of booklet in author's collection; for an illustration of the process lay people undertook to build a church in this period, see Philip D. Uzee, "Father Charles M. Menard: The Apostle of Bayou Lafourche," in Cross Crozier and Crucible, p. 378. Uzee's piece is an edited translation of Menard's personal diary as rector of a rural Catholic church in Thibodaux, Louisiana, called "Annales de l'Eglise de St. Joseph, Psse. Lafourche, Etat de la Louisiane" covering the period 1842-1892. For profile of lay leaders who collected funds see, Congregation of St. Francis de Sales, St. Francis de Sales, 1847-1972, Terrebonne Parish, Houma, Louisiana, pp. 18-19.

corner, separated by barriers from the body of the church Can it be wondered, therefore, that the slaves in Louisiana are all Catholics; that while the congregation of the Protestant church consists of a few ladies, arranged in well cushioned pews, the whole floor of the extensive cathedral should be crowded with worshippers of all colours and classes?²⁶

In 1838, Harriet Martineau wrote that the cathedral was a place where "the European gladly visits, as the only one in the United States where all men meet together as brethren Within the edifice there is no separation." All from the "fair Scotchwoman or German to the jet-black pure African" knelt together, according to Martineau. During the sermon, the sight of the "multitude of anxious faces, thus various in tint and expression, turned up towards the pulpit, afforded one of these few spectacles which are apt to haunt the whole future life of the observer like a dream." On a visit to the city in 1845, Dr. Thomas L. Nichols, a northern social reformer, noted "something very interesting in the appearance of the worshippers" in St. Louis Cathedral. Never had he seen such a "mixture of conditions and colours." On the altar steps, "white children and black, with every shade between, knelt side by side" with "no distinction of rank or colour." Nichols, described by one scholar as a most zealous abolitionist, admired what he saw in the Catholic church and, "could not have desired more perfect equality."²⁷

The removal of the trustees' power preserved interracial practices as well as allowed the clergy to increase the membership of the diocese. In 1860, the Eglise St.

²⁶Quote in Bell, Revolution, p. 73.

²⁷Quotes in Gould, "Liberty," p. 269.

Louis. St. Louis Cathedral, reported one hundred and eighteen "baptemes de couleur" and eight "marrages de couleur" and in 1861 eighty-nine "baptemes de couleur" and five "marriages de couleur." That same year, white members of the congregation required five hundred eighteen "baptemes de blanc" and sixty-four "marriages de blanc" and in 1861, two hundred fifty-two "baptemes de blanc" and forty-six "marrages de blanc." Without trustees in control, the traditional practices of the St. Louis Cathedral continued unabated throughout the period. St. Louis Cathedral was not unique, however, but typified the interracialism in the other predominately French Catholic churches.²⁸

The racial composition of each congregation, of course, varied from church to church. St. Augustine Church, founded by Father Rousselon in the city on property owned by free people of color and built with the resources of the free people of color and the assistance of the Holy Family Sisters, had a large congregation, nearly half of it black. Also in the city, in the Faubourg St. Marie, at the Eglise St. Anne founded in 1852 as a separate part of St. Augustine church, the ratio of whites to blacks in the congregation was more than two to one. For 1860, Father Hyacinthe Tumoine reported baptizing 201 "blancs", 64 "couleur libre" and 31 "esclaves." For 1861, he reported baptizing 153 "blancs", 56 "couleur libre" and 22 "esclaves."²⁹

²⁸St. Louis Cathedral Annual Reports, AANO.

²⁹St. Louis Cathedral and St. Anne Annual Reports, AANO. In January 1855, the black Societé de Bienfaisance des Arts et Metiers planned to celebrate the society's anniversary at St. Anne. Money would be collected for the Institute Catholique. Minute Entry, 14 December 1854, "Institute Catholique Board of Directors's Minutes," AANO--cite courtesy of Stephen Ochs.

At another church in the city, Annunciation Church, founded in 1844 in the Faubourg Marigny, Father Antoine Durier reported that for the year 1860 he had baptized 90 "enfants blancs". 106 "enfants de couleur" as well as performed marriage ceremonies for 32 "personnes blanches" and 13 "personnes de couleur." The next year, Durier reported that he performed baptisms on forty-two "enfants blancs" and ninety-seven "enfants de couleur." The marriage tally had a closer ratio than the year prior: fifteen "personnes blanches" and thirteen "personnes de couleur."³⁰

Upriver from the French faubourgs, the Redemptorist Fathers operated several churches in the city of New Orleans, all located within a few square blocks in the area called the City of Lafayette before the settlement by American migrants and European immigrants. DeBow's Review recorded that the Lafayette area of New Orleans was "peculiar" compared to other areas of the American South because only one-eighth of its more than 7,000 inhabitants were slaves. This percentage was the smallest in the region because of the large number of immigrants settling there. The Redemptorists operated their churches based on the language of the congregation, but black Catholics were members of all the congregations prior to the Civil War. St. Mary's Assumption Church, established for German immigrants in 1860, baptized 81 white children and 67 black children. In 1861, the numbers were 71 white children baptized and 58 black children being baptized. Across the street from St. Mary's, the Redemptorists operated St. Alphonsus Church for Irish immigrants. Yet, like St. Mary's prior to the Civil War, black Catholics formed part of the St. Alphonsus

³⁰Annunciation Annual Reports, AANO.

congregation. In 1860, 61 black children were baptized there with 81 white children. In 1861, the Redemptorist superior reported 58 black children being baptized along with 67 white children.³¹

Located further upriver from the French section of New Orleans and even above the American sector of the Redemptorists, in the city of Jefferson, the Vincentians operated St. Stephen's Church after 1850. Built on a large plantation, the congregation included "French, Creoles, Americans, and Germans." At St. Stephen's, the Vincentians stationed English-speaking and French-speaking priests. For 1858, Father Ryan reported in English that the parish recorded 2 marriages, 35 child baptisms and 3 adult baptisms for the "colored" population and 9 marriages, 67 child baptisms, and 1 adult baptism for the "white" population. The next year, Ryan reported 6 marriages, 29 infant baptisms and 3 adult baptisms for the "colored" population and 15 marriages and 72 infant baptisms for the "white" population.³²

In all directions from New Orleans, south Louisianians worshipped in interracial churches. In the rural areas, territorial boundaries were recognized by rectors to mark their jurisdiction and area of responsibility. The region usually conformed to civil parishes (or vice versa--civil parishes conformed to church jurisdictions). In Convent, Louisiana, Father E. Vignonet, pastor from 1857 to 1863

³¹Raymond Calvert, "The German Catholic Churches," p. 29; St. Mary's Assumption and St. Alphonsus Annual Reports, AANO.

³²St. Stephen Congregation, St. Stephen's Golden Jubilee, 1849-1899, Souvenir, (New Orleans: T. Fitzwilliams and Co., 1899), p. 7; St. Stephen Annual Reports, AANO.

at the Eglise St. Michel, recorded baptizing 76 white children and 119 black children, while in 1861 he baptized 54 white children and 132 black children. At Edgard, Louisiana, Father Modestus Mina, pastor of the St. John the Baptist Church (there was also a St. John the Baptist in New Orleans) in 1860 performed 140 baptisms for white children and 125 for "noir" children. In 1861, Mina performed 230 baptisms for white children of the congregation and 298 for "noir" children. The rural churches always had larger congregations because they served a larger territory.³³

Church authorities did not keep population statistics nor separate statistics for black and white members, only baptismal and marriage records--sacramental books. The hierarchy did recognize social and legal distinctions, however, as church documents recorded whether the black person was free or enslaved. Throughout the antebellum period, African-Americans from every social and economic class belonged to the Catholic interracial churches. Justine Couvant had been a free woman noted for her dark complexion. Henriette Delille was descended from an African slave and was a Creole of light complexion. Men were active Catholics as well. Sam Wilson was a slave who, according to Charlotte Brooks, mocked the Protestant faith. Thomy Lafon, a free person of color, spoke several languages and accumulated a sizable fortune by buying real estate. One of founding members of St. Augustine Church was Louis Barthelemy Rey, a natural son of Joseph Rey and Elizabeth Mirlen. A free person of color, he had emigrated from Santiago, Cuba. He and his wife, Agnes Lacrisle, had been married for thirteen years. He settled first in the Faubourg Tremé,

³³St. Michael and St. John the Baptist Annual Reports, AANO.

then acquired property at 1924 Derbigny, and by 1847 had acquired a building on Bayou Road. Rey contributed to the construction of St. Augustine Church, financed a stained glass window, then supported the parish by renting a pew. Typical of the refugee's second generation, Rey's daughter, Josephine Rey, was the placage, or member of an institution of formalized mistress-keeping, of white immigrant Jean Francois Chatry and bore him eight mulatto children. Other daughters of free people of color joined the congregation of Henriette Delille. Rey's sons, Octave, Henry, and Hippolyte, became well-known for their efforts to help the Union cause. Octave went on to become a member of the New Orleans Metropolitan Police Force of the Fourth Precinct in the 1860s and 1870s. Unlike daughters, sons of free people of color had no avenue to the religious life, if they remained true to their racial identity.³⁴

The movement by slaveholders and their political supporters to alter the practices of the universal churches came to a halt in 1844 after the Supreme Court gave authority over church property to the bishop. Once secure in his authority, however, the French bishop, together with the French hierarchy and French clergy, did not align the archdiocese of New Orleans with the Americanization program long underway in other dioceses. Rather, they followed the ruling of the Propagation of

³⁴For photos and sketches of Holy Family sisters and their students that depicted their complexion and phenotype see Gould and Nolan, Henriette Delille, pp. 6, 16, 18. Toledano, Architecture, p. 94; Lester Sullivan, "Henriette Delille and Sisters of the Holy Family (1813-1862)" Notable Black American Women, pp. 270-272; Stephen J. Ochs, Desegregating the Altar: The Josephites and the Struggle for Black Priests, 1871-1960 (Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State University Press, 1990), pp. 1-48. Bell explained how Henry Rey, son of Barthelemy, converted to spiritualism because of anger toward Catholic priests and Catholic racial oppression; see Revolution, pp. 215-221.

the Faith and treated south Louisiana as mission territory. Efforts at creating a native clergy and establishing parishes was considered less important than conversions and proselytization, particularly of blacks. In the period 1844 to 1861, the interracial churches and their congregants brought tens of thousands of slaves into the universal church and supplemented the work of Holy Family nuns.

During the antebellum period, French-speaking Catholic evangelization of slaves underwent few changes from the colonial period, apart from the work of black Catholic groups and nuns. In 1838, the clergy around St. Peter's Church in New Iberia, Louisiana, offered English catechism for the slaves of Americans with the help of a Vincentian missionary stationed in Donaldsonville, but few other efforts were made in the English language. More typical were the actions in 1850, when the founding pastor of St. John the Evangelist Church in Plaquemine urged slaveholders to have their slaves baptized; the second baptism in the history of the church was that of a male infant, the son of Clarisse, who was owned by Adonis Petit. Other slaveholders brought thirty-eight slaves to be baptized in the first year, to add to the sixty-nine whites and free people of color of the new interracial church.³⁵

If the master approved, French-speaking slaves experienced Catholic church life. Priests certainly welcomed slave membership. In Eglise de Notre Dame des

³⁵Berlin, Slaves Without Masters, pp. 396-397; John W. Blassingame, Slave Testimony: Two Centuries of Letters, Speeches, Interviews, and Autobiographies (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1977), pp. 307-308; Miller, Essays, p. 169; Roger Baudier, One Hundred Years in the Parish of St. John the Evangelist of Plaquemine, Louisiana (New Orleans: Archdiocese of New Orleans, 1950), pp. 10-11; Roger Baudier, St. Peter's Church of New Iberia, pp. 17-18; Bell, Revolution, p. 74.

Anges in Jefferson civil parish, for example, the rector reported on the state of his church and, as an aside, on the state of Catholicism among slaves in his church territory. He reported that there were seventy-two "blanc" parishioners contributing to the church, of whom forty-two regularly attended the sacraments. He reported fifty-four "personnes de couleurs libres" as paying parishioners, of whom twenty-five regularly attended the sacraments. Of these twenty-five, twenty were female, most the wives of a paying parishioners. Most important, the pastor reported that within his boundaries there were 625 enslaved Catholics. He stated that of that total, only 18 were disposed toward religion and well instructed in it. Another 20 had an interest and practiced actively in the church. He believed the rest did not have any interest in religion at all but was not certain because they either lived too far from the church to attend or were forbidden to attend by their masters. Nevertheless, for whites and blacks, the ritual of weekly church attendance in both urban and rural areas did not develop in Louisiana. Among those who did go, females predominated.³⁶

Like the rector of Notre Dame, Charlotte Brooks, a Protestant slave who testified to the fervor of Catholicism among French-speaking slaves of St. Joseph's church near Houma, Louisiana, made clear the numerical strength of black Catholics in the interracial churches of southern Louisiana. In Brooks' case, the isolation of being a Protestant in a Catholic area had been so complete that when she visited Jane Lee, a recent arrival to south Louisiana from Virginia, she became excited to learn

³⁶Report of Eglise de Notre Dame des Anges - Paroisse de Jefferson, c. 1861, "Notre Dame de Bon Secours Correspondence," AANO.

that Jane was not a Catholic. Charlotte was exasperated that, "where she lived the black folks were all Catholics, and she could not do much with them."³⁷

By 1861, with the expansion of churches throughout south Louisiana, the recruitment of clergy from Europe, and the development of an order of native black nuns, the Holy Family Sisters, the universal churches were increasing the number of slave baptisms annually. Although the efforts varied by church, rector, and year, the statistics of all churches indicated an increase of sacraments for black Catholics. The chroniclers of the history of St. Francis de Sales Church in Houma, for example, noted that in the year before the start of the Civil War "quite a number of Negro slaves" were baptized. The notable shift was because of the efforts of the church rector; no black nuns were stationed in that vicinity. Nevertheless, despite the consistent efforts of the Church to attract black members, the proponents of the universal ideal met serious challenges.³⁸

* * *

Throughout much of the antebellum period, the universal church faced a serious, potentially revolutionary, challenge: new Catholic arrivals who did not speak French. At first, they crowded the churches, but soon they built their own facilities. Despite membership in the universal church, non-French speaking Catholics, the Irish and Germans, had difficulty worshipping in existing diocesan churches. Even though

³⁷Octavia V. Rogers Albert, The House of Bondage (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), p. 19.

³⁸Congregation of St. Francis de Sales, St. Francis de Sales, p. 27.

the masses were performed in Latin, the scripture readings and homily were in French. The German and Irish immigrants in the diocese of New Orleans developed separate churches, recruited exclusive ministers and had few contacts with the diocese's French hierarchy. The rural French churches were hardly affected because immigrant settlement in Louisiana was confined to the areas immediately below and above the river from St. Louis Cathedral. Over sixty percent of the French churches were far from the city, and of the eighteen churches in New Orleans, only the ones in the Faubourg Marigny were affected by the initial immigration.

By 1860, 24,398 Irish had settled in New Orleans. The Irish despised Latin Catholicism for several reasons: language, practice, and politics. One Irishman declared, "God spoke English," but in New Orleans worship was in French. The Irish practiced stricter church attendance than the Latins, and the men attended services as frequently as women. Festivals were not as central as in Latin Catholicism, and the clergy received more respect from the Irish. Rather than accommodate to local customs, the Irish avoided the French clergy and bishop. When the Irish obtained their own priests to minister to them, they built and operated their own "national" language churches. The proliferation of such congregations challenged the practices that churches in the diocese of New Orleans were open to all Catholics, no matter their race, nationality, or status. In 1833, within the American district, the Irish built St. Patrick's Church. St. Patrick's became the city's second church and functioned as a pro-cathedral when the St. Louis Cathedral underwent repairs. By 1852, additional churches accommodated the Irish by offering masses in English: e.g.

St. Peter's was located in the Faubourg Marigny of the Third municipal district, and St. Alphonsus in the American section, Fourth municipal district. In 1855, the Irish also built St. John the Baptist church, also in the American sector.³⁹

In the eighteenth century, a small number of German immigrants integrated into the French churches, but as the proportion of Catholics among them increased--in 1830 there were nearly 7,000 Germans in New Orleans--they had the strength to form their own churches as the Irish had. A total of 24,215 Germans had immigrated into Louisiana by 1860. Of these, 19,675 settled in New Orleans. Not all were Catholic, however. Even more than the Irish, the Germans believed "language saves the faith." A German priest said that "religion and nationality go hand and hand." In 1836, German-speaking Catholics with Redemptorist priests had established St. Mary's Assumption church in the Fourth municipal district and, in 1847, Holy Trinity Parish, near the French section in the Faubourg Marigny. Later, in 1856, the Germans, with the Vincentians, built St. Henry's in Jefferson City as a national church. The congregants for St. Henry's derived from the members of St. Stephen's.⁴⁰

³⁹Baudier, Church in Louisiana, p. 273; Niehaus, Irish, pp. 98, 106, 109-111; Dolan, American Catholic Experience, pp. 160-165; Earl F. Niehaus, "Catholic Ethnicity in Nineteenth-Century Louisiana" in Cross Crozier and Crucible, pp. 51, 57, 58; see Michael Doorley, "The Irish and the Catholic Church in New Orleans: 1835-1918," (Master's Thesis, University of New Orleans, 1987), pp. 1-25.

⁴⁰For more on the Germans, see J. Hanno Deiler, A History of the German Churches in Louisiana (1823-1893), trans. and ed. Marie Stella Condon (Lafayette: University of Southwestern Louisiana, 1983); Roger Baudier, Centennial of the Church of Sts. Peter and Paul, 1860-1960 (New Orleans: Archdiocese of New Orleans, 1960), p. 15.

The actions of English and German-speaking Catholics in the culturally French diocese essentially removed them from participation in institutions that served both races. The "national" language congregations were unofficial, and they welcomed black members who came to them. Estrangement of the races, however, developed near the national churches as the immigrants recruited nuns who spoke their own language to staff schools. In 1851, St. Mary's Assumption obtained the School Sisters of Notre Dame from Milwaukee to teach in their school. As the white, non-French-speaking immigrants developed institutions and congregations separate from black Catholics, they altered the landscape of the diocese. The threat was minimal before 1861, however, because the bishop's delay in asserting his authority and the rapid expansion of interracialism, in large measure driven by French-speaking immigrants, prevented the creation of parishes in south Louisiana.

* * *

Nevertheless, in contrast to the rest of the United States, Gallic natives (Creoles) and immigrants dominated the churches in Louisiana in the first half of the nineteenth century. Throughout the period the hierarchy of the New Orleans diocese was composed of French natives. Although anxious to suppress the authority of the trustees, and successful in gaining control of church property in a Louisiana Supreme Court decision in 1844, the French prelates were largely unsuccessful in implementing the American plan for the Catholic Church in the United States. They preferred missionary work. They never attempted to create parishes and did not have success

in establishing a diocesan seminary. The only native vocation they nurtured was an order of black nuns.

The ascendancy of the bishop's authority first over the religious orders of missionaries and then over lay Catholics had posed no threat to the universal ideal. Rather, after 1844, the hierarchy expanded the number of interracial churches and increased black baptisms. The threat to the universal ideal derived from the black nuns ministering exclusively to black persons and black universal schools failing to attract white pupils. Along with separate racial facilities, European immigrants who left the interracial churches because of language difficulties in French-speaking congregations and built their own national churches posed another challenge.

In 1861, the threat seemed minor as there were only two exclusive black schools (one in New Orleans and one in Opelousas) and (no more than five) national churches, all located in New Orleans, in an archdiocese of over sixty churches and hundreds of thousands of French-speaking Catholics. In November 1861, however, Bishop Jean Marie Odin removed the freedom to choose membership in any church when he permanently established interracial and national parishes in the archdiocese of New Orleans. He designated a permanent congregation to each church. Parishes from then on would have requirements for membership that limited the congregation.

CHAPTER 3

AN ARCHDIOCESE DIVIDED, 1862-1866

The interracial churches and congregations of the Archdiocese of New Orleans survived the social traumas of the Civil War and Reconstruction in their antebellum form. A change was made in church structure, however. Although the elements of parishes had been in place as early as 1718, only in 1861 did the hierarchy create parishes in south Louisiana. The attempt to impose boundaries aroused opposition from New Orleans' clergy who preferred members to attend churches of their choice rather than one designated by where they resided. The archbishop's hope that imposing parishes would help the archdiocese of New Orleans conform to standards in other diocese in the United States was dashed by the Civil War, however.

At the same time that the hierarchy attempted to implement the parish system in the archdiocese urban area, diocesan support for the Confederacy angered black Catholics in both the urban and rural areas and transcended any structural changes undertaken by Catholic authorities. The result of diocesan support for the slave regime was a wartime split between many black and white Catholics. The political split even threatened the practice of interracial worship; black Catholics demanded separate churches. Dissatisfied by the clergy's resistance to their fight against white discrimination and their assertion of black civil rights, many black Catholics left the church. Yet, in the turmoil, Catholics maintained their pre-war practices rather than accept the alternatives presented by some black leaders. After the war, parishes

continued to lose black members. Black discontent arose over the weak efforts on the part of the hierarchy to provide schools and, particularly, colleges comparable to those founded by Protestant missionaries. Throughout the period, Catholic freedpeople saw an opportunity for independence and equality in Protestant denominations unavailable to them in the Catholic churches. Many converted to another faith. Yet, French-speaking Catholics in southern Louisiana did not react to the divisions within the Church by creating separate churches, as other denominations chose to do. Rather, they kept their church facilities open to everyone. By 1866, the universal church continued as an institution amidst growing disunity between the interracial congregations and especially between many of the clergy and black Catholics.

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In 1861, the unique interracial developments in the New Orleans archdiocese culminated in the official sanction of parishes. Boundaries that had been imposed since the colonial period conformed to civil limits and were only recognized by clergy in the rural areas as a way to limit their responsibilities over a wide territory. Bishops in antebellum Louisiana had not created canonical parishes and lagged behind the other American dioceses in following the Council of Trent's direction to organize urban areas into parishes, each under the administration of a pastor. Authorities recognized the lapse in the New Orleans archdiocese's development and appointed to head the recalcitrant territory a prelate with a reputation and proven record of administration and organizational skills. Jean Marie Odin had been appointed to bishop of Galveston upon the United States' acquisition of Texas from Mexico and

had been charged with establishing discipline and control over church properties formerly owned by the Mexican government. He successfully obtained legal title to church property, in particular, parish churches, and consolidated the bishop's authority. In 1861, the Frenchman Odin was made Archbishop of New Orleans. Odin was installed as archbishop in May 1861, shortly after the start of the war, and was amazed and distressed to find such a financially strapped diocese in an area with such a large and wealthy Catholic population. Moreover, he thought the city of New Orleans had become an urban area sufficiently large to merit a parish system. Between 1810 and 1860, the city had, in fact, grown from 17,240 to 170,024 people, the majority of whom were Roman Catholic. Odin soon learned that the archdiocese had other problems as well: English-speaking and French-speaking Catholics maintained tense relations and priests acted independently of diocesan regulations. Rather than place blame, Odin, a prelate of great determination, who strictly followed canon law, set out to establish discipline and regularity in what had been an unruly diocese.¹

Odin started his enterprise in 1861 with a program to establish parishes in New Orleans. In defining the new parish boundaries, Odin had to be flexible in applying canon law. He set out to delineate and define parish areas within his diocese by blocking areas on a map, but also sent letters asking urban church rectors what they

¹Baudier, St. Peter of New Iberia, p. 18; Robert E. Lucey, "The Catholic Church in Texas," in Louis J. Putz, ed., The Catholic Church U.S.A. (Chicago: Fides Publishers Association, 1956), p. 228; population figures in Niehaus, Irish, p. 23; population figures found in Joseph Logsdon and Caryn Cossé Bell, "The Americanization of New Orleans, 1850-1900," in Creole New Orleans, p. 206.

thought would be "reasonable limits" for their parishes. Most rectors, all but a dozen being natives of France who ministered to French-speaking congregations, offered streets and other physical features on the landscape as their borders. But Irish-born Cornelius Moynihan of St. Peters' church in the Faubourg Marigny replied that in his municipal district he ministered to three distinct "nationalities," French, German, and English or American. Moynihan made no reference to the race of his population but pointed out that lines could not be drawn to separate the various nationalities and variant language speakers. He therefore proposed making his parish attend to the "English speaking portion" of the district without any intimation as to their nationality (Irish or American). A German priest, Father A. Scheffer, in the French Faubourg of the city also wanted a ministry specifically for German-speakers. Yet Moynihan and Scheffer were exceptions in New Orleans; both acted like clergy in the northeastern United States where the distinctive element of a nineteenth century parish was language, not nationality. Historian Jay P. Dolan has pointed out that in the mid-nineteenth century "the sense of nationality was not yet very well developed among European immigrants." In essence, Moynihan and Scheffer asked that their "national" churches, actually based on the language of the congregation, be made a "national" parish with rights and privileges equal to any other parish.²

Odin agreed to his rectors' suggested boundaries, both "national" and territorial, but he limited the "national" parishes to one each for the German speakers

²Circular letter, John Mary Odin [sic] to Clergy of Diocese, 27 May 1861, Volume I, Bound Pastoral Letters, AANO; Moynihan to Odin, 27 June 1861, "Annunciation Parish Correspondence," AANO; Dolan, American Catholic Experience, p. 162.

and English speakers. All other parishes, even those where a particular national group dominated the membership, were given geographical boundaries. Odin then divided metropolitan New Orleans into four districts and assigned a number to each. Each corresponded to the secular municipal divisions and closely followed ethnic neighborhood lines. The first district (the American sector) included the churches of St. Theresa of Avila, St. John the Baptist, St. Patrick, Immaculate Conception, and St. Joseph. The second district included St. Louis Cathedral, St. Augustine, and St. Anne. The third district was composed of St. Peter, Annunciation, St. Rose de Lima, St. Vincent de Paul, Holy Trinity, and St. Maurice. The fourth district was simply called Lafayette (in New Orleans) and was composed of the Redemptorist order's churches. Moynihan's St. Peters, with no firm territory, operated within the four territorial parishes of the third district's boundaries and was officially designated "for all Catholics of the English tongue within the third district." The other "national" parish, Holy Trinity, became the German national parish within the boundary of the third district. The first district of the four was the only area where English dominated; in it only St. Theresa and Immaculate Conception operated in French, but they were not made "national" language parishes in this single American district.³

Because black and white people lived in every neighborhood of New Orleans and officially became members of the church that had jurisdiction over the area in which they lived, Odin's reorganization posed little problem for the racially inclusive

³Lettre Circulaire, Jean Marie Odin an Clerge De Notre Ville Archipicopale, 21 December 1861, Volume I, Bound Pastoral Letters, AANO.

tradition and practices of the archdiocese. A typical example of a territorial parish was the boundary Odin gave to St. Rose de Lima parish: "the parish is bounded by Dolhonde Street from the Old Basin to Esplanade, up to Tonti, and from there to St. Bernard Avenue; the opposite limit is from the corner of Dolhonde and the Old Basin to the lake (Pontchatrain)." These recorded boundaries allowed Odin to demand that his church rectors become parish pastors and enforce Church law by confining their ministrations to their own parishioners. Odin expected his pastors to celebrate mass; to perform baptisms, marriages, sick calls, and funerals; and to instruct and give sermons in the language of the parishioners. They were also to organize parochial societies for the people within their boundaries. By limiting the parishioners of "national" parishes to their mother tongue, Odin had made the "national" parishes predominately white. Almost all black Catholics spoke French, few spoke English and fewer, if any, spoke German. Because some black Catholics did speak English, Odin neither clarified the rights of slaves nor addressed the status of black Catholics in the "national" language parishes. Interracial parish membership was quite simple except in the first district that had two newly designated territorial parishes, St. John the Baptist and St. Patrick. They were practically all white because they were founded by the Irish, located in white neighborhoods, and traditionally had accepted few English-speaking black members. In the only section where English was predominant, the English-speaking parishes were territorial while in sections where

French predominated, English-speaking parishes became unofficial "national" parishes.⁴

Upon the announcement that Odin had designated parishes in December 1861, the laity and clergy reacted with confusion. Louisianians preferred attending the church of their preference, which was often not the nearest one or the one within whose parish boundaries they resided. To relieve his flock's apprehensions, Odin assured the clergy and laity that the changes brought by the division into parishes would be gradual. He outlined six rules that clarified the relationship between the people and the parish churches during the transition: individuals could rent pews and attend services in the churches of their choice, attend confession with any approved priest, receive extreme unction from the priest they called at the time of their sickness, and fulfill their paschal duty by receipt of Holy Communion in the church where they had a pew or in any other church. Baptisms could, but were not required, to be given in their parish; however, members could have their funeral only in a parish where the deceased had been at the time of death. The circular letter also gave the pastor guidelines as to who qualified for the sacraments and pew rental in their parishes. Within months, however, dismay over parish boundaries had been eclipsed

⁴Baudier, St. Rose de Lima, p. 20. Description and interpretation of pastor's duties described by a diocesan consultant in the matter of "national" parishes in letter from Father J. M. Lambert to Blenk, 02 February 1910, "Dominican Fathers-Miscellaneous Correspondence prior to 1911 (a)," AANO.

by a new and more serious controversy: Odin announced that the archdiocese would support the Confederacy in the Civil War that had just begun.⁵

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In early 1861, for the third time in the history of interracial churches and congregations, a change in civil government threatened to alter the practices and ideals of the New Orleans archdiocese. In March of 1861, the state of Louisiana joined the newly formed Confederate States of America. Its interracial churches had survived the Spanish takeover in 1766 and American takeover in 1803. The composition of the archdiocese had changed during the antebellum period, however. The racial composition of New Orleans had shifted from a black majority in 1830 (26,038 out of 46,085) to an overwhelming white majority in 1860 (144,601 out 170,024). Their new status as a minority coupled with the change in secular authority challenged black Catholics' trust in the interracial practices of the archdiocese. Before the war ended, French-speaking black Catholics would call for separation. The movement was unprecedented because the mother tongue of the secessionists was French rather than English or German and occurred in areas where French language, culture, and traditions predominated. In effect, the opening of hostilities with the United States

⁵Circular letter, John-Mary Odin [sic] to the clergy of our Diocese, 27 May 1861 and pastoral letter of the Most Reverend Archbishop of New Orleans, 16 February 1862, both Volume I, Bound Pastoral Letters, AANO.

of America and the state's return to Federal authority at the war's end divided the interracial congregations by race rather than language.⁶

From the outbreak of war in April 1861, most Catholics in Louisiana backed the Confederacy. Scholars have noted that many immigrants, with Irish and Germans outnumbering all others, rallied to the call for arms. The creole Catholics, natives of Louisiana, both black and white French-speakers, also registered for the Confederate military. Numerous black Catholics responded to the governor's call to organize a militia regiment for the defense of the State. Whether motivated by support of slaveholders and the slave system, hatred of the North, fear for the welfare of their families, or just in need of work, resident Louisiana black Catholics, at first, participated in the preservation of the slaveholding South. Black support was shortlived, however. By late 1862, black Catholics split from the hierarchy's position and welcomed the Federals.⁷

Even before the reversal of black loyalties, black and white Catholics served in segregated military outfits. African Americans formed their own units. The Confederacy recruited an organization designated the First Native Guards, Louisiana Militia, Confederate States of America. Its membership was overwhelmingly free Catholics. Though a few of these black Catholics may have been Confederate sympathizers, historians who studied black military activities have discovered that

⁶Niehaus, Irish, p. 23. Population figures are in Logsdon and Bell, "Americanization," p. 206.

⁷Logsdon and Bell, "Americanization," pp. 216-221.

most probably joined in the hope of improving their increasingly threatened civil and political status by demonstrating their loyalty to their state. Black Catholics, however, did have a martial tradition of serving their civil government, first during the French and Spanish periods, then under Andrew Jackson at the Battle of New Orleans. Some historians pointed out that they may also have been reacting to veiled threats of property confiscation and bodily harm if they failed to volunteer. In all, 900 volunteers filled out thirteen companies of the Louisiana Native Guards.⁸

Thousands of white Catholics, lay and clerical, filled the ranks of other Confederate regiments. Nearly every Redemptorist in the New Orleans archdiocese wanted to serve as a chaplain. The pastors of the interracial St. Mary's Assumption, St. Alphonsus, and Notre Dame de Bon Secours parishes followed their German, Irish and French parishioners into the war. Jesuits, Vincentians, and diocesan priests also heeded the call to serve in the Confederate forces. Then, to confirm the Catholic commitment to the Confederate forces, the French bishop prayed for the side of slavery. Such was the enthusiasm that few priests stayed behind to serve as rectors in the parishes. Not all of the clergy volunteered or even supported the Confederate

⁸Ochs, Patriot," p. 62-63; Roland C. McConnell, "Louisiana's Black Military History, 1729-1865," in MacDonald, Kemp, and Haas, eds., Louisiana's Black Heritage, p. 47; Ted Tunnell, Crucible of Reconstruction: War, Radicalism and Race in Louisiana, 1862-1877 (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1984), pp. 69-70; Mary F. Berry, "Negro Troops in Blue and Gray: The Louisiana Native Guards, 1861-1863," Howard C. Westwood, ed. Black Troops, White Commanders, and Freedmen During the Civil War (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1992) p. 43; see James G. Hollandsworth, The Louisiana Native Guards: Black Military Experience During the Civil War (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1995).

cause, however. The Reverend Claude Maistre, for example, became an outspoken opponent when the pro-Confederate archbishop sanctioned the slave regime in its fight against the United States with the authority and prestige of the archdiocese of New Orleans.⁹

Unionist sentiment simmered among blacks as Archbishop Odin gave the Confederate States of America the institutional backing of the archdiocese of New Orleans. In February 1862, Odin used the occasion of Easter and the annual reading of the bishop's pastoral letter to endorse the Confederacy. The letter, to be read at all masses in all of the churches, urged Catholics to endure the misery brought by the "disastrous war" and to look "with perfect confidence on the result of this conflict in which justice is on our side." Odin also asked God to punish the Federals for their attack on the "people of God." Although not a rabid pro-Confederate diatribe--most of the five-page letter dealt with church obligations--Odin urged all Catholics to support the Confederate cause. A show of support for the large numbers of Louisianians and priests in Confederate service, Odin's pro-Confederate position also revealed his insensitivity to or ignorance of the attitudes of his enslaved members.

⁹Stephen J. Ochs, "A Patriot, A Priest, and A Prelate: Black Catholic Activism in Civil War New Orleans," U.S. Catholic Historian, 12 (Winter 1994): 49-75; Earl F. Niehaus, "Catholic Ethnicity in Nineteenth-Century Louisiana," in Glenn R. Conrad, ed., Cross Crozier and Crucible, p. 52; Roger Baudier, One Hundred Years of the Upper Teche; Arnaudville, Louisiana, 1853-1953 (New Orleans: Archdiocese of New Orleans, 1953), pp. 28-30.

who represented a large percentage of his flock, and testified to his acceptance of black Catholic subordination.¹⁰

Federal occupation of New Orleans suppressed lay and clerical support for the Confederacy and nurtured Union sentiment. The capture of New Orleans and surrounding areas by Union forces in May 1862 forced the hierarchy and clergy to curtail their overt support of the Confederate military. Union occupation forces placed Odin under surveillance but did not take more drastic measures out of respect for his position. Father Napoleon L. Perche, however, editor of the diocesan newspaper Le Propagateur Catholique, angered the Union officers so much with his pro-Confederate stands that they suspended the publication of his paper and placed him under house arrest. Other clergy were left alone. In the parts of the archdiocese under occupation, the Union officers allowed Catholic pastors to perform routine functions and services, but they banned special services or fund raising for Confederate soldiers. In an illustration of compliance with the Union ban made by orthodox black laity after occupation, a black Catholic ladies' society in St. Rose de Lima parish, the La Societe des Fleurs de Marie, diverted the proceeds of a special collection originally intended for Confederate soldiers to the benefit of the Couvant School. At one mass, the collection amounted to \$24.85. For many black Catholics, however, the Union occupation presented an opportunity to express their

¹⁰Baudier, Church in Louisiana, p. 425. Odin's pastoral letter, 16 February 1862, was issued in English and French, both versions are in Volume I, Bound Pastoral Letters, AANO.

dissatisfaction with the support for the Confederacy by the hierarchy and white church members.¹¹

Black Catholic soldiers of the Confederate Native Guards switched sides early in the war. In September 1862, the Federal Army mustered approximately 1,000 black men--some from the Confederate Native Guards--into service with the designation First Louisiana Native Guard Infantry. Most of the men of the First Regiment were Roman Catholic. One of the regiment's officers, Captain Andre' Cailloux, was born a slave, baptized into the Catholic church, manumitted, then married a freedwoman in St. Mary's Assumption Church. The couple's first child was baptized in the St. Louis Cathedral and their second, a daughter, at St. Theresa of Avila Church. Some of the new Federals were members of Annunciation parish. So many of the men in the regiment were French Catholics, that Colonel Stafford, a regular officer assigned to lead the black troops, noted that he had little for the assigned Protestant chaplain to do. Eventually, Second and Third Regiments of Native Guards formed with a composition of freedmen. Bishop Odin did not recruit a Catholic priest for duty with the Catholic Federals. The Catholic clergy, in general, turned their back on the newly formed Federal troops. Black Catholics in the Union Army even faced discrimination at communion and with funeral arrangements. By

¹¹Ochs, "Patriot," pp. 67-68; Baudier, Church in Louisiana, pp. 428, 432; Baudier, St. Rose de Lima, p. 21; St. Rose de Lima Annual Reports, AANO.

the end of 1862, loyalties of black and white Catholics had divided along the Federal and Confederate line.¹²

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The black Catholics of the First Louisiana Native Guards did not have to endure the absence of Catholic clerical succor, however. Father Claude Paschal Maistre, a native of Troyes, France, ministered to the regiment while it was encamped near his church. In addition, Maistre welcomed the black soldiers and their families into the St. Rose de Lima parish congregation. The young French priest not only advocated interracial worship, allowed by Odin's sanction of the interracial parishes in December of 1861, he also acted to expand interracial activities amidst the turmoil. Maistre remained torn between his obligations as a pastor in Odin's pro-Confederate archdiocese and his sense of the moral right of the grievances of his black parishioners. Finally, by Lent of 1862, he spoke out on the contradiction between Catholic teaching on equality and the actions of church officials in support of the Confederate causes, one of which was slavery. Maistre thereby distanced himself from the hierarchy's pro-slavery stance and attempted to promote black political equality in his parish. By late 1863, faced with the paradox that in New Orleans maintenance of the universal ideal of human equality required a compromise with the

¹²Ochs, "Patriot," pp. 59, 60, 62, 65. L'Union covered the discrimination faced by ex-black Confederates: "they spit on them, they closed the doors of the temple to them" For a published source, although selective one, see Bell's presentation of L'Union's coverage; Revolution, pp.242-245. For a comprehensive presentation and interpretation of L'Union's complete coverage of Maistre and St. Rose de Lima, see Geraldine Mary McTigue, "Forms of Interaction in Louisiana, 1860-1880," (Ph.D. dissertation, Yale University, 1975), pp. 36-41.

ideal of interracialism in worship, Maistre, Catholic Union supporters, and many freedpeople opened a biracial, schismatic congregation at St. Rose de Lima similar in conception to the "national" churches sanctioned by Odin. Instead of one based on language, race, or culture, they established a congregation united by support for the righteousness of emancipation and civil rights for African Americans. Resentment over Odin's support for the slave regime that had begun as a rift in the parishes had evolved into a physical split within the archdiocese and resulted in the practical formation of a separate black Catholic parish.

Maistre believed in the universal ideal and the Catholic church's teachings about the equality of all people. Chosen as the first pastor of St. Rose of Lima parish in 1857, Maistre put his ideals into practice in his church. His decision to separate evolved as he discerned the traditional practices in New Orleans being perverted as white members did not work for the social equality of black members suppressed by the slave regime. In 1862, he rejected the prejudice and discrimination exhibited toward the black Federals by his fellow clergymen. That December, Maistre, determined to remove discriminatory parish practices used in most of the newest parishes or those created in the 1850s, such as his. He instituted a single parish register without racial distinctions. He wrote in the new register that he opposed the diocesan regulation that required separate sacramental books for the races. Maistre also assisted black refugees, many of whom were slaves. The determined prelate, with his resistance to the slave regime and outspoken support for emancipation and racial equality, redeemed the faith of black Catholics in their interracial church. Since

nearly all other clergy supported the Confederacy and denounced abolition and equal legal rights for blacks. black Catholics flocked to Maistre who, as one scholar put it, was "a visible sign of the French Catholic tradition that embraced abolition and suffrage." He attracted hundreds to a mass in celebration of the Emancipation Proclamation. Although the Emancipation Proclamation did not apply to all parts of Louisiana, black Catholics celebrated its implications. Black Catholics from other parishes throughout the archdiocese traveled to worship with Maistre at St. Rose de Lima. Slaves, too, went there.¹³

Predictably, Maistre's stand had the opposite effect on most whites. During the bloody military campaigning, when parishioners and clergy served in the Confederate armies and suffered heavy losses and the population endured Federal occupation, Maistre's distinctly Union position angered many in the archdiocese. Maistre's willingness to minister to the Native Guards and their families, while others ostracized them, distinguished him from other pastors. So too did his calling for the elimination of discrimination and the establishment of equal rights. Many of his white parishioners resented the change in their majority white territorial parish after black Union soldiers and their families, and especially runaway slaves, began to attend services in their church.¹⁴

¹³Baudier, Church in Louisiana, p. 413; Baudier, St. Rose de Lima, pp. 18-19; St. Rose de Lima Annual Reports, AANO; New Orleans L'Union, 26 May 1864.

¹⁴Ochs, "Patriot," p. 72; St. Rose de Lima Annual Reports, AANO.

To white Catholics outside of his parish, Maistre appeared to be dividing the two races as well as splitting the archdioceses' black membership. These white critics believed most black parishioners should remain in their territorial parishes. Neighboring pastors resented the trouble Maistre caused. Priests reported that Maistre "incited the Negroes against the whites." Archbishop Odin readily accepted the charge and sought to silence Maistre. He reported to the Congregation of the Propaganda in Rome, a major source of revenue, that Maistre had upset the balance of his interracial parishes by offending the whites under his care by attracting a large number of slaves and free persons of color, and by inciting slave insurrection. Odin failed in his bid to gain Rome's support against Maistre and outspoken black Catholics. Authorities in Rome took action against neither Maistre nor his black flock. After all, the black Catholics had not broken any ecclesiastical rules or regulations. In May 1863, in the absence of support from higher authority, Odin could do little more to suppress Maistre and his followers than suspend the priest and place the parish under interdict as they continued to ignore his demands. With the hands of their local church authorities tied, white parishioners abandoned the parish, much to the disappointment of their zealous pastor who wanted a biracial congregation. Maistre, unwilling to destroy the ideal of interracial worship, occupied the St. Rose of Lima Church and continued to hold mass until Odin convinced the

Federal authorities to compel his departure. By the time he left in January 1864, however, Maistre ministered to a black Catholic parish.¹⁵

Rather than allow St. Rose de Lima to operate as a racial parish, Archbishop Odin ruled that the priest and congregation were in a state of schism. The persistence of Maistre and black Catholics to operate St. Rose despite suspension and interdict forced Odin to declare them schismatics. He closed it down and padlocked the doors. Odin declared St. Rose de Lima church desecrated and warned that any person who worshipped there would "be guilty of a crime" and anyone who did so would be denied burial rights of the Church. White, and some black, members of the St. Rose de Lima congregation, went to the nearby Annunciation, St. Vincent de Paul, and St. Maurice churches for worship. Maistre and other black Catholics did not turn to nearby territorial parishes but rather sought to create a new parish. St. Rose de Lima parish remained viable, however, because under Canon Law parishes could exist without a congregation and Odin re-opened the parish under different leadership seeking to re-establish the parish. In October, 1863, Maistre, who acted without spiritual faculties, and black leaders Etienne Dolliolle, Charles Honore, and Armand Gonzales erected a new church facility on Ursuline and Claiborne Streets in the third ecclesiastical district, the only district with "national" parishes. They named the church Holy Name Of Jesus, perhaps to stress their tie to Catholic tradition rather

¹⁵Ochs, "Patriot," p. 73. Maistre's story is covered by Baudier as well, but it is not as detailed as Ochs' version. See Baudier, Church in Louisiana, p. 412; Baudier, St. Rose de Lima, pp. 23-24; for balance, Bell presented the controversy from the L'Union's perspective, Revolution, pp. 244-245.

than to draw attention to its racial nature. During the church's first year, 1864, black baptisms numbered 150 while there were no white baptisms. By comparison, in 1862, Maistre in St. Rose had baptized 65 white children and 23 black children; in 1863 Maistre had recorded 175 baptisms, "most of them Negroes," in St. Rose of Lima.¹⁶

In the schism, Odin and his fellow clergy had underestimated both the importance of abolition to black church members and their resentment of white racial prejudice. Many black Catholics as well as many non-Catholic African Americans attended Holy Name church where issues important to them but ignored in other congregations were addressed for the first time. In this church, African Americans celebrated the 1864 state constitution that abolished slavery, offered prayers for the Equal Rights League, and led a march to Congo Square to mourn Lincoln's assassination. The publishers and editors of the black newspapers, L'Union and its successor, the New Orleans Tribune, covered and reported on Maistre's sermons and activities. The black press applauded and trumpeted Maistre's equal rights position as well as his stand against his fellow clergy on black rights. The papers then attacked the archbishop and Catholic clergy for their racism.¹⁷

Maistre's creation of a separate racial church infuriated Odin. He described the Holy Name congregation as "a great number of irreligious and ignorant Negroes

¹⁶Pastoral letter, May 16, 1863, Volume I, Bound Pastoral Letters, AANO. St. Rose de Lima Annual Reports; John T. McGreevey, Parish Boundaries: The Catholic Encounter With Race in the Twentieth Century Urban North (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1996), p. 11; Baudier, St. Rose de Lima, pp. 19, 26.

¹⁷See L'Union May 14 and 31, 1864; New Orleans Tribune, January 13, 14, and 22, 1865, October 1, 1865, December 1, 1867, January 9, 1869.

who consider him [Maistre] as a virtuous persecuted victim for the love that he carried for their race." The separation vexed him more than black opposition to his support for the Confederacy. The black congregants were in a state of schism, and their bid for independence challenged the authority of the bishop but also undercut his effort to bring order and organization to the archdiocese. The radical new church went against the interracial practices and customs of worship in the archdiocese at a time when the appearance of runaway slaves at regular services portended a rush on Catholic facilities that had earlier baptized slaves but, because of slaveholder oppression, had few slaves actually attend. Nor did Odin have a scheme for racial parishes to handle the influx in his newly drawn parish boundary maps. Catholic church doctrine and teaching did not recognize skin color differences. The black church threatened the traditions of south Louisiana's Catholicism.¹⁸

Odin never acknowledged Holy Name Church. White Catholics seldom, if ever, attended it. Nor did many in the large black Catholic population go there. Holy Name neither appeared in the Catholic Directory nor became a sanctioned Catholic Church. Its sacramental records later were stored with those of St. Rose de Lima. Without ecclesiastical rights, the popularity of Holy Name had dissipated by 1867. In fact, that year its membership declined rapidly. The New Orleans City Directory continued to list it as a Catholic church until 1872 when it disappeared from its listings. Despite Maistre's overtures, Odin never received him back into regular parish work with completely restored priest faculties. In 1870, however, after the

¹⁸Odin quoted in Ochs, "Patriot," p. 73.

death of Odin. Maistre resolved his battle with the archdiocese with a written apology published in the diocesan newspaper.¹⁹

The conservative Odin had outlasted the radical black Holy Name church. During the war years, black Catholic leaders' protest and rhetoric had been unrelenting because the hierarchy was an "accomplice of secession" while black Catholic leaders actively supported the United States. The fight with Odin had been a power struggle over divided loyalties in the Civil War. French-speaking black Catholic laity also followed a biracial French Catholic tradition of lay authority against clerical authority in which both sides had legitimate rights and concerns. Black Catholics honored Maistre with an invitation to the state convention of African Americans in 1865 and by asking him to give daily prayer at the 1867-68 constitutional convention. In 1870, Father Maistre received an appointment as professor of modern languages in Straight University's collegiate department and delivered one of the principal addresses at Straight's first commencement exercises. Maistre was unique. Too few black and white Catholics followed the lead of Maistre and black leaders to develop a black "national" parish.²⁰

Language was important in Odin's decision to repudiate racial parishes. In the 1860s, Odin did not create separate racial parishes or additional French territorial parishes. Sufficient territorial parishes accommodated the French-speaking population.

¹⁹Catholic Directory, annually from 1866-1872; New Orleans City Directory, annually from 1866-72; Ochs, "Patriot," p. 73.

²⁰L'Union quote in McTigue, "Forms of Racial Interaction," p. 40.

Odin's official recognition of a German and English speaking "national" parish in 1861, but not a French-speaking black "national" parish a couple of years later in 1863, indicated Odin's belief that the black separatists split from his parish system over issues of authority in south Louisiana and not over needs for worship, schools, and other social services. Odin was wrong to focus on politics. More black Catholic schools were needed and churches faced seating shortages in the wake of emancipation.

In November 1863, Odin received an appeal, from another group of French-speaking black Catholics, independent of the efforts of Maistre and Honore, to form a separate parish. It came from the *Congrégation Unioniste de Bienfaisance*, a benefit society, founded in 1813 by Haitian refugees. It requested mercy, guidance, blessing and an interpretation of regulations needed to fulfill their goal of building a Catholic church. The *Congrégation* wanted to have the archbishop's blessings and support as well as to meet the prescriptions of Canon and civil law. The members would raise the money themselves "to acquire a piece of land in one of the quarters of this city [New Orleans], to build a Catholic Church, especially destined for the use of our population, and remaining forever our property during our lives, reversible at our deaths to our children and their descendants until the end of time." They proposed to name the church, St. Abraham, with Abraham Lincoln as patron, whom they desired to honor for his deeds in ending slavery and the cruelty it brought to their "population." The church would, forever, celebrate universal liberty. The parish was not intended for the exclusive use of black Catholics, although black Catholics

proposed black Catholic ownership and use and, presumably, the speaking of French.²¹

Odin did not act upon the request. Odin did not wish to dismiss such an old and respected Catholic group as the *Congrégation Unioniste* as "irreligious" or as people interested in dividing the races, but he did not want to give title to church property to a lay group. Catholic bishops had spent nearly half a century ending trusteeism, and Odin did not intend to undo what had been accomplished. Odin also did not have the financial resources to maintain such a church, or even to assist in its financing. Although he was never asked to provide financial support by the *Congrégation Unioniste*, Odin would have had to provide a pastor; doing so would have cost money as well as opened the possibility of demands to have a pastor of the congregation's own choice. With the costs of war burdening the archdiocese, Odin had no choice but to work with the facilities on hand to do the job of accommodating black Catholics. He therefore rejected the *Congrégation*'s request. In asking for a memorial to the action that broke "the irons which have restrained our brothers in a long and painful slavery," the *Congrégation* stirred up issues the archbishop had long worked to eliminate.²²

²¹"*Congrégation Unioniste de Bienfaisance Preamble*," 17 November 1863, "Negro Church Protest Against building colored missions, 1888-1894," AANO; original preamble translated by Trinette M. Robichaux; charter of the *Congrégation Unioniste de Bienfaisance*, 28 October 1896, Mortgage Office Book 565, folio 558, New Orleans Mortgage Office.

²²Quote from 1863 *Congrégation Unioniste* petition.

The push for separation by French-speaking blacks was not confined to the period of military activity. After the surrender of Robert E. Lee in April 1865, Odin faced various requests from French-speaking black Catholics for the establishment of new churches, both territorial and "national" parishes. As the slaves left the plantations and the Federal government recognized their freedom, Catholic churches that were already crowded before the war had to accommodate nearly twice the number of worshippers. On January 23, 1866, Odin turned down a request by French-speaking "colored Creole Catholics" in New Orleans for their own separate parish church and a priest of the "African race." With the end of hostilities easing the shortage of priests as they returned to the parishes, Odin would not even hear of black priests serving in his archdiocese. Odin's response to the request went unrecorded but he did not heed the petition. Along with the sticky issue of black pastors, the war had drained the resources of the church and the personal resources of its memberships. In rural areas, also where "national" parishes were unheard of, black Catholics wanted a separate parish. For reasons similar to those that affected his response to the request by the Congrégation Unionist, Odin refused the request of black parishioners in St. Martinville, Louisiana, after Victor Rochon petitioned the state legislature to repeal an 1858 statute that allowed only whites to incorporate churches there. The impetus toward black "national" parishes indicated that the rapid pace with which progressive French-speaking black Catholics worked to

"Americanize" the French archdiocese had shocked their conservative French clergy.²³

Like the congregations of English-speaking and German-speaking "national" language churches that had protested the imposition of boundaries, French-speaking black Catholics in New Orleans wanted separation. Black Catholics had tried to protect their civil rights and dignity--rather than language--by creating separate parishes during the years of war and Lincoln's Reconstruction. Black Catholics opposed Odin's support for slavery, embraced emancipation, and challenged elements of subordination exhibited by white clergy and congregants when African Americans joined the Union cause. In establishing Holy Name Church and requesting the sanction of the hierarchy for additional black facilities, they expressed their unhappiness with the existing system of interracial parishes without abandoning their church. However, they did not gain the support of the hierarchy and pastors--except for Maistre. The French prelates did not entertain black French-speakers' requests for separate racial parishes. Black Catholics had been ignored; any movement to segregate had been labeled schismatic, and official sanction withheld. The clergy and white members considered that the black schismatics were radicals and that most black Catholics preferred to remain in the interracial congregations. Neither Maistre nor

²³Charles Vincent, Black Legislators in Louisiana During Reconstruction (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University, 1976) p. 161; Ochs, Desegregating, p. 38. The request was made by Achille Glaudin, P. F. Glaudin, and Joseph Blanchard. Names were provided by Stephen Ochs.

the Congrégation Unioniste assembled sufficient--approximately 2,000--numbers of black Catholics to support the movement for French-speaking, black parishes.

In late 1866, the joy and happiness of emancipation continued to run deep within the African American community. Without separate racial parishes to develop their new freedoms and rather than tolerate the obstinacy exhibited by the French hierarchy and white Catholics toward their wartime goals and aspirations, African Americans were left frustrated by their attempted reforms within the traditional structures of the church. The destruction of the Confederacy, however, removed political differences with the hierarchy. At the same time, though, post-war integration and equality divided the African American community. For some, such as the former congregants of Holy Name church, racial subordination and white prejudice in some parishes removed any sense of privilege or dignity that came with freedom and Union victory. They felt that continuation of antebellum treatment was unbearable and un-American. For others, the opportunity to be members of congregations and to have access to church facilities and clergy equally with whites and former masters meant partial fulfillment of their ideas of equal rights. The Civil War had divided the congregations, but most Catholics remained in their antebellum churches.²⁴

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²⁴Eric Foner, Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877 (New York: Harper and Row, 1988), p. 91; for black radical perspective on the Catholic church see Logsdon and Bell, "Americanization," pp. 233-234.

The Civil War and the ex-slaves exercising their rights had a greater and more widespread impact on the interracial parishes when white Catholics challenged the freedpeople for influence in the churches. In the spring of 1862, the appearance of a Federal army in southern Louisiana was an occasion for despair among white, and some black, Catholics. While slaves welcomed the Union military with cheers all along the levee of the Mississippi River, virtually all whites including Catholics, treated the blue clad troops as the enemy. Women who cursed the Federal soldiers became famous examples of disdain. White animosity toward the United States continued through presidential Reconstruction and continued occupation by federal troops and the appearance of the Freedman's Bureau. Of greater concern for white Catholics than the presence of armed soldiers, however, was the change in society wrought by their presence. The movement of ex-slaves from the plantations into New Orleans, after the city's occupation by Union troops, provided the slaves' freedom. One of the most significant events in American history, the emancipation of slaves, in no small way tested white support for black equality in parish congregations. Moreover, because white Catholics were unwilling to recognize black equality, many blacks left the church.²⁵

During the war, clergy who had neither joined the Confederate army nor spoke out for the Union, as Maistre had, served as pastors of predominately female

²⁵For examples of Catholics' reactions--lay and religious--to Federal troops, see, for example, David C. Edmonds, Yankee Autumn in Acadiana: A Narrative of the Great Texas Overland Expedition Through Southwestern Louisiana, October-December, 1863 (Lafayette: The Acadiana Press, 1979).

congregations. Even in the early post-war years, the antebellum pattern of limited male attendance at services continued, in part because of battlefield deaths. After 1860, black baptisms continued at their antebellum pace. As freedpeople occupied more space in the sanctuaries, pastors in several churches--overworked because many priests had left with the troops--along with white members adopted new means to subordinate and control black membership. In 1862, as thousands of slaves poured into New Orleans from surrounding plantations, Father Gabriel Chalon of St. Mary's chapel adjoining the bishop's residence greeted the attendees with newly segregated seating arrangements: whites sat up front, mulattoes in the middle, and slaves in the rear. In New Orleans, former free persons of color, literally caught in the middle, publicly protested the seating arrangements as well as treatment of mulattoes by priests at St. Mary's. Then, after emancipation, they watched in despair as three-tiered seating became two-tiered, black and white. Freedpeople and free people of color also faced white lay prejudice. A priest, for example, that black Catholics were put in an "unhappy mood" and took "offense" when they were told by ushers that they were "mistaken" in wanting to enter a Catholic church because as black persons they must be Methodists.²⁶

There was an element of white fear of emancipation at work when freedpeople attended churches throughout the archdiocese. After the war for the first time, at St.

²⁶Congregation of St. Francis de Sales, St. Francis de Sales, p. 27. Quote from unnamed priest in Edward J. Misch, "The Catholic Church and the Negro, 1865-1884," Integrated Education, 72 (November-December, 1974), p. 38; Bell, Revolution, p. 243; Eric Foner, Nothing But Freedom: Emancipation and Its Legacy (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1983), pp. 3; Baudier, St. Peters, p. 28.

Joseph's church in Thibodaux, for example, Father Charles M. Menard, pastor there since 1842, reserved thirty pews for his black parishioners. Despite this allotment, Menard was quoted as saying he did not allow any black people in his church, "with the exception of his colored cook." He really preferred to have separate priests and churches for African Americans. Behind Menard's bigotry was the concern that too many African Americans would upset the racial harmony in his church during the social traumas of emancipation. To maintain an acceptable balance, Menard wanted only "faithful" African Americans to rent his pews. Unfortunately, Menard left no record of who, other than his cook, qualified as faithful, but certainly "faithful" implied someone who had attended services and rented pews before the war and, perhaps, were female. A priest, who witnessed Menard's actions, said Menard's discrimination was particularly excessive because he "had a personal grievance [unspecified] against the colored race."²⁷

Menard was not unique. In St. Louis Cathedral during 1866, a visiting English priest and a founder of the Josephites, the St. Joseph's Society of the Sacred Heart, a missionary order devoted exclusively to work among African Americans, noted that a wealthy black Catholic man who rented a pew located in a fine spot near the church's altar could not sit in the pew he rented because of his dark skin. The black man's white wife could sit in it, but he had to sit farther back in the area designated for African Americans. Renting a pew to a black member but not allowing

²⁷Gassler to Baudier, 31 August 1941, "Baudier Materials, 1941-1948," AANO; Philip D. Uzee, "Father Charles M. Menard: The Apostle of Bayou Lafourche," in Cross Crozier and Crucible, p. 386.

him to use it was extraordinary. Usually subordination in Louisiana took less dramatic form. A diocesan priest testified that after the Civil War several interracial congregations allowed black members to sit only in segregated pews nearest to the church entrances. A few churches even had special entrances for black persons. In another cases, black members were allotted a fifth of available pews. In Opelousas, at St. Landry parish church, an attempt to ignore the separate seating met harsh a reaction. Paul DeClouet, a white parishioner and pew renter at St. Landry, recorded in his diary that one Sunday in April, 1868, he had "put a negro wench out of [his] pew at church." The attempt to make black Catholics inferior, according to one priest, developed when "whites began to complain that they could not rent sufficient number of pews in the churches." Nonetheless, the unwillingness to accommodate all persons damaged the reputation of the universal church.²⁸

The appearance of large numbers of freedpeople that so frightened whites also affected free people of color who rented pews. Again in St. Landry parish in Opelousas, in April, 1867, the trustees for the first time refused to sell pews on a first- come, first-serve basis and insisted on auctioning segregated seats. The former free people of color boycotted the auction. The church rested on ground donated by a former free person of color, Martin Donato, and the church traditionally had opened seating to everyone. Anxious to keep the boycotters in the congregation, the trustees

²⁸John G. Snead-Cox, The Life of Cardinal Vaughn 2 volumes, (London: Burns and Oates, 1910), Volume I, pp. 167-171; Gassler to Baudier, 31 August 1941, "Baudier Materials, 1941-1948," AANO; McTigue, "Forms of Racial Interaction," p. 127.

offered former free people of color separate seating from freedpeople--a move that only angered the former free persons of color because of its apparent white paternalism. Besides the boycott and the stand against white subordination, the freedpeople complained to the Freedmen's Bureau that more than thirty families had been effectively excluded from services because insufficient numbers of pews were available for them. The Freedmen's Bureau asked Odin to follow the laws of the United States at the next pew auction, but it then learned that segregated pews were available and that the acts of Congress did not have the authority to overturn the rights of a legal parish corporation.²⁹

Although segregated pews for black members were numerous, former free people of color refused to sit with former slaves; hence, the lack of available space for freedpeople continued. Without recourse, then the freedpeople faced discrimination both from whites and from free people of color. Geraldine McTigue, in her study of St. Landry civil parish's race relations, argued that the distinctions made by African Americans in the Catholic churches typified the relationship between freedpeople and former free people of color in general after emancipation. After the

²⁹J. Amrien to William H. Sterling, Office of the Assistant Superintendant, Post Commissioner, Bureau of Freedmen in Louisiana, 30 April 1867, Record Group 5, Records of the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, Box 8, National Archives; Howard A. White, The Freedmen's Bureau in Louisiana (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1970), pp. 158-159. White presented the St. Landry Parish pew protest based on the records of the Freedmen's Bureau after the April report. McTigue analyzed the protest from the account in the New Orleans Tribune, 30 April 1867. McTigue, "Forms of Racial Interaction," pp. 150-151.

former free people of color did not win equal status for all. "they struggled to hang on to their in-between position."³⁰

During federal occupation and the attempts to Americanize the archdiocese by the Freedmen's Bureau, social distinctions recognized by the Catholic Church from its beginnings in Louisiana persisted but were transformed in a society that no longer had slavery. In the immediate post-war years, when congregations faced seating shortages and pastors decided who would be allowed to rent the pews set aside for blacks, there was a selection process. Black and white members placed value on antebellum social status. Among black and white Catholics, there were attempts to distinguish the former slave from the free person of color. According to historian Frances Woods, for the latter, in particular, their antebellum status, according to historian Frances Woods, "became a kind of symbol that could be manipulated to distinguish former light skinned free persons of color and their descendants, from the darker people, whose color was symbolic of slavery." Instead of trying to be white, free people of color avoided being black. The compensation could be a higher status in the Catholic churches because they had been born free or gained their freedom by means other than the Federal government. Many assumed that if an African American was Catholic, that person must have been free before the war. A French priest, who served in rural New Iberia and urban New Orleans, expressed this view when he wrote that "the majority of the colored population, that is to say, those who have colored blood but are not black in color, are and remain Catholics. The true black,

³⁰McTigue, Ibid.

old slaves, or their descendants, black in blood and color, are always great children who easily change religion, because they have no instruction" Black Catholics "will not associate with the blacks, though they rank among the colored" observed a Catholic nun. Culturally, one could be a dark-skinned black Catholic and be distinctive from light or dark-skinned Protestants. Later, as Louisiana Catholics adopted English and began to lose their French culture, membership in the Catholic Church usually meant a person of French heritage who had been a free person of color before the war.³¹

That black Catholics lost seats in a Catholic church weakened the universalism of the archdiocese, particularly when initiated by the pastor. Discrimination in allowing everyone entrance to the church building removed people from the sacraments. Seating shortages could be addressed by adding masses or even building another church, but discrimination by white and former free people of color toward freedpeople had no remedy. Prejudicial attitudes forced many freedpeople to raise concerns the Catholic hierarchy did not address to their satisfaction.

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³¹Interpretations and themes detailed in Anthony, "Creole," pp. 24, 47-48; L.A. Chasse to E.R. Dyer, 6 May 1887, 12 DY 28, Josephite Fathers Archives, (JFA); Sister Frances Jerome Woods, Marginality and Identity (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University, 1972), p. 67. For further discussions, see, for example, Howard N. Rabinowitz, Race Relations in the Urban South (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978); pp. 198-225; William A. Osborne, Segregated Covenant: Race Relations and American Catholics (New York: Herder & Herder, 1967); H. Shelton Smith, In His Image, but . . . Racism in Southern Religion 1780-1910 (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1972); George M. Fredrickson, The Black Image in the White Mind: The Debate on Afro-American Character and Destiny, 1817-1914 (New York: Harper's Row, 1971); Austin Carroll to Slattery, 24 November 1888, 4-B-13, JFA.

The hierarchy's refusal to recognize African Americans as equals in renting pews and to discriminate against people because of their social status in seating was intolerable to freedpeople. Thousands of members left the Catholic Church. For example, of three Catholic slaves from Opelousas--Frances Doby, Henry Reed, and Mary Ann John--who followed Union soldiers to New Orleans, two became Baptists. Late in life, Reed recalled that whites and blacks worshipped in the same Catholic Church, but that he left Catholicism to become a Baptist preacher. The switch was easier, he said, once he learned English and became "a real American." Not allowed by the hierarchy to form "national" parishes to exert independence and to handle overcrowding, free people of color also abandoned the interracial parishes. Rudolphe Desdunes wrote years later that although he "was reared in the Catholic faith," after the Civil War he "ceased going to church owing to the prejudice shown in the churches." Protestant denominations, spiritualist movements, and Masonic lodges welcomed African Americans. By 1867, the unique French-speaking Catholic archdiocese in the United States was set to lose its black membership.³²

The hierarchy in New Orleans did not provide any English-speaking facilities for black Catholics, and the Irish churches allowed few black members, even while fifteen thousand English-speaking blacks fled into the city from the countryside. This constituted racial discrimination, according to Protestant converts. The French archdiocese of New Orleans only allowed independence to foreign language groups, not to freed and free people of color who wanted more control over their religious

³²Sample and quote from McTigue, "Forms of Racial Interaction," pp. 140-141.

life. African Americans wanted more influence in the decision-making of the church. Also after the war, many freedpeople in south Louisiana viewed the Catholic Church as their oppressor; many of the slaveholders had been Catholic, and the Church had supported slavery and the Confederacy.

Prior to and after the war, Catholics came into conflict over jobs. Work, specially menial labor, so much needed by freedpeople, went instead to Irish and German immigrants. Fears emerged among freedpeople about Italian laborers being imported to replace ex-slaves. African Americans perceived that jobs went to Sicilians or whites before black people. Because the immigrants were Catholic, many African Americans associated the unruly immigrants with the Catholic church. Disenchanted with the limited opportunities allowed by the Catholic hierarchy and discrimination within the congregations, many African Americans were attracted to other associations.³³

The African American Protestant denominations, in contrast, had much to offer. All-black Methodists and Baptist denominations allowed independence from white supervision and black control of all aspects of the church. Their congregations collected money and spent it as they desired and chose their own preachers. Black

³³For discussion of contemporary views of black Catholics on race relations and religion see Rudolphe Lucien Desdunes, Our People and Our History, trans. Dorothea Olga McCants (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1973); as well as Charles Rousseve, The Negro in Louisiana: Aspects of His History and His Literature (New Orleans: Xavier University Press, 1937), pp. 99-100, 108-109. For relationship with other Catholics see, Robert L. Brandfon, "The End of Immigration to the Cotton Fields," Mississippi Valley Historical Review, 50 (March, 1964): 591-601; Arnold Shankman, "The Image of the Italian in the Afro-American Press," Italian Americana 4 (Fall/Winter, 1978): 30-49; Logsdon and Bell, "Americanization," p. 232.

men controlled the liturgy and the sermons. Moreover, to become a Protestant minister did not require a long and specialized education, which cost a lot of money and time many African Americans did not have.³⁴

Take the case of Pierre Landry, a child of a white master and a slave mother who had been raised a Roman Catholic in civil Ascension Parish and baptized and confirmed in the Catholic Church of Ascension. Landry recalled being a member of a large confirmation class of black and white youths in the presence of the bishop. In 1862, at the age of twenty-one, he converted to Protestantism under the guidance of a group of Methodist slaves. After the war, during the initial stages in the formation of a Methodist district in Louisiana, Landry recruited a number of former Catholics "who followed me into the Methodist Church" and helped found St. Peter's Church. By 1872, Landry received ordination and became pastor of St. Peter's.³⁵ Self-proclaiming that he had been impressed by the robes and jewelry of the clergy, Landry certainly felt called to be a minister, but for him or someone like him to have been ordained a Catholic priest would have required the sponsorship and money to travel and study in Europe--an imposing task that few undertook. As a Protestant,

³⁴See, for example, Donald G. Nieman, series ed. African-American Life in the Post-Emancipation South, 1861-1900: A Twelve Volume Anthology of Scholarly Articles (New York: Garland Publishing, 1994), vol. 9, Church and Community Among Black Southerners 1865-1900 by Donald G. Nieman; E. Franklin Frazier; The Negro Church in America (New York: Schocken Books, 1974); John Blassingame, Black New Orleans, 1860-1880 (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1976); H. Shelton Smith, In His Image, pp. 258-305; Rabinowitz, Race Relations in the Urban South, pp. 198-225.

³⁵William E. Montgomery, Under Their Own Vine and Fig Tree (Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State University Press, 1993), p. 102.

Landry obtained his ordination within the South. Most converts, of course, did not become ministers; their reasons for conversion fit few patterns.³⁶

The number of black Protestant churches increased dramatically in the city of New Orleans after the Civil War, a reflection of the black population doubling but also testimony to the popularity of Protestantism. Prior to the war, African Americans operated at least three Baptist churches, three Methodist churches, and one African Methodist Episcopal chapel. In a little over ten years after the end of hostilities, African Americans in the city operated twenty-one Baptist, five black Congregational, and seventeen Methodist Episcopal churches. New Orleans' forty-three African American Protestant churches outnumbered the twenty-two interracial Catholic Churches. Most black Catholics who left for the Protestant denominations, however, were English-speaking. Since they represented the fastest growing segment of the black population--as the English language came to predominance in Louisiana after the war--this pattern did not portend well for the Church's future among African Americans. A few converts even attended interracial Protestant churches. In south Louisiana, the archdiocese lost an estimated 60,000 black Catholics, though whether they ended up in a Protestant denomination in Louisiana or just left Louisiana was not certain. They no longer supported the unique interracial parishes of south Louisiana.³⁷

³⁶Gillard, Catholic Church and Negro, pp. 34-35.

³⁷New Orleans City Directory 1867, p. 539; New Orleans City Directory 1878, p. 842-843; Bell details how many French-speakers became masons or spiritualists, Revolution, pp. 187-219.

Rather than attribute the black Catholic exodus to white assertiveness in maintaining antebellum seating arrangements that still recognized the subordination of former slaves and free people of color, Catholic officials in Louisiana blamed the departing, former black Catholics as well as the Protestant missionaries for the exodus of freedpeople from the church. Catholic clergy complained about the arrival of northern preachers and the multiplication of ministers for whom, Auguste Martin claimed, "the only qualities necessary are some good lungs and enough 'gifts of gab' in order to be able to [sic], for hours to [sic] digress in absurdities." Auguste Martin, a native of France and bishop of North Louisiana, so resented the black flight from Catholicism that he wanted to return to the days of the slave system. Martin argued that under slavery, African Americans had material comfort and happiness, protection, stability, work. Since the war and emancipation, "dupes of puritanical quackery" allowed the African American to "follow by instinct his natural inclination" to lead a nomadic life and steal what he needed for survival. The clerics also watched as hundreds of baptized black Catholics "run towards our rivers . . . to be baptized anew by the first extemporaneous preacher." The Catholic clerics believed marriages, blessed by the church and of several years standing, were disrupted and replaced by cohabitation. The foreign clergy, especially, resented the American Protestant efforts. Like most of white society, the clergy feared that the black population resorted to theft

and pillage. Intolerance and prejudice toward freedmen, exemplified in Martin's comments, dampened the meaning of interracial worship, equality before God.³⁸

Although the exodus threatened the Catholic Church's relationship with African Americans, an estimated 100,000 black Catholics remained in the Catholic church to uphold the antebellum tradition of interracial worship. Northern missionaries and Protestants sometimes acknowledged the strength of the faith among Louisiana's black Catholics. In the 1870s, Octavia V. Rogers Albert, wife of a black minister, Reverend A.E.P. Albert, and also a former slave and Methodist convert, interviewed former slaves in Houma, Louisiana, and expressed surprise at the popularity of the Catholic Church. She had asked freedpeople whether they continued to support a Pope who had recognized the Confederacy and assisted in the perpetuation of the Civil War. She found the situation odd: "it is strange, however, that we find that here in the South among Catholic churches we don't see the caste prejudice so clearly manifested among all the other denominations." Nevertheless, she wondered why any black person could belong to a church whose authorities believed "God has made the black man to serve the white man." American Missionary Association ministers in Louisiana, such as Reverend J. W. Healy, used black ministers to attract converts

³⁸Bishop Auguste Martin to Lyon Society for the Propagation of the Faith, 6 October 1867, original in Archives of Diocese of Alexandria.

only to discover that most African Americans stayed in their denominations. Most African Americans in south Louisiana considered the Catholic churches their own.³⁹

In the 1860s, one reason to stay even in the face of seating discrimination was language--Protestant denominations were overwhelmingly English-speaking. Mother Austin Carroll, superior of the Sisters of Mercy and a native of Ireland, worked in the American sector of New Orleans upriver from the French Quarter. Recruited by the Redemptorists to teach in all their parish schools, the Sisters of Mercy began work at the French-speaking Notre Dame de Bon Secours parish school. Luckily, the talented Carroll spoke French, so the Irish nun worked with all the French Catholics in the American sector. She also left a record of unusual insight. She referred to the French-speaking population as "creoles," without regard to color. She noted that the only racial problems that she encountered in an interracial congregation at Notre Dame de Bon Secours had been the disruption of her plan to have "mulattos and blacks walk together as a unit in a procession." She learned that neither group would walk with the other, so the procession had to be arranged into two units. That Mother Austin did not specify whether mulatto implied light skinned and former free person of color or the legal definition of "mulatto," a person 50 percent black blood and 50

³⁹Albert, Bondage, p. 70; Richardson, "Failures," p. 267. In a report on the status of black Catholicism in New Orleans written in the early 1890s, a reporter wrote "the freed slaves here of Catholic owners cling to the faith in which they were raised with a tenacity that is wonderful, considering their ignorance, while they strive their utmost to bring their children up Catholics. Many of the older ones of the race who once bore the yoke of slavery are truly pious and edifying and during the ceremonies of Holy Week not one church did I visit without seeing therein a goodly number of them." Article in The Colored Harvest, 2 [October, 1892]: 14.

percent white blood, was not as significant as the presence of all skin shades receiving sacraments and worshipping together in parishes that spoke the same language. Despite the biracial and cultural divisions, the challenge to interracial worship in parishes was lessened as long as congregants literally communicated in the same language.⁴⁰

To a large extent, the pastors limited white discrimination in the parishes. In St. Francis Regis parish in Arnaudville, Louisiana, for example, the increased freedpeople's participation and presence in the congregation was encouraged by the Jesuit Fathers, who demanded tolerance by white parishioners. The number of whites who took sacraments there before the war usually outnumbered blacks two to one; but in 1865, 1866, and 1867, black members closed the gap and in 1868 more blacks than whites were baptized. In 1869, black marriages performed at St. Francis climbed to twenty-two, from a low of three in 1867. Like Maistre and Menard, the Jesuits at St. Francis were French, and maintained a strong cultural bond with former free people of color and freedmen who communicated in French. Apart from Maistre on one extreme and Menard on the other, the clergy generally resembled the Jesuits by preaching the universal ideal and trying to lure African Americans into the Church.⁴¹

⁴⁰Hermenia Muldrey, Abounding in Mercy-Mother Austin Carroll (New Orleans: Habersham, 1988), p. 389 n. 175.

⁴¹Baudier, Arnaudville, pp. 23,42. St. Augustine Parish of New Orleans had from its creation positioned slaves in the side aisles of the Church. "Plan desmontrant de situation des bunes de la cathedrale," c. 1870s, Kuntz Collection, Manuscripts Department, Howard Tilton Memorial Library, Tulane University, New Orleans, Louisiana, revealed the layout of pews, their prices, and the areas open for rent to "familles de couleur."

* * *

During the war and its immediate aftermath, the hierarchy's tolerance of even limited racial subordination by clergy and laity discredited the archdiocese's attempts to preserve the universal ideal. The refusal to allow black "national" parishes left African Americans little choice but to bear the subservience or abandon the practice of their faith. Odin had dismissed Maistre's argument that he had acted to preserve the Catholicism of many African Americans who had been scandalized by the clergy's support for the Confederacy and hence had threatened to leave the church. Odin defended church institutions rather than his members' human rights. He appeared to have acted from racial prejudice when he suppressed black Catholics who had broken no church rules and only sought to uphold the teachings of the church. The issue of separate racial parishes that appeared in the archdiocese with Maistre and the black Catholics of Holy Name concerned more than the questions of black rights and independence. It involved the relationship between all Catholics and their parish institutions--churches, pastors and bishops--and the commitment of Latin Catholicism to interracialism. Some clergy let down blacks when, in the power struggle with whites over seating, they sided with white members. The 60,000 African Americans who left found subordination intolerable, and only 100,000 remained with the church in the late 1860s. With the exodus, French-speaking black Catholics were not the only proponents for separate facilities. English-speaking bishops and clergy in dioceses across the country agreed with black grievances and initiated discussion about segregating parishes. An alliance between French-speaking black leaders and English-

speaking clergy never materialized. When the national hierarchy proposed sanctioning the segregation requested by French-speaking black Catholics, black Catholics reversed their stand.⁴²

⁴²John Gillard was the first scholar to pursue the accuracy of black population statistics reported by the Archdiocese of New Orleans. He assumed the higher estimates were inaccurate. Gillard wanted a truer accounting in his work as a Josephite missionary. See his correspondence with Roger Baudier as they hammered out acceptable numbers, Gillard to Baudier, 08 August 1941; Baudier to Gillard, 19 August 1941; Baudier to Gillard, 20 August 1941; Baudier to Gillard, 23 August 1941; Baudier to Gillard, 25 August 1941; and Baudier to Gassler, 28 August 1941; all in "Baudier Materials, 1941-1948," AANO. The number they calculated was in the 160,000 range. The confusion over the quantity of black Catholics stemmed from the fact that despite the post-war increase in black participation in the churches, there was also an exodus to other denominations. Quite simply, during the slave regime, slaves and their clergy always considered slaves Catholic despite white members and free people of color not seeing them at services.

CHAPTER 4

ARCHDIOCESE REUNITED, 1867-1888

During the 1860s, even when relations between French-speaking black Catholics and the hierarchy were tense, most Catholics in south Louisiana continued to adhere to the universal ideal by maintaining the status quo. In 1866, however, challenges to the interracial practices in the archdiocese of New Orleans came from a new source. That October, the national Catholic authorities proposed the creation of separate Catholic churches and the use of missionaries who would minister only to black Catholics. The national authorities even considered having a special bishop for black Catholics. French clergy, who dominated the archdiocese throughout the period 1866 to 1888, dismissed the national authorities' directives about conversion of Protestant freedmen as inapplicable to south Louisiana, where the effort to keep African Americans in the parishes and prevent a further exodus to Protestant denominations. With strong black support, French-speaking clergy in south Louisiana did not react to the wartime and post-war divisions within the Church by creating separate all-black churches under special ministers, as national authorities and religious orders wanted them to do. Instead, the hierarchy, clergy, and congregations successfully kept their church facilities open to everyone and provided resources to build more schools for blacks. Education, however, also involved co-religionists speaking different languages that only increased divisions among parishioners. Throughout the period of Republican rule, French-speaking Catholics divided over

schools. Many Catholics opposed secular schools because they believed such institutions spread anti-Catholic or Protestant ideas. White Catholics resisted secular education and the encroachment of the English language. French-speaking black Catholics, particularly freedpeople, put education before language, even, religion. By the 1880s, the expansion of black Catholic education continued the antebellum paradox that to maintain the practice of universal worship required the support of segregated Catholic education.¹

* * *

American church leaders challenged Louisiana Catholics in their attempts to maintain the status quo of interracial worship and segregated education. The defeat of the Confederacy and political Reconstruction by the United States gave American Catholic leaders the opportunity to advance their program to Americanize all of the diocese. Because of emancipation, the American Catholic Church added a new element to its program of asserting diocesan authority and creating parishes: separate facilities for black and white members. After the war, Archbishop Odin disagreed with the national movement toward racial separation. At issue was the role of the parish in creating a post-war American Catholic church and ultimate removal of the United States' status as missionary territory. To assimilate all Catholics into American society, parochial schools became a central institution in the parish. In

¹For observations on reaction of French Catholics to early post-war American education that stressed the division between French-speaking Acadians and French-speaking Creoles, see White, The Freedmen's Bureau in Louisiana, pp. 183, 199. For a comparison of Acadians and African Americans in Opelousas, Louisiana, see McTigue, "Forms of Racial Interaction," p.150.

1865 and 1866, French-speaking south Louisianians preferred the status quo of segregated education--whites not seeking education in black Catholic schools or from black religious--while resisting the call for segregation by national authorities. Moreover, providing education, even segregated education, succeeded in keeping black members from joining other denominations during the mid-1860s. The official historian of the archdiocese of New Orleans concluded that if more schools had been available, there would not have been the black exodus from the interracial parishes.²

Even as it was, the archdiocese of New Orleans resisted change. During the war and its aftermath, French-speaking black Catholics had not challenged the tradition of separate education. They wanted access to it. Religious orders of women, for example, who had operated nearly all of the antebellum schools in south Louisiana, faced the possibility of closing their facilities after the Federal victory and emancipation because plantation owners became poverty stricken and no longer supported private instruction.

In the rural areas, the Sisters of the Sacred Heart had before the war used two plantations to fund their academies for upper-class white girls and their convents near Grand Coteau and Convent, in St. Charles and St. Michael ecclesiastical parishes. In 1863 when Federal forces occupied Convent, a community upriver from New Orleans in St. John the Baptist civil parish, the slaves demanded payment of wages to work the nuns' plantation. Unsuccessful in obtaining financial remuneration, the freedpeople then demanded that the nuns provide an education in place of money. In

²Baudier, Church in Louisiana, p. 434.

1865, when the Confederates in the area around the nuns' second plantation at Grand Coteau, in St. Landry civil parish of southwest Louisiana, surrendered to the Federals, the slaves there made the same demands and received education in recompense. The nuns simply could not afford to pay freedpeople in wages. Of the nearly twenty-five slaves working on the two plantations, only one, a woman, left. The rest remained and signed contracts with the nuns that stipulated that the freedpeople would work for an education and spiritual care. The nuns provided them private instruction; in 1867 and 1868, at both locations they built schools that accommodated former workers of the plantations and hundreds more freedpeople. Black Catholics on the plantations wanted education and their efforts kept antebellum facilities open and operating.³

Like rural schools, the urban schools struggled in the hard times. As south Louisiana tried to rebuild economically from Federal defeat and Federal occupation, yellow fever epidemics in the mid-1860s further slowed recovery. New Orleans' population suffered greatly because municipal services could not keep pace with population growth. Many died in the overcrowded conditions. Although the entire population suffered, clergy arriving in the city after the war commented on how French-speakers among the Catholics "felt the pangs of poverty." Economic conditions posed little problem to interracial worship as the churches thrived and pew rents were collected. Education was adversely affected, however. The absence of tuition-paying students forced the Ursulines to cut back services at their historic girl's academy. The black Holy Family sisters struggled to find resources and paying-

³Louise Callan, The Society of The Sacred Heart in North America, pp. 523, 539.

students. More free schools were needed, as some whites and former free people of color, who had once paid tuition but could no longer afford to pay the nuns to educate their children, competed with freedpeople for places at free Catholic and public schools. The clergy struggled to find students to pay tuition.⁴

The crisis faced by Catholic educators in post-war Louisiana did not lead to any fundamental changes in the concept of separate education being a fundamental part of the universal ideal. While nuns were open to any method to keep services available, their attempts to desegregate Catholic schools met with harsh reaction. Black parents sending their offspring to the same classes with white children upset many clergy and white parents. In one case, whites protested and took the black families to court. Reaction to mixing freedpeople and former free people of color were less spectacular than ending up in a civil court: nuns reported they attended the same classes but that former free persons refused to sit next to those former bondsmen. Desegregation of Catholic schools required the laity to provide greater support for the nuns, however. The concept of integrated education had other obstacles. During Reconstruction, even if integrated, the nuns' academies did not have the capacity to educate the tens of thousands of freedpeople. Nonetheless, most black Catholics supported segregated schools because adults used teaching positions to be Catholic ministers and children needed a hard-to-find education. While attaining the priesthood was a difficult process, becoming a teacher in a Catholic school had

⁴Anonymous, Leaves from the Annals of the Sisters of Mercy in Four Volumes, Volume IV, Containing Sketches of the Order in South America, Central America, and the United States (New York: P. O'Shea Publisher, 1895), p. 406.

traditionally been a viable opportunity. Since 1836, young women could join the Holy Family sisters. Yet, young women and men need not have joined a religious order to be Catholic missionaries. In early 1866, nuns supported a "mulatto" girl who established a school for black children in St. Michael ecclesiastical parish. Jesuit priests taught catechism at an all-black school established by a black man near Opelousas. Although the nuns' academies survived the hard times, the urgent need for more schools, any schools, for the tens of thousands of freedpeople became a bigger priority than questioning the skin color of the teacher.⁵

In 1865 and 1866, priests in south Louisiana recognized the benefit that building more black schools had on their proselytization efforts. The parish ministers learned education was most important to freedmen. Witnesses, like layman John Bonner in rural Louisiana, noted that freedmen moved "with a specific goal in mind--often, to work on a plantation which had a school." In response, priests attempted to provide schools. Priests of St. Landry Parish in Opelousas, for example, established St. Joseph's school for black children. Other pastors provided stipends to pay teachers, buildings to house the classes, as well as furniture and books to operate the schools. While successful in keeping freedpeople in the parishes, efforts that depended on the individual pastors and religious communities were insufficient, especially when compared to the organized and well-funded efforts of the Freedmen's

⁵M. Florita Lee, "The Efforts of the Archbishops of New Orleans To Put Into Effect the Recommendations of the Second Plenary Councils of Baltimore with Regard to Catholic Education (1860-1917)," (Master's Thesis, Catholic University of America, 1946), pp. 50-52; Baudier, Church in Louisiana, pp. 433-434.

Bureau and the American Missionary Association. French clergy, like black Catholics, realized schools would be essential in preserving the faith among African Americans and maintaining traditional parish facilities. Black Catholics sought religious, as well as academic, instruction in the Catholic schools. They expected facilities and teachers (in ability) equal to those provided to white members. To meet the large demand required clergy to seek assistance outside of Louisiana.⁶

* * *

With the emancipation of millions of slaves, not just Louisiana's but America's Catholic leaders worried about the great numbers of freedpeople and the weak relationship between the Catholic Church and African Americans. Authorities in Rome demanded that the American bishops undertake efforts on the national level to convert the freedmen because church officials other than those in Louisiana had never really addressed the problem. The Church had little presence in the other southern states where almost all African Americans lived. In 1866, the Catholic Church had an unprecedented opportunity to affect the lives of millions of people. Perceiving the magnitude of the opportunity, the bishops agreed to hold an extraordinary session of the Second Plenary Council of Baltimore to shape the church's mission to the freedpeople. Opened in Baltimore in October, 1866, the

⁶Bonner quote in McTigue, "Forms of Racial Interaction," p. 117; Lee, "Efforts of Archbishops," p. 43; Baudier, One Hundred Years, p. 32; efforts of pastors recorded in Archdiocese of New Orleans Statistics of Catholic Education, "School Reports," AANO.

special session prepared to hear proposals from Louisiana's Bishop Odin who had been charged with preparing the discussions and panels.⁷

In the years before the assembly, the Jesuits had successfully operated a black parish, St. Francis Xavier in Baltimore, which proved that the idea of segregated parishes could work. Clerics in the rest of the United States endorsed the principle. In 1865, Patrick Lynch, archbishop of Charleston, South Carolina, advocated separate black parishes. Augustine Verot, bishop of St. Augustine, argued that, in general, something must be done by the church for African Americans and that separate parishes were a possibility. Some of these leaders advocated separation for racist reasons. Lynch, for example, not only wanted separate parishes but even expressed a desire to create a separate colony for the freed slaves. There was no consensus, however, on what the church should do. Except for Odin, the bishops of the dioceses in the South acknowledged that of the large numbers of African Americans in their territory, few were Catholic. The assembly therefore deferred making a decision until it heard the opinions and arguments of bishops with greater black Catholic populations--those in Baltimore and New Orleans.⁸

⁷Edward J. Misch, "The American Bishops and the Negro from the Civil War To The Third Plenary Council of Baltimore (1865-1884)" (Ph.D. dissertation, Pontifica Universitas Gregoriana, 1968), p.135; see also discussion of Plenary Council in John Philip Kirrane, "The Establishment of Negro Parishes and the Coming of the Josephites, 1864-1871" (Master's thesis, Catholic University of America, 1932).

⁸John T. Gillard, The Catholic Church and the American Negro (Baltimore: St. Joseph's Society Press, 1929), p. 40; Misch, "American Bishops," pp. 96-105; John C. Murphy, "An Analysis of the Attitudes of American Catholics Toward the Immigrant and the Negro, 1825-1925," (PhD. dissertation, Catholic University of America, 1940), p. 58; Michael Gannon, Rebel Bishop: Augustin Verot, Florida's

Bishop Martin John Spalding in Baltimore and Odin of New Orleans held opposing opinions, however. Spalding, who had been instrumental in making black Catholicism a topic of the Council, urged greater efforts in building and funding black missions and black parishes; he also advocated special ministers to work exclusively with African Americans. Odin, on the other hand, rejected separation of blacks and whites into separate parishes. Worship should be interracial. Odin did accept separation of black and white children into schools operated by the religious orders who worked among both races. He also urged greater efforts for black schools.⁹

Odin first had to convince the delegates that south Louisiana was not exceptional. Representatives assumed light-skinned blacks (referred to as mulattos) wanted equality with whites, while dark-skinned blacks wanted separation from whites. Odin explained that the well-known "middle group" between blacks and whites had, along with Maistre, led the attempt to create a schismatic parish. In fact, these black Catholics were in the forefront of the demand for separate churches to achieve equality for all African Americans. Yet the connection between separate churches and equal status posed for many a dilemma--did separate mean equal?--that was left unresolved. Apart from his support for the traditions in his archdiocese, Odin felt African Americans should not be treated differently from white members. He believed in his own archdiocese that sufficient care had been provided to the

Civil War Prelate (Gainesville, University Press of Florida, 1997), pp. 105-114.

⁹Views of Spalding quoted in John C. Murphy, "An Analysis of the Attitudes of American Catholics toward the Immigrant and the Negro, 1825-1925," pp. 57-59.

African Americans within the interracial churches. Although he felt increased numbers of missionaries were needed in the rural areas, no new churches should be started for African Americans. Odin did not think that any discrimination existed between black and white Catholics; hence separate churches, much less separate services, were unnecessary. He felt the practices in New Orleans churches suitable to deal with new social conditions brought about with the removal of chattel slavery.¹⁰

In his fight to maintain the tradition of mixed congregations, Odin received support from another cleric. William Henry Elder, bishop of Natchez, also opposed segregated churches. Elder felt that interracial churches were the ideal, but that African Americans after centuries of enslavement were not in a position to assume an equal place with whites in Catholic churches. Elder, however, did not have an answer to the question of how to bring the Catholic faith to the freedpeople, whom he felt needed special instruction to learn Catholic conceptions of morality. Even with Elder's support, Odin failed to persuade many Catholic leaders at the Council that interracial churches were the correct means of both uplifting the freedpeople and recognizing their new independence. Odin's position did not mollify fears that white prejudice was more severe within interracial congregations. Furthermore, his case was undermined at the extraordinary session because, as the debates made clear, pre-conceived notions about the Crescent City and its "in-between" people put the

¹⁰See Misch, "American Bishops," p. 157 for summary and translation from Latin of Odin's Schema, Titulus 13 no. 4., which contained Odin's argument for integrated parishes.

interracial parishes in a peculiar light. The fear of race mixture expressed by the clerics had been a major element of American politics for a century. It formed a basis for slave laws and restriction of free people of color in southern society. The concerns remained paramount after the war. At the Baltimore plenary council, several bishops blamed people of mixed parentage for the lack of interest in separate racial churches. Many clergy reached the conclusion that the Archdiocese of New Orleans was exceptional and its situation was not as useful in formulating a policy as had been hoped. Odin had failed to convince them otherwise, but he clearly made an impression on the assembly. The New Orleans prelate prevented the adoption of separate racial parishes as church policy. Instead, the debates produced no policy at all and left the bishops to act according to the conditions in their diocese. At least one bishop felt greater effort needed to be expended to convert freedmen.¹¹

Spalding, archbishop of Baltimore, possessed a broader outlook than Odin's and after the meeting traveled to Europe to solicit help for African American evangelization. Spalding concluded his visit in England with recruitment of missionaries from the newly founded (1866) St. Joseph's Society of the Sacred Heart for Foreign Missions. He wanted the Josephites, as they were known, to convert the nearly four million freedpeople of the South. Still other bishops, including Verot of St. Augustine and William Gross of Savannah, recruited a few missionaries to minister to African Americans in their territory. Verot recruited eight Sisters of St.

¹¹Misch, "American Bishops," p. 155, presented detailed views of bishops in the southern diocese; Foner, Reconstruction, p. 321.

Joseph, and Gross obtained two Benedictine monks. New Orleans, however, followed its traditional course.¹²

In Louisiana, the national hierarchy's preference for racial parishes would have lumped together French-speaking free people of color, freedpeople, and Protestant African Americans into one homogenous race of people and placed them in all black parishes. Such an approach was not in the spirit of Maistre, Holy Name or the Congrégation Unioniste because white members would be officially excluded. Proposed all-black parishes would also blur the actual divisions among black people in south Louisiana that "had resulted," according to bilingual former slave, newspaper editor, and convert to Methodism A. E. P. Albert, "not so much from perpetuation of antebellum lines of division as from difference in language and religion."¹³

The bishops' resolutions to solve the problems of black subordination and white discrimination through segregated churches and special ministers for the races gained few advocates in south Louisiana. While national church authorities were convinced by the success of Protestant denominations in converting freedpeople that the Protestant system of separate churches was the proper approach to proselytize African Americans, the experience in south Louisiana revealed that interracialism preserved the faith of black Catholics. Odin's refusal to require black worshippers to attend separate churches was an effort that historian Eric Foner found "attracted"

¹²Misch, "American Bishops," p. 263; Gannon, Verot, pp. 105-114; Davis, Black Catholics, pp. 119-120.

¹³A. E. P. Albert quoted in Bell and Logsdon, "Americanization," pp. 216-217.

freedpeople because African Americans were treated on terms of equality while former free blacks "coexisted harmoniously with the city's French and Irish white Catholic population." As late as 1871, the founder of the Josephites, Bishop Vaughn, could not convince any clergy in south Louisiana to work exclusively with blacks. He learned that the local clergy preferred ministering to both races. With their support, Odin resolved to stop blacks from leaving the Catholic Church and perhaps to even attract new converts by preserving interracial churches and establishing more segregated parish schools for blacks.¹⁴

* * *

Interracial churches and segregated schools preserved the parish pattern from the days of the repressive slave regime and presented little challenge to established relationships. Indeed, for the territorial parishes, the addition of schools expanded the universal ideal among the congregations because the two races that worshipped together in the churches would maintain dual schools from monies they both contributed in the church. Nevertheless, the archdiocesan plan still sanctioned separation in education. As Odin implemented his plan, he met with mixed reactions in the urban and rural areas. Rural parishes were slow to build parochial schools; rural Catholics relied on female religious orders to build schools, but maintained interracial worship. In New Orleans, however, Catholics supported the opportunity to have interracial worship in the churches in addition to parochial schools in their

¹⁴Foner quoted from Reconstruction, p. 91; Anonymous, Annals of Sisters of Mercy, pp. 404-405.

parishes--except during the 1870s, when equality of races caused problems in some areas of the city, particularly among English-speaking Catholics.

After 1867, with the addition of parochial schools, parish facilities in southern Louisiana formally consisted of a church building and parochial schools, one for blacks and another for whites. A parochial school was a school where the whole plant--property, building, furniture, books--belonged to the parish and was operated by clergy. There were also quasi-parochial schools where the school property and plant were owned by a religious community but otherwise operated like a parochial school. Private Catholic schools were supported, usually owned, by the parish but operated by lay people. Academies were Catholic primary or secondary schools operated by religious orders and lay persons, independent of parish ministries. Throughout the late 1860s and through the 1880s, the addition of more than fifty parochial schools made race relations in the integrated parishes stronger than ever as black Catholics formed an alliance with the bishop, French clergy, and white members to ameliorate conditions.¹⁵

To make the system of segregated schools and integrated churches equal for blacks and whites, Odin encouraged several orders to perform educational work among blacks. He persuaded the Oblates of Providence of Baltimore, the first black order of nuns in United States, to open a school for black children in Annunciation Parish and paid 200 dollars for their transportation to New Orleans. Black nuns were

¹⁵Definitions standardized in 1910, but the distinctions by ownership date from Odin's tenure.

few, however, and black Catholics preferred the same teachers provided white children. White parents did not send their children to black teachers. The Oblates left after a few years. Odin then requested the orders already established in New Orleans, who had not thus far extended education to black Catholics, to do so. Odin asked the Madames of the Sacred Heart to set an example by expanding their exclusive upper class ministry to African Americans in the city. Upon his request, the local superior wrote her adviser: "he begs me to tell you that our Holy Father has recommended to him the care and salvation of these poor black people, and he urges us to take up the work of teaching the little Negro girls in the parish here, promising that he will not insist on the continuation of the work, if it proves detrimental to the convent." The nuns feared that opening their facilities to black girls would threaten white parents' support. Despite their concerns, however, the Sacred Heart sisters felt they had sufficient "prestige" and opened a school for black girls. Odin also found additional support from black Catholics. Medard Hillaire Nelson, born in New Orleans in 1850, had traveled to Paris to be ordained a Catholic priest, but gave up his studies in order to return home to care for his siblings after the tragic death of his parents. Nelson used his vast education and experience--he spoke seven languages--to open a private school on Burgundy Street in the city. Based upon Catholic principles, his school operated within St. Louis Cathedral parish and welcomed blacks, whites, Indians, Italians, rich and poor.¹⁶

¹⁶Roland Lagarde, "A Contemporary Pilgrimage: Personal Testimony of Blessed Katherine Drexel's Charism," U.S. Catholic Historian 8 (Winter/Spring, 1989): 48; Roger Baudier, Souvenir Book-110th Anniversary of Annunciation Parish, Sunday.

Although the number of parochial schools rose dramatically, the diocese did nothing to provide higher education for blacks. The Protestants, in contrast, provided their converts with higher education. The Baptists founded Leland College, the Methodists, New Orleans University, and the Congregationalists, Straight University. Straight even included medical and law schools for African Americans. Black Catholics had to attend these schools for secondary and higher education because no other schools were available. Doing so hurt their pride as Catholics and also sorely tested their faith. Catholic students underwent attempts at Protestant proselytization. They also saw the use of French decline as the schools operated in English.¹⁷ Nevertheless, black Catholics in the archdiocese of New Orleans fostered and nurtured interdenominational alliances with all African Americans, not just Catholics, and took advantage of assistance provided by Protestant missionaries. Black Catholics

November 21-Sunday, November 28, Marian Year, 1954 (New Orleans: Archdiocese of New Orleans, 1954), p. 9; Sally K. Reeves, "The Society of the Sacred Heart in New Orleans," in Cross Crozier and Crucible, p. 224; DeVore and Logsdon, Crescent City Schools: Public Education in New Orleans, 1841-1991 (Lafayette: The Center for Louisiana Studies, University of Southwestern Louisiana, 1991), p. 70.

¹⁷See William Preston Vaughn, Schools for All (Lexington: University of Kentucky, 1974), pp. 85-100; Roger A. Fischer, Segregation Struggle in Louisiana, 1862-1877 (Urbana: University of Illinois, 1974) pp. 101, 115-117, 133-157; James O. Anderson, The Education of Blacks in the South (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press 1988), pp. 188-194; New Orleans Crusader clipping, undated, circa 1881, Charles Rousseve Collection, Box 2, folder 17, Amistad Research Center; DeVore and Logsdon, Crescent, pp. 25, 29, 37, 47, 61. DeVore and Logsdon detail the French populations' loyalty to their language. The contemporary Irish Louisianians did not understand the French resistance to the teaching of English.

composed nearly half of the student body and faculty at Straight University, an institution sponsored by the Congregationalist's American Missionary Association.¹⁸

Catholics used the training received at Protestant institutions to get jobs in secular schools where they fostered the Catholic faith. For example, Sylvanie Francoz Williams migrated from Opelousas and became a member of St. Joseph's parish. She had planned to enter the convent but switched to dispensing Catholicism through higher education. She joined the faculty at Straight and taught French. In the public schools, as well, black teachers attempted to perpetuate the use of French, the language of the Catholic church. A former student recalled that attending a public school with Catholic teachers was similar to attending a Catholic school: "we were in a public school [Bayou Road] but it was also a private school--if you can imagine that." Officials at Straight realized that their university seemed to advance Catholicism rather than Protestantism, and by the 1870s the Congregational ministers required all students to attend religious services. Many Catholic students resented having to go. There was nothing to replace Straight, however. The Catholic schools were unprepared to educate the large Catholic population. The Catholic religious as well as the black Catholic laity only provided education through the eighth grade.

¹⁸Joe M. Richardson, Christian Reconstruction: The American Missionary Association and Southern Blacks, 1861-1890 (Athens and London: University of Georgia Press, 1986), pp. 131-139; Joe M. Richardson, "The Failures of the American Missionary Association to Expand Congregationalism Among Southern Blacks" in Church and Community Among Black Southerners, 1865-1900 ed. Donald G. Nieman (New York, 1994), pp. 262-275.

The church did not sponsor a black Catholic secondary school or university. The religious orders of nuns were missionaries, often without training as teachers.¹⁹

In the 1870s, because of the growing Protestant pressure and the weakness of Catholic schools, black Catholics asked their fellow parishioners and clergy for more money and help. Additional nuns arrived in the archdiocese: Carmelites, Ursulines, Marianites, Sisters of the Holy Cross, Sisters of St. Joseph, all of whom taught black children. But schools for higher learning were not established, so black Catholics found other means to the education they sought. Eventually, black Catholics adopted the secular Southern University, created by the Louisiana legislature and built in New Orleans, as an institution to advance their faith.²⁰

By 1870, Catholics in south Louisiana had supported the status quo Odin fought to preserve in Baltimore among the bishops of the American dioceses.

¹⁹Quoted in Anthony, "Creole," p. 98-99; for a study of the hierarchies view of public education see Bernard Julius Meiring, Educational Aspects of the Legislation of the Councils of Baltimore, 1829-1884 (New York: Arno Press, 1978); Rousseve, Louisiana, 138-145; Robert Meyer, Jr., Names Over New Orleans Public Schools (New Orleans: Namesake Press, 1975), pp. 219-221. See report on state of black Catholicism and the problem with schools in letter from L.A. Chasse to E.R. Dyer, 6 May 1887, 12 DY 28, JFA. Almost all religious orders have published works on their activities' in which a common theme is of their adaptation to the environmental. An excellent work about the nuns' activities in New Orleans is in Muldrey, Abounding p. 119; Richardson, Christian, p.105, Benedict Westrick, "The History of Catholic Negro Education in the City of New Orleans, La. (1724-1950)" (M.A. thesis, St. Mary's University, 1950), pp. 120-121.

²⁰Westrick, "Education," p. 1-121; Lee "Councils," p. 39-78. For discussion of African Americans and Southern University, see Charles Vincent, A Centennial History of Southern University A. and M. College, 1880-1980 (New Orleans: Southern University, 1981) as well as Ulysses Simpson Lane, "The History of Southern University: 1879-1960" (Ph.D. dissertation, Utah State University, 1969).

Although in need of clergy to work in south Louisiana, Odin refused to build separate parishes or recruit special ministers for black Catholics. Pressed by national authorities to build Catholic schools in all parishes, Odin decided that the archdiocese would help the pastors and interracial congregations operate parochial schools equally, if on a segregated basis. Between 1866 and 1870, the impoverished archdiocese used its resources to build a school for each group, black and white children. Their success slowed the black Catholic exodus to Protestant denominations and helped preserve interracial parishes.

* * *

After 1870, the challenge to build equal schools was exacerbated by the inability of advocates of interracial churches to hold off the national authorities' push for segregated parishes. As old adversaries reunited under the guidance of the hierarchy and use of a common language, their defense of Louisiana's system lost adherents as English language use became more widespread in parish churches. In 1870, Odin passed away. His replacement Napoleon Perche was more of a traditionalist than Odin, so the New Orleans' French hierarchy did not waver in its support for building interracial parishes. The French laity, however, particularly the youngest members, were learning English. The younger generation, therefore, came to find little use for churches that did not conduct services in English. According to the new archbishop, "if churches be necessary for the present generation, they would be useless for the generations of the future, who would desert them," if Catholic schools did not preserve the language and culture of the faith. If French territorial

parishes disappeared, the capacity for multiracial worship, an element of the universal ideal, could disappear as well. Formerly Gallic white Catholics had the freedom to attend the Irish parishes where black members were largely excluded. In fact, the populations of the English-speaking congregations of St. Peter, St. Patrick, and St. John the Baptist multiplied in the 1870s and 1880s, no doubt because of their proximity to the French sections of the city. Many pastors wavered in their support of the universal ideal as the expense of operating non-English churches and schools increased because of the loss of new French-speaking parishioners.²¹

Despite the new challenge posed by the ascendancy of English as well as old challenges from the Protestant denominations and fellow bishops, Perche continued his predecessor's efforts to build segregated parochial schools in integrated parishes. Perche, a native of France who assumed the archbishop's position at the age of sixty-five, recruited, among others, the Sisters of the Perpetual Adoration from France to build schools for French-speaking black and white Catholics. While he built more segregated schools, Perche attended to the seating shortages that led to racial discrimination in the churches. Yet Perche did more than maintain the status quo. An ardent opponent of Americans and Americanization, he had become famous for using his newspaper the Le Propagateur Catholique to attack the Know Nothing party in the 1850s and then the Federals during the Civil War. After the war, he resisted

²¹Perche quoted in Lee, "Efforts," p. 67; St. Peter had an original population of 2,500 and by the mid-1890s it had 5,000, Sts. Peter and Paul Annual Reports. St. John the Baptist originally had 3,000 population that by the mid-1890s had reached 7,000, St. John the Baptist Annual Reports, AANO. St. Patrick's original population of 2,000 peaked at 3,000 in mid-1890s, St. Patrick Annual Reports, AANO.

any assimilation of Catholics into American society. His defense of anything French led to the expansion of interracialism when, between 1870 and 1877, he established twenty-five new chapels and churches that served both blacks and whites in the rural parts of the archdiocese. Perche also introduced unprecedented equality between black Catholics and German Catholics in New Orleans. Altogether, his measures added to the strength of Louisianians' defense against national church authorities and use of the French language.²²

Late in Odin's tenure, the Germans had continued to fill the pews at Holy Trinity, which never had black parishioners. In 1869, German Catholics requested permission to construct another church because their "national" facility, Holy Trinity, was overcrowded and too distant from the German settlements that stretched as far as Lake Pontchartrain, more than five miles away. In response, Odin had allowed the Germans to build another parish on Lapeyrouse and North Galvez streets with a 6,000 dollar loan from Holy Trinity parish. Odin died during the church's construction, however. When Perche assumed the archepiscopacy, he used the opportunity of the building of another German parish to introduce French-speaking Catholics, most of them black migrants recently arrived in New Orleans from the rural areas, as members of the congregation. The combination would increase the size of the congregation, furnish more resources, and provide French-speakers facilities that were non-English. Rather than create a German "national" parish or a territorial parish, Perche created a new type of parish that had neither boundaries nor a mother tongue;

²²Baudier, Church in Louisiana, p. 443.

its distinction was that it was non-English speaking. The homilies and readings would alternate by mass between French and German. Composed of 50 percent German and 50 percent French (most of whom were black), the St. Boniface parish proved successful. For the first time, Germans and French shared a church. Together, the congregation built German and black parochial schools.²³

By 1872, the over 20,000 African Americans who moved to New Orleans had become too numerous around St. Boniface for that parish to accommodate the Catholics among them. Perche sanctioned another parish, Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, a regular territorial parish to serve a multi-national, multi-racial population. It also drew from the defunct Holy Name, the all-black church founded by Maestri during the war which was located approximately a quarter of a mile from Our Lady of the Sacred Heart. Our Lady of the Sacred Heart became a center for many of the French-speaking black migrants who arrived in New Orleans. Perche built only one other territorial parish in the city during his tenure--Sacred Heart of Jesus--on Canal Street for a French-speaking, interracial congregation.²⁴

²³Baudier, Church in Louisiana, p. 415; Anthony, "Creole," p. 140; New Orleans Tagliche Deutsche Zeitung, 01 August 1871, p. 8, c. 2; New Orleans Tagliche Deutsche Zeitung, 10 September 1871, p. 8, c. 4; St. Boniface Annual Reports, AANO. Raymond Calvert attributed Perche's action to refuse another German "national" parish to the French hierarchy's hostility toward Germans because of France's humiliation in the 1870 Franco-Prussian War. Although plausible because of Perche's defense of anything French, the argument did not explain why Perche worked to integrate French and Germans in St. Boniface; it would have been an odd way to show anti-German hostility, Calvert, "The German Catholic Churches of New Orleans," pp. 90-92.

²⁴Our Lady of Sacred Heart Annual Reports, AANO; Sacred Heart of Jesus Annual Reports, AANO.

In the late 1860s and early 1870s, Italian immigrants also settled amidst the Germans and French-speaking migrants. The fair-skinned "Teutonic" Italians, as the northern Italians were later called, did not request a "national" parish as had their Irish and German predecessors. The Italians were content to attend the interracial parishes. In 1873, Father Joachim Manoritta, an Italian priest, bought a church from the archdiocese, the mortuary chapel annex of St. Louis Cathedral, and opened a parish. Although the priest wanted to serve Italian immigrants, Perche never allowed the parish to be exclusively Italian. As he had at St. Boniface, Perche created a parish with neither boundaries nor traditional "national" status; it was Italian and French. The multi-national parish's congregation, called St. Anthony, had a nearly thirty percent black membership.²⁵

Despite Perche's creation of new interracial parishes, the maintenance of traditional practices was difficult. The sectors of New Orleans where English predominated posed a problem for the bishop because congregations had begun to switch churches along national and racial lines, which had begun prior to his appointment. The area was small and unique in the archdiocese. While much of the urban and all of the rural parishes reunited after the war, the trend in the half dozen parishes in this area was just the opposite. After 1870, in the ecclesiastical First District, an area upriver from the French Quarter and above Canal Street, the exodus

²⁵Leonard V. Huber, Our Lady of Guadalupe Church, New Orleans, Louisiana (Hackensack, New Jersey: Custombook, 1976), p. 25; St. Anthony Annual Reports, AANO; Robert Orsi, "The Religious Boundaries of an Inbetween People: Street 'Feste' and the Problem of the Dark-Skinned Other in Italian Harlem, 1920-1990," American Quarterly 44 (September, 1992): 315.

of black Catholics had not been stemmed. In this American sector, the equal racial balance in the interracial parishes that began to shift during the war and post-war years collapsed entirely with black flight and the almost exclusive use of the English language in services. The attraction of equal parochial schools and the practice of equality in worship never materialized as parishes did not build black parochial schools and intensified discrimination in seating. Before the war, St. Theresa parish, for example, was a mixed congregation where the French language predominated. After the war, it became exclusively white after English became the language of the parish. The parish never built a black parochial school but instead devoted much of its income to the education of white girls. Perche's battle against the English language did not go as well as his battle against national authorities because there was no remedy to stop the spread from the American sector outward into the archdiocese.²⁶

Perche thought the potential for stemming the English language ascendancy in New Orleans was in the ecclesiastical fourth district, adjacent to the American sector, upriver from the city and above the territorial parishes of St. Patrick, St. John the Baptist, and St. Theresa because the district still had a multi-national and multi-racial population similar to the French faubourgs. The Redemptorists' jurisdiction sandwiched the American sector between their fourth district and the French first

²⁶St. Theresa of Avila Annual Reports, AANO; Roger Baudier, St. Theresa of Avila's Parish (New Orleans: Archdiocese of New Orleans, 1948), pp. 10-13; Leander Roth to Shaw, 24 February 1920; Roth to Shaw, 23 October 1920; both in "St. Theresa Correspondence," AANO.

district and isolated the English-speaking area. There, Perche demanded that the Redemptorists and Sisters of Mercy build schools for black children to be taught in French. The results were not forthcoming, however, as Perche discovered, because the district had more difficult problems.

The Redemptorists' ministry began in New Orleans before the war with German priests whom Bishop Antoine Blanc had asked to minister to the Germans in the American sector. They built St. Mary's Assumption church to serve all nationalities, however, largely because of its proximity to the dense immigrant settlements and in the absence of other facilities. In 1849, the Redemptorists built St. Alphonsus to accommodate the Irish, then in 1857 Notre Dame de Bon Secours for the French. All the buildings were within a city block of each other. All served black Catholics. In 1861, Odin gave the Redemptorists order of priests territorial boundaries to work within rather than assign their individual churches geographical limits. This allowed the Redemptorists plenty of freedom. They staffed their parishes with priests from Germany and Ireland. Any priests who spoke French staffed Notre Dame.

By the 1870s, under the leadership of Irishmen and Germans, the parishes became fiercely nationalistic toward Ireland and Germany, with Gallic blacks and whites caught in the middle. In 1861, the multi-national St. Mary's Assumption, for example, had nearly equal numbers of black and white (German, Irish, and French) baptisms. Ten years later, after the Franco-Prussian War, the Germans of St. Mary's wanted all the French members removed. In 1871, black baptisms ceased at St.

Mary's because the Redemptorists began to operate the church exclusively for Germans while in the French section the Germans integrated with the French. In the late 1870s, St. Mary's ceased baptizing black persons, and soon after its congregation of 4,000 had "no colored." The Germans' motivation was more cultural than racial. They wanted to preserve their language and culture, so they made the parish exclusively German and invited German-speaking nuns from Milwaukee to operate their parochial school in German. Moreover, French-speaking black Catholics had no reason to be members of St. Mary's because the interracial French Notre Dame de Bon Secours was a block away and not too crowded. Further complicating matters, however, were nationalistic priests. The Irish pastor of St. Alphonsus, Father Philip Gleeson, resented the German isolation at St. Mary's. He broke off all relations and attacked the Germans in sermons after the German priest charged with overseeing a black parochial school, St. Joseph's, placed a picture of St. Patrick in the classroom. Irishman Gleeson accused his fellow Redemptorist and the Germans of insulting St. Patrick and Irishmen by placing St. Patrick in a classroom for black children. The Redemptorists removed all English-speakers from St. Mary's to St. Alphonsus, the church for the Irish. At St. Alphonsus the motive behind the parish's removal of its black members was clearly racial because English-speakers had no cultural or language reasons to remove black members, who were then left without a church. Relations improved after the bishop removed Gleeson from the archdiocese.

More problems emerged in the district, however. Within the same block as the churches and in the heart of the neighborhood, racial violence broke out.²⁷

After 1874, the parishes in the Redemptorists' fourth district continued to develop far differently from the French-speaking parishes in the remainder of the archdiocese of New Orleans. At 1:00 a.m. on 23 September 1874, a huge fire engulfed St. Joseph's school for blacks and Mrs. Fitzgerald's home next door. Both structures were totally destroyed in the blaze. Reports indicated the fire started in the Fitzgerald house and spread to the school. Although destroyed, the buildings were insured for \$650 and \$700. While the news reporter never determined a cause and dismissed the incident, the Catholic religious suspected foul play in the mysterious fire. Circumstances indicated the fire had been part of the program by the White League to overthrow Federal occupation. The Redemptorists and the Sisters of Mercy, who taught at the St. Joseph school, also thought the action was the work of an arsonist who set out to destroy race relations and black Catholic education in the area. The school had been opened at the time of the White League's September 14 bloody revolt against the Republican Party in New Orleans. The White League's headquarters was just blocks from the school and churches. Although black schools were common, the Sisters of Mercy had been teaching English to the black students and probably attempted interracial education. The school reopened in October, but after a semester, it was again set fire by an arsonist, once more at the time of White

²⁷St. Mary's Assumption Annual Reports; Baudier, Church in Louisiana, p. 368: story of nationalism among the Redemptorists found in Calvert, "German Catholic Churches of New Orleans," pp. 74-81.

League activity. A third attempt to open the school also was halted by fire. After three burnings in six months, the clergy, without saying anything but that its German and Irish neighbors opposed it, attributed the conflagrations to racial violence. The school was not reopened. Indeed, for decades, the terror spread by the arsonist convinced the Catholic clergy that any further attempts to create black facilities would meet the same fate as St. Joseph's school.²⁸

After the fires and violence, the clergy in the American sector feared a troubled future for black members in the Catholic church. Redemptorist Fathers Ferreol Girardey, John B. Duffy, and M. Leimgruber noted that the "laboring class" of Irish and Germans intermarried. In contrast, intermarriage between Irish and African American or German and African American Catholics did not occur except in the French sector where both interracial marriages and integration were more common.²⁹ In the American sector, as intermarriage among Irish, Germans, and

²⁸New Orleans Daily Picayune, 23 September 1874, p. 601; Muldrey, Abounding, pp. 183, and 389, fn. 176; Frank C. Richardson, "My Recollections of the Battle of the Fourteenth of September, 1874, in New Orleans, La.," Louisiana Historical Quarterly, 3 (1920): 498-501. The enrollment book for St. Joseph's remained in the possession of St. Alphonsus and was displayed in a small museum within the sacristy of the decommissioned St. Alphonsus Church, the property of Friends of St. Alphonsus, New Orleans, Louisiana where the last notations, in English, indicate that the school was destroyed by fire. During the early 1920s when the archbishop inquired to the Redemptorists about the possibility of the Josephites opening a segregated black parish in their territory, the Redemptorists refused, citing that the fires and racial violence of 1874 reflected the racial feelings in the area, Shaw to Kane, 04 April 1922, "Blessed Sacrament Correspondence," AANO.

²⁹Of the one third of the public schools that were integrated, most "were in the downtown creole and German neighborhoods." The location was near St. Boniface and Sacred Heart. Devore and Logsdon, Crescent City, p. 70; Anthony, "Creole," pp. 149-158.

French led to the disappearance of national distinctions and use of English, the priests foresaw the end of distinctive national parishes in the archdiocese of New Orleans. In the place of Irish or German churches, they expected black and white churches. By 1875, Mother Austin, a teacher in Notre Dame de Bon Secours schools, noted the "hardening" of racial distinctions and racial lines coming to define divisions rather than national identities. She reported "that the line between white and colored people is drawn so nicely that a drop of black blood is enough to get banished from white schools and white society." That discrimination appeared greater in the American sections than the French sections was clear after an Irish woman had remonstrated Mother Austin for having admitted to the white school "a fair-headed girl who was a Negro descent." Mother Austin feared such controversy and racial concern would endanger her school by having more white students leave for the public schools. Mother Austin also felt that many black Catholics wanted to have white teachers rather than black teachers. Both the Redemptorists and Mother Austin sensed that some form of national and racial discrimination would always exist. The Redemptorists and Mother Austin reached the same conclusions that the national authorities at the 1866 Second Plenary Council had: interracialism posed a danger to black Catholicism.³⁰

³⁰For observations on race relations in New Orleans see transcription of Canon Peter Benoit Diary in the Josephite Fathers Archives, pp. 186, 199; St. Mary's Assumption, St. Alphonsus, and Notre Dame de Bon Secours Annual Reports, all in AANO. The contrast toward equality of black Catholics in French parishes versus English parishes can be found in the experiences of the Society of the Sacred Heart, they had no trouble providing equal education to blacks in Convent and Grand Coteau, French-speaking areas, but they faced tremendous white opposition in Natchitoches,

Other clergy in the American sector also saw the merits of segregation, particularly in the parishes hit hardest by the black exodus, the English-speaking parishes. The Irish parishes of St. Patrick, St. John the Baptist, Sts. Peter and Paul, and St. Alphonsus were created for English speakers and all baptized and had black members. In the post-war years, however, their black populations declined. Father J. J. Foote of St. John the Baptist reported "very few" black members among his 3,000 parishioners. The other parishes recorded a token number of black baptisms. In addition, the parishes in the American sector were the first to introduce gallery seating. While the lone French parish in the American sector allowed black members "the privilege of renting the back pews on the ground floor of Notre Dame and also the pews in the galleries," in exclusively English St. Alphonsus, "the pews in the gallery fronting the choir are [were] reserved for them [black members] at mass every Sunday at 6:30 o'clock."³¹

French speakers had plenty of church facilities. Ironically, the few English-speaking Catholic churches lost black membership even as English appeared the language of choice for most African Americans. Many African Americans who spoke English left the Catholic church, as the case of St. Theresa of Avila parish illustrated. Until Reconstruction, the parish had been interracial and French-speaking, even

Louisiana, situated north of the archdiocese of New Orleans, see Callan, The Society of the Sacred Heart, p. 542.

³¹St. Patrick, Sts. Peter and Paul, St. Theresa, St. John the Baptist, and St. Alphonsus Annual Reports, AANO; quote from New Orleans Morning Star, 30 April 1887, p. 4, c. 4.

though located in the American sector of the city. During the late 1860s and early 1870s, the parish congregation came to be predominately English-speaking. Few black members remained after that. Father P. M. L. Massordier reported that of a population of 4,000, the black members totaled "at most" 100.

Black Catholics criticized the animosity and growing discrimination. A letter to the editor in the Crusader pointed to the recent "unjust, degrading and humiliating discrimination our children have submitted [to] . . . on the occasion of their first communion and during the preparation for that great day, for them, a period lasting six months." Although the writer did not specify the nature of the discrimination or in which parish it occurred, he referred only to "all the Catholic churches," he resented the growing discrimination in churches and called for the white members to assume responsibility for the problem of not following the church's dogmas. He did not want to abandon the church and was not willing to "change it for another one." In reference to the letter of protest, the editor admitted that the Catholic church was not perfect, but added that no other denomination did more to eradicate the "color line." He suggested that the reader either leave and save himself from further humiliation or push the church toward more liberal practices. A few raised money for an English-speaking black Catholic church. Most blacks did not leave the church or abandon interracial parishes, however.³²

³²Letter to editor in The Daily Crusader, clipping, 2 June c. 1890, Folder 18, Box 2, Charles Rousseve Collection, ARC; Misch. In 1884, after Perche's death, Misch pointed out that a group of "colored" Catholics raised money for a "colored" Catholic Church, although the reference was undocumented. See "The American Bishops," p. 265.

By the 1880s, despite the efforts of Perche to protect Gallic Catholicism, the post-war spread of the English language still posed the greatest challenge thus far to the universal ideal. Isolating the parishes in the American sector failed to change the dominant American society outside of south Louisiana. To survive, many French-speaking people had to learn English just to perform routine business. The process began in the urban areas. Because of the railroads and migrations of Americans, English gradually became the language among Catholics. This change affected all non-English speakers and their relationship with the Catholic Church. As English began to spread, Germans faced the fact that the loss of their language might mean the loss of their faith. Hence, they insisted upon having exclusive facilities for German speakers in the American sector. In the French sections, the Germans shared parishes with French speakers, because French speakers did not pose a threat to their language and faith while English speakers did. French, however, was the language of the local church and the vast majority of its members. Throughout the nineteenth century the connection between language and church had been strong. Limited in church selection to interracial parishes, the black population divided over the importance of the English language. The black leadership favored French and the maintenance of their status with the French archbishop and clergy. Many former free people of color also held on to their French heritage. For other blacks, particularly

the freedpeople. though, speaking and understanding English offered greater social opportunities.³³

As long as the use of the French language dominated in the archdiocese, Odin had rebuffed the national authorities and local Catholics who wanted segregated racial parishes. In time, Perche had rewarded black faith in the universal ideal by instituting new non-territorial, multi-racial and multi-ethnic congregations in the city of New Orleans as well as by establishing additional interracial churches in the rural areas to alleviate overcrowding in the original parishes. In doing so, he had relied on the alliance of priests and the non-English speaking laity to support him. In particular, the black, Catholic, French-speaking migrants infused the French language into the areas of greatest French strength. In the only area where the English language dominated, in the American sector of the city, interracialism had passed. At risk were the practices of the universal ideal in the territorial parishes as national officials put greater pressure on the New Orleans hierarchy for segregation.

* * *

Perche continued to maintain French and interracial worship in the parishes and the schools until he died in 1883. Perche's successor, Francis Leray, found that Perche's administration had left the dioceses' financial affairs in shambles. Leray,

³³Description of French language influence in Louisiana detailed by Bishop Leray to Cardinal Simeoni, 11 March 1887, in Annemarie Kasteel, Francis Janssens, 1843-1897: A Dutch-American Prelate (Lafayette: University of Southwestern Louisiana, 1992), p. 173; Anthony, "Creole," pp. 107-108; see also Anonymous, Leaves from the Annals of the Sisters of Mercy in Four Volumes, Volume IV, Containing Sketches of the Order in South America, Central America, and the United States, pp. 406-407.

born in Rennes, France, in 1825 had been in the United States since 1843. He served in Mississippi his entire career, even surviving the siege of Vicksburg in 1863, before being appointed as bishop of Natchitoches in 1877. With Perche's passing, Leray assumed the New Orleans seat while also remaining as head of the Diocese of Natchitoches. Since Perche's building program had nearly bankrupted the archdiocese, Leray spent his administration raising money and arranging payments of the archdiocesan debt. By necessity, the status quo reigned in the parishes, as no new schools or parishes were built in south Louisiana. Leray left the running of the parishes to the pastors and congregations.

In the ecclesiastical first district, Father R. J. Fitzgerald of St Joseph's, on Tulane Avenue in the business district of the city, reported an 1880s population of 12,294, a huge parish, of which between one quarter and one half were "colored." He was not sure because he kept records with "no distinction in color." The congregation supported both a black parochial school and a white one. In 1884, at the Eglise de Immaculate Conception parish in the city, also in the business district, Jesuit Father Darius Hubert, reported a congregation of nine hundred fifty "whites" and one hundred twenty "colored." The congregation did not build a parochial school during this period.³⁴

In the ecclesiastical second district, by 1884 the staff at St. Louis Cathedral ministered to a large congregation estimated at 7,000 people. Of this number, reportedly three-fifths were "blancs" and two-fifths "personnes de couleur." Just four

³⁴St. Joseph Annual Reports.

years later, the congregation totaled 12,000 with equal numbers of black and white baptisms. The congregation supported thirty-five schools, of which twenty percent were for black children. Also in 1888, the pastor of St. Anne's parish in the city reported that "very near half" of his 3,900 members were "colored." The congregation did not have any parochial schools.³⁵

In the ecclesiastical third district Father Antoine Durier, pastor of Annunciation parish, in 1884 reported that his large congregation spoke "Francais, Anglais, Espagnol, and Italien" and that all baptisms and marriages were recorded in the same book, regardless of color. Four years later, the new pastor at Annunciation, Father Gustave A. Rouxel, reported that of his near 3,000 parishioners, "the colored people may be considered as one fourth." The congregation supported a parochial school for black children and one for white children. In 1884, St Rose de Lima, Maistre's former parish, had a small population of 1,200, which the pastor divided into 1,100 "white" and 100 "colored." The congregation did not yet operate parochial schools. In Sts. Peter and Paul parish, formerly St. Peters until the definition of boundaries by Odin in 1861, served only English-speaking parishioners; by 1884, it had a population of 3,000 whom the pastor J.D. Flanagan described as "all white." The congregation operated one white parochial school. Nevertheless, Flanagan still baptized black children.³⁶

³⁵St. Louis Cathedral and St. Anne Annual Reports, AANO.

³⁶Annunciation, St. Rose de Lima, and Sts. Peter and Paul Annual Reports, AANO.

In the New Orleans faubourgs that developed after the war, Vincentian Father A. Verrina recorded a congregation of 3,000 "white" and five hundred "colored" in his St. Stephen parish where both English and French were spoken. The parish congregation operated two parochial schools, one black and one white. In 1884, Father A. G. Demers of the new Sacred Heart of Jesus parish reported a population of two hundred fifty "blancs" families and fifty "de couleurs" families. The dual language congregation supported just one parochial school for whites only.³⁷

Much of the diocese remained rural into the twentieth century, and a slight majority of parishes lay outside the city. Father C. Denoyal of St. Francis Regis in Arnaudville had a Catholic population of 4,000 of whom one half were black members. The congregation did not support a school in this period. In Algiers, across the Mississippi river from the French Quarter, the Marists operated Holy Name of Mary Parish. The congregation supported two parochial schools, one black and one white. In 1884, the English-speaking and French-speaking congregation consisted of 5,500 "white" and 500 "colored" members. In Edgard, Louisiana, Father J. M. Ravoire pastor of St. John the Baptist also had a congregation of around 3,000 by the late 1880s. Although he was not specific on the proportion of black to whites among his membership, the baptism figures reveal a larger than fifty percent black congregation. Father A. B. Langlois of St. Thomas parish in Pointe-a-la-Hache, near the Gulf of Mexico in Plaquemines civil parish, reported in 1884 having a population of eight hundred "blancs" and four hundred "de couleur." In 1884, the pastor of Our

³⁷St. Stephen and Sacred Heart of Jesus Annual Reports, AANO.

Lady of Lourdes parish in Violet, of St. Bernard civil parish, had a population of 1,200, the number of baptisms were two to one white to black. In Reserve, St. Peter parish, Father Stephen Badoil reported in 1888 a population of 4,000, in which annual black baptisms exceeded white baptisms one hundred nine to eighty.³⁸

By the end of Reconstruction and the departure of Federal troops, the largest program of building churches and schools since the 1840s had continued the traditions established in the antebellum period, interracial churches and separate schools. On the eve of the twentieth century, Catholic interracial worship in the United States remained a reality only in the Catholic parishes of south Louisiana.

* * *

The survival of the antebellum interracial congregations and the building of additional, unprecedented multi-language parishes testified to the resiliency of Louisiana's Catholics and the universal ideal. Between 1866 and 1887, the French bishops of New Orleans had resisted efforts to segregate the parishes of the archdiocese of New Orleans. They stopped the push by French-speaking black Catholics as well as the national authorities to create all-black parishes. The trend toward segregating English-speaking white Catholics had been contained in the American sector. Yet by 1887, the combination of special nationwide funding of programs for work specifically for blacks and the decay of black parochial schools, despite the availability of these funds, created animosity in the congregations. The

³⁸Holy Name of Mary, St. Thomas, St. John the Baptist (Edgard), Our Lady of Lourdes, and St. Peter (Reserve) Annual Reports, AANO.

paradox of interracial churches and segregated schools began to unravel the universal ideal as the need for money to build schools put pressure on the interracial congregations. In 1887, black members of the parishes placed a greater reliance on interracial parishes to supply parochial education after white supremacy measures passed in the Louisiana legislature began to have an effect on African Americans.

National church authorities had not interfered with Odin's, then Perche's, integrated church and segregated school system in New Orleans. Yet, the movement to build separate facilities had gained momentum, even in sections of the New Orleans archdiocese. That the resolutions adopted by the 1866 Plenary Council did not produce African American converts to the Catholic Church became a major issue among the bishops, and much emphasis was placed on studying why that failure had occurred. The Josephites investigated and prepared a program for a segregated black ministry for the entire United States. In 1875, as part of a fact-finding mission, Josephite Canon Peter Benoit toured the United States. Benoit did not get a complete picture of the archdiocese of New Orleans because he spent all of his time in the American sector where the violence of the White League had nearly destroyed race relations. Benoit failed to see first hand the French parishes. His skewed views portrayed the archdiocese inaccurately.

Benoit was anti-French; he observed that the Gallic Louisianians "were not good Catholics . . . they were stingy." Canon Benoit reported that the black Catholics he observed were quite satisfied with their position in the integrated parishes. They preferred to keep "their inferior condition among the whites rather

than to be exclusively black congregations." When asked about the conditions of black Catholics, Archbishop Perche told Benoit that the needs of black Catholics were met by diocesan clergy in integrated congregations, hence he did not see a need for "special" missionaries. Benoit appeared surprised that Perche, archbishop of such a poverty stricken diocese, would be unreceptive to offers of help and defended interracial churches.³⁹

Benoit believed that separate racial parishes were the future, even in the archdiocese of New Orleans, stronghold of interracial worship. After all, he found proof in the archdiocese, which contained the largest number of black Catholics, of trends developing in other regions. He noted that the removal of African Americans from St. Mary's Assumption and St. Alphonsus followed patterns of segregation in other parts of the United States without noting the tradition of interracialism in the rest of French New Orleans: "negroes in English portion of New Orleans same as other cities," he wrote in his diary. Benoit was pleased that the Redemptorists had moved in the direction of racial segregation and praised the archdioceses' tolerance of the gradual removal of black Catholics from their Irish church, St. Alphonsus. While staying with the Redemptorists in New Orleans for a few days, Benoit praised their activities and prodded them to do more toward segregation. For the time being, however, the Redemptorists told Benoit that, rather than special missionaries, the

³⁹Benoit diary, p. 196, quote on page 197.

responsibility of African Americans belonged to the French hierarchy, and they along with the French diocesan clergy wanted interracial parishes.⁴⁰

Rather than the pugnacious Frenchmen, the American bishops relied on the findings of the Josephites to formulate a national agenda. In 1884, American bishops convened the Third Plenary Council of Baltimore at which, instead of following the example of New Orleans and allowing bishops to formulate policies based on local conditions, the American Catholic leaders passed firm policies. In them, the Catholic church made black Catholicism a special ministry and officially adopted a national policy to build separate racial parishes. During the assembly, Leray and Antoine Durier, pastor of Annunciation parish, asked the assembly to consider funding for religious orders to open schools for blacks and whites. Rather than segregate the churches, Leray and Durier proposed desegregation of the schools, a proposal the assembled prelates did not consider. They did nothing more than hear Leray and Durier. The Council did create an annual collection in all the dioceses for the spiritual care of Africans Americans and Indians. It also discussed the use of African American catechists to work on black missions but refused to ordain black priests for service in the South.⁴¹

Leray never enacted the provisions of the Third Plenary Council that "strongly recommended" separate churches. Quite possibly, a lack of money because of the debt left by Perche prevented segregated parishes from being built and tested. Leray

⁴⁰Benoit Diary, pp. 187, 196, 197.

⁴¹Misch, "American Bishops," pp. 206-332.

worked to reduce the debt and consolidate the finances of the archdiocese. Leray did not implement the decrees also because nearly 90 percent of his archdiocese consisted of interracial parishes.

In 1887, however, the national authorities for the first time implemented a special annual Lenten collection for African Americans and Indians that had been called for at the 1884 Third Plenary Council of Baltimore. The first collection in New Orleans created animosity because it was designated for black Catholics. White members did not contribute much to the special collection, largely because of their poverty, but also because it was only for blacks. The chancellor of the archdiocese, L. A. Chasse, made clear that the collection of special funds also alienated the black parishioners in the integrated congregations because of their perceived special treatment. Both blacks and whites resented it. Disbursement of the money caused problems as well. In the application for funds, Chasse emphasized the need for money for the parochial schools. He proposed making the Catholic schools free or at least reducing the tuition so that they could compete with the public schools. Chasse warned that unless schools received enough funds to stop charging tuition, "an immense number of children baptized Catholics" would leave the parishes and "turn Methodist and Baptists because they have their own schools gratis." He asked for as much money as possible because in the integrated parishes, most of which had black schools, the pastors already had "extraordinary difficulty of obtaining" assistance from the white parishioners to fund the black schools; any hint of special treatment toward African Americans might stop the contributions all together. After receipt of his first

check. Chasse was disgusted that the amount was not sufficient to make the schools free. Chasse calculated that the archdiocese contributed \$695 to the special fund and received in return \$2,500 for a gain of \$1,800. Chasse classified this sum as a "very small allowance for a Diocese which surely needs more help than any other diocese in United States if the spiritual welfare of the colored people is seriously intended."⁴²

The money from the mission fund was not nearly enough for the large black Catholic population in south Louisiana. The archdiocese lacked resources for an organized program to help the parishes, and with parish congregations the sole resource for building schools, parochial schools developed slowly. In the city, for example, the parochial schools by 1888 enrolled between 1,000 and 1,330 black pupils and 3,500 to 3,700 white pupils. The quality of schools was mixed. St. Louis Cathedral parish had excellent facilities. More typical was St. Michael's parish that operated "an one story building divided into two classrooms . . . besides a shed and closet near the building" for the black children of the parish. The white children of St. Michael's attended a two-story brick building. The Redemptorists' black school was in a "poor building." Nuns usually taught both the black and white students of the parishes. In Algiers, however, a lay teacher taught the forty-two black children of the parish. In such a situation as that at St. Michael's with poor facilities, whenever black parishioners did not obtain religious nuns for their children, or when they generally felt the parish revenues were unequally disbursed in education, black

⁴²L.A. Chasse to E.R. Dyer, 6 May 1887, 12 DY 28, JFA; L.A. Chasse to E.R. Dyer, 12 June 1888, 12 DY 29, JFA.

Catholics either simply stopped putting money into the collection plate during mass, did not rent pews, or ceased to attend church services. By the late 1880s and wary of the subtle protest, the bishop's concern with pew rents became so severe that the archdiocese published a warning against using other persons' pews and requesting pews but not paying the rental fee. Black protest dissipated. With little resort in the public sector, however, black Catholics had little choice but to continue to send their children to the poor parochial schools.⁴³

Many of the congregations, especially in the rural areas, had yet to build schools of any sort. In the rural parishes, black Catholics wanted industrial training. For the residents of the urban territorial parishes, the shortcomings of Catholic primary education and complete lack of secondary or higher education became a crisis after 1877 because conservative Democrats in the state segregated the city's public schools and cut state and local appropriations. The burden fell with special severity on the French-speaking black Catholics of the interracial parishes in downtown New Orleans, where most of the Reconstruction integration of the public schools had occurred. An 1887 appeal from leaders of the predominately black Catholic second and third districts of the city of New Orleans, who called themselves the Justice, Protective, Social and Educational Club, called attention to the lack of public schools or "any suitable institution" for the 20,000 school children in the area. Because of separate facilities, African Americans could attend only five of the eighteen available

⁴³St. Michael's Annual Report, AANO; school figures compiled from review of all parish Annual Reports. New Orleans Morning Star, 08 January 1887, p. 4, c .5.

schools. As a result, nearly 10,000 children did not receive an education. The appeal warned of the dangers the deprivation of education posed for the future of democracy in the United States.⁴⁴

In the 1880s, the collapse of public education had the effect of attracting lapsed black Catholics back into the parishes. To accommodate the growing number of Catholics, larger parochial schools were needed. In St. Vincent de Paul parish, for example, Father Chapius reported that a better "school would be the best means to bring" black members back into church services. The stubborn blacks claimed that they were unable to pay anything for the church or school, Chapius said, but he suspected that they were actually "unwilling" to support the interracial parish because of white prejudice. He accepted that they were going to stay away without better schools for their children, however. Chapius suggested to the archbishop that for forty-five dollars a month from the money collected by the Board of Indian and Colored Missions, he could overcome black concerns of white prejudice and help the "large number" of black members in his congregation. He promised that the attempt to expand the black school would not be "fruitless." Chapius' proposal did not receive a response from Leray because he died in mid-1888. Rather, Chapius and St. Vincent de Paul would have to await word on the proposal from the new archbishop. In addition to the need to build schools, by the mid 1880s, the churches built in the 1840s were nearly half a century old and in need of major repair. Many parishes

⁴⁴From the scrapbooks, vol. 3, in the William D. Rogers Papers, Howard Tilton Memorial Library, Tulane University, New Orleans, Louisiana. The "Appeal" was issued in early 1887.

required larger structures with expanded seating such as St. Joseph and St. Vincent de Paul. The congregations planned fund raising drives to gather hundreds of thousands of dollars needed to build new churches and schools. As in the 1830s, 1840s and 1850s, black Catholic participation could translate into decreased racial discrimination in the brand new facilities built in the 1880s and 1890s.⁴⁵

By their effort, Chapuis and other priests formed a bond with black Catholics appreciative of their efforts. The French bishop's leadership in forging ahead with interracialism and building schools set an example for all the clergy. Their battling spirit and fight for what they believed right added to the survival of interracial churches.

* * *

Black Catholics in south Louisiana remained in the Catholic parishes through the Civil War, Reconstruction, and the rise of Bourbon Democrats even in the face of discrimination within the church and the opportunity to join all-black Protestant denominations because they desired interracial congregations and opposed racial segregation. One scholar has observed that their adherence to Catholicism was so important because they were admitted to the sacraments "indiscriminately with whites, they sang in mixed choirs, and they were buried in Catholic cemeteries alongside whites." In addition, they worshipped with other races and other classes that in politics and economics were bitter rivals. The Catholic Church alone maintained the

⁴⁵Gassler to Baudier, 31 August 1941, "Baudier Materials, 1941-1948," AANO; Chapuis to Leray, 2 January 1888, St. Vincent de Paul Annual Report, AANO.

universal ideal in a dynamic, increasingly racially stratified society. A black member of a "secret society" wrote to a Catholic weekly that what struck him about the Catholic church in Louisiana was that it was "the only one in the South that shows no discrimination within its walls. It is truly christian in this respect, but that is all I can say I like about it." Although in fact overstated, his impression that both the "poorest colored man" and the "proudest white" had to dip their fingers in the same water was important in what it revealed about what African Americans sought in society, of which churches were an element, in the post-war South.⁴⁶

Black Catholics also remained in the Church because during the nearly century and a half since its founding in Louisiana, the Roman Catholic Church had become a part of the social identity of many African American families. Black Catholics cherished their parish membership after emancipation because baptismal records as well as sacramental records provided proof of their familial identity and heritage. The Catholic church gave and recognized the identity of persons produced from an interracial liaison that evoked loyalty from the offspring. One black Catholic told an interviewer he remained a Catholic because, "if our ancestors before the war had not the right of succession, at least they bore the name of their parents, their fathers and their mothers, and were admitted to the sacraments of the Catholic religion." Being a free person of color or a descendent of a free person of color had status associated

⁴⁶Scholar's quote from Robert C. Reinders, "The Churches and the Negro in New Orleans, 1850-1860," 22 Phylon (Fall, 1961): 242. Excerpt from article that appeared in the Cincinnati Tribune, reprinted in St. Joseph's Advocate, First Quarter (Jan. 1887): 205; reprint of article from Philadelphia's Weekly Tribune in St. Joseph's Advocate, II (October 1890): 216.

with it, and membership in the Catholic Church was a key element in establishing that status. Several black Catholics remained in the church rather than join another denomination, according to their priest, because they "were former slave owners and fought in the Confederate army. Mr. Goudeau and his brothers [are] all veterans of the lost cause." The priest warned others not to mention the word "Yankee" around them! During the period when free desegregated public schools existed, hundreds of black and white Catholics chose to send their children to segregated Catholic schools where French was spoken and taught. These schools had an aura of exclusiveness.⁴⁷

Attachments to the Catholic Church continued through Reconstruction, and bonds were renewed for another generation. Interracial parish activities and sacraments composed special occasions that extended to distant families and left positive memories. Black Catholics recalled hot chocolate and doughnuts being served to family and friends after a first communion service. First communion also left other lasting memories, not just of the sacred event but of girls dressed specially in white with white umbrellas, shoes and gloves, or of boys in suits. Together they were walked to church by their parents. In this procession through the interracial neighborhoods, they moved "from one friend's house to another. And the girls would have what they called a satchel hanging on their arm. Everywhere that you would go they'd give you a nickel or a dime, you'd make a collection." Even Pierre Landry, the Methodist convert, recalled his captivation by the splendor of his confirmation

⁴⁷Black Catholic quoted in Arthe' Agnes Anthony, "The Negro Creole Community in New Orleans, 1880-1920: An Oral History." (PhD. dissertation: University of California, Irvine, 1978), p. 32; LeBeau to Slattery, 13 December 1897, 18-S-1, JFA.

ceremony. Often the sacrament of confirmation was followed by a big dinner of traditional stewed chicken, macaroni, baked sweet potatoes, lettuce and tomato salad, green peas, and ice cream for dessert. Ecclesiastical events, therefore, had much broader social meaning and helped convince many blacks to stay with their pastors and interracial churches. Their performance often created a bond between an individual and their faith stronger than that between an individual and a particular place of worship. Black Catholics who migrated from their birthplace would automatically belong to any Catholic parish, at least if the parish was interracial. Despite skin tone or antebellum social status, the offer of sacraments such as baptism, confirmation, and communion anywhere and at anytime without distinction was the Catholic church's greatest asset in African American society.⁴⁸

* * *

Between 1866 and 1888, the bonds that held blacks to the parishes were not broken, but were challenged by national authorities and English-speaking Catholics. The practice of interracial worship survived because of biracial efforts to provide Catholic education; this resistance to the national authorities' attempts to impose segregation became another interracial activity. Although the archdiocese contained a few white-only "national" parishes, many African Americans felt that the Catholic Church practiced its teaching of human equality, particularly after Germans and Italians joined the congregations. Another key factor that united the races in the Catholic Church was that interracial parishes preserved French traditions in the face

⁴⁸Recollection from Anthony, "Creole," pp. 128-129; Montgomery, Vine, p. 102.

of the spread of English. The incentive of belonging to a parish in order to obtain an education, always important, became more so after the public school system collapsed in the mid-1880s. Throughout the period, however, black Catholics remained with the Catholic church not out of expediency but out of faith and commitment. The requirement for the interracial congregations to support churches as well as schools strained the resources of poverty-stricken Catholics. As the French clergy turned to outside sources to maintain their interracial parishes, national authorities sought to divide parish congregations by race. Rather than help the interracial parishes, the allocation of the meager resources re-divided the congregations along racial lines because of black preferential treatment by the national hierarchy. The struggle against separate racial parishes like those in Protestant denominations revealed, on one hand, the strength of the belief of the universal ideal in south Louisiana. Or, on the other hand, the struggle to resist separate racial parishes was rooted in a fear that all-black parishes would be denied already scarce resources.

CHAPTER 5

FIRST BLACK CHURCH IN THE ARCHDIOCESE

After 1888, for the first time in archdiocesan history, New Orleans had a non-French-speaking archbishop. That year, black Catholics had welcomed the appointment of Francis Janssens, the bishop of Natchez; his efforts there to build black schools and establish a black priesthood had made him well known around the country. Black Catholics in south Louisiana, therefore, expected the popular Janssens to be an ally in their fight against the troubles brought by racial separation and Jim Crow laws. He did, initially, attempt to raise money and recruit clergy to teach in black parochial schools. But the blacks expectations soon turned into resentment after Janssens attempted to expend funds on a separate church, rather than on separate schools. In fact, after 1888 Janssens sought special ministers and separate churches for African Americans. Many black Catholics, English-speaking and French-speaking, split with Janssens' over his plan. He appeared to have capitulated to the Jim Crow regime. Black Catholics did not want to lose their places in the established parishes and in all of the churches that they had supported and even built. They resisted. After 1895, when Janssens opened a black Catholic parish in the archdiocese of New Orleans, they by and large ignored it. Rather, they continued to attend their territorial parish or abandoned the Catholic Church.

* * *

When the Vatican appointed Janssens in 1888 he appeared a good candidate to bring the New Orleans archdiocese in line with the other American dioceses and with the provision for parochial schools set forth by the 1884 Plenary Council. A native of Holland, Janssens entered the United States soon after his ordination. He worked tirelessly as a missionary and devoted himself to the pastoral care of any and all he came across. Although he never aspired to be an archbishop, church authorities recognized his talents when he labored in Richmond, Virginia, and appointed him as bishop of Natchez, Mississippi, in 1881. In Natchez, Janssens worked hard to build parochial schools. He increased their number and improved the education provided in those already established. Between 1881 and 1888, the Dutch prelate established a school examination board to approve teachers and instituted an annual inspection of all educational facilities to monitor standards. Before he left for New Orleans, Janssens had doubled the number of black parochial schools, from two to four, and had solicited funds and religious orders to open more.¹

While in Mississippi, Janssens had nurtured an interest in the African Americans of the South and had even established a name for himself as a prelate determined to bring more African Americans into the Catholic church. Janssens published articles on black Catholicism in which he advocated a black priesthood for the South. He worked closely with the Josephites, who had in the 1880s established a branch in the United States, to launch a seminary for black priests. So he supported an integrated seminary to train priests to work with blacks. In addition to his support

¹Anne Marie Kasteel, Dutch American Prelate, pp. 128-133.

of black priests, he pushed for another seminary to produce black and white missionaries to work especially in the South. He also urged bishops of other southern dioceses to accept black clergy in their territory. He brought these interests to New Orleans where he oversaw more black members than "all the other diocese taken together." Although integrated in the seminary, the white and black priests would be sent to special all-black parishes. His first months as archbishop confirmed his conviction that white and black members required separate ministers, even in already established ministries. He told John Slattery, the Josephite superior and builder of integrated seminaries, that "our priests . . . are devoted to their duty and willing to work for the colored people as well as for the white" but that black Catholics needed special attention. Because the diocesan clergy ministered to multi-racial congregations, black Catholics did not receive the special treatment that he felt they needed: "the work for one and for the other is quite different and it is almost impossible, a few cases excepted, as far as my experiences goes to do much good for the salvation of the negro whilst engaged in the ministry for the white." After his initial survey of his territory and flock, Janssens was very excited about his position and the potential of his opportunity "to labor among the negroes."²

²In her biography of Janssens, Annemarie Kasteel stressed the development of Janssens's racial views long before his arrival in New Orleans, Kasteel, Dutch-American, pp. 81-163; St. Joseph's Advocate I (April 1887): 229-231; Janssens to Slattery, 22 September 1888, 7-D-6, Josephite Fathers Archives (JFA); Morning Star, 7 July 1888; Janssens to Slattery, 15 November 1889, 7-D-2, JFA; St. Joseph's Advocate I (April 1887): 638.

The members of the archdiocese most jubilant at Janssens' appointment were the English-speaking black Catholics in the American sector of the city. Tired of fighting white discrimination in St. Theresa, St. John the Baptist, and St. Alphonsus parishes and having been removed from St. Mary's Assumption when that parish became German-only, the English-speaking black congregants believed Janssens would bring help and assistance. They wanted better. Mrs. Leah Smith, C. Haggerty, A. Adams, E. Sales, and C. James requested "aid and sympathy" from Janssens for "an English Catholic church (colored)." They specifically asked for permission to solicit and raise money for a church where they would not be discriminated against. The collection they had begun when Perche and Leray were archbishops had been suspended after they encountered opposition from their "parish priest." Their initial effort had resulted in a small collection that they then entrusted to the care of a Jesuit priest. Janssens received their request with the greatest enthusiasm. Even though they had not asked to have special ministers (in contrast to regular diocesan priests that served everyone) for an exclusively all-black church, Janssens reported to the Josephites that the "English-speaking negroes are anxious to have a church of their own" and the timing was perfect for the Josephites to build exclusive all-black parishes in the archdiocese of New Orleans. Just weeks into his new post, Janssens wanted to act fast "while the iron is hot." He pleaded for a Josephite priest to be

assigned to the American sector where he saw a great future for segregated churches operated by special ministers in the archdiocese of New Orleans.³

The English-speaking black Catholics of New Orleans were part of a national trend. Black members of other dioceses, particularly in the Midwest and Northeast, pushed for complete separation and organized conventions and started publications. These black Catholic congresses then asked that racial discrimination be banned from Catholic churches and that the hierarchy recognize the right of African Americans to form exclusively black Catholic churches under black priests or white priests devoted exclusively to blacks. Separation was preferred to white discrimination and prejudice. Response from Louisiana to the Catholic Congresses was negligible, considering that the largest concentration of black Catholics were in southern Louisiana.⁴

Buoyed by the black Catholic reception in New Orleans, Janssens quickly prepared to impose upon the New Orleans archdiocese the standards required by the provisions of the Third Plenary Council of Baltimore. In his first year, however, Janssens could achieve little toward building black parishes and attracting special ministers. The establishment of separate racial parishes could not proceed without greater financial assistance and special ministers. The Josephites, the sole order of priests devoted exclusively to African Americans, did not have any personnel available

³Smith, Haggerty, Adams, Sales, and James to Janssens, 16 September 1888, "Negro Church, protest against building colored missions, 1888-1894, 9-16-1888; 1-3-94, org." AANO.

⁴Davis, Black Catholics, pp. 163-194; St. Joseph's Advocate, 1 (Winter, 1887): 290-303; St. Joseph's Advocate, 2 (1890): 36, 67-70, 188.

to take advantage of the archbishop's enthusiasm or the small group of black Catholics' pleas in the American sector. Janssens, upon reflection, calculated that he would need at a minimum twenty priests especially devoted to the black ministry because of the vast number of black Catholics in his area of responsibility. He estimated the total at twenty thousand in the city and fifty-five thousand in the country. Although the Dutch prelate knew that such large numbers of clergy were unavailable, he could not rest with the thought that as every day passed without a "special ministry" more African Americans left the church.⁵

Early in his tenure, Janssens discovered a connection between the deficient parochial system and the failure of the Catholic Church to have greater numbers of African Americans in the parishes of the Archdiocese of New Orleans. Although aware of the importance of parochial schools in the evangelization of both black and white children before his arrival to New Orleans, Janssens considered the absence of parochial schools for African Americans the more acute. Janssens worried that when black Catholic children attended the American schools, where they learned English, they harmed their Catholic faith. Yet the local parochial educational efforts had been insufficient to attract parents and children away from the American schools. The result, Janssens believed, had been that when the young generation learned English they lost interest in the French-speaking churches. Janssens figured that if the French-speaking parishes that dominated the archdiocese did not appeal to the younger

⁵Report of Janssens to Commission for the Catholic Missions Among the Colored People and Indians, c.1889, 161-DY-1, JFA.

generation. its members would leave the faith for other denominations. Whereas in Natchez, Janssens had built schools in separate parishes, the development of a parochial school system in south Louisiana required a re-evaluation of the system of ecclesiastical interracial parishes. Rather than desegregate the English-speaking parishes, Janssens thought that he urgently needed to create separate black parishes.⁶

In May of 1889, during his first synod, Janssens addressed the problems with Louisiana's parish system of integrated churches and segregated schools. The combination stunted parochial life, he believed. In an attempt to increase the vitality of parish life and stir enthusiasm for parochial schools, he issued new parish regulations. He wanted every parish to maintain a choir, to increase participation, and to develop a greater sense of community. He urged individuals to have greater loyalty toward the parish in which they lived. Janssens added to the requirements for baptism the stipulation that the child or adult must live within a three mile radius of the church. Students within the parish boundary had to attend the parish's school. Janssens' vision sought greater integration of the Catholic faith into the lives of south Louisianians, but the result of using the territorial parish as the means to his goal was increased racial separation. There were no black English-speaking parochial schools. The requirement to join a church within three miles of one's home created a greater problem for English-speaking black Catholics since there was no interracial English-speaking church within three miles of their homes. Janssens sought to curtail the

⁶Report of Janssens to Commission for the Catholic Missions Among the Colored People and the Indians, c. 1889, 161-DY-1, JFA; St. Joseph's Advocate, 1 (July 1889): 638-639.

laissez faire attitude of his flock, but when he imposed qualifications for parish membership, he adopted the very antithesis of the universal ideal by drawing the color line. To these ends, he announced additional changes in a pastoral letter in June of 1889: "we have made it law, which already exists in most every diocese in the Union, that the children should make their First Holy Communion and be confirmed in their parish church, unless they go to Catholic schools, in which case they may receive the sacraments in the church in which that school is situated."⁷

After a couple of years in south Louisiana, during which he witnessed the hardening of white supremacy, Janssens became convinced more than ever that the archdiocese of New Orleans needed to continue in the direction of separate racial parishes he envisioned for it. In the 1890s, Bourbon Democrats consolidated their power by uniting white southerners under the political banner of white supremacy. Throughout Louisiana, after the Bourbons failed to create a white political party by courting black votes, they removed African Americans as well as any opponents to the politics of race, in particular, Populists, from the political process. On the other hand, Bourbon Democrats sought to attract the Sicilians into the "white" camp. Robert Orsi, who studied the assimilation of Italians into American society, argued that in their everyday lives dark-skinned Sicilian immigrants were caught in what historian John Higham called the "inbetweenness" of the new racial regime. They

⁷Pastoral letter from Janssens to clergy and laity of diocese, 16 June 1889, in bound volume of pastoral letters, AANO; report, "Synodus Dioece Sana Neo-Aurelianensis, Quinta Habita Mense Mass, Anno MDCCCLXXXIX, Francisco Janssens, 1889," Notre Dame Seminary Library, New Orleans, Louisiana, pp. 12-22; Labbé, Jim Crow, p. 33-35.

were not light skinned enough to be considered white but were perceived to be harder working and more industrious than African Americans. The Bourbon's attempt to forge a new party by persuasion failed; Sicilians did not join. Sicilians were then grouped with African Americans. Political violence against both ensued. To soothe tensions and promote parochial life, Janssens, therefore, sought the removal of African Americans and Italians from the interracial parishes. Yet, amidst the political turmoil, Janssens' vision of separate parishes to minister to the various racial and ethnic groups failed to gain clerical or lay support. He faced resistance both because his program conformed to the politics of white supremacy and because it required special ministers.⁸

The racial and ethnic hatred of the period, fanned by politicians, demanded that the Catholic Church take a more active role in the lives of its adherents, as white members discriminated against Italians as well as African Americans. When he assumed the archepiscopacy, Janssens had appealed to Italy for priests and nuns to serve the recently arrived Sicilian immigrants. While Janssens succeeded in obtaining an Italian priest, he never obtained results he wanted. Italian immigrants resisted special facilities. The Sicilians preferred interracial, inclusive churches. They blended into the French and Latin Catholicism of Louisiana. Historian John V.

⁸Robert Orsi, "The Religious Boundaries of an Inbetween People: Street Feste and the Problem of the Dark-Skinned Other in Italian Harlem, 1920-1990," American Quarterly 44 (September, 1992): 313-347; George E. Cunningham, "The Italian, A Hindrance to White Solidarity in Louisiana, 1890-1898," The Journal of Negro History L (January, 1965): 22-36; John Higham, Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism, 1860-1925 (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1955), pp. 169-171.

Baiamonte, in his study of Sicilians in Louisiana, discovered that the Sicilians brought with them a faith in "the use of rituals, symbols, and charms" and therefore easily associated with the Louisiana Catholic tradition with its veneration of saints and festivals, processions, and feasts. Not just politically and religiously but also socially, the Sicilian immigrants associated on equal terms with African Americans. Despite language barriers, the Sicilians fit right into Catholic Louisiana and the inclusiveness of the universal ideal. Both white and black parishioners accommodated them but the archbishop wanted to segregate them.⁹

Janssens feared for his flock amidst the endemic racism and racial violence in south Louisiana, and segregation seemed a logical answer. In October 1890, indicating the ethnic prejudice among white Catholics, Sicilians were rounded up and arrested in mass after the killing of Irish New Orleans police superintendent David C. Hennessy. In the months that followed Hennessy's murder, the Italians were acquitted of murdering the chief because of lack of evidence but they remained incarcerated, and tensions between the Sicilian immigrants and white political factions escalated. In March, 1891 Janssens redoubled his efforts for Italian segregation after mobs lynched eleven Sicilians who had been acquitted for Hennessey's murder. The mob secured its vengeance right in the parish prison where the Italians were to be released. Janssens condemned the violence. The harsh relations in the city that followed the

⁹John V. Baiamonte, Jr., "Community Life in the Italian Colonies of Tangipahoa, Parish, Louisiana, 1890-1950," Louisiana History 30 (Fall, 1989): 386-388; Orsi, "Religious Boundaries," p. 314. Because of interracialism and an existing "in-between" people, the pattern of Sicilian assimilation was different in Louisiana than other areas.

riot impelled Janssens to remove Italians from the interracial parishes. Janssens sought to solve the national and racial hostility by creating separate parishes.¹⁰

Janssens responded to the discrimination toward Italians the same way that he did white discrimination toward African Americans: by proposing segregation. As Janssens' biographer, Annemarie Kasteel, noted, his "conviction that separate churches could save souls was not limited to blacks; his theories applied to other groups, like the Italians as well." Kasteel argued that the "motivation was pastoral, not racist or discriminatory." Perhaps. But whether or not Janssens treated Italians like African Americans, Janssens still preferred to remove the people who upset the dominant white members of his archdiocese. While he condemned the violence, he capitulated to it and the racism behind it by trying to segregate the parties.¹¹

Improving pastoral care to African Americans also led Janssens to change the racial system in his archdiocese and to seek special ministers and parochial schools for blacks. Interracial parishes did not work, he believed, particularly in fund raising. He claimed that Catholics in interracial parishes, particularly the wealthy, failed to give money for efforts in behalf of the black parishioners. Compared to white Protestants, white Catholics in the archdiocese gave nothing to separate black

¹⁰See Richard Gambino, Vendetta: A True Story of the Worst Lynching in America, the Mass Murder of Italian-Americans in New Orleans in 1891, the Vicious Motivations Behind It, and the Tragic Repercussions That Linger to This Day (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Company, 1977).

¹¹Rudolph Vecoli, "Prelates and Peasants: Italian Immigration and the Catholic Church," Journal of Social History 2 (Spring, 1969): 217-68; Kasteel, Dutch-American, p. 324.

facilities. Black parochial schools suffered as a result, and this negligence led black parents to seek public or Protestant education that ultimately meant their children learned English and left the church. Janssens attributed the situation to white indifference, rooted in prejudice and selfishness, rather than satisfaction with the status quo in the interracial parishes.

At the same time he pointed to whites for the problem, however, he blamed blacks as well. Instead of attributing drops in black contributions to erosion of African American economic independence through job discrimination and removal from the economy through Jim Crow laws, Janssens imputed the black Catholics' insufficient support to their desire to have white officials finance church and school facilities. Rather than deal with black poverty and complaints about growing discrimination and the lack of return on their donations discussed in the Crusader under Leray's tenure, Janssens attacked black Catholic independence and their historical contribution to the archdiocese. By relegating in his decisions the positive aspect of interracial parishes that Louisiana Catholics cherished, interracial worship, Janssens confirmed his belief in the need for black separation that could be supported by special ministers with access to northern philanthropy and their own resources.¹²

The first year Janssens tried to put his plan in motion, the clergy and laity of the Archdiocese did not appreciate Janssens' efforts. The clergy realized that the

¹²Reports of Janssens to Commission for the Catholic Missions Among the Colored People and the Indians, 1890, 161-DY-2 and 1891, 161-DY-3, both in JFA; Salve Regina, 4 [February, 1892]: 73-74, copy in St. Mary's Dominican Academy, New Orleans, Louisiana.

Dutchman opposed priests and nuns serving both races when given the choice. Never popular because of resentment that a Frenchman had not been appointed archbishop, Janssens did not win friends by tightening rules and regulations. In response to his initiatives and push for special ministers and improvement of parish life, the French clergy publicly and loudly complained. They attacked Janssens in the French newspaper L'Observateur Louisianais. His biggest critics, Fathers F. Rouge of St. Augustine in the city, Magloire Simon of St. Mary's in Lockport, and J. P. Martin of St. Philip in Vacherie, blamed much of the problem on Janssens being Dutch rather than French. They assumed that the archdiocese of New Orleans was a French domain. They took pride in the unique interracial parishes preserved by the French bishops and clergy despite the opposition of national officials. That Janssens wanted to place black Catholics and Italians, each with special ministers, in separate parishes only challenged the authority of the French clergy. Of Janssens' proposals, they resisted most vehemently his attempts to create a black ministry.¹³

Despite being convinced of his rights and of his ideas, Janssens curtailed his parish program in the face of attacks. Janssens reported that the "good colored creoles are opposed to separate churches, most all of the priests are opposed to separate churches." Although taken aback by the reaction, he questioned why the clergy, much less black Catholics, disagreed with his ideas for segregation of parishes and the creation of a special ministry. After all, the interracial system had problems.

¹³F. L. Gassler, "Our Native Clergy," unpublished manuscript, 1936, pp. 54-58, typed copy in AANO.

He believed that black Catholics gave "next to nothing," while the white members supplied all the financial support. Black Catholics had to pay for their right to be in the interracial parishes; free rides would not be tolerated in the new parish communities if black Catholics did not make an effort to help keep the parish viable. Janssens could not be convinced that interracial parishes should be maintained because they did not meet the standards of the rulings of the Third Plenary Council and because pastors complained that black Catholics "outcrowded" the white members. Janssens, despite his ambitions to have a segregated parish, admitted that the problems were not widespread. Willing to compromise, Janssens accepted the French speakers' position in the "country" parishes and the French city parishes where black Catholics had "ample accommodation in the churches." The resistance even forced him to adjust his plan to segregate facilities where "there is no distinction made between white and colored and they freely intermingle in the pews in the church." In any case, no matter how right or wrong, Janssens was helpless to change anything. The archdiocese lacked the resources, the clergy lacked the inclination, and the laity lacked the desire to build separate parishes.¹⁴

Despite setbacks, Janssens did not abandon his plan and accommodate to south Louisiana's practices and traditions. Instead, he bided his time. He learned that funds were available, but that the complex racial and cultural membership of the parishes required tactics that called for gaining allies and dividing opponents in order

¹⁴Reports from Janssens to Commission for the Catholic Missions Among the Colored People and the Indians, years 1890-1893, 161-DY-2, 161-DY-3, 161-DY-4, and 161-DY-5, JFA.

to tap them. Janssens, the nationally recognized voice for black Catholicism, revealed his ignorance of and prejudice toward his black members when he was amazed to discover that in some parishes the number of black Catholics equaled or exceeded that of white Catholics in many congregations and that they wanted to keep it that way. He was caught off guard that black Catholics were not uniform in their opinions. He quickly perceived that his black allies, "the American negro, who only speaks English and would prefer to have a separate church," were few in number. The vast majority were of another type, "the creole negro, as he is called, who speaks French and loves to be with the whites in the church." After his initial experiences in south Louisiana, Janssens noted that there were three classes of black Catholics: those "who were free before the war and who have kept the faith very well"; "the old ex slaves who had kept the faith fairly well," though "many left the church the first years after the war," only to return; and "the young generation." After his discovery that the English-speaking black Catholics lacked the material means to assist him, Janssens worked with the French-speaking black leaders. He presented his proposal to several clergy. One of them, Father P. M. Jouan of St. Peter's in New Iberia, opposed asking former free people of color to volunteer to lead an effort for all-black parishes. Father Jouan responded that the numerous "mulattoes" of his parish "will not leave the white congregation to associate with the Negroes in a place of Catholic worship." Janssens concluded that the black leaders could not be persuaded to support his plans for segregation. Undeterred and at the risk of dividing the black Catholics of his diocese - and in a move that did not fit the pattern of leadership and race relations in the

South discovered by scholars--Janssens chose to deal with ex-slaves and English-speaking black Catholics rather than with the wealthier, more educated black Catholics.¹⁵

When pushed by black Catholics, Janssens did speak out against one aspect of white supremacy. Janssens and the black Citizens Committee of New Orleans, later of Plessy vs. Ferguson fame, joined to defeat a racial measure before the Louisiana legislature, House Bill Number 136. Sponsored by the Democrats who had initiated white supremacy laws in 1887, the bill proposed prohibiting intermarriage between the white and black races. At the request of the Citizens Committee, Janssens presented a memorial that condemned the law as unjust and unprecedented. Janssens stated that the law was unjust because it violated human and religious liberty. Indeed, natural law and the laws of the universal Catholic Church allowed interracial unions. He pointed out that the law was unnecessary, as such unions were rare, and when they occurred, the parties married for "good reason." He also wrote that "the motive of the law, I presume, is to prevent miscegenation and immorality between the races. It is my firm conviction that the proposed law instead of preventing will simply increase both." Whether the Citizens Committee agreed with the substance of

¹⁵Janssens to Elliott, 4 February 1889, 7-D-8, JFA; for another description of differences among black Catholic similar to Janssens, see letter from former Annunciation parish pastor then Archbishop Durier of Natchitoches to Josephite Father Leeson, 7 September 1889, 5-B-10, JFA. The consensus among historians has been that white leaders worked with educated lighter skinned, and middle class black leaders rather than dark-skinned, less educated freedpeople. For example, see Daniel D. Thompson, The Negro Leadership Class (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1963) and Louis R. Harlan, Booker T. Washington, The Making of a Black Leader, 1856-1901 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972); Baudier, St. Peters, p. 41.

Janssen's opposition was unclear, but they used his statements to attack publicly the Democratic, white supremacist Times-Democrat. An editorial in the Crusader, a black-owned and operated newspaper, indicated that "the bill was not opposed by Negroes only. It was opposed by the Catholic Church, officially through the head of the archdiocese of New Orleans." When the bill was defeated, the Citizens Committee claimed victory and announced its success in its battle against the white supremacist Times-Democrat. During his tenure, Janssens and the Citizens Committee found agreement on this one, minor issue about race relations amidst the ascendancy of white supremacy.¹⁶

White supremacy affected all African Americans daily. One black Catholic, who witnessed three black nuns forced to pay the fare on car number 116 of the Rampart and Dauphine streets line, inquired of Janssens why black nuns, despite passengers' objection, were required to pay the fare when white nuns did not. He asked "if the colored people, notwithstanding their vocation are to be deprived of all the privileges that the white now enjoy." Janssens' response went unrecorded, but he found little success on his own to fight white supremacy. Black Catholics had no further success in enticing Janssens to join their fight for social rights.¹⁷

¹⁶St. Joseph's Advocate 8 (1892): 235; clipping, Daily Crusader, 16 July 1891, 1/7/5, Xavier University Archives, New Orleans, Louisiana (XUA); clipping, Daily Crusader, 11 June 1892, 1/11/5-9, XUA; Clipping, Daily Crusader, c. 1892, 1/12/1-4, XUA; clipping, Daily Crusader, 23 July 1892, 1/13/1-5, XUA.

¹⁷[Illegible] to Janssens, 27 April 1893, Janssens File, Sisters of the Holy Family Archives, New Orleans, Louisiana, (SSFA).

They did find the Archbishop willing, even enthusiastic, to assist in the building of segregated schools and charitable facilities. During Janssens' tenure, Thomy Lafon completed plans for establishing a boys asylum. Born in New Orleans on December 10, 1810, to Pierre Laralde, a Frenchman, and Modeste Fouche Lafon, a mulatto, Lafon in eighty years had accumulated an estate valued at \$600,000. Educated in music and art, Lafon spoke Spanish, French and English. His education prepared him well for his dealings in multi-racial and multi-cultural New Orleans society. While a young man, he developed business savvy while selling candy to waterfront laborers and later taught school. By 1840, he had opened a dry goods store on Orleans Street and a couple of years later moved it to offices on Rampart Street. After the war, Lafon's investments in real estate paid off as land values increased in the city. Personally frugal and modest, Lafon shared a small home with his widowed sister, Mrs. Beaudin, on Ursuline and Robertson Street in the Faubourg Marigny. He preferred the quiet life. Reared and life-long friends with Lanusse, the poet and teacher; Edmond Didi, the musical composer; Norbert Rillieux, the inventor; Warbourg, the sculptor; Henry Rey, the scholar and accountant; and merchant Francoix Lacroix, Lafon made his mark in society by doing good deeds. By the time he drew up his will in April of 1890, Lafon owned property throughout New Orleans, much of it in the valuable commercial district.¹⁸

¹⁸Compiled from miscellaneous, clippings, undated c. 1890s, found in Thomy Lafon File, SSFA. Lafon's transactions covered nearly the entire nineteenth century. His name appeared frequently in the New Orleans Conveyance Office Vendors Books. See, for example, his purchase of property in the 1870s at C.O.B. 100 folio 500 and C.O.B. 102 folio 237.

Eager to assist the less fortunate in his native city, Lafon applied his real estate wealth to charitable and educational uses. By the 1890s, people who had lived through the Civil War and Reconstruction were too old to care for themselves. Within the archdiocese, black and white residents had few facilities to care for them. Freedpeople and widows of Civil War veterans needed help. Lafon wanted to help persons unable to survive on their own. In March, 1890, he planned to acquire property next to the St. Bernard Old Women's Asylum on Hospital St. to expand its aging facilities as well as to provide room for men. The neighbor was unwilling to sell, so Lafon asked Janssens to assist in procuring the property. He obliged.¹⁹

Lafon respected Janssens. Lafon sought out Janssens' counsel for projects. Janssens, who described Lafon as "a colored (bright mulatto) gentleman with all the manners of a French noble" and as "nearly white," appreciated Lafon's generosity, but never persuaded Lafon to support all of his own activities. Lafon, a truly exceptional Catholic, supported all denominations in charitable and educational works. Although much of his resources went to Catholic groups, Lafon gave liberally to Protestant Asylums and orphanages as well as to Straight University. Lafon practiced the universalism taught by the church, but his beliefs became more and more at odds with the emergent racially segregated society. Lafon, unlike Janssens, did not want a separate church for the exclusive use of black people. Janssens' inquiries--through the Holy Family Sisters--about Lafon's willingness to support separate churches fell

¹⁹Janssens to Mother Austin, 4 March 1890, Janssens File, SSFA.

on deaf ears. Janssens asked for support anyway and was flatly refused. Janssens could not rely on Lafon's unquestioning support.²⁰

By the early-1890s, Janssens had become exasperated with Lafon and the other French-speaking black Catholic leaders of New Orleans. He ignored their battle for civil rights and focused on church matters. Henceforth he would do what he thought best for his English-speaking black members, even if it entailed dividing--by parish--the black Catholic community into overlapping English-speaking and French-speaking factions, French versus Americans, as well as descendants of slaves versus descendants of free people of color. In January, 1892, without having convinced French-speaking black Catholic leaders and donors of the wisdom of segregation, Janssens made the fateful decision to put his plan for separate churches into effect. Convinced even before he entered the diocese that bringing lost black Catholics back into the church would require separate churches, he trusted that the French clergy could be persuaded to support segregation. Janssens' will, however, could not overcome the cost of a church buildings. He believed only first class facilities would attract black members. Although he opened schools in nearly every type of structure, he believed that a church had to be impressive. To create such edifices would require a large outlay, but even taken together contributions from the mission board and private donations did not add up to the necessary large sums. These sources hardly met his needs to build and fund schools and charitable structures, much less open new

²⁰New Orleans, The Times Democrat, 24 April 1897; report from Janssens to Commission for the Catholic Missions Among the Colored People and the Indians, 1894, 161-DY-6, JFA.

churches. Refused by Lafon, Janssens sought out another source of income, a source capable of delivering the large sums required for his purposes.

* * *

In March of 1891 Janssens wrote Katharine Drexel of Philadelphia requesting her help in efforts to "preserve the faith among our Catholic negroes." The daughter of Francis Anthony Drexel, a prominent Philadelphia banker who made a fortune in the California gold rush, Katherine had made a name for herself as a benefactor of African Americans and Indians. She was born in 1858. Her mother died giving her birth and her father died in an 1863 train accident. Although her family had not been involved in the anti-slavery movement, Katherine learned of the plight of Native Americans and African Americans from missionaries whom her stepmother entertained at their home and while abroad. The bishop of Pittsburgh, Michael O'Connor, became Katherine's confidant and nurtured her interest in the ministry among African Americans and Native Americans. Janssens' goal struck a responsive chord with Drexel, who agreed with his claim that blacks were leaving the church in vast numbers. In fact, Drexel had already attempted to stop the exodus. She, her sister, and her brother-in-law devoted the interest from their late father's fifteen million dollar fortune to the care and education of black Catholics and Indians. Along with her money, Drexel devoted her life to missionary service. Having experienced religious life in an established order, the Sisters of Mercy, she discovered that the Sisters allowed little time or effort for her to pursue the ministry among African Americans and Native Americans. From this experience, Drexel concluded that

evangelizing African-Americans and Native Americans required clergy devoted specifically to the task. In February of 1891 she established an order of nuns to work exclusively among black Catholics and Indians, the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament, and became its first superior. By 1891, Drexel was in a position to help Janssens.²¹

Drexel promised Janssens that if he could find devoted religious teachers, she would provide the financial resources to pay them. Janssens had to rely on the diocesan clergy and religious orders who ministered to both races. An April 1891 attempt to secure Marist priests to establish "parishes for the colored people" failed. By June of 1891, Drexel provided Janssens with \$2,900, in part her own money and in part money from her sister and brother-in-law, Mr. and Mrs. Philip Morrell. Drexel required Janssens to put the funds into educational and charitable organizations with the condition that the money be used for African Americans. She specified where her donations were to be applied out of fear that her money would be used for whites to the neglect of black children. She wished to help those who needed help the most. Janssens obliged. He gave \$900 to the Sisters of St. Joseph for their school for black children in Charenton, \$100 to a school in Baton Rouge, \$1,000 to the Sisters of the Holy Family for the old folks asylum on Hospital Street, and another \$700 to black schools in St. John the Baptist and St. Francis De Sales territorial

²¹Janssens to Drexel, 14 March 1891, H-10-B, Box 3, Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament Archives, Bensalem, Pennsylvania, (SBSA). Quote contained in letter. Katherine Burton, The Golden Door: The Life of Katherine Drexel (New York: P.J. Kennedy & Sons, 1957), pp. 3-153. Felicity O'Brien, Treasure in Heaven: Katherine Drexel (Middlegreen, Slough, United Kingdom: St. Paul Publications, 1991), pp. 9-40; Marie Consuela Duffy, Katherine Drexel: A Biography (Bensalem, Pennsylvania: Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament, 1966), pp. 131-140.

parishes in the city of New Orleans. Janssens was pleased since \$2,900 from Drexel nearly matched his annual stipend of \$3,000 from the Commission for Indian and Colored Missions!²²

Aware of the potential of Drexel's assistance, Janssens immediately applied for more money to use in building additional schools. Janssens told Drexel he had thirty-two schools and asylums for black children. Unfortunately, the donations of the local Catholic community together with the stipend from the Commission for Indian and Colored Missions did not provide enough money to fund these institutions, he explained, much less fund the four new schools under construction. As an example of his needs and the good Drexel could achieve, Janssens pointed out that in the Carrollton suburb of the city, Father Rene Vallee of St. Mary's Nativity territorial parish had one school that could support only thirty children. With just one hundred dollars from Drexel, Janssens told her, the school could support sixty children without charging them any tuition. The need for Catholic efforts for blacks was especially great in New Orleans because it was on the verge of bankruptcy; its school system did not even have teachers. Therefore, Catholic parents did not have the option of a public education. Drexel seemed to be the only source of revenue to make schools available to black children. Drexel, however, realized that the archdiocese of New Orleans had integrated parishes. Indeed, St. Mary's Nativity was such an interracial parish, and Drexel was reluctant to send money to white pastors who she felt could

²²Janssens to Drexel, 06 June 1891, H-10-B, Box 3, SBSA; Janssens' Diary Transcript, c. 30 April 1891, G-39-C, JFA.

spend money on needy white children just as easily as on black children. She quit sending the Archbishop money.²³

Rather, in January of 1892, Drexel requested an accounting of how the money she had earlier forwarded had been spent. Janssens reviewed for her where the money had been allocated and explained that more money was needed. The Holy Family sisters needed money for structures. They had repaired the orphan asylum with Drexel's money and were about ready to open another asylum with a gift from Thomy Lafon. Janssens mentioned his concern about the cost, an estimated \$24,500, to build the new St. Bernard Asylum. He had borrowed \$4,000 at five percent interest, and the sisters contracted for two thirds of the cost, \$16,250. Additional funds were required. Drexel's two hundred dollars was just a drop in the bucket; Janssens needed far more. Janssens fretted to Drexel, "the colored people take little interest in their own color, though I have on several occasions by speeches and celebrations tried to rouse them; the white people will give 25 cents to a colored asylum when they will give \$5 to a white asylum. Not long ago a charitable lady consulted me on some charitable objects. I suggested the colored orphans asylum, but I could not get a cent, she did not believe in having an asylum for colored children, yet she is a good lady" Satisfied with Janssens allocations and motives, Drexel

²³Janssens to Drexel, 04 July 1891, H-10-B, Box 3, SBSA; Baudier, Church in Louisiana, pp. 389,559; Janssens to Drexel, 29 July 1891, H-10-B, Box 3, SBSA.

sent \$2,000 for the orphan asylum. The money, after all, would go directly to the black nuns and not through a white pastor.²⁴

Black Catholics had a generous benefactor in Drexel, and Janssens delighted in his progress. In the six months after he first contacted Drexel for donations, he had received nearly \$5,000. He then presented his other projects for Drexel's approval. The French Sisters of Perpetual Adoration needed money for their three schools located in both the city and country areas. The nuns were building a white school in Breaux Bridge and offered to build and staff one for black children if given the funds. Janssens believed St. Bernard Church in Breaux Bridge needed immediate attention because nearly half of the parishioners were black. He asked for money for a school in Baton Rouge. Without a school in Baton Rouge, Janssens pointed out, many black Catholics there had left the faith "for lack of instruction and because the Protestant sects furnish them education. However with a sisters' school they will come back." Janssens asked Drexel for \$1,200. After Breaux Bridge, Janssens planned a school in Gretna, but he had time to collect money for this project since the proposed area had flooded and was not expected to dry out until the Mississippi River receded in three months time.²⁵

Aware of the extent of Drexel's commitment and resources, Janssens even invited Drexel to move to New Orleans with her fellow sisters, the Sisters of the

²⁴Janssens to Drexel, 09 January 1892; Janssens to Drexel, 14 January 1892; Janssens to Drexel, 22 January 1892, all in H-10-B, Box 3, SBSA.

²⁵Janssens to Drexel, 16 February 1892, and Janssens to Drexel, 29 February 1892, both in H-10-B, Box 3, SBSA.

Blessed Sacrament. Janssens proposed the construction or purchase of a convent, then the establishment of a normal school. For his part, he would contribute \$5,000 to the project and make the money a gift to Drexel. He suggested St. Joseph's territorial parish in the city as the ideal location for the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament to settle and build their institutions because the Vincentian priest of that parish had constructed a massive new church building and were looking to find a use for their other properties and old church. He developed the St. Joseph's plan around it. The Vincentians rushed to complete a brand new church there and had to dispose of their old buildings to raise capital. They offered Janssens the old church for a negotiable \$5,000. Distant from the powerful downtown centers of French-speaking black Catholics and outspoken French clergy, the area was home to many English-speaking black Catholics. After further review of the situation, however, Janssens decided that St. Joseph's parish school building would not meet his needs nor accommodate Drexel's Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament. Despite the low cost of just seventeen dollars per month, the facilities were not large enough. Moreover, the nuns were not in a position to move down. The new order lacked sufficient personnel to undertake such a large project, and even the enticement of a convent to attract and train members from Louisiana was insufficient incentive.²⁶

Janssens did not take no for an answer. In an early March 1892 letter to Drexel, Janssens attempted to sell his idea for a completely separate black ministry

²⁶Ibid. Janssens to Drexel, 04 March 1892, H-10-B, Box 3, SBSA; the new St. Joseph's Church was completed in October, 1892, and dedicated on 20 November 1892, New Orleans, Daily Picayune, 20 November 1892, p. 10, c. 2.

in Louisiana. He informed Drexel that she and the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament were an integral part of his vision's success. Although Drexel only allowed her money to be spent on schools or asylums, Janssens confided that he felt the time had come when his aspirations for separate churches could be funded by Drexel's resources. For the first time, Janssens expressed his wish to spend money available for schools on a separate church for the blacks. He saw the separate church as the next step in a complete racial ministry:

It is my decided opinion and advise [advice] that your order take charge of this work; to have a school and church for the colored population. I am morally certain of a complete success; and besides the good it will do to that section of the town, it will convince our people & clergy that separate churches are as necessary as separate schools. Of course you will advise with archbishop Ryan; and if he coincides I would further advise that you come in person not merely to see whether the property would suit, but that by your own observation you may see the work that is done here for the colored people and the work your order may successfully undertake.²⁷

Janssens, in effect, asked the foundress of an order of nuns, who had never visited the city but relied on local sources of information about the work, to take over the ministry among black Catholics throughout New Orleans. After nearly four years of resistance to his ideas from French clergy and French black Catholics, Janssens had scaled back his plans. He was desperate now to get just one separate church. He made no mention of the secular priests or of black benefactors such as Thomy Lafon, who spent time and money on black and white Catholics. Certainly, he did not mention the Holy Family Sisters, a black order, that had been working the ministry

²⁷Janssens to Drexel, 04 March 1892, H-10-B, Box 3, SBSA.

for fifty years. Janssens was presumptuous in assuming that a white order of nuns who worked exclusively for African Americans would be accepted by clergy who had mixed ministries in the archdiocese.

Drexel kept Janssens hanging. With no response, less than a week after proposing a ministry to her, Janssens dropped the subject rather than pursue his model church and risk losing the money promised him. He needed the agreed upon \$2,000 to provide for the expanded St. Bernard female asylum that was set to open in April of 1892. In addition, Father Antoine Borias, the secular priest in charge at Breaux Bridge, planned to buy land for building a school; he required the \$1,200 promised by Drexel as well. The Sisters of Perpetual Adoration agreed to staff the school. Yet, Janssens' pitch for a separate church paid off: by early April, Drexel had sent the money. While she did not agree to help him establish a separate black church in New Orleans, she did make provisions for allowing her money to be used in the search for clergy willing to work exclusively with black Catholics. With this assurance, Janssens re-examined his plan for St. Joseph parish. Instead of putting the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament there, he would arrange for an order of priests to open a church. Assured of Drexel's financial backing, Janssens met with Assumptionist Father Marcellin, a priest visiting from France, about creating a black ministry. After the Assumptionist expressed a strong interest, Janssens advised

Drexel that the time to act had arrived. The property in St. Joseph territorial parish would be on sale in May, for \$5,000.²⁸

The plans could not be finalized in the few weeks before the property became available because Janssens had acted too hastily and never gave Drexel sufficient time to approve the large undertaking. Rather than creating a parish, she allowed funds to be used for recruiting priests. Nonetheless, for Janssens, it seemed the ideal situation because he found a source that agreed with his views for a special ministry. As had occurred when he arrived in 1888, Janssens' attempt to alter the interracial practices of the Archdiocese of New Orleans without consulting his assistants and in the face of the opposition of his priests and black members failed. What actually stopped him, however, was Drexel's inability to come up with all of the required funds. Not willing to give up on the opportunity for special priests and the separate church, Janssens suggested Drexel pay monthly rent for the property instead of leasing or purchasing it. Drexel refused. Unable to increase the appropriations from Drexel, Janssens informed the Vincentians that their offer had been rejected. By renting, Janssens would not have to siphon funds from the Ladies of the Sacred Heart who needed \$1,000 for their school in St. James civil parish. In addition, the proposed school in Gretna also needed funding. Without an agreement to rent the property, Janssens used the allotted portion of the money promised by Drexel to pay Father Ildephonse, the Superior of the Mission of the Assumption Fathers for the Colored

²⁸Janssens to Drexel, 23 April 1892, H-10-B, Box 3, SBSA; Kasteel, Dutch-American, pp. 294-294; Janssens to Drexel, 09 March 1892, H-10-B, Box 3, SBSA.

People, who had been recalled to France for further consultation with his superiors about arrangements, after a thorough investigation of the possibility of the Assumptionists locating a mission in the city. In mid-1892, without diocesan support, Janssens did not have the resources for his vision, although he was closer to realizing it than the previous year.²⁹

Unaware of Janssens' attempt to entice Drexel to fund a separate church, French-speaking black Catholics continued to depend on the Dutch prelate for help with Catholic education and benefits. Drexel's money had done much to improve education and assistance. The schools improved parish life for hundreds of black Catholics in the city and rural areas. The new St. John Berchman's Asylum for girls opened under the direction of Mother Cecile of the Holy Family Sisters. Some of the money for the asylum, \$700, had been raised during a fair held by the black Catholic community. As one of the beneficiaries of black community support, the Holy Family sisters anticipated building new schools, in particular in Father Eugene Aveilhe's St. Maurice territorial parish. By June of 1892, not in the least interested in a black Catholic church, Lafon entered into negotiations to purchase land on which to build a boys' asylum. Lafon was ready with the \$5,500 cash to meet the asking price.³⁰

²⁹Janssens to Drexel, 10 April 1892 and Janssens to Drexel, 23 April 1892, both in H-10-B, Box 3, SBSA.

³⁰Janssens to Mother Austin, 24 May 1892, Janssens file, SSFA; Janssens to Drexel, 01 September 1892 and Janssens to Drexel, 17 June 1892, both in H-10-B, Box 3, SBSA.

With the expansion of the number of schools, asylums, orphanages, Janssens worried about how he would provide for these institutions, especially after the Mission decreased his allowance from \$3,000 to \$2,700. He asked Drexel to cover the difference as well as to continue funding the planned projects. More important, Janssens reiterated his request that Drexel send sisters to Louisiana. On this occasion, the persistent Janssens proposed Baton Rouge as the site for the Sisters of Blessed Sacrament. Conditions in the capital city were favorable to getting the Blessed Sacrament order accepted by the clergy and laity. He wrote her that there was a large black Catholic population in Baton Rouge and education was poor because of inadequate teachers. He said nuns were needed. The Sisters of the Holy Family had already extended themselves that year by taking over two new schools (Father Aveilhe's and one to be opened the next month) and eighty orphans in a new orphanage. They could not take on another institution. No other black nuns were available. Drexel, however, refused to send sisters or give Janssens additional money. She suggested a loan.³¹

Although concerned about the lack of church facilities for African Americans in south Louisiana, the interracial parishes there troubled Drexel. She was accustomed to separate black facilities ministered to by clergy who did not work with white members. Segregated facilities, she believed, allowed for a fuller Catholic life for black members free from white interference, except for their ministers. Of

³¹Janssens to Drexel, 13 September 1892 and Janssens to Drexel, 09 October 1892, both in H-10-B, Box 3, SBSA as well as Janssens to Drexel, 12 October 1892, H-10-B, Box 3, SBSA.

course, most priests and French-speaking black Catholics did not view the absence of black churches as a problem, but Drexel learned of conditions from Janssens and nuns who made clear that the interracial parishes had problems that exceeded benign neglect.

Janssens had not been alone in trying to coax Drexel into deeper commitment. In December of 1892, Sister Albina, superior of the French Sisters of St. Joseph Convent, academy, and parochial schools in Baton Rouge, had also solicited teachers and money. In addition, like Janssens, Sister Albina believed that the best way to serve black Catholics was to build a special church:

It is time in this Capital of Louisiana to do something for nearly 9,000 colored people in this City alone. They have here about six protestant churches for themselves, as they are not admitted with the white people except in our catholic church. There they creep along the wall on one side and we have no place to bring the school children together.³²

Although the interracial worship in the churches functioned adequately, the need to operate separate schools stretched the resources of the sisters and their community. The black parochial school received less attention than the white one; white discrimination forced black parents to send their children to American schools that ultimately led black members into the Protestant churches. Albina wanted Drexel to provide resources for a black parish: a church and school. Drexel, however, had already expended her annual income. She also worried about who would staff the separate parish; there were no priests available for the proposed black parish, and the Sisters of St. Joseph would not work in an all-black parish. In 1892, Drexel had

³²Albina to John Slattery 14 December 1892, 4-C-22, JFA.

refused two offers to build a separate church. Yet, intrigued by the call for help in building churches, Drexel re-examined her policy for funding only schools and asylums.³³

In February of 1893, Sister Albina tried again. She explained that the present situation of integrated churches with separate schools could no longer be maintained. Albina, a Frenchwoman, came to the same conclusions Janssens had reached years before. Her new attitude stemmed from three developments. First, she had been unable to interest her sisters or "subjects" (novices) in devoting themselves to work among black children. Even on recruiting trips to France, she could not secure devotees for the work. Sister Albina felt workers willing to teach the black children must come from the North. Second, although the children were in separate classes, even buildings, the convent faced taunts and ridicule, even threats, from white parents for teaching black children. Janssens, too, heard of the threats against nuns who served both white and black children. Third, Sister Albina agreed with Drexel's conclusion that for ministers to maintain the Catholic faith among African Americans, they needed to devote all of their energies to the field. Drexel did not fulfill Sister Albina's request but referred the crisis in Baton Rouge to Janssens. To supply money to Albina directly posed the risk that the gift could be used for white children. Whatever her concerns with religious orders, after 1893, the situation in Louisiana, as described by Albina and Janssens, appeared desperate; black Catholics there

³³Baudier, Church in Louisiana, p. 419.

appeared to be neglected by the Catholic clergy. Separate parishes for blacks under exclusive black-only ministers seemed the logical solution to combat the neglect.³⁴

Although Janssens and Drexel agreed on the need for special ministers, the lack of their availability still posed a problem. Janssens was stuck in a vicious cycle: to get funding for a separate church he needed special ministers, and to get special ministers he needed separate facilities. Despite prodding and begging, he could not overcome the fact that the Josephites did not have the personnel--nor did Drexel. Janssens worked hard to address the problem. He attempted to establish another order of black nuns, the Oblates of St. Francis, to operate schools. Black nuns working with black children posed no problem. Next, he presented to his consultors his plan to have separate churches under the French Assumptionists. Consultation was a process in which the bishop selected pastors based on their extensive knowledge of an issue, asked them to determine the feasibility of a proposal, and then requested them to give their opinion on it. Unknown to black Catholics, the local hierarchy held a meeting on whether or not to establish a separate parish for blacks. At it, Janssens and his consultors argued over the best method of evangelization. Despite several participants serious reservations about segregating black Catholics, they all decided to try a special parish with priests serving blacks exclusively. The consultors justified their support for Janssens' attempt at trying segregation because the archbishop

³⁴Albina to Slattery, 08 February 1893, 4-C-23, JFA; Albina as late as 1899 was trying to obtain special ministers for black Catholics, Father Souby of Church of the Sacred Heart in Morgan City, La. to Albina, 17 January 1899, 11-G-7, JFA; Arthur Droesserts, History of the Catholic Church in Baton Rouge (Baton Rouge: American Bank and Trust, 1971), pp. 13-15.

promised that special ministers would avoid white members and black members would not have to leave territorial parishes. The consultors then weighed the positive and negative consequences of introducing a new religious order to take charge of this work. Argument again broke out because some priests believed that there were already enough religious orders in the archdiocese, and these habitually acted, in their words, like suction pumps on neighboring parishes by drawing all their resources to the orders rather than to the archdiocese. The advisers also cautioned that creating black parishes could possibly lead to conflicts between white and black parishes. When they took the first ballot, the vote was split. Janssens became the decisive factor and allowed the Assumptionists access to a ministry in New Orleans. To reach a decision, the consultors had agreed that the Assumptionist jurisdiction was to extend only over the black Catholics who volunteered to attend. In the end, as a reminder of the animosity French prelates had treated him in 1888, Janssens barely received approval: two stubborn consultors withheld their support.³⁵

By March 1, 1893, with support from his subordinates, Janssens assumed he had cleared all obstacles to put black Catholics into church facilities separate from those for whites. He had priests and nuns, and he had the money. He understood Drexel to have promised him \$10,000 for the year 1893. He requested an allocation of \$800 for the school in Arnaudville, \$750 for St. John Berchman's Asylum, \$800 to continue the work in Breaux Bridge, and at least \$3,000 for the Peres de

³⁵Janssens' Diary, 23 August 1892 entry, typed transcription, JFA; Douglas J. Slawson, "Segregated Catholicism: The Origins of St. Katherine's Parish, New Orleans," Vincentian Heritage 17 (3, 1996): 154.

L'Assumption. He assured Drexel that the order would have no jurisdiction over whites. A disagreement arose at this point. Janssens stated he wanted to start in the "city," not specifying New Orleans or Baton Rouge. Drexel wanted the work to go forward with the Assumptionist and Holy Family Sisters (who would receive an unspecified amount of the \$10,000) in Baton Rouge, the location Albina told Drexel was in a crisis. Despite at least \$3,000 credit available to buy a church, Janssens' plan came to a quick halt. The Holy Family Sisters said they could not relieve Albina's sisters and assume responsibility for black schools in Baton Rouge while utilizing their nuns in additional institutions in New Orleans. Janssens was stuck because he did not want white sisters in Baton Rouge and had already assured Drexel that the black sisters would take over. By mid-March, Drexel, aware of the glitch, had dispatched \$1,550 for the schools in Arnaudville and the asylum anyway. Without an assurance of exclusive ministers or the precise location where Janssens intended to begin his separate parish, however, Drexel did not send money for the Baton Rouge project or to the Assumptionists.³⁶

Rather than abandon the plan because of the misunderstanding with the Holy Family Sisters and with Drexel, Janssens presented his proposal to the Assumptionists anyway. If the Assumptionists insisted on being in New Orleans while Drexel said Baton Rouge, the French order could raise the money itself. Janssens could then use Drexel's money for another project in Baton Rouge. Janssens' preferred that the

³⁶Janssens to Drexel, 01 March 1893 and Janssens to Drexel, 20 March 1893, both in M.M.K.-10, Box 30, folder 15, SBSA.

Assumptionists situate their headquarters in a predominately black section of New Orleans, where they would lease a residence, a hall, and a chapel. The Assumptionists could only rent the chapel's pews to black Catholics. Only after establishment in New Orleans would the Assumptionists be allowed to create similar all-black parishes in the rural areas of the archdiocese. Unwilling to lose the money offered by Drexel because of miscommunication and confident that Drexel would support special priests anywhere if they worked exclusively with African Americans, Janssens required that the Assumptionists work only with black Catholics. When the Assumptionist negotiator presented Janssens' proposal to his superiors in Paris, however, the Assumptionists refused to approve the proposal because of the requirement that they only work with blacks.³⁷

In August 1893, however, the Assumptionists' superiors overcame their initial reluctance after Janssens compromised and stipulated that the Assumptionists would be permitted to hear the confessions of white Catholics from across the archdiocese. This concession and the possibility that they would have to raise money on their own without Drexel's support probably confirmed the fears of diocesan priests that religious orders wanted a parish in New Orleans to attract the wealth of its inhabitants to support the projects of the religious orders--at the expense of the archdiocese. The French clergy, already faced with the decline of their language and culture, especially

³⁷Slawson, "Segregated Catholicism," pp. 154-155. Description of Janssens' problem with Assumptionist contract recorded in Janssens' Diary, entry for 08/31/97, transcription, JFA; the transcription listed the year as 1897, but that must be a typo in transcription, should be 1892.

feared that another French-speaking order of priests would draw the dwindling number of French-speaking parishioners from existing French-speaking territorial parishes. They had little concern for English-speaking black Catholics. Even before the Assumptionists arrived, the city's French clergy objected to the newcomers.³⁸

In a desperate move after four years of having failed in his plans to have a black parish, Janssens put all of his efforts into a single separate parish in the city of New Orleans. To satisfy the Assumptionists, Janssens insisted that the location for the separate parish be in New Orleans and indicated that he would pursue a separate parish without Drexel's aid, if he must. He believed the necessity for a separate parish was more urgent than ever.

By 1893, Janssens realized that French-speaking black Catholics did not want black churches, and because white Catholics would not accept new black schools needed by black members, he saw no interracial solution to the dilemma. The attempt to attract African Americans to the Catholic Church through schools only led to white violence. Indeed, whites had attacked white nuns in Baton Rouge and black educational institutions in Lafourche. In Arnaudville, where Drexel had sent so much money, Janssens blamed hostility toward religious and black Catholics on whites who he claimed were very ignorant--"not more than 1 in 15 can read." Janssens complained that before he had completed building the school there, the white neighbors "made threats, after building it, still worse so, tried even twice to burn the

³⁸Labbé, Jim Crow Comes to Church, p. 40; Janssens to Drexel, 01 March 1893 and Janssens to Drexel, 20 August 1893, both in M.M.K.-10, Box 30, folder 15, SBSA.

school, threatened bodily harm to the sisters." Roger Baudier gave the event a vivid account derived from recollections of the Marianite sisters in St. Francis Regis parish:

The schools' doors opened on September 15, 1893, with an enrollment of 12 colored children--five boys and seven girls. . . . Promptly there was agitation against the school by the Regulators [those who regulated race relations], and soon threats were made, not only against the institution, but also against Sister Martina, who was a member of a distinguished Louisiana French family. On opening day, the Regulators had set a demonstration, but courageously Sister Martina gathered the 12 tots around her and seated herself on the front steps of the school, awaiting the worst. Like the Master Whom she served, she was seeking to suffer the little ones to come to Christ, but before long a band of brave (but masked) Regulators drove up, cracking whips, shouting and galloping, bent on scattering small children away from the savior and intimidate a defenseless woman, interested solely in saving souls. They drove away finally, without any further harm, but the trouble was not over. On September 22, at 11:30 at night, the cry of fire resounded in Arnaudville, and the church bells were rung. The colored school had been set on fire. Father Denoyel was heart-broken, but the only consolation he had was the assurance that the perpetrators were few, if any, from among his parishioners. Good citizens took turns for two weeks to mount guard around the convent. . . .³⁹

The Marianites of the Holy Cross had felt the sting of white persecution experienced earlier as previously described by Sister Albina. Violence and burnings also occurred in other parishes.

Janssens regretted that his priests and nuns faced these threats. He wanted to stop the arson and reduce the risks to his clergy and his flock. All-black parishes would reduce the threats and burnings because resources from interracial congregations would not be expended on blacks to the perceived detriment of whites. There would no longer be any mixing of resources, money, clergy, and buildings--and

³⁹Baudier, Arnaudville, p. 48.

blacks and whites. The New Orleans parish would be an experiment. In addition to preventing further violence, he felt that without a single separate church, the Catholic religion "was losing out to Protestants who looked out for perversions not conversions." Rather than a deficiency in special ministers, he decided that continuing to spend money on schools in the interracial parishes was the problem. Janssens had determined that the interracial tradition of the archdiocese of New Orleans no longer worked; seating discrimination had degenerated into violence. He wrote that "it would be desirable to have no discrimination in our churches, so that anyone might occupy any pews and any seat anywhere in the church, but the feeling between the two races make such intermixture impossible." In the face of racial violence, Janssens blamed white violence and animosity on "well-to-do blacks, the mulattos" who have no interest in separate facilities. He stated that they "never go to church" and hence do not have practical faith. He said Mr. Lafon was an exception.⁴⁰

* * *

Janssens' commitment to separation appeared to be rewarded with divine intervention; he found a situation whereby the Assumptionists would not be needed and Drexel would agree to begin work in New Orleans. In September, 1893, just a week before his scheduled meeting to finalize an agreement with the Assumptionists, Father Thomas Abbott, a Vincentian priest, intervened. Abbott chanced upon

⁴⁰Janssens to Drexel, 01 October 1893; Janssens to Drexel, 07 October 1893; Janssens to Drexel, 20 August 1893, all in M.M.K.-10, Box 30, folder 15, SBSA; report from Janssens to Commission for the Catholic Missions among the Colored People and Indians, 1894, 161-DY-6, JFA; Salve Regina, 6 (February, 1894): 51-53, copy in St. Mary's Dominican Academy.

Janssens while both men made visits in Charity Hospital. The archbishop told Abbott that previously he never had the funds to take up their offer for the old St. Joseph, but recently he had obtained \$3,000 to establish a church for blacks. Janssens wondered whether the Vincentians would be willing to use the old Saint Joseph's church and supply the priests to form an exclusive congregation of African Americans. Janssens reasoned that after their new church of St. Joseph's went into operation they would no longer have a use for the old facility, so the Vincentians would want to sell the building or would be open to suggestions for its use. Abbott told Janssens that only his provincial, Father Thomas Smith, had the authority to render a decision. The persistent archbishop then inquired whether the Vincentians would at least lend the church to the Assumptionists, who would only permit African American parishioners. Abbott responded that even allowing another order to use the church required approval from his superiors; only Smith could agree to his request. Abbott assured Janssens, however, he would report to Smith the archbishop's wishes and the availability of \$3,000 to undertake the work.⁴¹

Indeed, Abbott acted quickly. Douglas Slawson, who studied the Vincentians involvement in creating separate black parishes in New Orleans, discovered that Abbot and Smith intentionally blocked the Assumptionists from entering New Orleans. Rather than the French-speaking Assumptionists, Smith decided that the Vincentians would undertake the work with black Catholics in New Orleans. Smith explained to Father Francis Nugent, the new superior of Saint Joseph's, that he had reached this

⁴¹Slawson, "Segregated Catholicism," p. 156.

conclusion because the Vincentians "are obliged to undertake the formation of a colored congregation in our old church in order to keep out a strange community." Smith's reason for wanting to keep the Assumptionists out of New Orleans, although not expressed, may have been rooted in his experience and longtime service at Saint Joseph's years before when he may have developed a similar outlook to the secular clergy's fear of the "suction-pump" effect on funds and members. Quite possibly, Smith wanted to preserve the Vincentian tradition of ministering--in English--to black Catholics in Louisiana that began in Donaldsonville in the 1838. Nonetheless, Janssens was relieved to learn of Smith's enthusiasm for his plan; he admitted that "I was under the impression somehow or other that you had not the men nor perhaps the inclination of undertaking the work" after meeting with Abbott. To prevent a repeat of the problem he had with the city's pastors when introducing the Assumptionists to New Orleans, Janssens demanded that the Vincentians follow the same guidelines established for the Assumptionists. First, African Americans would continue to have the right that they now possessed, to go to their own territorial parishes. In other words, they were not to be forced to belong to this one black congregation. Second, the pastors of the new parish would have jurisdiction over blacks from throughout the city. Third, the new church's priests could hear the confessions of whites who came there, but no whites could rent pews in the new black church. Janssens saw no harm in allowing confessions.⁴²

⁴²Quoted in Slawson, "Segregated Catholicism," pp. 156-157. Transcribed letter agreement, Janssens to Abbott, 16 August 1893, in M.M.K.-10, Box 30, folder 15, SBSA; also list of regulations found Janssens' Diary, entry for 30 May 1895, JFA.

The Vincentians' decision to undertake the work would make Janssens' plan a reality. Yet Janssens had settled on New Orleans and not Drexel's choice, Baton Rouge. Nor had he obtained the special ministers that both he and Drexel found desirable. In providing priests to operate both the interracial St. Joseph and the new all-black parish meant that the Vincentians did not work exclusively with black Catholics. The Vincentians assured Janssens, however, that each parish would have distinct pastors. Janssens was delighted because the Vincentians agreed to do something the Assumptionists would not: work exclusively with blacks in a separate parish. Janssens was satisfied that this arrangement would work in the city but not in the rural areas. To avoid any intermixture with the French order, he then assigned the Assumptionists to Klotzville, Louisiana, along Bayou Lafourche, the general area where the black school had been burned in Arnaudville. Drexel accepted this arrangement with the knowledge that she had already invested much money in Arnaudville. The Baton Rouge project was put on hold and Janssens just hoped that Drexel would agree to the Vincentians undertaking the project in New Orleans.

The archbishop then left responsibility with the Vincentians for collecting Drexel's \$3,000 donation to start work. Drexel rejected the Vincentian request for the donation, however. Janssens had mistakenly assumed that funding of the New Orleans project to repair old St. Joseph would come from Drexel's original donation, but that money had been allocated to the Assumptionists and they needed it for work in Klotzville. Moreover, Drexel kept a strict accounting of her allocations and did not transfer money from one project to another. Without the promised money, Smith felt

Janssens had duped the Vincentians. Smith suspected that Janssens only wanted to "shift the repairs etc. on ourselves." Smith would only proceed with the project if Janssens came up with the original offer of \$3,000. To honor their agreement, Smith expected Janssens to show good faith and request Drexel to reconsider allocating the money. Janssens obliged. Smith then directed Nugent, pastor of St. Joseph, to deliver Janssen's letter to Drexel in-person, a task which he performed in late September. From meeting with Drexel in Philadelphia, Nugent learned Drexel was interested in making a large donation for the Janssens/Vincentian project but would not advance any funds without an exact estimate of the costs involved. Wanting to take advantage of Drexel's generosity, Nugent returned to New Orleans and immediately requested the construction company of O'Neill & Koch to bid on the work. Slawson, who studied the contract, wrote that for \$5,675 the company would straighten the brick work on the exterior of the church, re-floor the entire interior (except under the altar), install new rain gutters, repair the tin work and slate work on the roof, re-plaster interior walls, refurbish all the wood and ironwork, restore door frames and window frames complete with new sashes and glass, install wainscoting throughout, and shore up the concrete foundation. Repairs to the church would allow seating for eight hundred and fifty worshippers and increase the value of the structure to over \$40,000. Nugent assured Drexel that Janssens favored the

estimate and that the archbishop seemed "very anxious to have the church opened as soon as possible."⁴³

Nugent was a very persuasive man. Nugent, in pushing Drexel to approve the O'Neill and Koch contract, had assured Drexel that the Vincentians were committed to the project and would tirelessly work to make the parish a success. Nugent had stressed the Vincentian commitment to black Catholics by stating that facilities were undergoing renovation for use as a new school for black children. Nugent also stressed that English-speaking black Catholics in New Orleans wanted more than Catholic education. They wanted a parish. He explained that a black man from Galveston, Texas, hoped to start a newspaper for English-speakers in the proposed all-black parish. Nugent saw religious support for the newspaper important because it could serve as "a strong power" in gathering support in the black Catholic community for the Vincentian all-church. Janssens and the Vincentians were anxious to commence work while English-speaking black Catholics, at least, endorsed the idea.⁴⁴

Drexel liked the contract offer but regretted not being able to meet the construction company's bid. She allotted \$2,000 toward the contract and instructed Nugent to cover the shortfall by raising the money among both black and white

⁴³Quoted in Slawson, "Segregated Catholicism," p. 158; Janssens' Diary, entry for 14 November 1895, JFA; Janssens to Drexel, 14 October 1893, M.M.K.-10, Box 30, folder 15, SBSA; F. V. Nugent to Drexel, 14 October 1893, M.M.K.-10, Box 40, folders 22 and 23, SBSA.

⁴⁴Nugent to Drexel, 14 October 1893, *ibid.*

Catholics. Nugent tried to get more money from Drexel because he held little hope that white members would give money to a black church: "the prejudice of the whites does not permit the hope that they would give anything worth mentioning, for such a project." The Vincentians knew from their experience when they had tried to solicit money for a black school that whites in St. Joseph parish gave little toward all-black projects. He also expected little support from "colored people" because French-speaking black Catholics "look with some suspicion on the movement as an attempt to draw the color line in the Catholic Church." Acknowledging black Catholic resistance, Nugent added that "it is only after time has worn away this suspicion, and they see their own church has come to stay that the Negroes can be expected to rally enthusiastically to its support." Drexel, despite the plea, wanted the people to help themselves and did not supplement her donation. A mission designed to "to rally" black Catholics from across the city gained nothing for a Jim Crow church. Without French-speakers support in helping the English-speakers, Nugent held little hope for the separate parish. "We are really in a very embarrassing dilemma," Janssens reported to Drexel. Despite Nugent's claims about black Catholics wanting a parish as evidenced by the willingness to start a newspaper, their numbers were too few to raise much money. Janssens and Nugent remained firm in their belief, however, that the unsuccessful attempt to raise capital from the community did not indicate a lack of interest.⁴⁵

⁴⁵Nugent to Drexel, 14 October 1893, *ibid.*; Slawson, "Segregated Catholicism," p. 159; Nugent to Drexel, 09 November 1893, M.M.K.-10, Box 40, folders 22 and 23, SBSA; Janssens to Drexel, 11 November 1893, M.M.K.-10, Box 30, folder 15, SBSA.

For the third time in little more than a year, Janssens pleaded with Drexel. He resorted to blaming black Catholics, the people whom he claimed to be trying to help even as he diverted money from education to a church few wanted. After attempting to persuade Drexel with arguments about white violence against schools. Janssens went to the heart of the matter:

We see that many of our colored Catholics leave us, first because we cannot give them in the church the same accommodations as the white; that is mix them together, as they desire, for they are drive [sic] the whites away owing to prevailing ideas concerning the two races, and secondly because the real negroes seem to feel more at home in their own [Protestant] churches. On the other hand, our white Catholics are unwilling to help the Negro for church & school purposes; and many of the influential negroes, especially mulattoes, are opposed to special colored churches, not because they go to church themselves, but because they imagine the different churches will tend to greater social separation. I tell them they keep all the privileges they have and that they can continue to go to the white churches, but they do not want to understand it. A separate congregation is a trial, and I think here, where we have 2/3 of all the colored Catholics of the U.S., this ought to be given a fair trial. If one succeeds, we will have far less difficulty with the following; and if one, after giving it a fair trial, fails, we will simply give it up for the future; and console ourselves with the thought that we tried, . . . I want to do my duty towards the colored people & somehow or other my conscience often troubles me concerning them.⁴⁶

After double dealing and renegeing on his agreement with the Assumptionists, Janssens pleaded his case to Drexel seemingly without holding anything back. But he did. He wrongly claimed that only the elite black Catholics resisted his efforts. That was not true. He only gave Drexel the white perspective. Drexel took notice, however; she put this project on top of her list for 1894.

⁴⁶Janssens to Drexel, 11 November 1893, Ibid.

Black Catholics became incensed with Janssens' actions and their inability to influence the archbishop. Lafon and Janssens had earlier worked together, but on December 22, 1893, Thomy Lafon died. Also in 1893, another of the radical Reconstruction leaders had passed away, Aristide Mary. Younger black Catholic leaders, though no less courageous, did not have the material means or influence of Lafon, Mary, and a few others like them. With Janssens and the Vincentians putting maximum effort into making a separate church a reality, though, the members of the younger generation objected as best they could. In January 1894, self proclaimed "practical Catholics" addressed to "To his Grace, Archbishop Janssens" a petition:

We, the undersigned, practical Catholics, most earnestly call your attention to the injustice designed against us, in the endeavor to establish a church, exclusively for colored people in the Parish of St. Joseph, against our wishes or consent. And as faithful subjects of the Church, we do most emphatically protest against this class legislation for no other reason than to humble and humiliate one class of God's children without elevating the other. We, therefore, humbly pray you to consider this our protest unto which we attach our names.⁴⁷

In their petition, the black Catholics expressed views very much at odds with those attributed to them in Janssens' letters to Drexel. Discrimination in transportation, in schools, and in the work place had crippled the economic fortunes of all African-Americans in south Louisiana, the petition claimed. They requested that their social situation not be further damaged by the archdiocese. The petitioners were careful and respectful of Janssens' position. They did not attack Janssens and his abhorrent

⁴⁷Petition to Janssens, 03 January 1894, folder entitled, "Negro Church, protest against building colored missions 1888-1894, 9-16-1888; 1-3-1894 - Organizations," AANO.

actions. They even held back from pointing out to Janssens how his plan contradicted the teachings of the universal church. Rather, they made a request to maintain the status quo.⁴⁸

As a group, the one hundred fifty signers represented all elements of the black community. There were teachers and laborers, married and unmarried, educated and uneducated, young and old. They lived in various parts of the city, not just in St. Joseph territorial parish. They had French surnames as well as Spanish surnames and Anglo surnames. Their ages ranged from late teens to the seventies; several were at the stage of beginning a family. One of the couples who signed, Ernest E. Chessé, son of Louis E. Chessé and Marie E. Boutin, and his wife, the former Marie Emma Dubois, daughter of Auguste DuBois and Mary L. De Bulnez, had been married on December 28, 1893. The young couple were members of St. Augustine Parish and resided at 222 St. Philip St. Another signer, a laborer by trade, Paul Gueringer, resided at 181 Columbus St., nearer to St. Joseph Parish. In February of 1885, Gueringer, son of Ulysse Gueringer and Marie Duval, had married in St. Augustine church, Helena Azemard, daughter of Felix Azemard and Magnon Felier. William F. Baptiste, a mason; Eugene Bazille, another mason; Albert Blandon, cigarmaker, Albert Bouis, a cooper, Edward E. Brady, a printer, John L. Brossette, a baker; Fernand Cavanaugh, a shoemaker; John Drish, a policeman; Edward P. Lopez, a musician; Edward O. Moss, a barber, Alfred Planchard, a cigarmaker, all united to

⁴⁸For comparison of New Orleans Catholic protest with others, see August Meier, Black Protest Thought in the Twentieth Century, second edition (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1971).

sign the petition and to express to Janssens their disapproval of building a Catholic Church for the exclusive use of black people.⁴⁹

Married and single females stood out among the names. The writer of the petition, Mrs. Sylvanie F. Williams, was at the time of the protest a prominent New Orleans educator. Born on August 5, 1847, in Opelousas, Louisiana, as Sylvanie Francoz, she came to New Orleans after the war to be educated in a convent. She then took classes at Peabody Normal to be trained as teacher. She married Arthur P. Williams, another educator. In 1870, Mrs. Williams taught French at Straight University where her father-in-law held the position of dean of the Normal Department. By 1883, Mrs. Williams served as principal of the public Fisk School, a school exclusively for black girls. Mrs. Williams became a spokeswoman for black education and in time, the Orleans Parish School Board named a school after her. The Fisk schools for girls and boys had many Catholic teachers, and other signers taught there: Sarah Allen, Clara Julia Isabelle and Emma Rose Williams. Miss Emma P. Lopez and Olivia P. Hamilton taught at another black school, Robertson School.⁵⁰

Prominent men who signed the petition included William J. Nickerson. Nickerson held a position as chair in the musical department at Southern University.

⁴⁹Sacramental Records, St. Augustine Parish, Marriage Bk. 6 (1882-1894) p. 520, AANO; Sacramental Records, St. Augustine Parish, Marriage Bk. 6 (1882-1894) p. 132, AANO; New Orleans City Directory, 1893.

⁵⁰Meyer, Names Over New Orleans Public Schools, pp. 219-220; Betty Porter, "The History of Negro Education in Louisiana," Louisiana Historical Quarterly 28 (January-October, 1945): 805; New Orleans Daily Picayune, 28 September 1892; New Orleans City Directory, 1893.

Back in 1888, Nickerson had led the university orchestra. Soule "Sully" Roudez, a man in his seventies, also signed the petition. In 1894, Sully lived at 66 North Roman Street. Prior to the Civil War, Sully had begun his trade as a cooper. He belonged to Fraternite' #20 from 1867 to 1873 and probably had been an active Mason. At that time he lived at 343 Benton Street. Charles Pierre, a former free person of color, who had married in the church in the 1850s, had been a member of the Congrégation Unioniste de Bienfaisance, the group that desired to memorialize emancipation in 1863, and worked as a cooper by trade, also signed the petition. So too did C. Populus, a member of the Justice, Protective, Social and Educational Club.⁵¹

With their petition, black Catholics forced Janssens to confront the depth of opposition to his new segregated parish. Humbled, he could not just blame outspoken black Catholics for holding up his schemes. On January 9, 1894, less than a week after the petition had been signed by average black Catholic parishioners, Janssens wrote to Drexel that the "special church" may prove to be a failure. He said failure was probable because of a "lack of interest on the part of colored people . . . [and] insufficiency of means to keep it up." He could not blame Creoles, light-skinned, or outspoken leaders for opposing his plan. Many black Catholics opposed it. Janssens also expressed sympathy for the plight of black Catholics, for he felt they were in a "very peculiar position." He admitted to Drexel that "the separate work might prove

⁵¹Bell, Revolution, p. 396. Charter of Congrégation Unioniste de Bienfaisance, 24 October 1896, New Orleans Mortgage Office, Book 565, folio 558.

detrimental to the political or social conditions of the colored people." Janssens had finally come to understand that, despite their racial and cultural differences, black Catholics, who had once been divided, had now united in the fight against segregation and drawing of the color line in the Catholic church. In closing, Janssens assured Drexel that if the project failed, all contributions would go to other work among black Catholics.⁵²

Rattled by the realization that he may hurt those he wanted to help, Janssens let someone else take the lead for a time. Black Catholic influence had swayed him. Lafon's will had been opened and not a penny had been left for a black Catholic church.⁵³ Black Catholics did not want to be segregated. It would be the Vincentians and Drexel who made a separate church in New Orleans a reality. Nugent, the Vincentian superior in the archdiocese of New Orleans, asked Archbishop Patrick Ryan of Philadelphia, Drexel's trusted spiritual adviser to help their cause. Ryan advocated the Vincentian's project and reminded Drexel of her ambition "to do something good for the black Catholics of New Orleans." Convinced of the good cause, Drexel increased her previous offer from \$2,000 to \$5,000. She trusted Janssens but added conditions to the large donation which largely applied to the Vincentians. Nugent agreed to provide Drexel a document obligating the Vincentians

⁵²Janssens to Drexel, 09 January 1894, M.M.K.-10, Box 30, folder 15, SBSA.

⁵³New Orleans Times Democrat, 20 December 1893; transcribed copy of bequest located in Thomy Lafon file, SSFA. Janssens recorded in his diary how exemplary Lafon had been. Lafon's funeral took place on 22 December 1893 at St. Augustine Church. Janssens' Diary, entries for 30 July 1893 and 22 December 1893, transcription, JFA.

that in the event the proposed church was "abandoned for Colored purposes," the \$5,000 could not be used for other Vincentian works in the diocese of New Orleans. Nugent had acted too quickly. Rather than an acknowledgement of black resistance, Nugent's superior, Smith, interpreted the proviso as testimony to Drexel's suspicions about Vincentian honesty. But the act was typical for Drexel, who, as in her dealings with the Sisters of St. Joseph in Baton Rouge, had no more in mind than ensuring that her large donation would benefit African Americans. While Nugent had accepted Drexel's requiring the Vincentians to provide a written guarantee on the use of her donation; Smith did not. Smith's disappointment in Drexel delayed commencement of the plan for months.⁵⁴

Because Nugent knew Smith's disapproval of Drexel's procedure threatened the entire project, he forwarded to Janssens Drexel's letter. The archbishop was anxious to appease both Smith and Drexel because he was relying upon to make the project a success. Janssens suggested the removal of the wording that upset the Vincentians superior and a rewording that assured Drexel that the \$5,000 would go to "other colored work" in the archdiocese if the proposed Vincentian parish failed. According to Janssens, in the event of failure, the archbishop of New Orleans would assume responsibility for applying the money to black work. Nugent sent the archbishop's letter to Drexel along with his own note pointing out the Vincentian's

⁵⁴Described and quoted in Slawson, "Segregated Catholicism," pp. 160, 161. Undated Vincentian acceptance of Drexel's demand found attached to Nugent's letter responding to a 24 November 1893 correspondence from Drexel to Nugent, M.M.K.-10, Box 40, folder 22 and 23, SBSA.

concerns. "If the apostolate were to continue only during the life of the present archbishop," added Nugent, he himself would accept the disputed wording because Janssens was "a man of sound practical judgment and eminently just" who would apply the money to the black ministry. Nugent's objection to the proviso, however, took into account the status of the money under Janssens' successor who might interpret such a clause to mean that the success or failure of the black parish depended "entirely on the zeal of the Vincentians, and a difficulty might arise over what constituted sufficient zeal." Certainly, Nugent believed that all stipulations should be dropped. In any case, Smith, the provincial, was not willing to accept the compromises reached by Nugent and Janssens. Smith ordered Nugent to make the agreement with Drexel on the original terms, namely, without Drexel's proviso requiring the Vincentians to guarantee refund of the donation if the project failed. "The proposition of Mother Catherine [sic] and her advisers I regret to say implies a distrust in us and suspicion of our sincerity [sic] and honesty in undertaking the formation of the Colored Congregation and a doubt of our discharging our duty to them faithfully unless the forfeiture of that 5,000 was held in terrorem [in terror] over our heads," he wrote Nugent.⁵⁵

Nugent was unhappy with the delays and again asked Janssens to intervene. By mid-November, even Janssens withheld agreeing to Drexel's demands. Janssens foresaw the possibility of failure, not on the part of the Vincentians, but "on the part of the Colored people themselves, e.g. the fear of being deprived of 'Social Equality'

⁵⁵Slawson, *ibid.*

which they have been fighting for so long in being excluded from the Churches of the White people and having the Baptisms and Marriages registered on the same books." Nugent informed Drexel that withdrawal of Janssen's support guaranteeing use of the \$5.000 for other black work if the project stopped was too great a burden on the Vincentians. Although the project was stalled because of Janssens' wavering, Janssens' caution had gained the confidence of the provincial. "He has a clear view of the situation," declared Smith. Smith was then prepared to continue the negotiations. Although Nugent's efforts to appease Smith, Drexel, and Janssens had prevented failure, and within months, the attitudes of black Catholics would make the diplomatic priest want to drop the entire project.⁵⁶

In February of 1894, the project to turn the old St. Joseph's church into a parish church for the exclusive use of African Americans finally became public and immediately met with vehement black resistance. Janssens wrote that "everything is doing pretty well, though some few high toned colored mulatto persons are stirring up strife against a colored church in the city." Despite the petition from black Catholics that sent Janssens into despair over the project, Nugent's hard work and Vincentian commitment had heartened the archbishop to this latest challenge. Janssens again blamed the problems on the black leaders. Despite his earlier claims that the English-speaking black Catholics who actually requested a separate church were "few," he reported to Drexel that the "largest number" of black parishioners favored

⁵⁶Janssens to Nugent, 09 January 1894, M.M.K.-10, Box 30, folder 15, SBSA; Nugent to Drexel, 11 January 1894, M.M.K.-10, Box 40, folder 22 and 23, SBSA; Smith quote taken from Slawson, "Segregated Catholicism," p. 162.

the idea of a separate church. He confessed to Drexel that if only he could try the experiment despite the objections, once they saw it was meant for their benefit, all black Catholics would support the separate parish. Janssens then wondered why black Catholics, "though they do not deny that I am their friend and have done much for them, yet they do not fully trust me."⁵⁷

Put off by the black opposition and tangled wishes of religious orders in New Orleans, during March of 1894 Janssens approved a separate black-only chapel, requested by one of his diocesan priests. The place chosen was Cameron, Louisiana, located about seventy miles south of Lake Charles. John Engberink, a native of Holland, and compatriot of Janssens, had arrived in the area in 1890 and established Sacred Heart Parish. Operating from a central location at Sacred Heart, he had in just four years built nearly fifteen missions. Nevertheless, Engbrink quickly discovered that despite the large number of mission chapels that served both races, many of the local Catholics had become Protestant. Engbrink, according to Janssens, had a difficult time ministering to his black members because of "much prejudice by the whites." In 1894, he proposed a special mission and asked Drexel for money. In a little more than a year, Engbrink designated a chapel for the exclusive use of blacks. Although significant in its conception, the scale of Engbrink's effort was small.

⁵⁷Janssens to Drexel, 13 February 1894, M.M.K.-10, Box 30, folder 15, SBSA.

isolated, and temporary compared to Drexel's and the Vincentians' effort in New Orleans to establish a model parish for a system of black churches.⁵⁸

The same month, the Vincentians finally completed their preparations to commence work on the first separate all-black church building in New Orleans. Black Catholics again publicly voiced their criticism. A subcommittee of the larger Citizens Committee that had defeated the miscegenation law, composed of A. Esteves, P. Chevalier, E. Luscyc and L. A. Martinet, met with Janssens for an hour to discuss the proposed repair of old St. Joseph's for exclusive use by colored Catholics. Each side presented its views with great frankness, according to the Crusader's correspondent. Janssens explained to the committee that a separate church became necessary when black Catholics "estranged" themselves from the services in the face of white discrimination in seating and school appropriation. The committee agreed that there was estrangement but argued that it resulted from "prejudices which obtained in the churches; that if these were discontinued, or abolished, the colored people would fill the pews and crowd the churches." It objected to the idea of a separate church as the solution; to create one would result in a loss in membership, not a gain. After the meeting, the committee realized it had failed to convince Janssens of "his erroneous notions." "He appears to us to have been evidently imposed upon by unscrupulous plotters---vile Negro tricksters, who can never rise above servility, and who, urged by the prospect of personal advantage, have allied themselves with the enemies of

⁵⁸Janssens to Drexel, 02 March 1894, M.M.K.-10, Box 30, folder 15, SBSA; Baudier, Church in Louisiana, p. 486; Janssens to Drexel, 11 March 1894, M.M.K.-10, Box 30, folder 15, SBSA.

Catholicism and equal rights" Janssens recalled that English-speaking black Catholics had requested a separate church. He used the request to argue with the Citizens Committee in favor of separation. The subcommittee then announced a meeting of the full committee to protest against the Jim Crow church being renovated by the Vincentians as emphatically as members of the Committee would later take their protest against separate rail cars to the United States Supreme Court in the Plessy vs. Ferguson case.⁵⁹

Despite the objections voiced in January in a rank-and-file petition as well as in the meeting with Citizens Committee, the archbishop allowed the Vincentians to continue the project. Janssens became close minded. "I am in a pickle just now," he reported to Drexel about conditions in New Orleans, "some of our colored people are up in arms against me and the proposed colored churches." Janssens repeated his long-held belief that "the leaders are bright mulattoes who never set foot in the church, some of them freemasons, who imagine that it will bring about a greater social distinction." Janssens repudiated their claims that an all-black church would cause problems, rather he argued that the "darkeys" favored the idea. Besides, the English-speaking people wanted it; and they were concerned not about equality but church facilities. "It is the poor darkey that is led astray from the Church to the Baptist and Methodist shouting houses," he insisted, "the mulatto would believe

⁵⁹Nugent to Drexel, 07 March 1894, M.M.K.-10, Box 40, folders 22 and 23, SBSA; New Orleans The Daily Crusader, clipping, c. February 1894, folder entitled "Negro Church, protest against building colored mission, 1888-1894 - 0-16-1888; 01-03-1894; Organizations," AANO.

himself contaminated to go to such places." Janssens was certain that "we must reclaim the poor dark negro and lead them back to the church." Hardened in his position against French-speaking black Catholics and for complete separation, Janssens headed to Europe convinced that "nothing will accomplish it except priests who devote themselves exclusively to this work."⁶⁰

Undeterred by the implacable position of Janssens, the Citizens Committee, veterans of civil rights politics, struck at the core of the project with an allegation against the Vincentians. In The Daily Crusader, the Citizen's Committee reported on the status of Janssens attempt to draw the color line in a lengthy piece entitled "The Uncatholic Church." It charged that the old, deserted Saint Joseph's church was being prepared for the exclusive use of African Americans, something, they believed, that every black Catholic resisted. Doing so, the author of the article added, "diverts money given by Sister Catharine [sic] [Drexel], for work among the colored people, from its legitimate use." The writer then accused the Vincentians of trickery: "we have been informed that the real purpose in establishing the church, and one that does not speak well for the authorities, is to get possession of Miss Drexel's money by purchasing the church for themselves, turn it over to the colored people, and take the proceeds resulting from the sale to extinguish the debt on the new St. Joseph Church. And this is to be done under the guise of Christian charity." The article also quoted Janssens' annual report to the Commission on Colored and Indian Missions, and the archbishop's admission that a church for African Americans would deepen ill feeling

⁶⁰Janssens to Drexel, 29 April 1894, M.M.K.-10, Box 30, folder 15, SBSA.

and separate the two races still more. Janssens felt the risk was worth it because the prejudice and feeling of the white people prevented the archdiocese to everywhere "prudently extend the same privileges of indiscriminate pews, of rank in procession, etc." "Some of the colored Catholics use this pretext not to come to church," Janssens claimed. Because the archbishop believed that a separate church could increase racial hatred, the writer of the Crusader article concluded that the only thing "self-respecting colored people could do is stay away. Give the new concern a wide berth, for it will not be a house of God, but rather a temple dedicated to the perpetuation of prejudice."⁶¹

The article had the effect of challenging the Vincentians' commitment to the separate church. Smith, who obtained a clipping, then sent it to Nugent with a note drawing attention to the "ugly disreputable charge" against the Vincentians. Smith informed Nugent that under the new circumstances, the plan of spending Drexel's \$5,000 for restoring old St. Joseph's church had to be revised and Janssens urged to see the importance of building a brand new church elsewhere for the blacks because the present facility "would always be looked upon as an abandoned old church." The charge that the Vincentians undertook the project only for the money was wrong. Yet, despite this fact, Smith believed the Vincentians needed to clear their name and redeem their honor after the "imputation of dishonesty." "To deny it is useless,"

⁶¹Described and quoted in Slawson, "Segregated Catholicism," pp. 165, 166; *Seventh Annual Report of Commission on Colored and Indian Missions*, p. 537, copy in JFA.

Smith reasoned. "A new Church will show our disinterestedness," Smith wrote and, besides, "it will equally sustain the Archbishop's course and rather emphasize it."⁶²

Initially inspired to prove the altruism of the Vincentian task, Drexel's intervention led Smith to question the project even more. No sooner had Smith plotted a new course in the face of the Daily Crusader article than Nugent reported Drexel's requesting the Vincentians to sign and notarize an agreement to renovate the old church. Smith was disappointed that Drexel wanted to continue the restoration project in the aftermath of the public attack on Vincentian intentions. "Mother Catharine [sic] seems to think like the colored people of New Orleans that we are desposed [sic] to use her money for our own benefit and is determined to bind us to refund it," he wrote Nugent. Smith, dejected by Drexel's suspicions, now intended to sell the old Saint Joseph's to another--anonymous--party and use the proceeds to erect a new school building for white children near the new St. Joseph's church. The Vincentians wanted out of the project. If the archdiocese built a new church without Vincentian involvement, Smith calculated, "the Archbishop will own the Church and she will be freed from the annoyance of securing guarantees for the honest disposition of her money." Smith directed Nugent to explain their refusal to sign the agreement because they "have discovered that a colored Church in the center of our large school properties would render them almost worthless." With Janssens using Drexel's money and building an all-black church elsewhere, the Vincnetians would be free of accusations about misuse of money. Moreover, Smith was convinced a new all-black

⁶²Slawson, *ibid.*

church would dispel the allegation that while Saint Joseph's was not good enough for whites, it was good enough for "colored people." Smith's reaction to black Catholic discontent and Drexel's caution jeopardized Vincentian efforts to build a black parish. Janssens urged Smith to reconsider this latest decision to back out of a deal with Drexel, however. Janssens intervention worked: Smith renewed Vincentian commitment to create a black Catholic church.⁶³

The contracts between Drexel and the Vincentians took months to draw up. Once they were signed, repair of the old Saint Joseph's still faced a delay of nearly six months because of mistakes, illness, and, most important, problems with the black parochial school. By late July Nugent needed money in order to pay for materials and the contractor so he requested Drexel to send \$2,500. The money was not dispatched until a month after the request because Drexel had mislaid both Nugent's letter and the contract. She admitted to Nugent that "it seems as though the fates are against us." Drexel's words were prophetic. The delay in obtaining the \$2,500 forced Nugent to postpone work. Then, reportedly, Nugent placed the check in the parish vault for safekeeping while he recovered from an illness and never acknowledged receipt of the check until mid-September; at that point he confessed to Drexel with being "puzzled" about just what to write. Nugent's hesitation derived from problems that developed with the commencement of the 1894-1895 school year as black students showed up for classes though the Vincentians did not have enough money to educate them. Despite his confusion over why black Catholics wanted education, not separate

⁶³Slawson, *ibid.*

churches. Nugent realized that if the school closed. "this would not suit well with the opening of the church." The Vincentians were perplexed over how to resolve their problem: using the \$2,500 to renovate a church few wanted or saving a deeply indebted school for black children that had been very popular. For years the Vincentians had operated in the old St. Joseph's rectory a school for black girls and boys; while its enrollment had risen from 100 pupils in 1889 to 180 pupils in 1894, its debt had mounted as the new St. Joseph congregation terminated its funding. In the year after the opening of the new St. Joseph church, the school was six hundred fifty dollars in the red and without prospect of future funds. In late 1894 the school operated despite its debt.⁶⁴

By mid-November both Janssens and Nugent resolved to keep the \$2,500 for church renovations and to request additional funds for the school's debt. The archbishop asked for a six hundred fifty dollar annuity for the facility. Drexel sympathized with the clergy's request but allocations for current year had been totally depleted. She then urged Nugent to make another request in early 1895. Having to wait for final word on securing funds for the school meant Nugent left the \$2,500 donation for church repairs in the vault, postponing renovations.⁶⁵

⁶⁴Nugent to Drexel, 23 July 1894 and 17 September 1894 both in M.M.K.-10, Box 40, folder 22 and 23, SBSA, acknowledged in letter of 17 September 1894, complete cite above; quoted in Slawson, "Segregated Catholicism," pp. 167, 168. Latter quote from Nugent to Drexel, 06 November 1894, M.M.K.-10, Box 40, folder 22 and 23.

⁶⁵Slawson, *ibid.* In letter from Drexel to Nugent, 07 December 1894, she urged reapplication.

Smith, who had remained committed to the new black parish despite the resistance and problems, did view the difficulty in funding a popular school as an indication that supporting an unpopular church would be risky. Smith's conservatism led him to caution Nugent on how and when to spend the \$2,500. Smith first directed Nugent to begin repairs if Janssens insisted, but "in a moderate inexpensive way, so in case it fails he will not be tempted to use it still as a church for other people." In January, 1895, the provincial explained to Nugent that something had to be done to reflect the "honor" of the Vincentians and the archbishop in their agreement to undertake the project. Smith directed that repairs should commence but with "fussing and talking and making preparations till I get down when we will see what is essential and necessary and cheap and showy." If Nugent could conserve enough money, Smith said he could use the leftover to purchase some "cheap vestments" and relieve the school's debts. Nugent instructed to show zeal for the work in order to improve the Vincentian's image.⁶⁶

Nugent followed Smith's instructions and allowed work to begin on the church in mid-January 1895. He updated Drexel on their progress and promised her the work would be completed "as quickly as possible." Nugent also wrote that the future of the school had been assured without stating specifically how. "We have however decided to make a start and trust to Providence for the maintenance [sic] of church and school in so worthy a cause." Not depending on providence alone, Nugent requested, in the same letter, Drexel to provide seven hundred dollars to pay off the

⁶⁶Quotes in Slawson, "Segregated Catholicism," pp. 168-170.

school's debt. After waiting two months for a reply Nugent finally informed her that the school debt had now reached eight hundred dollars. She did not reply to requests for money to pay for the school's indebtedness so Nugent focused his efforts to opening the all-black church. Meanwhile, in March 1895, Drexel provided the rest of her initial \$5,000 donation to complete the renovations to the church. Nugent thanked her for the second and final installment of \$2,500 and reported that the renovations neared completion. Nugent said all the \$5,000 would be expended, "no matter how much we economize." The money had been spent well, according to Nugent, because the church turned to be "one of the most beautiful in the city--perhaps the most, for its size."⁶⁷

Nugent was not alone in his assessment of the renovated St. Joseph church. A reporter with the city's newspaper, Daily States, pointed out that unless a person knew that the church had been renovated, one would never recognize that the church was old and used "from an observation of either its interior or exterior." Even while viewing the church unfurnished, without paintings, pictures, and statuary, the beauty of interior had caught the reporter's attention. Indeed, the renovators had created dazzling white walls bordered by pale gold fresco design work. The results were "beautiful." The wood pews had been transformed, extended, and refinished. The

⁶⁷Nugent to Drexel, 23 January 1895, M.M.K.-10, Box 40, folder 22 and 23; SBSA. The debt issue over the school lasted for a while, as late as April, 1895. Nugent to Drexel, 08 April 1895, M.M.K.-10, Box 40, folders 22 and 23, SBSA.

reconstructed altar was elaborately conceived and finished.⁶⁸ Any attempts by the Vincentians to be conservative and cut costs escaped the attention of the newspaper. With work completed, the archbishop planned on dedicating the new parish on 19 May 1895.

The black community understood the church's creation to be an extension of the civil authorities' efforts to remove African Americans from society. To many, their beloved Catholic Church was only following the lead of secular powers. Mary B. Williams, a sixteen year old, wrote a letter condemning the Jim Crow church to the Daily Crusader. In mid-February 1895, the Citizens Committee fired another shot against Jim Crow with a resolution published in The Daily Crusader. As threatened after their meeting with Janssens, the Citizens Committee sponsored a boycott of the new church. Protesting the use of the old Saint Joseph's "as a separate place of worship for any class of the faithful," a Committee of A. Esteves, R. L. Desdunes, A. J. Guiranovich, Dr. Milanese, L. J. Joubert, L. A. Martinet, and N. E. Mansion hoped that "the colored Catholics will better show their disapproval of the same by abstaining from the dedication services and from any subsequent frequenting of said church." The Committee had reason to challenge black Catholics to support their protest. The belief that the new church would have disastrous consequences was apparently not shared by everyone. Janssens, unlike the civil authorities, ensured that the new black church would not be mandatory, but voluntary, for people who wanted

⁶⁸New Orleans, Daily States, 20 May 1895, p. 5, c. 2; see also New Orleans Times Democrat, 20 May 1895.

the choice of exclusive black facilities. He never intended to remove the rights and traditions of blacks to support the parish of their choice. He even tried to maintain some interracialism by getting all parties involved by allowing whites the privilege of attending mass and to have their confession heard at the black church. For everyone involved, black Catholic reaction to the special church was uncertain.⁶⁹

In New Orleans, the Daily Picayune published an announcement of Drexel's donation of \$5,000 for a proposed separate church. In a quick reply, in the February 28, 1895 editorial of the Crusader, R. L. Desdunes wrote a piece entitled "Mother Katherine and the Color Line." Desdunes stated that the black people of the United States were indebted to Drexel for her many bounteous acts of charity and benevolence. But, he believed, she placed her bounty under the control of ministers and "as a consequence of the misplaced bounty, the color line is perpetuated where it exists already, and introduced with the germ of success where it has not existed before." Desdunes accepted that Janssens always wanted a separate church, even though Desdunes thought it "a strange fascination," but without Drexel, Janssens would have waited a very long time to see his vision become reality. Desdunes sensed that the separate church would succeed in drawing the color line because whites would expect black members to attend their own church, then black Catholics

⁶⁹New Orleans The Daily Crusader, clipping, c. February 1895, in Charles Rousseve Collection Box 2, Folder 19, Amistad Research Center, New Orleans, Louisiana, (ARC); The Daily Crusader, 14 February 1895, clipping, Charles Rousseve Collection, Box 2, folio 2P, ARC.

would be forced to patronize it. But segregation, he concluded, was un-Catholic and un-American. He called for Drexel to oppose separation:

If the Catholic Church in Louisiana cannot at this stage of progress imitate the example of other institutions, it is the duty of Christians such as Mother Katherine, to remedy the evil. The schools of the church should be open to all, like Harvard, Yale, West Point and other American institutions, and not confined to the few on account of race prejudice, like Tulane and others, whose work degrades mankind by teaching a peculiar code of coarseness and contemptuousness. Such institutions are pernicious for the whites as well as for the blacks. "Turn as you will," said Charles Sumner, "you have to come back to the principle of equality." The coeducation of blacks and whites is not an experiment, nor is it a failure where it is practiced⁷⁰

Revealing just how little he knew about Drexel, Desdunes assumed Drexel had been duped by Janssens when she was actually the force behind special ministers and special facilities.

In another editorial on March 5, Desdunes urged Drexel to "consult that inward oracle mentioned by the poet to find out what it has to say on the equality of Christians before God." Since his first editorial, Desdunes had learned more about Drexel and the creation of a separate church. Angered, he urged Drexel to keep her money because she strived "to spread the light of the gospel among the lowly by practicing the very reverse of what the gospel teaches." Rather than accept Drexel's money and practice Catholicism her way, Desdunes stood by the teachings of the

⁷⁰New Orleans The Daily Crusader, 28 February 1895, clipping, 1/24/1-4, XUA. In another piece, Desdunes related the story of elderly white parishioners of St. Joseph who did not want to be forced to leave the church of their youth. They wanted to stay at the old structure to avoid having to cross the street to the new facility. Perhaps black Catholics--white members were barred--became church goers at St. Katherine's for sake of convenience. Incomplete clipping c. February 1895, 1/24/5. XUA.

Catholic church: "we must know no race, no color, nationality; but brotherhood, union and concern of action which have always made the strength and the glory of the Catholic Church."⁷¹

Whether Drexel saw Desdune's editorials seemed unimportant to Janssens. After all, Janssens felt Desdunes' opinion counted for little because he did not practice the faith. Desdunes would not even set foot into a Catholic Church. If Janssens dismissed the appeals of his rank and file members, surely the militant Desdunes could be explained away. Drexel, for her part, had already sent the money for the separate church. If Desdunes wanted Drexel to stop the process, he did not see his wish fulfilled. In addition, the boycott of the church announced by the Citizens Committee appeared in jeopardy. In late April, Nugent noted a shift in black Catholic support. "The colored people themselves have opposed the church in every way," he told James Wheat of the Tabernacle Society, "but now that they see it a fact, they are putting on a more favorable front and the situation looks hopeful." The money and time spent refurbishing old St. Joseph's, and reported favorably upon in the newspaper, seemed to alleviate concerns by black Catholics of receiving second-hand, second class facilities. The racial unity achieved in 1894 appeared to dissipate in mid-1895.⁷²

⁷¹New Orleans The Daily Crusader, 5 March 1895, clipping, 1/24/6-8, XUA; the black Catholic Congress desired an end to discrimination. See earlier views of Bishop Ireland and Catholic Congress reprinted in clipping of New Orleans Daily Crusader, 10 May 1890, Charles Rousseve Collection, Box 2, Folder 15, ARC.

⁷²Nugent to Drexel, 24 March 1895, M.M.K.-10, Box 40, folders 22 and 23, SBSA; quoted in Slawson, "Segregated Catholicism," p. 171.

* * *

May 19, 1895, the day of the opening of the new church, renamed St. Katherine, was a solemn occasion for black and white Catholics. Not all black Catholics participated in the boycott called by the Citizens Committee through the Crusader. Customarily, other parish societies marched in procession at the dedication of new churches, but not on this occasion. Rather, at the dedication of St. Katherine's, a short procession headed by cross bearer Uncas Tureaud, forebear of famed civil rights lawyer A. P. Tureaud, led black and white guests, the newly organized choir and altar boy's society, and Janssens from the new St. Joseph's Church to the locked doors of St. Katherine's. Miss Eva Ledet then unlocked the door in a special ceremony. Mrs. A. P. Williams and her husband, Professor A. P. Williams, who less than a year and half before had petitioned Janssens to stop the plans to be build a separate black church, sang in the choir at the ceremony. The all-black choir, gathered under the direction of Vincentian Father Charles Remillon of St. Stephen's Parish, performed well enough for Janssens to mention them to Drexel. Almost certainly, the choir included members of other parishes. Joining St. Katherine's choir symbolized these black Catholics tacit approval of the church.⁷³

At the ceremonial mass, Archbishop Janssens formally dedicated the new St. Katherine's Church, so named in honor of Mother Katherine Drexel. Janssens

⁷³Knights of Peter Claver, "History of St. Katherine Church, Golden Jubilee," The Claverite (October, 1945): 7. A copy located in Charles Rousseve Collection, Box 3, folder 14, ARC; Janssen to Drexel, 21 May 1895 and Nugent to Drexel, 24 May 1895, both in M.M.K.-10, Box 40, folders 22 and 23, SBSA.

presided over the ceremony and in his sermon--given in English--maintained that the efforts of the archdiocese, Vincentians, and Drexel on behalf of African Americans should not be interpreted to mean "that there is a religion for the white people and one for the colored people." Addressing the opposition from the passed two years, Janssens was pleased that they had been converted by his discussions to correct mistaken beliefs "that I intended to discriminate against them by opening this new church." Janssens hoped that all black Catholics understood that Saint Katherine's be a place where "the colored people will be at home . . . a church for their own special benefit and occupation." Apart from the Williams, the number of Janssens former opponents at the dedication was uncertain. For those who preferred to remain in the territorial parishes, however, would not be compelled to attend it. Janssens assured his listeners that they had the choice to attend the all-black parish or their territorial parish. Even if black Catholics stayed away from the new parish, Janssens promised the audience that Saint Katherine's was "for them at all times." Secretly, the Vincentians decided to tie the success of the parish to black Catholics only. They would not receive white people for communion or confession. Nor would they allow whites to rent pews, although Janssens gave them permission to do so.⁷⁴

Despite his claims that the opposition had been satisfied with his argument, Janssens never persuaded the Citizens Committee of the merits of his position. But the Citizen's Committee were unable to convince first, Janssens, then Smith, and

⁷⁴New Orleans Daily States, 20 May 1895, p. 5, c. 2; Slawson, "Segregated Catholicism," pp. 171-172.

ultimately Drexel of the evils an all-black church, even an equal one. Therefore, the Committee turned its attention and energies to fighting civil legislation. In 1896 their challenge of Louisiana's law to segregate railway cars reached the United States Supreme Court. In the case Plessy v. Ferguson, the high court validated the principle of "separate but equal," thereby opening the way for blanket segregation. Although no record existed of his support of St. Katherine Church, Homer Plessy had been a parishioner of St. Augustine Parish, where he was married. A couple of years after their defeat in the Supreme Court, the Committee disbanded, and the publication of their newspaper, the Daily Crusader, ceased.⁷⁵

The boycott of St. Katherine's called by the committee had not materialized. In August 1895, Drexel wrote to Nugent to congratulate him on how well the parish had been doing. Responding to requests made in December, 1894, and January, 1895, she sent down six hundred fifty dollars for the struggling school. Janssens reported that same month that "St. Katherine's is doing well & continues a success." He based this evaluation on the fact that the church had not been shut down by protestors. Another indication of St. Katherine's success had been that Drexel never exercised her legal options of demanding her money back if black Catholics were not beneficiaries of her donation. Years later, in 1904, on one of her first visits to the parish, Drexel noted that in regard to the black opposition: "before Archbishop

⁷⁵Logsdon and Bell, "Americanization," pp. 258-259.

Janssens purchased St. Katherine's, the Colored asked for a separate Church. Then they retracted but he held them to this first demand."⁷⁶

The selection of Saint Katherine's first pastor was difficult. Apparently, Father Abbott--the Vincentian whom Janssens had initially approached about using old Saint Joseph's as a church for blacks--expected the job. Smith, however, had deep reservations because Abbott gave "signs of peculiar notions for the management of the colored people." Without giving specifics on what these peculiar notions were, Smith was so alarmed that in the first of two letters sent on 15 May 1895, the provincial told Nugent to place the elderly Father Martin V. Moore in temporary charge of the black people and instructed that Abbott "have nothing to do with them at all." Smith even considered transferring Abbott elsewhere and bringing in French-speaking Father Charles Remillon from Saint Stephen's Parish in uptown New Orleans to help with confessions in French. Born in Alsace-Lorraine, Remillon had begun studies for the priesthood in Europe but completed them in Philadelphia, where he was ordained. The second letter of 15 May was brief and decisive. "I have thought it better to make the change at once for reasons you will approve of," wrote Smith. "Father Abbott goes up [to Saint Stephen's] and Father Remillon comes down for Sunday next." The selection of Remillon was most certainly due to his ability to speak French. Although St. Katherine's was a distinct black parish, the Vincentians never made the pastors

⁷⁶Drexel to Nugent, 04 August 1895 and Janssens to Drexel, 19 August 1895, both in M.M.K., Box 30, folder 15, SBSA; Labbé, Jim Crow, p. 56.

who served there into special black ministers who would live in a separate house; Remillon belonged to the Vincentian community at the new Saint Joseph's.⁷⁷

Father Remillon made St. Katherine into a complete parish. Soon after taking charge as pastor, he brought in the Sisters of the Holy Family to teach in the school. Enrollment quadrupled in just a few years. Remillon recruited a choir. One of St. Katherine's most prominent members was Andrew J. Bell. Bell, a native of Alabama, had been educated by the Josephites. He married a woman from New Orleans and established connections with the city's black Catholic community. Trained as a teacher by the Josephites, he eventually taught in several Josephite schools and attempted to establish black Catholic schools of his own in Josephite parishes. His ambition was to establish a black Catholic Normal and Industrial School, but he never received the financial support to do so. Bell, instead, became noted for his music teaching and choir development. In the early twentieth century, Bell obtained a teaching job at Southern University. From St. Katherine, Professor Bell became a great advocate of separate parishes and pushed for the creation of more of them with his insistence that the Josephites establish black parishes in the New Orleans archdiocese. Although there were a number--exactly how many is impossible to determine--parishioners like Bell, who were not natives of New Orleans, many of St. Katherine's parishioners had been English-speaking blacks from the American sections of the city. Janssens had realized that not all black Catholics agreed about the status quo, but he appeared to have overestimated the numbers for segregation. Janssens

⁷⁷Slawson, "Segregated Catholicism," p. 173.

achieved the effect he wanted when St. Katherine attracted hundreds of lapsed Catholics back into the archdiocese. On the other hand, St. Katherine's did not attract black members from the interracial parishes because no single parish in New Orleans experienced a significant drop in black membership while there also was not a net gain in the total number of black Catholics in the archdiocese. Rather, some black Catholics--spread across the city--protested the archbishop's drawing the color line by quitting the church. The black Catholic unity to fight the Jim Crow church suffered in its failure to defeat Janssens; old divisions reappeared.⁷⁸

St. Katherine's very presence, however, had an unexpected impact: increased discrimination in existing parishes. White members expected black Catholics to attend the new black "national" church opened for them. Janssens noted that, since the opening of the new church, blacks in some existing parishes, did "not participate in the service, neither as altar boys nor as singers in the choir, a special place is assigned to them, they are kept separate from the whites for 1st communion, confirmation, and processions and they do not attain to the degree of equality with the whites to which they aspire." The discrimination increased the likelihood of black members being pushed out of interracial churches rather than "sucked" out as feared by the French

⁷⁸LeBeau to Donovan, 18 May 1906, 26-B-3, JFA; Henry Moeller to Bell, 27 August 1906; Bell to Donovan, 15 September 1906; Donovan to Blenk, 26 September 1906; all in "Archbishop Blenk, 1906-1909: Josephites & Material on Mission Helpers," AANO; LeBeau to Drexel, 14 October 1906; LeBeau to Drexel, 19 November 1906; both in M.M.K.-10, Box 33, No.30, SBSA; Butsch to Donovan, 23 October 1907, 25-N-22, JFA; Bell to LeBeau, 11 February 1909, 28-N-15, JFA; reports from St. Katherine parishioner Dominic F. Gaspard, The Josephite, 7 [October, 1904]: 22; and The Josephite, 8 [September, 1905]: 9-10.

clergy. Although St. Katherine's had brought increased intolerance on the part of white laity, according to Janssens, discrimination was rampant everywhere. In 1898, a priest in the rural area testified to the growing mistreatment when he noted that "in mixed congregations, they are only 2nd hand, the whites control everything; so they [black Catholics] take money [sic] to where they are all alone to themselves as in protestant [sic] churches and do more work. You must remember they are very sentimental." To meet the new threat, Janssens went back on his word given at the St. Katherine's dedication that St. Katherine was to be a special parish. Even before it became clear that St. Katherine could survive as a special parish, Janssens pushed forward a plan to remove the Assumptionists from Klotzville and give them a parish in the city's Latin quarter. They would assume charge of the blacks in the French-speaking area of the city, while the Vincentians would maintain jurisdiction of those in the English-speaking area. But before proceeding with this project, Janssens obtained ministers from his request to the Josephites back in 1888.⁷⁹

In November 1896, John R. Slattery, the superior general of the American Josephites informed Janssens that the first four priests trained in the United States seminary would be ready for assignment. Janssens decided to place the one new priest available for service in Louisiana in Petite Prairie, the home town of the assignee. To work in Louisiana, Slattery assured Janssens that the Josephites would "have nothing to do with whites; in our churches, not even hearing confessions. Self

⁷⁹Janssens' report entitled, "Observations on Report to Colored Missions, Diocese of New Orleans, 1896," 52-DY-29, JFA; Peter LeBeau to Slattery, 20 August 1898, 18-S-16, JFA.

preservation will keep the Missionary from his own race, because from the moment he begins to visit the whites, his love for his blacks is on the wane." Priests in the area did not register a complaint. Slattery's sentiments matched those expressed by Janssens to him nine years previous. In February, 1897, the contracts between the Josephites and Janssens were signed, and Father Pierre (Peter) O. Lebeau was assigned to the mission. The Josephites were missionaries and not parish priests; they established and serviced a network of churches, chapels and schools--called missions--in an area without ecclesiastical boundaries. Finally, in 1897, after nearly a decade of hard work to find exclusive ministers to build separate racial parishes and ruin the historic parish system of integrated churches and segregated schools, Janssens had put all the parts of his initial plan together. Janssens, however, did not live to see the results of his labor.⁸⁰

On June 9, 1897, Janssens died aboard a steamer bound for New York enroute to Europe. He was on a recruiting trip for priests. Janssens passed away just as segregation of African Americans in Louisiana's Catholic churches began. His death ended the attempt by New Orleans archbishops to impose racial segregation and immigrant segregation. Janssens had aimed to attract African Americans, converts and lapsed Catholics, back into the parishes. He never greatly increased the number

⁸⁰Janssens to Slattery, 26 January 1894, 14-C-1, JFA; Janssens to Slattery, 20 May 1896, 13-N-3a, JFA; Slattery to Janssens, 2 November 1896, file entitled "Josephite Correspondence prior to 1910," AANO; Janssens to Slattery, 4 November 1896, 14-C-2, JFA; Slattery to Janssens, 12 November 1896, file "Josephite Fathers correspondence prior to 1910," AANO; Josephite Consultors Meeting and Minute Book, 1893-1935, entry 16 December 1896, p.17; entry 16 February 1897, p.18; and entry 12 April 1897, p.19; Lebeau to Dyer, 7 September 1897, 67-DY-43, JFA.

of blacks in the archdiocese. Rather, the segregated St. Katherine attracted a few African Americans who found separation from whites preferable to interracialism but also pushed away black Catholics opposed to segregation. The additions were balanced by the losses. The impact of the first black church on interracialism would take years to develop.

* * *

The "suction pump" feared by the French clergy never occurred. Black Catholics did not leave their territorial parishes for St. Katherine's. Of course, white members were barred from it. The other Vincentian parish in the city, St. Stephen, was not at all affected by the opening of St. Katharine, at least in the statistics. In fact, between 1895 and 1900, no parish had a decline in black baptisms. The first Josephite priest in the Archdiocese of New Orleans declared St. Katherine's a failure. Lebeau reported that, "St. Katherine's is not so well attended either as Father Cuddy told me. . . . Many go to the white churches all over the city. They are near them and have free seats in them. I was told they like to go to the white churches. St. Joseph's church is 2 blocks from St. Katherine's and same order attends both and the people attend St. Joseph's also. The organist of St. Katherine's had a requiem mass at St. Joseph's for his wife some time ago." Lebeau confused white churches with interracial churches. He failed to mention that black Catholics had subsidized those churches as well.⁸¹

⁸¹Lebeau to McCarthy, 13 May 1909, 28-N-21, JFA.

Janssens had built a black "national" parish. The Vincentians of St. Katherine had obtained jurisdiction over all black Catholics in the archdiocese. The Josephites had been charged with converting African Americans. Janssens had worked so diligently to alter the parish system in Louisiana, but he had only reaffirmed it. St. Katherine was similar to Holy Trinity and St. Henry, German national parishes that had jurisdiction over all Germans but without any requirement that they attend them. St. Katherine was also similar to Sts. Peter and Paul, an Irish national parish that had jurisdiction over all English-speakers but without any requirement that they attend there. Yet, whereas the national parishes had been built by the congregations, St. Katherine took years to establish a parish community. English-speaking black Catholics and French-speaking black Catholics did not form a parish community in St. Katherine as Janssens had hoped. Janssens would have preferred black jurisdiction to be in the hands of special ministers, such as the Josephites, rather than the Vincentians. The diocesan clergy and laity had accepted St. Katherine's because the value of jurisdiction was in reality an administrative matter. After all, pastors could still collect the money for baptisms and funerals from black parishioners even if they did not have "national" jurisdiction over them. They still had territorial jurisdiction. From the perspective of many black Catholics, they did not view themselves as a black "nation" with a special jurisdiction because it was imposed upon them. Rather they were members of the parishes where they had been baptized and where their ancestors had been buried. Ironically, within the archdiocese of New Orleans, St. Katherine appeared just as the "national" language parish system was being rendered

useless by the adoption of the English language. Janssens' St. Katherine's was almost out-of-date as soon as it appeared.

CHAPTER 6

TOWARD WHITE PARISHES IN THE ARCHDIOCESE, 1897-1905

After the death of Janssens, the interracial parishes in the archdiocese of New Orleans were no longer pressured by the hierarchy to segregate their black members. Janssens' successor, the Frenchman Louis Placide Chapelle, preferred to preserve the status quo established by Archbishop Jean Marie Odin in 1866: territorial congregations that maintained interracial churches and segregated schools. Chapelle even attempted to desegregate the Josephites' missions among blacks in rural Louisiana. The stemming of Jim Crow measures in the archdiocese's facilities did not remove the impetus toward racial segregation of Catholics, however. Rather, in the late 1890s more whites joined the dioceses' interracial congregations and, more important, language divisions were transformed into racial divisions. The interracial congregations had survived the compromises to the universal ideal posed by the European immigrants in the 1830s, French-speaking black Catholics in the 1860s, English-speaking black Catholics in the 1880s, and Francis Janssens in the 1890s. By 1900, however, the awareness of social distinctions between white people and black people, supported by theories postulating biological differences among the races, prevented further compromises to sustain biracial congregations. The categorization of membership along new, strictly racial lines split black French-speaking Catholics off from the once dominant group of French-speaking Catholics in the archdiocese and left them in a new group of black Catholics. Attempts at bridging the color line met

with unpleasantness, uncertainty, and danger. After 1900, the influx of Italians into the archdiocese, the effects of the Robert Charles killing spree and race riot, and discrimination by pastors gave white members the upper hand in the parishes. Consequently, equality in worship was challenged. The tension became so great that Bishop Chapelle acted to preserve language distinctions because the various languages in use in the archdiocese offered the last bastion against racially segregated parishes.¹

* * *

When Louis Chapelle became bishop of New Orleans in 1898, he found that the provisions of the Plenary Councils of Baltimore had been satisfied by Janssens' efforts, and he applied himself to the maintenance of the status quo in his new archdiocese. Born in France, Chapelle arrived in the United States in 1859 at the age of seventeen to devote his life to service as a missionary. Ordained in 1865, Chapelle became a noted theological scholar who wrote an opinion for the Second Plenary Council, but he ventured from the academic world and pursued his ambition as a missionary. After five years, in 1870, he received an appointment as a pastor of a parish in Baltimore, Maryland. Between 1870 and 1888, Chapelle served in parishes around Baltimore and Washington, D.C.. Service in the nation's capital as a pastor in charge of a parish agreed with Chapelle, and he lost his aspiration to be a missionary. In Washington his ability to speak five languages impressed acquaintances and allowed him to develop many personal relationships with world

¹Framework for argument adapted from Arnold R. Hirsch, "Simply a Matter of Black and White: The Transformation of Race and Politics in Twentieth-Century New Orleans," in Americanization, pp. 262-265.

diplomats and United States government officials. In 1888, Chapelle, who had been the first choice of New Orleans' French clergy to replace Leray, was instead appointed to Santa Fe, New Mexico, while Janssens received Louisiana. In addition, Chapelle received an appointment from the Pope as an official diplomat of the Vatican. After Janssens' death, Chapelle finally received the New Orleans position that he and his French compatriots had wanted in 1888. Thrust into the archdiocese with the largest black Catholic population, Chapelle refused to undertake building Jim Crow churches or schools.²

Chapelle checked Jim Crow's expansion in the archdiocese of New Orleans, although he did not close Janssens' black national parish of St. Katherine. Because Drexel's contract with the archdiocese forbade the use of St. Katherine's facilities except exclusively by blacks, Chapelle was legally bound to honor the stipulations. However, he could and did refuse to pursue Janssens' plan to place Assumptionists in downtown New Orleans on Esplanade Avenue. In addition to not renewing the Assumptionists' contract that Janssens had worked so hard to achieve in 1892, Chapelle requested that the only other order of missionaries that worked exclusively with African Americans in southern Louisiana, the Josephites, desegregate their ministry. In 1898, Chapelle asked LeBeau, the Louisiana native and French speaker who was the sole Josephite missionary in the archdiocese, to undertake the work of ministering to Sicilians. Officially the Josephites' ministry included "colored" people and perhaps Chapelle expected the dark-skinned Sicilians to receive the same

²Baudier, Church in Louisiana, p. 495.

treatment as African Americans. Although LeBeau personally liked the archbishop because of his politeness to and cordial treatment of him, the Louisianian Josephite was taken aback that Chapelle "told me to take care of" the Sicilians because the bishop's request put him in a delicate position. The Josephite's vows were to minister exclusively to African Americans and therefore barred LeBeau from doing work with Sicilians and white Catholics. Nevertheless, LeBeau followed Chapelle's instructions and ministered to all Catholics, Italians and few whites, in his chapels. That LeBeau's parish was so isolated, the nearest parishes were one hundred miles in one direction and sixty in another, perhaps made it easier for him to break his order's rules in ministering to Sicilians and whites.³

Chapelle curtailed most of the work on behalf of African Americans begun by Janssens, including the building of black schools by the Holy Family Sisters and Katherine Drexel. In early 1898, as requests poured in from the Holy Family Sisters for permission to expend funds to build black schools, Chapelle did not respond. The Holy Family Sisters as well as the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament waited a year for word on their requests. They still did not receive a response from Chapelle, even after the personal intercession of Drexel who had provided the archdiocese with tens

³See Janssens diary entries for 31 August 1897, where the Dutch prelate indicated that the problem with the Assumptionists was that they were not exclusively devoted to blacks. Hence they were not allowed to build a chapel on Esplanade Avenue in New Orleans. After Janssens' death, an entry was made in his diary on 10 February 1898, by someone unknown, that the Assumptionists were a problem but did not state a reason. Janssens' Diary Transcriptions, 25 February 1977, G-39-C, JFA. The Colored Harvest, 7 (October, 1914): 1-4; Slattery to LeBeau, 21 December 1897, 18-S-2, JFA; Slattery to LeBeau, 11 January 1898, 18-S-5, JFA; LeBeau to Slattery, 16 June 1898, 18-S-14, JFA.

of thousands of dollars since 1891. By February 1899, Chapelle had not agreed to nor supported separate work in Opelousas. Without the archbishop's approval, the Sisters could do nothing. In addition to refusing to allow the nuns to undertake the building of new schools, Chapelle never requested extra funds from the Commission for the Catholic Missions Among the Colored People and the Indians to help in the maintenance of existing structures. Initial clerical mistakes in applying for funds was followed by a decrease in the archdiocese's share of the allocation. Chapelle not only halted the spread of separate parishes but suspended all special projects for African Americans despite the availability of financial resources for such work from Drexel. Correspondence between the archdiocese and Katherine Drexel ceased under Chapelle's administration. The break in the dioceses' relations with Drexel cut off the flow of money much needed to support traditional black school facilities in the archdiocese.⁴

Neither Chapelle nor his representatives ever reported undertaking any special work for black Catholics. One consequence was a decline in the number of black baptisms, first communions, and confirmations as children catechized and trained for the sacraments through the parishes education ministry decreased as parochial schools lost funding. The number of parochial schools supported by interracial congregations dropped from forty-two in 1899 to twenty-three in 1904. Except for the addition of

⁴Sr. Mary Austin to Drexel, 27 December 1898; Drexel to Chapelle, 22 February 1899; both letters in "Blessed Sacrament Sisters (a) 12-27-1898; 07-26-1917," AANO; J. M. Massardier to E.R. Dyer, 21 September 1899, 21 November 1899, and 23 August 1900, 82-DY-39-41, JFA.

the new school in Crowley. Chapelle made no proposals to stem the declension. In his official explanation to the Commission he attributed the drop in the number of baptisms to "old priests [who] seldom keep a special record" of statistics for black brethren. While a valid point and a reflection of the interracialism achieved in the parishes after the Civil War, it failed as an excuse for the French prelate's administration's ignorance of black Catholic issues. Catholic education had attracted African Americans to the parishes, however. Chapelle did not make-up the loss of school space with, for example, the desegregation of all Catholic schools. Failure to stem the decay in black parochial schools made Chapelle's administration smack of negligence rather than adherence to the universal ideal.⁵

Failure to attract black members or even convey any sense of respect for African Americans did not endear Chapelle to the clergy who worked among blacks. They missed Janssens. The Holy Family Sisters and Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament became frustrated with Chapelle's neglect. LeBeau explained that after Chapelle traveled to Petite Prairie to bless his new chapel that "I am sorry it was not Janssens. I suppose knowing Chappelles' [sic] views on the negros [sic] he was not very demonstrative. Though in speaking, he said for the people it [his presence] was an honor for them." Although LeBeau never specified Chapelle's views on African

⁵Cazales', Rouxel's and Chapelle's reports to the Commission for the Catholic Missions Among the Colored People and Indians, 1899-1904, 161-DY-10 to 14, JFA: on 03 August 1904 Chapelle entered into an agreement with Katherine Drexel and the Sisters of Blessed Sacrament to build a school in the "City of Lafayette." Agreement, 03 August 1904, "Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament Correspondence, 12-27-98 to 07-26-17," AANO.

Americans, white and black ministers who worked with African Americans did not consider Chapelle a friend of their work or of African Americans. Evangelization efforts were crippled. Chapelle's interruption in the building of additional black parishes, particularly schools, not only slowed baptisms and the growth in new members that these sources contributed to, but did not increase black membership in any existing interracial parishes or the number of black Catholics claimed by the archdiocese. Although the consequences did not affect the status quo at the turn of the century, the decrease in new black membership in the archdiocese weakened the black presence in the parishes at a time when white membership continued to increase.⁶

If Chapelle's attempts to limit Jim Crow had been designed to preserve the universal ideal in the parishes, they clearly threatened the future of black Catholics--the youngest generation in the church. Black protest to the hierarchy's disinterest in the Catholic faith being passed on to future generations emerged in the form of support for black parishes and the call for additional exclusive ministers. At least the Vincentians (at St. Katherine), Josephites, and Holy Family Sisters had vowed their lives to bring the faith to African Americans and worked to ameliorate conditions among them. St. Katherine developed a fine English-speaking parochial school staffed by the Holy Family sisters. In 1901, Jeremiah Dixon, a black Catholic convert from Arkansas on his way to San Antonio, Texas, visited the Catholic facilities in south Louisiana. Reporting on what he observed, Dixon warned that ministers should only

⁶LeBeau to Slattery, 27 June 1900, 18-T-9, JFA.

work exclusively with African Americans because any priest who worked with both black and white "would show preference" for whites. Such discrimination kept black Catholics away from church, Dixon argued. Dixon had asked English-speaking black Catholics in Louisiana and Texas whether they preferred interracialism or exclusiveness and learned that they preferred special ministers. In particular, they wanted the Holy Family Sisters to be assigned outside Louisiana because, despite adherence to French-speaking and Gallic culture, they were "devoted women and good Catholics." That English-speaking black Catholics wanted to work with the French-speaking Holy Family sisters rather than English-speaking white nuns indicated a subtle breakdown in traditional identity; the race of the educators became more significant than their cultural background. Dixon explained that black Catholic resentment of white preference for dark-skinned immigrants over black Catholics made special ministers who worked exclusively with African Americans a necessity. In San Antonio, Dixon pointed out that dark-skinned Mexicans supplanted African Americans in churches, and he probably found that in south Louisiana dark-skinned Sicilians had the same effect. In addition, Dixon never mentioned language differences; skin color appeared to be taking precedence. Dixon's report raised important issues about Catholic attempts to accommodate dark-skinned peoples in the universal churches. It suggested that all dark-skinned Catholics, African American, Italian, or Mexican, faced discrimination, but that even though the mother tongue of

Sicilians and Mexicans differed from white Catholics, white clergy and laity still "preferred" them to African Americans.⁷

Although Dixon reported hearing black discontent, most black Catholics did not take the ultimate step of quitting their neighborhood parish. After 1900, the majority of black Catholics remained in their traditional parishes but expressed greater resentment over poor school facilities. To remain in interracial parishes and face the decay of their schools while the white schools remained open constituted clear discrimination. Interracial congregations did not provide their black members assistance to supplement the scarcity of resources. On the contrary, an unchristian trend emerged in the parishes in which white members chose to help members based on racial prejudice. Although white members had been a majority in the archdiocese since the arrival of European immigrants in the 1830s, language differences among the Creoles, Irish, Americans, and Germans had divided the churches in the archdiocese. On the other hand, after Reconstruction, language had united French-speaking white and black members of the congregations against racial parishes. Even the initial focus on skin color and black inferiority, prompted by the creation of St. Katherine church, had not shifted the racial balance within parishes because dark-skinned Sicilians had not been treated as white in the 1890s. During Chapelle's tenure, 1898 to 1905, race distinctions became recognizable as the French language continually faded from use by each new generation and as dark-skinned Sicilians were separated from African Americans. Chapelle, however, did not formally recognize

⁷Jeremiah Dixon to Slattery, 17 October 1901, 20-M-09, JFA.

racial unity. First, his denial of black facilities effectively limited any black unity gained from segregated parishes. Second, he wanted Sicilians accommodated in interracial as well as exclusively black parishes. Third, he attempted to maintain language differences. His actions thereby postponed the emergence of a system of racial parishes. Black Catholics also saw segregation in a different light after clergy and white members of the congregations showed a preference for dark-skinned Sicilians. African American members questioned why fellow dark-skinned Sicilians, accepted into the parishes because of its inclusive nature, had initially been lumped with African Americans, but then were accepted as non-black (often white) while black Catholic children were not assimilated. Their questioning led to little action.

* * *

The closing of special ministries undermined the Church's ability to gain black members while the rest of society had drawn the color line. With the decay and stagnation of archdiocesan efforts, divisions emerged between pastors and congregations. Black Catholics, in the fight against Janssens, had put aside antebellum social differences, cultural distinctions, and language differences to resist the color line. Once the fight was lost, old conflicts between English-speakers and French-speakers were formalized by St. Katherine church and the preservation of traditional interracial parishes. No longer did English-speakers have to suffer in the old parishes, they had a choice. With the presence of a Jim Crow church, however, an old question first posed in 1866 re-surfaced for black Catholics remaining in the traditional parishes over whether they were trying to be like whites or avoiding being

black. New distinctions appeared in choosing between worshipping in an all-black church or in the neighborhood church. Interracial marriage produced a generation of "inbetween" people (mulattoes), not just originating between French speakers, but involving Germans and Irish in downtown New Orleans. In addition, even after thirty-five years, families held on to their status as free people of color and intermarried with other families of similar status. The drawing of the color line raised issues that forced pastors and congregations had to face; each reacted differently. The confusion lasted until the hierarchy set a firm policy.⁸

The shift in the racial balance toward dominant levels of white membership in the parishes commenced with the accommodation of Italian immigrants in the interracial, territorial parishes. During the late 1880s and 1890s, many of the Sicilians who entered New Orleans initially settled in the area of greatest French strength and population, unlike the Irish and Germans who had settled above and below the French section along the Mississippi River. Initial attempts to create "national" language parishes for Sicilians failed. Clergy attributed the problem to sparse interest among Sicilians and Italian clergy who did not speak the Sicilian dialect. Within a few years, however, nearly one third of the Italian immigrants left

⁸See Arthé Anthony's dissertation describing how antebellum status continued through 1920; "Negro Creole Community," pp. 1-200. The Josephites were keen to describe Louisiana Catholic culture and gave precise detail to rituals and practices of black Catholics. They attributed the practices to the people being black, but frequently the practices had origins among the Irish and Germans. Black Catholics adopted the culture of their parent's churches and of their parents, who were natives of Ireland or Germany. See, for example, The Colored Harvest, 10 [May 1922]: 13; The Colored Harvest, 10 [July/August 1922]: 4.

the city for the rural areas. As they did, accommodation became an issue for the rural parishes as well. Chapelle did not set a firm policy, expecting the pastors to uphold traditional practices. Segregation was not attempted; the universal ideal reigned. At first recognized as non-white, the entry of Sicilians bolstered the non-white membership of congregations and put white members in the minority.⁹

Some rural congregations assimilated Sicilians into their membership. In Petite Prairie, Louisiana, the Josephites successfully desegregated their ministry and served the Italians. However, LeBeau, the first Josephite in Louisiana, kept the Sicilians separate: "I also attend a colony of Italians . . . I have to try and learn Italian, although they don't speak the good Italian, they are Sicilians, it is a patois." Relations were fine, intermixture was limited, and the black population outnumbered the Sicilians. The effects on interracial congregations differed, however. For example, the French-speaking congregation of St. Peter in Reserve, Louisiana, shifted from a majority black congregation to a majority non-black congregation depending on how the pastor classified the Sicilians. Between 1895 and 1899, the congregation of 4,000 people grew with the addition of 400 to 700 Italians, which in turn decreased the percentage of African Americans for the first time. Nevertheless, the black members of St. Peter maintained a strong minority because they shared the French

⁹Report, "Italians in Louisiana," c.1910, in "St. Louis Cathedral - correspondence 1835-1915," AANO; J. M. Laval to Blenk, 09 February 1910; J. F. Lambert to Blenk, 02 February 1910; both letters in "Dominican Fathers--Miscellaneous Correspondence prior to 1911," AANO.

language and culture with white members. In addition, the St. Peter congregation did not have parochial schools to create acrimony over fiscal spending.¹⁰

With accommodation of more people into old facilities, the available space had to be utilized or new, bigger, expensive churches built to accommodate the growth in congregations. Father Leander Roth of the interracial Our Lady of Perpetual Help (1894) in Kenner, Louisiana, for example, demanded that the archdiocese provide money if it expected him to minister to Italians as well as his current interracial parish. "I have invested every cent of the Parish revenues in the new church & I do owe at present over \$10,000.00 on the new church & do not know how & when to pay [The] Italians, most of them have lately arrived from Sicily & they do not give anything towards the support of the Parish or church or school & it is on account of them that I had to build a new church." Despite Roth's plea, Chapelle did not offer any help. Pastors struggled to find solutions to the dilemmas created by ethnic and racial integration and limited financial resources that disrupted the practice of the universal ideal. Old members were squeezed out. Pressure to find space tapped traditional distinctions of "inbetween" people in Louisiana--persons of mixed race ancestry. Whites came to view Sicilians as the middle group, or "inbetween" people rather than the people descended from racially mixed marriages.¹¹

¹⁰LeBeau to Slattery, 16 June 1898, 18-S-14, JFA; LeBeau to Drexel, 01 October 1904, M.M.K.-10, Box 33, 30, SBSA; St. Peter Annual Reports, AANO; report, "Italians in Louisiana."

¹¹Our Lady of Perpetual Help Annual Reports, AANO. Quote from 1901 report. For geographical reference, Our Lady of Perpetual Help was a territorial parish upstream the Mississippi River from New Orleans from the city of Carrollton.

Sicilian insistence on integration forced congregations to accommodate them, and they were ultimately accepted as white rather than black. Although the archdiocese's estimate that 12,000 Sicilians had entered the rural territorial parishes amounted to less than one fourth the total number of black Catholics in the area, the Sicilians effectively shifted the racial balance within many parishes just enough to undermine the position of black Catholics in the archdiocese. The Sicilians' impact exceeded their numbers because of their widespread dispersal into every parish of the archdiocese. In the first decade of the twentieth century the Sicilians became distinct from other dark-skinned members, and because of their language, were eventually separated from black congregants.

Even before it occurred in the archdiocese, the practice of groups placing dark-skinned Sicilians with African Americans broke down in Louisiana society. During the 1890s, Democratic white supremacy campaigns had pushed the dark-skinned, non-English speaking Sicilian immigrants into a political and social alliance with French-speaking African Americans. However, African American participation in the lynching of thirteen Sicilians in 1891 and racial riots on the docks of New Orleans in 1895 made Italian immigrants suspicious of African Americans. For their part, African Americans had long viewed Sicilians as economic competitors. By the 1890s, the two groups began to divide as more and more Sicilians moved to the rural areas. As they did, African Americans feared that Sicilians might replace them as agricultural labor. In Independence, Louisiana, for example, nearly 1,100 Sicilians had taken up residence by 1900, after having commuted from New Orleans seasonally

during the 1890s. Taking advantage of worsening Sicilian-African American relations, white politicians sought Sicilian support to pass Jim Crow legislation. In 1898, white supremacists used the new political atmosphere initiated by the Spanish-American War to seize power. Rather than alienate the Sicilians and northern Italians, white supremacists attempted to attract them with pro-Italian issues. The strategy worked. Imperialism united European ancestral factions in 1898, not just Italians. As late as 1902, however, in the French urban parishes where the majority of Italian immigrants stayed, Sicilians were still not quite accepted as white. Rather, they were placed above African Americans, after being initially lumped with them.¹²

The dark-skinned, Italian-speaking immigrants, an "inbetween" social group in the racial society of the South, who the hierarchy initially viewed as subject to Josephite care, gradually forced assimilation into the white Catholic orbit. Even though they spoke a different language, they were still European. Also, Sicilians were late arrivals to a process in which groups formerly divided by language had successfully united, while those of different skin colors had not. In addition, whites and dark-skinned Sicilians experienced an economic prosperity not shared by black Catholics. After the turn of the twentieth century, the traditional division, language, that had compromised the antebellum universal church but had assured black French-

¹²Cunningham, "Hindrance to White Solidarity," p. 36; Gambino, *Vendetta*, pp. 56-63, 81, 131; Orsi, "Religious Boundaries," p. 314; Baiamonte, "Community Life," p. 367.

speakers influence in the original territorial parishes, disappeared in an emergent American racial taxonomy that recognized only black and white.¹³

The process of assimilation of Sicilians into French interracial parishes was illustrated by events in Holy Name of Mary parish in Algiers, located across the Mississippi River from the French section of New Orleans and operated by the Marist religious order. It was the first interracial territorial parish in the city of New Orleans to receive large numbers of Sicilian emigrants. Between 1895 and 1900 the multi-racial population increased by 500 persons per year and then by 1905 leveled off. Because the vast majority of Italian immigrants who left Sicily and settled in Louisiana disembarked at Algiers Point, in Holy Name Parish, during the period 1890-1905, the growth of the parish population derived from Italian immigrants. In 1899, Father James Hubert Blenk, the pastor, for the first time officially recognized the differences among his congregation. He held special three-day missions for his dark-skinned members, one for Italians and one for African Americans. A separate Italian mission, in which evangelization was performed in their language, constituted a meaningful

¹³Richard D. Alba, Ethnic Identity: The Transformation of White America (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1990), pp. 3-4, 10-11, 84-85, 94; some recent labor history detailed how class superseded race and ethnicity in human relations and that people of the same class united politically against other classes despite their skin color, religion, or ethnicity. for example see, David R. Roediger, Towards the Abolition of Whiteness: Essays on Race Politics and Working Class History (London and New York: Verso, 1994) and Eric Arnesen, Waterfront Workers of New Orleans: Race, Class, and Politics, 1863-1923 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991); Vatican directive presented and interpreted in Harte, "Racial and National Parishes," pp. 159-160. Joseph Fichter in a critical analysis of church law upon American society pointed out that with the Vatican's ruling on assimilation and "national" parishes, the "right" to leave a "national" parish did not extend to members of black "national" parishes, Fichter, Social Relations, p. 11, fn. 9.

distinction, but in parish records the statistics for school attendance and sacraments were kept with Sicilians recorded in the "white" category. The initiation of an African American mission had nothing to do with language because the black members spoke the same French and English as the non-Sicilian white members. An all-black mission recognized them as a racial group even as it showed that Sicilians were not being grouped with African Americans. In addition, despite the growth of the parish, Blenk without explanation, closed the black parochial school, valued in 1893 at 1,050.00 dollars, and ended the long tradition of black Catholic education in the parish. After the school closed, black baptisms decreased each year, which effectively stunted the growth of black Catholicism in the parish. After 1900, with the loss of their school and the continued influx of Sicilians into the parish, African Americans became a smaller and smaller element in the life of the parish.¹⁴

Sicilians accounted for an increase in all parish population totals in New Orleans. For example, at the new English-speaking St. Joseph's parish in the predominately American downtown sector, the white population increased by two and three thousand, putting the parishes' membership at nine thousand. As a result, the new church soon became too crowded. Black Catholics who had chosen not to support St. Katherine's therefore competed for space with Sicilians. The black members faced discrimination by the pastor who posted a sign that read "THESE

¹⁴J. Francis Georgelin, The Catholic Church in Algiers, Louisiana (1848-1948): The Marist Fathers and Holy Name of Mary Church (New Orleans: Privately Produced, 1949), p. 29; Holy Name of Mary (Algiers) Annual Reports, AANO; Baiamonte, "Community Life," p. 365.

LAST TWO PEWS FOR COLORED PEOPLE ONLY". Although the reserved seating arrangement protected their space, black members found themselves limited to seating in these areas. After 1900, the problems St. Joseph faced spread to all the territorial parishes in the French sections because of the rising number of Italian speakers. St. Louis Cathedral, for example, had a population of 13,000, of whom nearly fifty percent were Sicilian. Its pastors, too, resorted to limiting black seating. The long history of interracialism at the Cathedral was at stake. At the interracial Cathedral, the black Holy Family Sisters had only recently purchased two \$240 stained glass windows to honor Etienne Rousselon, their first chaplain, and Thomy Lafon, the black benefactor. The symbolism of the interracial heritage in honoring a black and white man lost meaning at the venerable Cathedral as black members were squeezed out. A short time later another symbolic gesture indicated the existence the new color line. The "colored ladies" in the century old Christian Doctrine Society requested that the archbishop transfer their group from the jurisdiction of the St. Louis Cathedral to an exclusive black parish. Their request was granted.¹⁵

The process of Sicilian assimilation into white parishes and consequent neglect of black members that began at the turn of the century, slowly spread across the archdiocese. Over 18,000 Sicilians stayed in New Orleans. As white supremacy separated the Sicilian from the African American, white Catholic congregations accepted Sicilian members, although not as full equals. For example, at St. John the

¹⁵St. Joseph and St. Louis Cathedral Annual Reports, AANO; J.J. Albert to McCarthy, 01 April 1909, 28-K-2,a-c, JFA; Kasteel, Dutch Prelate, p. 221; Shaw to St. Laurent, 18 March 1922, "St. Peter Claver Correspondence," AANO.

Baptist parish in the American sector of New Orleans, an unofficial Irish parish that had territorial boundaries, black membership declined until it ultimately disappeared. Sicilians were welcomed. In 1900, the Sicilian membership became so large that an Italian priest, Father J. B. Larosa, had been appointed to the parish. Although the residence of an Italian priest acknowledged ethnic segregation in the Irish parish, the fact that the English-speakers accepted Sicilians, who spoke a foreign language, and not African Americans, who spoke English, appeared racist. That the trend toward race definition of parish membership rather than membership based on language or ethnicity confirmed the white racism of the American sector. Sicilians had little impact on the other parishes in the American sector; most Sicilians attended the French parishes.¹⁶

While the Catholic churches ceased to be a haven in a racist world, blacks' faith in Catholicism remained very strong. Unchristian discrimination on the part of white members did not deter them from practicing what they had always upheld, the universal ideal. They were vulnerable, however. The hierarchy's neglect of black Catholic education began to take its toll, and black Catholics also faced new problems when congregations wanted to divert their resources from the ministry among African Americans.

The introduction of non-African American dark-skinned members had major effects on black Catholic education. Faced with a system that Catholics in south Louisiana cherished, interracial worship but segregated schools, the Sicilians, caught

¹⁶Baudier, St. John the Baptist, p. 37.

in the middle, did not pick sides but instead chose to attend public schools. The clergy lamented that Sicilians risked assimilation into America by sending their children to public educators. For the church officials, the result would be the loss of Italians to the Protestant denominations. Throughout the archdiocese, clergy and congregations focused on saving Sicilians from the public school menace by nurturing Italian societies and festivals, and in some cases offering free tuition in parochial schools. The emphasis on assimilating Sicilians hurt black schools; resources could not be found to help all groups. By 1905, in addition to the loss of Holy Name of Mary's black parochial school in Algiers, the diocese had closed thirteen other black schools.¹⁷

Black parochial schools had been central to the African Americans' decision to remain in the parishes after the Civil War. The loss of any parochial school, whether by the hierarchy's neglect or in an attempt to accommodate Sicilians, destroyed part of a major tradition in the archdiocese and reduced black participation in the parish community. The decrease in black participation, in turn, affected the ability of black Catholics to contribute to parishes that needed to expand church facilities. In most areas, competition for seating with Sicilians increased because of limited seating capacities for dark-skinned persons. In New Orleans, St. Katherine's, which staffed its school under the Holy Family Sisters, annually increased its attendance, as blacks fled the interracial parishes that had closed schools. As more black Catholics went to St. Katherine's, however, money for black parish schools

¹⁷Lorente to Blenk, 03 October 1907; Gagliardoni to Shaw, 05 January 1920.

gradually dried up as the share of black contributions in the interracial parishes dwindled. In the face of these problems, Chapelle devoted little attention to Catholic education for either race. Inexplicably, Chapelle did not supplement the shortfalls in black contributions toward black parochial schools with money from outside the archdiocese, such as Katherine Drexel. The loss of schools increased the strain on universal worship already under pressure because of racial preferences. The hierarchy still did nothing.¹⁸

* * *

While the interracial territorial parishes struggled to accommodate Sicilians and black Catholics watched their status at their schools decline, the "national" language parishes underwent a different transformation that became the impetus for the hierarchy to address racial and ethnic discrimination with policy. When Chapelle became archbishop, the 375,000 Catholics in the archdiocese of New Orleans could go to more than fifty French territorial parishes, at least seven English-speaking parishes, one Irish "national" parish, three German "national" parishes, and three African American "national" parishes (Vincentian St. Katherine, Jospheite Immaculate Conception, and Assumptionist in Klotzville). After 1898, the growing use of English in the Catholic churches made the diocesan system of French territorial parishes and "national" language parishes pointless to the urban laity of the archdiocese. The hierarchy's first attempt to address the growing use "of the English tongue" failed.

¹⁸Reports to Commission for the Catholic Missions Among the Colored People and the Indians, 1899-1907, 161 DY 10 thru 161 DY 16, JFA; Lee, "Efforts of the Archbishops," pp. 96-100.

Then, the Spanish- American War interrupted further attempts to deal with the problem, thereby leaving the archdiocesan officials with the status quo. The social consequences were dramatic.¹⁹

As early as 1895, the hierarchy had allowed members of the territorial parish of St. Louis Cathedral, who adopted English, the privilege of becoming members of Sts. Peter and Paul Irish "national" parish. The effort solved nothing since so many Cathedral members exercised the privilege it threatened the viability of the Cathedral's white membership. To create more "national" English language parishes was not feasible; the cost of buildings was too high and the shortage of priests was an insurmountable and chronic problem. Although no problem had been solved, the hierarchy took no further initiatives in order to avoid upsetting precarious racial balances in territorial parishes.²⁰

By the turn of the century, however, the traditional distinctions between the urban territorial parishes, many of them French speaking, and white "national" parishes began to disappear as all parishes became, in effect, English-speaking. St. Vincent de Paul, for example, became a predominately English speaking parish after accommodating speakers of both languages became unnecessary. In all areas, Irish and German immigrants and their descendants moved among the ecclesiastical parishes unrestrained by language differences, thereby threatening the existence of the

¹⁹New Orleans Chancellor Reverend B. Cazals' report to Commission for the Catholic Missions Among the Colored People and the Indians, 01 January 1899, 161 DY 10, JFA; Hirsch, "Simply a Matter," pp. 263-266.

²⁰Bornside, "Sts. Peter and Paul," p. 10.

"national" language parishes. As a result, many Irish or German Catholics sought parishes with better schools or simply supported the parish that was most convenient. The abandonment of the "national" parishes shocked the clergy. Father F. Paul, for example, complained that "owing to the fact that the German Catholic have [has] the 'privilege' to go to either in [sic] their own church or consider themselves belonging to the parish in which they live---be the church English or French---no control can be had over them. They can not be cared for properly." Other pastors were angered if Irish descendants were married in their territorial parish. In the face of demographic changes and the breakdown of the parish system, the clergy petitioned the hierarchy to preserve their parishes' original status. The clergy acted upon the assumption that the movement among parishes by English-speaking white members of the archdiocese had racial elements. Pastors therefore tried to preserve their white membership, but worried less about what happened to their black members. In a couple of churches, at German St. Boniface and German Mater Dolorosa, the pastors actually advocated racially segregated territorial parishes. The Benedictines of St. Boniface, an urban multi-national parish, requested that their congregation be divided along racial lines. Then, diocesan cleric Father Bichlmeyer of Mater Dolorosa devised a complicated scheme to swap members of two parishes, also along racial lines.²¹

²¹Joseph C. Toy, ed., A History of St. Vincent de Paul, 1838-1967: Commemorating the 100th Anniversary of St. Vincent de Paul Church, 1866-1966, (New Orleans: Archdiocese of New Orleans, 1966), p. 11; Father Paul quoted in St. Boniface annual report, 1895.

During the last quarter of the nineteenth century, with the support of Germans and black Catholics who lived near the St. Boniface church, the Benedictine fathers had used their status as an urban "national" parish to gain access to resources in the city that funded their work in poorer rural Louisiana, particularly on the north shore of Lake Pontchartrain where, for example, Sicilians had migrated in large numbers. The German clergy fretted over the loss of their German (white) members and the concomitant increase in the proportion of black members at their St. Boniface parish located in the midst of the French section of the city. As the operators of St. Boniface, the Benedictines had enjoyed the privilege of jurisdiction over Germans throughout the archdiocese. By the late 1890s, the Benedictine's authority over Germans paid fewer and fewer dividends as the German population adopted English and chose to attend other parishes, albeit interracial ones. As some of the few German clergy who welcomed black members and cared for many in the archdiocese's black population, the Benedictines had performed a unique service. Their black parochial school, for example, had been a well established fixture in downtown New Orleans since the 1870s, but the Benedictines began to fear having too many black members since they were poor and therefore threatened the future of the orders' accomplishments. They complained to Chapelle that because St. Boniface was not a German parish, they had lost many of their white parishioners. Chapelle, however, ignored their complaint and insisted that the Benedictines continue to operate the parish as they always had. Black members remained. Although dissatisfied, the

Benedictine pastors of St. Boniface nevertheless continued to operate a "national" parish with black members but increasingly fewer German (white) members.²²

The second request from a German pastor to allow racial segregation came from Mater Dolorosa. The inquiry involved two parishes, the pastor's own German "national" language parish, Mater Dolorosa, and the nearby French territorial parish, St. Mary's Nativity, both located near the American section of New Orleans in a rural area called Carrollton. The pastor of the German "national" Mater Dolorosa watched his exclusive German population wither in the face of the advancing use of the English language among his congregation. In response, he proposed to Chapelle a change in the status of not only his "national" parish, but also the area's territorial parish. He recommended condemning St. Mary's, the interracial territorial parish church, then dividing its congregation by race. With the bishop's agreement to the change in status, the pastor could obtain white members from St. Mary's and send all black members to St. Katherine's. Mater Dolorosa would become the territorial parish--albeit exclusively white. With its congregation split up by race and its jurisdiction as a territorial parish assumed by Mater Dolorosa, St. Mary's would be suppressed and its buildings demolished. The pastor of St. Mary's could find work elsewhere. Together with the remnants of his German congregation, the infusion of white

²²St. Boniface, Our Lady of the Lake, and Our Lady of Lourdes Annual Reports, AANO; New Orleans Daily Item, 29 August 1891, p. 1 c. 4; New Orleans Daily Picayune, 01 January 1894, p. 10, c. 3; New Orleans Daily States, 13 August 1894, p. 5, c. 3; Baiamonte, "Community Life," pp. 386-387; Jonathan DeFrangé, O.S.B., A Century of Grace: A Pictorial History of Saint Joseph Abbey and Seminary (Saint Benedict, Louisiana: Saint Joseph Abbey, 1982), pp. 5-6.

members from St. Mary's would temporarily meet at Mater Dolorosa, but in a short time, gather the resources necessary to build a totally new parish, church and school. Chapelle rejected the pastor's ideas; instead he decided that the interracial St. Mary's Nativity would continue as the "parish church of Carrollton" and that repairs would be made despite the growing poverty of its multiracial congregation. He also ruled that:

as the church of Mater Dolorosa was built exclusively for the German Catholics of that part of the city, it is nothing but right, just and proper that said church should remain absolutely dedicated to the spiritual wants of German Catholics. In order to the more securely attaining this end we absolutely require that no other language but German should be spoken in such church.

The pastors of both parishes were unhappy with Chapelle's ruling. With no money, St. Mary's could not function in its collapsing buildings. There were too few German speakers to justify an exclusive German language parish in the city of Carrollton. Within the year, Chapelle replaced the two pastors with one man, Francis Prim, and assigned him the task of combining the congregations of St. Mary and Mater Dolorosa into one inclusive interracial American parish--called Mater Dolorosa.²³

Even though Chapelle did not follow a clear policy, the results were similar. In the case of St. Boniface he ordered it to keep its "national" status but maintain its interracial congregation. In the Mater Dolorosa and St. Mary's affair, he eventually reversed his earlier decision and suppressed the German "national" character of Mater

²³Bichlmeir to Chapelle, 24 december 1898; Bichlmeir to Chapelle, 08 May 1899; Bichlmeir to Chapelle, 10 May 1899; Leander Roth to Chapelle, 25 May 1899; Chapelle to Bichlmeir, 26 May 1899; Bichlmeir to Chapelle 06 June 1899; all letters in "Mater Dolorosa Correspondence, 1869-1909," AANO.

Dolorosa but made it an interracial territorial parish. Although the official status of the resulting parishes differed, they were both interracial. By 1899, that was the extent of Chapelle's grappling with demographic changes and the parish system.

In 1899, Chapelle had greater concerns than pastors squabbling over the best parishioners. With the American takeover of Spain's territories after the 1898 Spanish American War, the Pope made Chapelle his Apostolic Delegate Extraordinary to Puerto Rico, Cuba, and Philippine Islands. As such, Chapelle spent much of the rest of his tenure in Puerto Rico, Cuba, Philippines, Rome, and Washington trying to secure any lands and property held by the Catholic Church under Spanish authority. He therefore consumed as much of his time on those duties as archbishop of the archdiocese of New Orleans. Chapelle's negligence of his duties as archbishop of New Orleans was not intentional, of course. Rather, his responsibilities as an official delegate and ambassador of the Pope called him away from the archdiocese for long periods and removed Chapelle from the operation of parishes. In Chapelle's absence, that job fell to his assistant, Gustave A. Rouxel, also a Frenchman, who performed the administrative functions. Rouxel, too, opposed the "special" status of national parishes. Rouxel never had the authority to establish new interracial parishes, much less undertake the creation of the controversial system of separate black "national" parishes. In effect, the pastors were left to their own devices.²⁴

As pastors intensified the debate over the future of the parish system with little guidance from the hierarchy, racial violence in New Orleans at the turn of the century

²⁴Baudier, Church in Louisiana, p. 495.

exacerbated interracial tension. In July, 1900, Robert Charles openly defied white domination during a killing rampage that left a handful of whites, including police officers, dead. Charles' attacks began in the American sector of the city, the area of strongest segregation. White retaliation knew no geographical boundaries, and dozens of African Americans around the city died in the aftermath as whites went on a rampage. In the downtown sections of the city that were culturally French, interracialism saved lives. One black Catholic recalled that "I was living on Urquhart Street in the 1800 block [Annunciation parish] during the Robert Charles riot of 1900. Whites were running around beating Negroes in the street and everything. White people were our neighbors, and they made sure that they were going to protect us if the mob would have come around there. That's how the people lived at that time." Charles was cornered, killed, then had his beaten, bullet-ridden body dragged through the streets. Although the violence died down soon after the spectacle, race relations did not recover. Interracial worship, much less dual support for education, became more difficult. Pastors witnessed the alterations in parish make-up with concern. The pace of social change quickened, and the call for segregation increased in the archdiocese. The status quo ordered by Chapelle no longer functioned as the racial violence hardened the color line. In the absence of Chapelle and without direction from the administration, pastors worked together to divide congregations to suit each other's needs.²⁵

²⁵See William Ivy Hair, Carnival of Fury: Robert Charles and the New Orleans Race Riot of 1900 (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1976); Anthony "Creoles," p. 155.

Clergy acted individually in handling the heightened racial tensions. The pastors of St. Boniface made the greatest adjustments to reduce further trouble between the races. Prior to the riots, the Benedictines experienced problems with their parish and with their archbishop, who seemed oblivious to their plight. In 1899, the pastor reported a peak number of 126 black baptisms, half the total number of baptisms in the parish. In 1903, the Benedictines indicated that there had been no black baptisms:

they [African Americans] came to have their children baptized, but of course I had to refuse to do so. They did not understand why this is done. I tried to explain it to them that everyone is obliged to go to their parish. But in many cases, the people being too ignorant, especially the colored, left in indignation and simply thought this is an excuse for my unwillingness to baptize them. The neighboring churches therefore must show an increase in the number of their baptisms, especially the colored, otherwise, I am afraid, the children remain unbaptized.

The pastors of St. Boniface had refused to let any new black members join their parish. African Americans who did not leave the Catholic church over such treatment made the long trek to other parishes to have their children baptized. St. Katherine's, "their parish," however, was not a neighboring church but rather far away from the downtown St. Boniface and attracted few of the African Americans rejected by St. Boniface. Although St. Katherine's statistics showed an increase in attendance--in the early 1900s it more than doubled what it had been in the 1890s--most of the new worshippers appeared to be English speakers. Certainly some arrived from St. Boniface, since the Vincentians at St. Katherine's made provisions for a French-speaking priest. Pastors of French-speaking St. Anne and Sacred Heart, however,

reported marked increases in black baptisms. Most blacks forced out of St. Boniface went to them rather than to St. Katherine, which offered testimony to the black Catholic belief in interracial worship and the strength of the French language.²⁶

St. Boniface was a radical case of white reaction. The fears of an approaching black majority, restrictive baptism regulations related to geographical boundaries, and the concerns over Robert Charles' race riot had led the Benedictines to halt the influx of additional black members into the congregation. When they did, they deprived hundreds of African Americans of the sacraments in just one church. The racist presumptions of the pastor illustrated the reactions clergy, an ever increasing percentage of whom were not French, who undertook to address the racial imbalance occurring throughout the archdiocese as well as the white apprehensions about coexistence among an equal number of black people. At St. Boniface, overt black protest of the Benedictines' action was negligible because it never affected the established black membership. The interracial parish continued to operate the popular black parochial school as well as hosted marriages for their established membership. The attempt to stop black baptisms sought to cut off future black membership in the parish--all because white parishioners feared the loss of their German language and faith in the face of a black majority and the possibility of racial violence. Once

²⁶St. Boniface Annual Reports, AANO; quote from 1903 annual report. Of the neighboring parishes Sacred Heart, St. Anne, and Annunciation, only Sacred Heart increased its black baptisms, but its increase did not match St. Boniface's decrease. See Sacred Heart, St. Anne, and Annunciation Annual Reports, as well as St. Katherine's, AANO; Slawson, "Segregated Catholicism," pp. 178-179. The white baptisms at St. Boniface and its surrounding parishes remained constant during the same period.

African Americans were out of their parish, the white congregation could do as they pleased. When the clergy wanted to appease the white congregants, interracialism was threatened.²⁷

In contrast to the German pastors, the Irish "national" parishes were under fewer pressures, yet the congregations considered themselves white. Father Joseph Hanrahan was isolated from the troubles in the other parishes. Appointed pastor of Sts. Peter and Paul in 1896 after serving in a rural area for six years after his ordination, the native of County Tipperary, Ireland, presided over a booming parish and congregation. The parish had been developed not only by Irish pastors but by such active laymen as Edward Douglass White, who would become Chief Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court. Its wealth had been contributed to by downtown Creoles, formerly of St. Louis Cathedral, who received permission to become members of Sts. Peter and Paul if they spoke English. By the early 1900s, its development had reached a peak as baptisms, Holy Communions, confirmations, and marriages increased annually. The parish was free of debt, and the congregation successfully raised in a short time the money to build a brand new school and convent for its nuns. By 1900 money was available to renovate the church. Times were good and Hanrahan wanted it to stay that way. His jurisdiction, not confined by boundaries but by language and Irish heritage, had allowed Hanrahan to refuse membership to African Americans and Sicilians. Even English-speaking black Catholics from St.

²⁷St. Boniface Annual Reports, AANO; Chambronne to Blenk, 05 April 1908, "St. Boniface Parish Correspondence," AANO.

Louis Cathedral had, inexplicably, not qualified. Hanrahan attributed the success of the parish to its exclusive nature.²⁸

The success of Sts. Peter and Paul was good for the Catholic Church in a Protestant nation, but neighboring pastors at St. Boniface, Annunciation, and St. Louis Cathedral felt its success came at the expense of their territorial parishes. The exclusive nature of Sts. Peter and Paul attracted too many persons of consequence, paying white members, while black members and Sicilians remained in the territorial parishes under the care of pastors watching resources trickle away. During the racial crisis at the turn of the century, Sts. Peter and Paul became a haven for white people seeking to avoid the troubled relations in territorial parishes. The relationship between Annunciation territorial and nearby "national" Sts. Peter and Paul, formalized in 1867 illustrated the cultural and racial dynamics at issue in the 1890s but solidified after the racial violence.

The co-existence of these two parishes reached a crisis in the late 1890s. Father Gustave A. Rouxel, administrator of the archdiocese, who also served as pastor of Annunciation parish, complained that as "the question of language that limited [parishes] before, is no longer an issue" the people did not know to what parish they belonged. In the case of his territorial parish, the traditional rule used by the pastors that "latins, creole French, Spanish, and Italians" belonged to Annunciation parish while the "Irish or Americans" belonged to St. Peter was no longer applicable because

²⁸Baudier, Centennial of the Church of Sts. Peter and Paul, pp. 15-17; Bornside, Sts. Peter and Paul, pp. 7-11; Sts. Peter and Paul Annual Reports, AANO

"with the marriage of the Irish or Americans with a creole and vice versa, the parties are free to choose between the two churches, and their children follow equally." Rouxel, therefore, proposed the removal of the status of the "national" churches and a division of all parishes by geographical boundaries. If Annunciation and St. Peter were divided by territory, Rouxel believed the people could freely "choose the church that is most convenient for them."²⁹

In Chapelle's absence, Father Rouxel and Father Hanrahan worked out an agreement between themselves. In 1898, they agreed that Rouxel could baptize, marry, and bury the Irish and American population of their shared boundaries, located in the city near the heart of the French Quarter. In return, Hanrahan could perform the same sacraments on the Latin population, the creoles and French. Between 1898 and 1902 the arrangement worked and neither parish lost any resources; their congregational totals were consistent for the period--3,000 members for Annunciation and 4,000 for St. Peter. In 1902 Rouxel in a letter to Chapelle complained that Hanrahan was being unfair. Hanrahan protested the marriage of an Irish couple at Annunciation, claiming that he had jurisdiction over the couple while also claiming jurisdiction over Latins, except black creoles and African Americans. Rouxel demanded that Hanrahan follow the agreement fairly or parish limits would be imposed on the Irishman's parish. He ruled out a return to the traditional "national" parish/territorial parish relationship because Hanrahan would destroy his congregation.

²⁹Gustave Rouxel to chancellor of Archdiocese of New Orleans, 24 August 1896, "Annunciation Correspondence," AANO. Original translated from French by Genevieve K. Jacques.

Rouxel warned that "to return to the old state of things" would lead to the "absorption of Annunciation" by Hanrahan. Rouxel said new ideas were needed to address the social transformation caused by "the fusion of Irish families and English with the Creole and French families." The fusion resulted in expansion of the use of the English language. Hanrahan had authority over English speakers, except black Catholics: "Father Hanrahan reclaims as a parish all those who speak English, with the exception of the colored people (with reason). But, today, all the Creole families speak English." Hanrahan's argument had been that he could not allow or afford certain "pillars" of his church the freedom to choose their own parish. The two priests could not reach an agreement. The Robert Charles' riot and loss of further white parishioners exacerbated the problems. At that point, Chapelle, back from abroad, stepped in after an agreement had not been reached. He ordered the Annunciation and Sts. Peter and Paul pastors to maintain the status quo.³⁰

Little was solved by Chapelle's intervention. Matters worsened because even as he did nothing to relieve the pastor of Annunciation of their burdens he did do something to help St. Louis Cathedral prevent the loss of white members as Sicilians filled that parish. It proved a momentous consequence for development of racial parishes. Unwilling to build Jim Crow parishes to solve the controversy at St. Louis Cathedral, Chapelle arranged for the jurisdiction of Italians to be turned over to

³⁰Annunciation and St. Peter Annual Reports, AANO; Rouxel to Chapelle, 2 February 1902, "Annunciation Correspondence," AANO; original translated from French by Trinette M. Robichaux; Chapelle to Rouxel, 5 February 1902, "Annunciation Correspondence," AANO.

Spanish-speaking Dominicans recruited out of Manila, in the Phillipine Islands. For the first time Chapelle had not categorized Sicilians with black Catholics. The Sicilian's "national" parish would be established at St. Anthony's, a French/north Italian parish. While black Catholics had for years watched their seating capacity decline because of sharing space with Sicilians, Chapelle worked to ease pew shortages and overcrowding only after Sicilians occupied white members' pews at both the Cathedral and St. Mary's chapel. Chapelle's move at that point threatened interracialism in other parishes that had previously maintained a balance. The shift also indicated the state of "inbetween" status, whether descended from mixed racial parents or being Sicilian. Unlike Janssens, who had divided black Catholics into three categories, Chapelle acted as if the all Catholics were either white, black, or Italian. The switch by the hierarchy to make the parishes reflect conditions certainly affected the congregation's perceptions of their traditional identity. Chapelle's new policy undermined the universal ideal.

Originally established in the 1870s by Perche amidst a large Italian population, St. Anthony's operated under an arrangement similar to St. Boniface, a multi-language and multi-racial parish without boundaries. From its establishment, therefore, St. Anthony's had been an interracial parish, with as high as fifty percent ratio of black to white baptisms in the early 1890s. Interracial worship was a cherished tradition at St. Anthony's, and the parish supported no schools. In July, 1902, Chapelle brought Spanish, Italian-speaking Father Thomas Lorente into New Orleans and handed over this interracial parish to his care. Chapelle gave jurisdiction to the Dominicans with

"explicit understanding that they should minister exclusively to the spiritual wants" of Italians. Chapelle had taken St. Anthony a step closer to becoming a "national" parish without actually making it a "national" language parish. Once the Dominicans took charge of the parish, black Catholic baptism ceased as the pastor refused black members because they were not Italian. More importantly, dark skinned Sicilians, northern Italians and African Americans were segregated from each other. But Sicilians gave little support to the church, despite the Dominican's having jurisdiction over them. One reason was that Lorente spoke a different dialect of Italian from that spoken in New Orleans. Also, Sicilians preferred to attend the territorial parishes. Pastors of nearby parishes accused Chapelle and the Dominicans of using the Italian ministry as a ruse to introduce another religious order to the archdiocese. The diocesan clergy resented the fact that the Dominicans attracted white French-speaking and English-speaking brethren from neighboring parishes, "drawn by a short mass," but turned away African Americans. Even if Chapelle introduced the Dominicans into the archdiocese under false pretenses, that Chapelle ignored the fact the Dominicans attracted whites, while rejecting blacks, despite extensive complaints by neighboring pastors, indicated that he continued to neglect African American issues or, at worst, that he had a bias against African Americans.³¹

³¹Chapelle to Manoritta, 29 July 1902; Extract from the minutes of the meeting of the Diocesan Consultors, 10 October 1907; Blenk to Lorente, 04 January 1910; Laval to Blenk, 09 February 1910; Lambert to Blenk, 02 February 1910; all in "Dominican Fathers--Miscellaneous Correspondence prior to 1911," AANO; St. Anthony of Padua Annual Reports, AANO; Thomas Lorente to Blenk, 03 October 1907; Gassler to Blenk, 01 February 1910; Carmel Gagliardoni to Shaw, 05 January 1920; all in "St. Louis Cathedral Correspondence, 1835-1915," AANO; Leonard V. Huber, Our Lady of

Even in the face of possible racial bias by Chapelle, a white preference to associate with dark-skinned Sicilians rather than African Americans, and racial discrimination by the clergy, interracial worship still predominated in the archdiocese. Rather than leave the church because of discrimination and decreased educational opportunities, black Catholics stuck to their parishes when they were allowed to do so. The use of French remained common, particularly among black Catholics. As late as 1909, Josephite Father LeBeau found in New Orleans that "the people are talking more to me as I speak French, gumbo French" During Chapelle's tenure, black Catholics from interracial parishes pushed for more opportunities to join schools run by religious orders. For example, Sr. M. Lawrence of the Holy Family Sisters recalled how she entered the convent from St. Vincent de Paul parish in the late 1890s. Raymond and Gustave Lee as well as Henry Thompson from Mater Dolorosa parish attended St. Joseph's College with hopes of becoming priests. Black Catholics also sought more parochial schools for their children. The obvious and subtle effects of white racism had not deterred black Catholics from holding to the traditions and customs of the archdiocese. Most important, black Catholics resisted segregation. That Chapelle resisted the color line certainly preserved the faith of many black Catholics.³²

Guadalupe (Hackensack, N.J.: Custombook, Inc., 1976), pp. 26-27.

³²The Josephite 4 [January 1902]: 52; M. Lawrence to Shaw, 18 August 1918, "Religious Women, Holy Family Sisters Correspondence," AANO; LeBeau to McCarthy, 12 March 1909, 28-N-19a&b, JFA.

In 1904, late in Chapelle's tenure, Katherine Drexel visited New Orleans and St. Katherine parish for the first time and was surprised by what she observed. She attended the ten o'clock a.m. Sunday mass at St. Katherine's and found few worshippers and a bad choir. In fact, the organist was a white woman. When she inquired about the lack of attendance, she learned "the Colored prefer to go to church with the Whites. They are given pews or rent them in all the churches in New Orleans. I am told the priests do not wish to give up their Colored congregations because they efficiently aid in the support of the churches." The tradition of black Catholics to support their territorial parish observed by Drexel was in danger, however. Change was underway across the archdiocese that weakened the relationship between pastors and their black members.³³

* * *

During his tenure Chapelle offended nearly all of his subordinates, including Frenchmen. For example, Father J. Anciaux, a French-speaking Josephite who ministered in Louisiana for a short time reported that "Bishop Ch...[sic] is disliked ... and the best he can do is go to Cuba." Anciaux resented Chapelle personally, particularly because of his aloofness. Some of the clergy disliked Chapelle's version of universalism in the parishes. LeBeau also reported the common perception of Chapelle held by the clergy: "[they] don't seem to like Chappelle [sic] at all." Chapelle left an unpopular legacy because he was frequently absent from the archdiocese at crucial times in the social development of the city. Had he provided

³³Quote in Duffy, Drexel, p. 314.

firmer leadership, the actions of individual pastors to alter the make-up of their congregations would not have been met with the reactions of nearby pastors to preserve their congregation. A diocesan policy could have preserved the universal church during a period of emerging identities when even Chapelle appeared to alter his views of dark-skinned people.³⁴

In an additional irony, the hierarchy's resistance to Jim Crow was the beginning of white supremacy in the Catholic churches of south Louisiana. The influx of 30,000 Sicilians increased divisions within the archdiocese. Initially, the archbishop halted Jim Crow and accommodated Catholics in the traditional territorial parishes, but increased attendance overcrowded facilities and forced Sicilians and African Americans to struggle for pews. Viewed as dark-skinned and black, Sicilians quickly occupy an "in-between" social status traditionally accorded to people of mixed racial ancestry. By 1902, the hierarchy separated Sicilians from African Americans in an Italian "national" parish. The hierarchy treated the Sicilians as non-black, although still a threat to whites. Nevertheless, Sicilians remained in the territorial parishes where they were gradually recognized as white. At the turn of the century, the color line had been drawn in the territorial parishes and the white side gained members from among the Sicilians as well as the Germans and Irish. Black numbers dwindled as the loss of parochial schools led to fewer black members in the parishes.

³⁴Anciaux to Slattery, 12 August 1898, 11-D-12, JFA; LeBeau to Slattery, 16 June 1898, 18-S-14, JFA.

The future of the universal ideal depended more than ever before on the dominant white members.

Chapelle succumbed in the yellow fever epidemic that struck the city in 1905. Under archbishops James Hubert Blenk (1905-1917), born in Germany, and John William Shaw (1918-1933), born in Mobile, Alabama, the interracial parishes proceeded along the path to becoming official white parishes. After 1905, the future of interracialism in the archdiocese relied on the faith and strength of black congregants.

CHAPTER 7

WHITE AND BLACK PARISHES IN THE ARCHDIOCESE, 1906-1920

The transformation, between 1906 and 1920, of the archdiocese's system of interracial territorial parishes and "national" language parishes into a black and white racial-territorial parish system resulted from several developments. A racial imbalance emerged within the multiracial congregations as black Catholics left Louisiana to escape Jim Crow. The combination of black emigration and Italian assimilation increased the numerical strength of whites in the parish congregations at the same time that the English language gained ascendancy and racial identity became stronger throughout the archdiocese. The decrease in black membership, therefore, ultimately resulted in increased white supremacy, the object many African Americans sought to escape by remaining in the Roman Catholic Church. The diocesan hierarchy accommodated the white clergy and congregations by creating new parishes and boundary realignments after the adoption of a universal language blurred the official distinctions between territorial and "national" language parishes. With English dominant, all nations and parishes, became either white or black. White members remained in the traditional territorial parishes, while black members had to build new churches and schools or occupy structures vacated by whites. Natural disasters then compounded the separation begun by people. Hurricanes and floods hit southern Louisiana early in the twentieth century and in many cases blew down or swept away the facilities that had been built by the united efforts of interracial congregations.

When reconstructed, in the place of one interracial structure, two churches were built, one for whites and one for blacks. In some rural areas, though, black Catholics did not have the resources to build their own structures. After 1920, proponents of the universal ideal attempted to maintain the tradition of universal worship with regular church attendance at parishes regardless of the designated race. Yet they were in the minority. Most black and white Catholics attended parishes with their own race and left the traditional interracial practices of the archdiocese to their ancestors.

* * *

The new archbishop, James Hubert Blenk, had one agenda for the role of parishes in helping all Louisiana Catholics cope with the economic, racial and language transformations and assimilate them into the mainstream of American society, parochial education. Blenk, an immigrant, was born in Neustadt, Bavaria, on August 6, 1856, to Protestant parents. His family came to New Orleans while Blenk was still young and settled in the American sector in St. Mary's Assumption parish, under the direction of the German Redemptorists. After regular attendance at the services, Blenk was baptized a Roman Catholic on September 12, 1869. Although brought into the church by the Redemptorists, Blenk joined the Congregation of Mary, or Marists, when he decided to become a priest. In 1897, Blenk was appointed pastor of the interracial Holy Name of Mary parish in Algiers. While there, Blenk excelled at raising funds for new facilities as well as gained experience in a multi-racial and multi-ethnic congregation. He learned that special three-day missions--a series of sermons, instructions, and other religious exercises that

concluded with a renewal of baptismal vows--which were conducted by missionary priests who toured the diocese and held exclusively among Italians or African Americans were superior to integrated missions. In another bad omen for proponents of interracialism, Blenk also closed the black school in his parish and offered no explanation. Shortly after that, in late 1899, Chapelle tapped the talented Blenk to accompany him abroad. An appointment as archbishop soon followed, and Blenk served as archbishop in Puerto Rico between 1900 and 1906. In July of 1906, he was appointed to his mentor's former post, the vacant see of New Orleans. He immediately worked to create a parish school system.¹

As early as 1907, Blenk sought to modernize the archdiocese. An efficient and careful administrator, Blenk worked to adjust the Catholic church's parish system to evolving social conditions in south Louisiana as well as the universal use of the English language and the status of special parishes. Blenk also was the first bishop in New Orleans to face the consequences of rulings made by the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith in 1897 regarding membership in national parishes in the United States. They directed that children born in America of parents who were not American and spoke a language other than English could, at the age of twenty-one, join a parish in which English was used rather than one that still used the foreign language of their parents. In Louisiana, all parishes were beginning to operate in English, so the ruling freed the second generation from having to belong to their

¹Holy Name of Mary Annual Reports, AANO; Georgelin, Marist Fathers, pp. 29-31.

parents' congregation that spoke French or where nationalism was an important factor. Ultimately, the breaking of familial and language ties allowed new forms of identity for the members of parishes, class and race. To continue bringing the archdiocese into compliance with the 1884 Third Plenary Council of Baltimore that ordered every parish to operate a parochial school and strongly recommended racially segregated parishes, Blenk also needed to reorganize the diocese's parishes.

His first priority, however, was the improvement of the school system. In 1905, the year before Blenk's arrival, the Catholic directory listed ninety parochial schools, a seemingly large number because there were not ninety parishes. In reality many parishes had multiple schools while other parishes did not have any. Moreover, beyond the fact that nearly all schools charged tuition and employed teachers who were ill prepared, there was simply no system. Blenk attempted to abolish inequities between parishes. He wanted a parochial school (or schools) next to every church, paid for by the parishioners (rather than through tuition), and placed under the responsibility of the pastor who would obtain teachers deemed qualified by the state's civil government. In addition, he planned on establishing Catholic men's secondary schools under the care of the priests' religious orders. As he began to reform the schools, though, Blenk discovered that their deficiencies owed much to the awkward parish system. To build a modern parochial school system, Blenk decided he would first have to make certain the parishes had stable congregations to provide children to attend and money to operate the schools. Blenk found that "national" language parishes that operated without boundaries but with jurisdiction over "nations"

insufficient because these parishes lacked the stable congregation needed to build the schools he sought. In essence, Blenk wanted all territorial parishes. In the case of the black "national" parishes, St. Katherine and Immaculate Conception (Petite Prairie), he would make them territorial to satisfy both the removal of "national" status in the archdiocese and to comply with the Third Council of Baltimore. Blenk arranged for every parish to have boundaries and for English to be the language of all the congregations. He instructed the pastors to build modern schools and hire trained teachers. To meet the demands for more qualified teachers, Blenk also had a normal school established, Dominican College, run by the Dominican Sisters.²

The imposition of a parochial schools system had been attempted once before, by Odin after the Second Plenary Council of Baltimore in 1866. Odin had achieved some success. Because of his efforts, parishes for the first time operated parochial schools. The offering of parochial education to the archdiocese's black members had stemmed the exodus from the parishes to Protestant denominations. Black Catholics appreciated the fact that religious orders were inclusive and sought to help all children, regardless of race. The schools had also solidified the practice of interracial worship as interracial congregations built schools for all the congregation's children. Education, in other words, had united the interracial congregations, particularly as the French language and culture were preserved. Boy's secondary schools had never been

²Harte, "Racial and National Parishes in the United States," pp. 159-160; Lee, "Efforts of the Archbishops To Put Into Effect the Recommendations," pp. 101-112; John B. Alberts, "Black Catholic Schools: The Josephite Parishes of New Orleans During the Jim Crow Era," U.S. Catholic Historian 12 [Winter 1994]: 85.

attempted. The implementation of Blenk's plan, in stark contrast to Odin's earlier attempt, divided the congregations because it also entailed changes in the parish system.

Diocesan clergy welcomed the implementation of firm boundaries. Typical was the pastor of St. Vincent de Paul, Father A. M. Barbier, who in 1907 recommended that the German "national" parish within his boundaries, Holy Trinity, be given territorial status because the German language there had fallen out of use and its exclusive status attracted affluent members who lived within his boundaries. He wrote that "the giving of limits to Holy Trinity church, which is located within St. Vincent de Paul limits," would benefit both parishes. Blenk did not act immediately, and Barbier asked again. This time he offered additional reasons. "I would still respectfully suggest that limits be given to Holy Trinity Church located within two squares off St. Vincent," he wrote, because it would foster and develop "a parish spirit," build up of a parochial school system, and improve "feelings between pastors and flocks of two respective congregations." The congregations had been feuding over the exclusive nature of Holy Trinity. African Americans were not allowed into Holy Trinity and could not use its excellent facilities or send their children to its exemplary free school. Despite Barbier's agreement with the German bishop's plan, Blenk was unprepared to desegregate Holy Trinity. The attempt might risk endangering the sort of school he wanted every parish to build and maintain if he set a precedent dictating to parishes who could (and could not) attend a congregation's historic facilities. From his own immigrant experience, Blenk treaded carefully in

dealing with existing parochial schools because the hierarchy's involvement in modern education raised the issue of standard curriculums, particularly language. Although English was the hierarchy's preference for a system to ease the entry of Catholic children into American society, parents (French, German, and Italian) had their own individual ideas and choices--so tact was required. Creating such schools as Holy Trinity's which operated in English, after all, was why Blenk advocated boundaries in the first place.³

Blenk's plan for demanding changes quickly met opposition. The Vincentians rejected Blenk's approach and resisted the attempt to make St. Henry's German "national" parish into a territorial one. In September 1907, Father Thomas Finney, rector of the Vincentian community in the United States whose residence was in Perryville, Missouri, wrote to Blenk to express reservations about "the project of determining certain parish lines for St. Henry's church, thereby forming a new 'English' parish." Finney explained that he could not see a "sufficient or just reason" for turning St. Henry's into an English parish. He felt that "if the German congregation served by St. Henry's has become extinct, it seems more just that St. Henry's should cease to exist than that [neighboring] St. Stephen's should be deprived of its territory in order to support St. Henry's." Blenk did not agree. He responded that he understood Finney's desire to protect St. Stephen's but needed a better reason than that to halt his plans. The Vincentian's objection was unusual because they operated both parishes and apparently would lose few resources in the conversion.

³Quote from St. Vincent de Paul 1910 Annual Report, AANO.

One factor, that Finney did not mention, was that making St. Henry's a territorial parish would allow the African Americans living within its boundaries to become members of the parish. Once they were members and if custom was followed, the congregation would have to build black parochial schools--a great expense. Blenk agreed to study the matter further, but nevertheless, in 1911, made St. Henry's a territorial parish. The year of consolidation, St. Stephen's population dropped from 6,000 to 3,800. In the shift, black baptisms at St. Stephen's plummeted disproportionately; St. Stephen's had seventy-five percent fewer blacks while St. Henry's added a handful of black parishioners to its membership for the first time. Most black members ended up leaving for the Vincentian's St. Katherine parish for blacks. Nevertheless, St. Henry's remained desegregated until a segregated black parish was built in their area in 1915 by Drexel and the Holy Ghost Fathers.⁴

With St. Henry's, the Vincentians were primarily concerned with the reaction to Germans being forced to give up their parish's language identity. The activities of Irishman Father Joseph Hanrahan of Sts. Peter and Paul revealed that opposition to making of all parishes territorial was rooted in racial prejudice. Race, albeit intermixed with class and language, remained the key factor in the dispute between the pastors of Annunciation and Sts. Peter and Paul over boundary implementation. Before Blenk's move to give the parishes boundaries, Hanrahan thought the matter of

⁴Thomas Finney to Blenk, 07 September 1907; Blenk to Finney, 10 September 1907; Blenk to Finney, 06 February 1912; all in "Vincentian Fathers (Lazarists) Correspondence, 02/08/1897-06/26/1932," AANO; St. Stephen and St. Henry Annual Reports, AANO.

Sts. Peter and Paul's borders had been solved in 1902 when Chapelle told him to maintain the status quo and keep his "national" language status. However, after Chapelle had agreed in 1902, the demography of the territory shared between Sts. Peter and Paul and Annunciation, the territorial parish with which Hanrahan shared jurisdiction, changed ever more rapidly. The railroad companies bought up the property along the banks of the river and built rail lines that destroyed the aesthetic and domestic, as well as economic, value of surrounding property since migrants arrived by train and lingered along the rail lines. Affluent white members moved northward from the banks of the Mississippi River toward Lake Pontchartrain, while the poorer members, who could only afford the cheaper land near the railroad, remained. As a result, the boundary dispute had been complicated because the Annunciation territorial parish requested new boundaries. The pastors of both Annunciation and Sts. Peter and Paul wanted to keep their affluent members rather than the poorer, usually African American, members. Gassler, pastor of Annunciation in 1908, asked for a new boundary for his parish because "it would afford the new Annunciation ample room and the necessary revenues to not only build itself, but also to work up the vast territory." As far as the old limits and the poor area of the parish he wanted to abandon, Gassler suggested that "the property be sold to . . . [a] congregation of Colored Catholics." Hanrahan never worried about the boundary restrictions sought by Gassler because Chapelle had left him with his "national" language status, and he selected members regardless of where they lived. On the other hand, Hanrahan never had and did not want black members, and the imposition

of boundaries would effectively desegregate his parish. As a consequence, Hanrahan resisted the making of St. Peter and Paul a territorial parish until 1917, when he did not have to accept black members within his boundaries. Nonetheless, Blenk's sensitivity to the plight of existing parishes and their schools held up his plan to build a modern school system.⁵

Although pastors of neither a territorial nor a "national" language parish, the Benedictines in New Orleans, already pioneers in limiting black membership in integrated congregations, also opposed Blenk's program to give boundaries to "national" parishes. They had a large black membership to concern them, so they suggested that Blenk go a step further and build more separate black parishes in the city. That way, black Catholics could build and support their own churches and schools. The benefits would also prevent blacks from leaving the Catholic churches for Protestant ones. In 1908, the pastor of St. Boniface wrote that "a church exclusively for the colored people in this vicinity would certainly be a blessing for them."⁶

In the face of the opposition from several orders in attempting to make all parishes territorial, Blenk began to see the benefits of all-black parishes, but waited for an opportune time to try to establish them. Two unrelated events would create that time: a request by the pastor of Mater Dolorosa to build a new white parish with

⁵Gassler to Blenk, c.1915; Chancellor to Hanrahan, 12 October 1916; Shaw to John Bonzano, Apostolic Delegate, 13 January 1917; Gassler to Shaw, 27 August 1919; all letters in "Annunciation Correspondence," AANO.

⁶Quote from St. Boniface 1908 Annual Report, AANO.

a provision for taking care of its black members and the availability of Josephite Father Peter LeBeau, who had lost his congregation because of natural disasters.

The common sticking point in the parish boundary debate had been black Catholics. Many priests felt that white members did not want to worship with black members. Francis Prim, for example, who in 1899 had been sent by Chapelle to combine St. Mary's Nativity territorial parish and Mater Dolorosa German "national" parish into one parish, shared this view. Prim had successfully combined the German and French congregations but had not received official status as a territorial parish before Chapelle was called away on Papal business and then died. In 1908, Blenk's plan to give all parishes boundaries pleased Prim, and Blenk was glad that he had found a pastor who did not oppose his program to formalize congregations in order to build a modern parochial school system. Prim's hopes of building a grand parish church had been dashed by white members of his congregation who attended other churches. Prim needed an ambitious scheme to lure his straying congregants back to his parish: "the present location of my church is absolutely out of the way and the better class of my congregation, on account of better accommodations go preferably to my neighbors than to their own church." He proposed relocating his church to a more central and active location. To do so, Prim required a \$50,000 loan from the diocese to erect a new church as well as permission to relocate the site of the parish seat. Although nearly half of the money had been raised within his interracial congregation, he assured the bishop that the new location and dazzling structure would attract the kind of congregation capable of amortizing the debt taken out to obtain the

rest of the capital. Prim hinged his future on the creation of a white congregation--no matter their wealth. At some point in 1908, and unbeknownst to the black parishioners of Mater Dolorosa, Prim and Blenk agreed to make the new parish church for white members only.⁷

At about the same time, the Josephite ministry to African Americans in south Louisiana had collapsed. Quite simply, the Josephite's French-speaking congregations had moved out of Louisiana. African Americans began to migrate out of the state as early as 1897. That year Father LeBeau, the only Josephite priest in Louisiana, was a Louisiana native who ministered in French and worked among the farmers of rural southwest Louisiana. He reported a "great political agitation" in Louisiana. The white Democrats were in the process of amending the state constitution to disfranchise blacks. LeBeau believed the Democrats had wrongfully gained power to pursue disfranchisement; during the last presidential election, he explained, "the colored people were very shamefully treated. The whites armed themselves with shot gun [sic] and prevented the negroes registering or voting as much as they could. . . .

⁷There was a certain irony in the St. Mary Nativity/Mater Dolorosa saga in the context of the origins of Prim's parish. Mater Dolorosa had first been created in the mid-1870s after the German speakers who dominated the multi-racial and multi-national St. Mary Nativity parish wanted a German language parish because of their intense anti-French feelings following the Franco-Prussian War. Out of nationalistic fervor the Germans had built a schismatic parish--Mater Dolorosa. But the fervor soon dissipated. By the late 1890s only 50 out of 450 members understood German raising questions about the parish's existence. Yet, the schismatic parish survived while the universal St. Mary Nativity was suppressed. For story of Mater Dolorosa in the 1870s, see Raymond Calvert, "The German Catholic Churches of New Orleans," pp. 98-100; McCarthy to Drexel, 20 March 1908, M.M.K.-10, Box 35, no.7, SBSA; Prim to Blenk, 04 April 1908; Petition by Parishioners of Mater Dolorosa For Prim to Blenk, 19 March 1913; both in "Mater Dolorosa Correspondence, 1869-1909," AANO.

They murdered 6 negroes." LeBeau was convinced "that our poor negroes of the South are receding very fast politically." The loss of political rights alone was not sufficient to cause his parishioners to migrate, according to LeBeau, since their standard of living was not at all bad. Although half of his people relied on credit, usually \$120 to \$150 worth for provisions, clothing and one year's crop which, supplemented with their own gardens, potatoes, chickens, duck, hogs, LeBeau believed that it nonetheless, "offered a pretty good living." In addition, "they can always get extra work in cotton and sugar mills, chopping wood, etc." In general, LeBeau was impressed with his parishioners and saw success for the Josephites in the area. But acts of nature compounded political problems and forced migrations.⁸

LeBeau's mission of Immaculate Conception, a district in southwest Louisiana that had not received any definite canonical organization but was referred to as a parish, consisted of three churches, one chapel, and one station. After 1903, it slowly lost nearly all of its six hundred black and one hundred Italian members. Even though the loss of political rights had been tolerated by many African Americans, the loss of the ability to make a living forced the movement out of stagnant areas. Trouble started in 1903 as the tenant farmers were unable to pay off their liens. In March of 1904, LeBeau reported that the previous years' failed cotton crop caused such a setback that it prevented the operation of a school; the members could not pay tuition. In addition, in late 1904 and 1905, yellow fever broke out and threatened the picking

⁸Cunningham, "Hindrances to White Solidarity," p. 29-33; LeBeau to Slattery, 13 December 1897, 18-S-1, JFA.

of the cotton crop during September and October. In March, 1906, heavy rains threatened the corn and cotton crops. After the 1907 harvest, LeBeau reported, the "boll weevil played havoc" with the cotton. At that point, after years of deepening debt, some of his people were already "going to Indian territory on account of it." When Blenk demanded a parochial school, LeBeau and his congregation could not afford it. In January of 1908 a small pox epidemic broke out; few members attended church or school. By May of 1908, the Josephites had "few members." By August of 1908 the boll weevil had destroyed the crops. The "people are bad off," wrote LeBeau. There was no cotton at all, and the people could not pay back the credit advanced them. Forced to sell everything, "many of the people have left for Oklahoma and many more are going, the agents pay their fare there." All parishes in southern and central Louisiana suffered, but the number of French-speaking migrants had been substantial. LeBeau's mission starved through 1908, and he closed the schools. In such dire straits and without a congregation, LeBeau sought new mission territory.⁹

At about the same time, in New Orleans, Prim still needed to sell his old church to pay for the new one. Together with Blenk, Prim summoned Peter LeBeau to the city to discuss the possibility of the Josephites purchasing the old Mater

⁹LeBeau to Drexel, 01 October 1904; LeBeau to Drexel, 01 March 1904; both in M.M.K.-10, Box 33 No. 30, SBSA; LeBeau to Donovan, 20 August 1905, 26-B-1, JFA; LeBeau to Drexel, 26 March 1906, M.M.K.-10, Box 33 No.30, SBSA; LeBeau to Donovan, 04 November 1907, 26-B-5,a-b, JFA; LeBeau to Donovan, 06 January 1908, 26-B-6, JFA; LeBeau to McCarthy, 13 May 1908, 26-H-25a, JFA; LeBeau to McCarthy, 08 June 1908, 26-H-26, JFA; LeBeau to McCarthy, 04 September 1908, 26-H-27, JFA; Baudier, One Hundred Years, p. 23.

Dolorosa and creating there a parish for Prim's black members, who were French-speakers. LeBeau had been searching for months for a new mission, since the closure of his Immaculate Conception church in the wake of his flock migrating. That he spoke French made the match perfect. On Cosmopolitan Hotel letterhead, LeBeau wrote of the proposal: "with the approbation of the most reverend archbishop Father Prim wants to cede our society a colored mission in New Orleans of 150 families and work to bring back fallen away Catholics . . . for \$20,000." LeBeau was anxious to be getting a chance to begin work in New Orleans, where large populations of black Catholics were concentrated. But he had to act fast. Prim wanted an answer quickly; he really needed the money. The Josephites accepted the offer and sent LeBeau, the designated pastor, \$5,000 to secure the property. Blenk approved the transaction. As a consequence, Prim got his white parish.¹⁰

By late February, LeBeau was apprehensive about the new ministry but was relieved that A. J. Bell--a supporter of separate parishes and a parishioner at St. Katherine's, the first black parish in the archdiocese of New Orleans, who taught at New Orleans University--agreed to help him convince French-speaking black Catholics to accept a separate black church. In early March, LeBeau arrived in New Orleans to assume control of the Josephites' first parish in New Orleans. In contrast to St. Katherine's, St. Dominic, as it was called, had jurisdiction over the black Catholics just from Mater Dolorosa, not the entire archdiocese. Surely, Blenk anticipated St.

¹⁰LeBeau to McCarthy, 05 January 1909, 28-N-14, JFA; Excerpt from Josephite Consultors Meeting and Minute Book, 15 February 1909, p.59, JFA; 21 February 1909, 28-N-16, JFA; McCarthy to Blenk, 18 February 1909, 25-B-12, JFA.

Dominic being an all-black territorial parish together with St. Katherine's. Although its boundaries were unclear (as were St. Katherine's), St. Dominic was the first of several parishes for blacks planned by Blenk. Indeed, the official status of the parish had not been officially worked out but the Josephites were willing to minister only to black people. Diocesan clergy treated St. Dominic as a "national" parish that served African Americans throughout the archdiocese. Neighboring white pastors did not become concerned about the Josephites attracting their parishioners, particularly whites, because Josephites only ministered to African Americans. In addition, St. Dominic and Mater Dolorosa were located upriver from the city, distant from the heavy concentration of French-speaking black--and white--Catholics in interracial parishes of downtown New Orleans. Black resistance had been circumvented because Blenk and Prim kept their negotiations private and undertook them quickly. Despite the precautions against black opposition, LeBeau still worried about the response he would receive, but nevertheless felt that "if we treat the colored people as we ought to, we will find them very appreciative and grateful."¹¹

The Josephites wanted a smooth transition and proposed sending a black priest to the dedication of St. Dominic. But Blenk refused. He feared what the white reaction would be. The Josephites were angered by Blenk's position: "I have seen the

¹¹LeBeau to J. J. Albert, 04 March 1909, 28-E-2, JFA. All-black parishes having definite boundaries took years to develop and only after sufficient parishes existed did they officially become territorial; yet in 1916, the Holy Ghost Fathers prepared a map with boundaries covering the entire city of New Orleans with limits for the all-black parishes subject to the archbishop's approval. See "Holy Ghost Parish Correspondence," AANO.

fact demonstrated that the southern white man has absolutely no objection to colored priests for a colored congregation. The whole trouble comes from the Bishops and the priests." LeBeau was disappointed because Blenk and Prim thought of the white population before they considered the feelings of the black members.¹²

The opening and dedication of St. Dominic went well for the Josephites. Black resistance did not appear because black Catholics were not told of the transaction until its completion and because they did not know they would be discouraged from attending other churches. When Janssens had dedicated St. Katherine's fourteen years before, the process had been public and was covered in the newspapers. Janssens had also explicitly pointed out that the presence of a church for the exclusive use of black Catholics did not bar them from the territorial parish but only gave them an option worshipping among blacks. In March 1909, black Catholics of Mater Dolorosa were stunned by their new parish. They had only learned of its existence the Sunday before its dedication when Prim announced at mass that they would have their own parish and warned them not to attend the brand new church any longer. LeBeau said their general reaction, after the shock of the news, was that they felt cheated that their contributions to the new church would not be enjoyed rather than resentful at being told to attend a separate church. Many black members, however, did resent the location of their new parish. It was out of the way and inconvenient. White reaction to St. Dominic was mixed. LeBeau reported some white people disrupted the church: "some of the whites around here tried to stop our entertainments [fundraisers] but I

¹²J. J. Albert to McCarthy, 29 March 1909, 28-K-1a-c, JFA.

went to the mayor and fixed everything. These low whites ought to be all [illegible]." LeBeau was upset by the white interference because "they had no reason to kick as our entertainments go on fine." Some whites resented any use of sacred facilities by dark-skinned people. Meanwhile, others were delighted with Prim's efforts and wholeheartedly supported the new white parish. The clergy in other parishes used the creation of St. Dominic parish as an "excuse to freeze the colored out." The pastor of Our Lady of Lourdes interracial parish, after hearing the news of St. Dominic, posted a "FOR BLACK ONLY" sign over some seats in the back of church."¹³

In the end, Blenk had successfully given the new (white) Mater Dolorosa parish territorial boundaries that would attract a congregation even Prim thought capable of building a modern school. Prim was relieved of responsibility for his black brethren who would have required the entire congregation to improve and upgrade the school taught by the Holy Family Sisters. The Josephites obtained what they wanted, access to the largest concentration of black Catholics in the United States centered in New Orleans. White Catholics proved indifferent. Black Catholics feared for the worst.

The success in segregating Mater Dolorosa's congregation by race was a key moment in the history of parishes in the archdiocese of New Orleans. Blenk craftily bypassed "national" parish preservationist's resistance, lay and clerical, in transforming a "national" language parish into a territorial one. Black Catholic

¹³LeBeau to McCarthy, 12 March 1909, 28-N-19, JFA; LeBeau to McCarthy, 16 August 1909, 29-D-14, JFA; J. J. Albert, 05 April 1909, 28-K-2, a-e, JFA; Our Lady of Lourdes Annual Reports, AANO.

opposition had been avoided by secret negotiations. Yet the procedure had confirmed that in the archdiocese of New Orleans race, not language, had become the basis for establishing congregations capable of uniting to support church structures and, more importantly, modern schools. The Colored Harvest reported that when a black Catholic inquired of a Josephite why the Catholic church tried to separate the races, he replied "as representatives of the Catholic Church, we disclaim any intention of separating the races. Neither in the strict sense of the word is this a colored church. It is simply a Catholic church, and by that very fact excludes specialization. However, as there are churches, the congregations of which are composed mainly of German, Irish, Polish or other races and such churches, in popular language are called German, Irish, or Polish, etc. ... [Josephite churches] might thus be referred to as 'the Colored Church'." The black nation analogy worked well for the Josephites. They wanted nothing to do with white people, or the white nation.¹⁴

In 1909 the future course of universalism had been altered. Although "national" parishes had thrived since 1833 because of language differences, the "national" parishes' special status and jurisdiction were intended to be temporary in the Catholic Churches' structure. That effort at making all parishes territorial and the recognition that modern nations were divided into white and black people occurred at the same moment in history meant that racial parishes became fixed in the structure of the Church. Just months prior, the Society for the Propagation of the Faith had

¹⁴The Colored Harvest, 5 [June 1909]: 178; Harte, "Racial and National Parishes," p. 161; McGreevy, Northern Boundaries, pp. 8-9.

released the United States from its designation as missionary territory making all diocese directly under Vatican control. The settlement of the Josephites and their exclusive black ministry meant that an order of priests in Louisiana would minister to persons based only on their skin color and not to all Catholics. A key element of the universal ideal had been removed, all in an effort to improve schools and assimilate Catholics into American society.

Between 1907 and 1912, the progress made in organizing the archdiocese into territorial parishes based on race pleased Blenk and the Josephites. The diocesan clergy liked the arrangement as well. Among white Catholics, a few lay people maintained traditional divisions represented by the old parish system. Most, however, whether of German, Irish, Italian, or French descent, after the first decade of the twentieth century spoke English and viewed themselves as non-black. Black Catholics, on the other hand, had not completed the process of forging a black Catholicism and still held on to the traditions of interracial worship.¹⁵

An important exception to the attitudes of white Catholics was Holy Trinity parish, although its identity was still shaped by race. Located in downtown New Orleans, where the German language had disappeared from use, members of Holy Trinity's congregation wanted to preserve its German status as late as 1911. Holy Trinity congregants, in contrast to its clergy, petitioned Blenk not to impose territorial boundaries on their parish. The parishioners had been aroused by the attempts of St. Vincent de Paul's Father Barbier to denationalize Holy Trinity. In April, 1911,

¹⁵Hirsch, "Simply a Matter of Black and White," p. 263.

eighteen members of Holy Trinity, who would be affected by the implementation of boundaries, sent Blenk a seven page petition stating the reasons they opposed boundaries. Their pastor, Father John B. Prim, had just informed the parishioners of Blenk's plans and "in giving his understanding of the proposed boundaries, we find that a number of the ever faithful workers of the Holy Trinity church would be out of the limits, and nominally members of other parishes. We naturally see the wisdom of arranging for the proposed boundaries, but you can imagine our feelings that in the future we will be subject of or be compelled to adhere to some other parish." In contrast to the petitions of black Catholics, the Germans resorted to race in their argument. The Germans gave twelve reasons for keeping their parish a German "national" parish, and none of them involved the German language. Rather they cited their investment and parent's investment of time and money in the parish, the model free parochial school the parish maintained, and their German heritage. Their last reason involved race. Nearly half the area within the proposed boundaries for their parish was "inhabited at times by a floating railroad population, and mostly negroes." Other areas within their boundaries had "very few houses inhabited by white people:" most were "negro shacks." The parishioners of Holy Trinity did not want to share their beautiful exclusive church and free school with African Americans. Neither did their pastor. Like Hanrahan at St. Peter's, Prim resisted and protested receipt of boundaries for his exclusive parish for another fifteen years, when the issue no longer entailed racial desegregation. Certainly, the education-minded Blenk subscribed to the

prejudice that they had an excellent school that only would be hurt by boundary restrictions and the acceptance of African Americans.¹⁶

Most white Catholics did not oppose the changing of traditional divisions of parishes. More typical of congregations' reaction to the movement by the hierarchy and clergy to replace ethnic divisions with the color line was St. John the Baptist parish. In 1912, St. John the Baptist parish needed a new pastor, and Blenk proposed appointment of a German priest. The parish was eighty-five percent Irish with the other fifteen percent being German, French, or Italian. The Irish parishioners arranged a meeting to voice their opposition to having a German as pastor. They gave Blenk the choice of either retaining the present pastor or appointing one of a nationality "that would be pleasing to the people." Despite the protest, Blenk appointed a German, Father Godfrey Frohn, anyway. Frohn turned out to be a successful pastor at St. John. Although the opposition to a German priest appeared nationalistic, the Irish worried that a German native would be weak using English and not be understood by the congregation during the sermons. Frohn spoke English well enough that his acceptance was immediate. Gone was the ethnic rivalry, however, but it also illustrated a shift in the identity of congregations from French, German and Irish to black and white.¹⁷

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¹⁶Petition of Members of Holy Trinity Church to Blenk, 06 April 1911; John B. Prim to Shaw, 06 November 1926; both in "Holy Trinity Correspondence," AANO.

¹⁷Baudier, St. John the Baptist, pp. 39-41.

After March 1909, Blenk needed more African American parishes to continue building black parochial schools if African Americans were to remain in the Church. After all, the universalism of Louisiana's parishes had distinguished the archdiocese from other denominations and attracted black members. Despite blacks' ambivalent response to St. Dominic, Blenk was still committed to the idea that segregating black and white people was essential to creating a modern Catholic school system in south Louisiana. Although segregated schools were the tradition, integrated parishes hindered full development of a Catholic education for every Catholic child. His approach of building new churches for white members and leaving the old structure to black members generated opposition, however. Black Catholics and their ministers did not want second class facilities. Having different ministers for white Catholics and another for black Catholics also aroused suspicion. After 1909, Blenk needed to gain black support for segregated parishes. The promise of good schools met their needs and advanced his ambitious plans.

Blenk could not rely on a repeat of the good fortune of having LeBeau available during negotiations over Mater Dolorosa; there were more than seventy interracial parishes. Blenk, therefore, re-established the diocese's contact with Katherine Drexel, which had been broken by Chapelle in 1899. Blenk asked Drexel to send funds for building black schools as part of the system of black parishes he envisioned after his success at Mater Dolorosa. Drexel, still remembering the sting of black criticism she received for financing St. Katherine's and Chapelles' shabby treatment, made new demands. She would only work with ministers devoted

exclusively to African Americans. She recommended the Divine Word Fathers, the Holy Ghost Fathers, and the Josephites. She also said exclusive black-only parishes were a definite pre-requisite for her projects.¹⁸

Drexel's demands slowed development of a modern parish school system. Blenk had few black parishes or pastors to build more of them. Establishing more parishes by recruiting more priests also required Blenk to overcome Josephite opposition to the introduction of other religious orders into their territory and black resistance to special ministers. The Josephites expected to receive jurisdiction to all black Catholics in the archdiocese of New Orleans and wanted to build more parishes. They immediately realized that St. Dominic, located in the city of Carrollton, was far from New Orleans' most dense black Catholic population in the French downtown sections. The Josephites had hoped that Gassler's idea of moving Annunciation away from its existing location near the railroad tracks and leaving the old structure for use by black Catholics would benefit their ministry. Annunciation parish was "the proper location" for a black Catholic church. But a parish for the Josephites in downtown New Orleans was not forthcoming and the hold-up was not of Drexel's making.¹⁹

After the treatment of black members in Mater Dolorosa parish, black Catholics in the downtown part of the city opposed Blenk's plans to allow the

¹⁸Drexel to Blenk, 10 March 1909; Drexel to Blenk, 23 March 1909, both in "Blessed Sacrament Sisters, (a) 12/27/1898-07/26/1917, Rel. Wom.," AANO; The Morning Star, 42 [04 December 1909]: 2.

¹⁹McCarthy to S. J. Kelly, 12 April 1909, 28-N-2, a-g, JFA; J. J. Albert to McCarthy, 29 March 1909, 28-K-1a-c, JFA.

Josephites to expand the separate parish system and to create "national" ethnic parishes. They did not want to be treated specially when Blenk had continually worked to suppress "national" parishes for whites. Universalism was at stake. Black members of St. Boniface, for example, wrote Blenk to oppose the appeals of their Benedictine pastors to make the parish a German ethnic parish. They proposed a change in the rules "governing the Parish limitations of this Church so as to include any nationality, besides the German, so that we, the major part of whom have been worshipping in this church for a number of years, and who have been educated and are having our children educated in the Parish school can have the privilege of having our children baptized and married and our dead buried from said church and not be compelled to go to another church some distance away." They asked "that you grant us the favor we are asking of you and make St. Boniface church a Parish Church to include residents of the immediate neighborhood of any nationality [German, French, and African American]." One of the petitioners, Edward J. Delery, wrote a more personal letter to the archbishop a year later because the first and a second petition had not evoked a response. Delery again asked that he be allowed the full privileges of a member of St. Boniface and offered four reasons. He resided two blocks from the church, he had been a member and pew renter "since 1882 (30 years)," all ten of his children had been baptized there, and he desired "to be buried there by the priest of and at that church" and no other. He graciously and formally made the appeal on his employer's letterhead, T. Lanaux' Sons, Sugar and Rice Factors, and attributed the bishop's previous lack of response to earlier appeals to being lost in the mail. The

archbishop never acknowledged the third appeal from displaced black members of St. Boniface who lost their membership solely for being dark-skinned.²⁰

The appeal had an effect and halted segregation for a time. In 1912, Blenk dropped the entire matter of ethnic parishes and boundaries in downtown New Orleans, where the dense intermixture of races and ethnic groups complicated any move to divide them. As a result, the Josephites did not receive additional parishes in the city as had been promised. Without introducing more black parishes Drexel withheld donating money to build schools. The process of segregating parishes to get a modern parish school system that began with such promise in 1909 stopped in New Orleans because of black resistance to racial segregation. To get schools, Blenk, the Josephites, and Drexel needed to interest black Catholics in the building of all-black parishes.

The task appeared difficult. Black support for the work of the Josephites was small. Although, their St. Dominic parish survived under the leadership of LeBeau, the parish even started a newspaper, the congregation struggled from lack of money. The membership received no support from white people, and the school suffered most. It only survived through the efforts of the Holy Family sisters. The congregation could not pay for general repairs on the church because, as LeBeau pointed out, the "families wash for a living, the men perform manual labor . . . prejudice prevents clerkship or waiter jobs." The Josephite community in Baltimore

²⁰Petition, c.1911, signed by Edw. J. Delery, R. L. Tureaud, and others [illegible] to Blenk; Edw. J. Delery to Blenk, 09 March 1912; both in "St. Boniface & Our Lady of Sacred Heart Church Correspondence, 1859-1917," AANO.

provided much of the funds to operate the church. The Josephites had greater success in the rural areas as they returned to Palmetto and Klotzville after migrants returned. In 1912, Blenk and diocesan priest W. J. Teurlings opened a separate black church in Lafayette, Louisiana, and wanted to turn it over to the Josephites. The Josephites stood to gain the Lafayette black ministry. Yet, the Josephites' primary hopes and desires remained to build churches in downtown New Orleans where black resistance stopped them.²¹

Between 1912 and 1914, despite setbacks, Blenk and his administration adhered to their program for modernizing Catholic education with parochial schools because the need for them was greater than ever. The boundary plan, the basis for a modern school system, had been sidetracked by congregations fearing changes in the make-up of their membership in downtown New Orleans. However, a greater obstacle, because it occurred throughout the archdiocese, was black members' attempt to counter the white supremacy that had been increasing. Black Catholics did not want to contribute any more to expanding white control by leaving the parishes. White supremacy had already contributed to the closing of traditional black parochial schools and an end to black baptisms. St. Francis de Sales in the city closed its black school in 1906, St. Vincent de Paul in 1910, and St. Louis Cathedral in 1914.

²¹St. Laurent to McCarthy, 03 November 1909, 28-S-2, JFA; LeBeau to McCarthy, 05 March 1911, 29-D-32a, JFA; LeBeau to Drexel, 21 November 1911; LeBeau to Drexel 22 January 1912; both in M.M.K.-10, Box 33, No.30, SBSA; The Colored Harvest, 6 [March 1912]: 158; LeBeau to McCarthy, 09 March 1912, 29-D-36, JFA; LeBeau to McCarthy, 11 March 1911, 29-D-33a-b, JFA; LeBeau to McCarthy, 03 June 1911, 29-D-34a-b, JFA; The Colored Harvest, 7 [October 1914]: 50.

Between 1906 and 1914 several white territorial parishes stopped baptizing blacks. The archbishop's chapel, called St. Mary's, halted black baptisms in 1908 after the church became the exclusive facility of Italians. Immaculate Conception in downtown New Orleans ceased black baptisms in 1912. White supremacy had increased in part because of the treatment of St. Katherine and St. Dominic as "national" parishes. The jurisdiction of black "national" parishes allowed diocesan pastors across the territory to ignore their responsibility to black members.²²

In 1914, Blenk and his administration saw a way of using the Josephite's enthusiasm for working downtown, stemming the erosion in black Catholic educational institutions as well as imposing boundaries on all of the parishes. Black Catholics needed to be persuaded of the hierarchies' position. Indeed, the support of ecclesiastical authorities and the cooperation of interracial parish pastors willing to shift their black members to priests exclusively devoted to blacks was not enough to segregate black Catholics from their parishes. Even when the pastor of Holy Name in Algiers, Father Larkin, repeatedly reported his desire to see a separate black parish for his black members, Blenk was not willing to push black members out of his parishes even though he saw a benefit in gaining parochial schools. The sticking point was that although blacks and Blenk agreed on the necessity of schools, finding the resources to obtain them was difficult. Drexel was willing but demanded exclusive ministers. To take advantage of such opportunities as presented by Father Larkin, the

²²St. Francis de Sales, St. Vincent de Paul, St. Louis Cathedral, St. Mary's (Archbishopric), and Immaculate Conception Annual Reports, AANO.

hierarchy concluded that the Josephites--experienced race-exclusive ministers present and anxious to expand in New Orleans but who were missionaries, not pastors or educators--needed to adjust their approach. Rather than the clergy pushing black members out, the Josephites needed to pull them away from the interracial congregations. Gassler, a Frenchman, longtime pastor in the city of New Orleans, now an official of the archdiocese, suggested that the key to overcoming black Catholic reluctance and distrust at being removed from their traditional parishes was to "start out with a school." The location of the parish church and school were just as important, Gassler added; the Josephites needed to be in downtown New Orleans where the Josephites had never had an institution. Gassler then warned that if the Josephites did not make progress, the archbishop had other orders of priest willing to try and who would also build schools. Blenk was determined to improve education and wanted to train more qualified black teachers to staff parochial schools but it was doubtful he could find other sufficient ministers than the Josephites. Blenk was convinced that his best chances were with the Josephites.²³

The hierarchy saw that St. Katherine's had survived as had St. Dominic, though barely. Black Catholic resistance to the hierarchies' dividing the races even as white supremacy threatened their place in the parishes prevented Blenk from making all of the parishes territorial. Black Catholics had previously compromised the universal ideal to get schools, and there was the antebellum tradition of segregated

²³Holy Name of Mary Annual Reports, AANO; Gassler to McCarthy, 10 September 1914; Gassler to Pastorelli, 11 September 1914; both in "Josephite Fathers Correspondence (a) 08/09/11-12/25/19," AANO.

education. Blenk made his attempt to divide the congregations a second priority and persuaded both Drexel and the Josephites to develop black secondary schools, operated independently of the parishes.

Drexel and the Josephites heeded Gassler's advice and applied it in New Orleans. Drexel would give the bulk of her money to a university for black Catholics. Josephite priests would teach at the school. She would also support two separate parishes: one under the Josephites, the other under the Holy Ghost. After a search for a location by her agents, she selected a spot in the uptown part of the city, near St. Dominic, and very distant from downtown black Catholics. She chose the site because the abandoned Southern University building met her needs for establishing a Catholic school of higher education and in that section of the city the English language was predominant--Drexel's nuns spoke English. Downtown Catholics still preferred French. Gassler's formula of schools first, brand new facilities, and convenience was only partially applied because Drexel and her agents avoided the heart of the city's black Catholic concentration. The building of a normal school and arrival of the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament with Josephites on the faculty was an important moment in the history of the archdiocese. Black Catholics could hardly resist Gassler's project because it entailed a Catholic college, which had been needed since the Congregationalist's built Straight. The opening of Xavier College laid the basis for the training of black teachers to be sent through south

Louisiana. Then, with the spread of parochial schools under black teachers, the segregation of parishes was expected to follow.²⁴

* * *

After 1915, black Catholic resistance to segregation in the Catholic Church dissipated, but not at all as planned by the authorities. Resistance to white supremacy in the interracial parishes, however, decreased because of the loss of the French language and the decline in the number of black Catholics. Although black Catholics desperately needed schools, the universal ideal was still cherished by many Catholics. By 1920, the ascendancy of English, migrations, and white supremacy, had taken their toll on the black faithful remaining in interracial congregations. The universal ideals advocates dwindled. The end of the use of French meant that the unifying factor of language was replaced in importance by the divisive factor of race. The migrations of blacks out of Louisiana, however, continued throughout the period from 1906 to 1920, and the effect on the Catholic territorial parishes was overwhelming. Black membership dropped as white membership increased. The effect already had a direct impact on separate parishes because it had allowed for Blenk and LeBeau to build St. Dominic. Later, during the years of World War I, many urban African Americans left southern Louisiana to find work in war factories of the Northeast, Mid-West, and West. Migrations continued to the West Coast after the war and increased during the Great Depression, as landlords and businesses laid off tenants and workers. During

²⁴Blenk to Eugene Phelan, Holy Ghost Fathers, 17 April 1915, M.M.K-10, Box 4, No.6, SBSA.

the migrations, on September 30, 1915, a hurricane destroyed numerous buildings, among them several major interracial churches. The destruction disarrayed some congregations who then chose not to rebuild with the same members. Blacks had left Louisiana after the natural disasters. With the loss of the little power their large numbers had given them, black parishioners who had not migrated or black Catholics who had migrated into Louisiana were removed from the traditional parishes and denied access to parochial schools.

The use of French, German, and Italian declined which resulted in the weakening of the traditional bonds between whites and blacks. At the time of the exodus of black parishioners because of the boll weevil, another social transformation occurred within the interracial parishes. The use of the French and German languages, which remained common in the archdiocese of New Orleans through the mid-1890s and early 1900s, had all but disappeared by 1910. The transition to English was nearly complete, except for elderly lay people and French priests who continued to speak and use French until the end of their lives. In 1909, upon his arrival in New Orleans to take over St. Dominic, LeBeau found the transition well underway. Even the poorest people, he reported, wanted to learn English. He communicated in the language of their choice, "of course English." Father B. L. Favard, reporting on his work along Bayou Lafourche, wrote that "it's wrong to think that people speak French altogether. . . . Services will be conducted in English." He explained that the people generally preferred English, but that the pastor refused to use it because after forty-eight years of service he was not about to change the

language of the church. In St. Peter's parish in Reserve, Louisiana, the death of the old French priest in 1908 meant that the records were henceforth kept in English. The transition to English met resistance that varied with the age of the congregants and pastors. The older members were more likely to maintain their first language. The youngest members of the Catholic parishes had begun to speak English, however.²⁵

In a study undertaken by the archdiocese in 1910 to determine the use of languages in ecclesiastical parishes, all locations reported the use of English, while only a few still conducted services in two languages. The nuns who responded to the study gave detailed reports on language use in the parishes. For example, in the ten parochial schools taught by the Sisters of Mercy in civil parishes spread out between New Orleans on the east and St. Martinville on the west, five of the schools taught French as a second language. They included Notre Dame and Holy Name, white parochial schools in the American sector of New Orleans; St. Joseph's, a white parochial school in Jeanerette; St. Martin's, a white parochial school; and St. Martin's black parochial school, in St. Martinville. The Sisters Marianites of Holy Cross operated four English-only schools in Algiers, Plaquemine, and New Orleans. The only school operated by the Marianites that even offered the option of French was located in Arnaudville. The Sisters of Perpetual Adoration reported that in their eleven parochial schools in southern Louisiana, half operated for black children.

²⁵Baudier, St. Francis de Sales, p. 27; LeBeau to McCarthy, 12 March 1909, 28-N-19,a&b, JFA; B. L. Favard to McCarthy, 27 September 1911, 27-K-3, JFA; Baudier, Church in Louisiana, p. 583; Baudier, One Hundred Years, p. 47.

French was taught only when requested. In one parish, St. Joseph's in Gretna, the pastor forbade the nuns to teach "either French or German in the Gretna Parochial Schools [black and white]." The black Holy Family Sisters reported that they maintained eleven black schools throughout the archdiocese. Sister M. Elizabeth stated that "French is taught only at the motherhouse, as a course In no school is French only taught." In a final example, the Sisters of St. Joseph reported that they had "no school conducted entirely in French." Even the possibility of language dividing congregations had passed after 1910.²⁶

The ascendancy of English removed traditional distinctions among Catholics in the archdiocese of New Orleans. After 1910, black and white Catholics no longer could be distinguished by their language and black Catholics were no longer divided by language. Race prevailed. The dark skinned Sicilians had entered the American world while African Americans, because their skin color, could not. In 1910, the Dillingham Commission, a U.S. congressional commission on immigration, reported that Sicilians in south Louisiana had been accepted by whites while blacks had not: "cooperatively the Italians have an advantage over the natives: if class consciousness has not been developed; there is at least a race consciousness which forms a basis from community consciousness and commercial cooperative endeavor." The Catholic

²⁶Report, "Parochial Schools taught by Sisters of Mercy," c. 1910; Report, "Parochial Schools under the direction of the Sisters Marianites of Holy Cross," c.1910; Report "The Parochial Schools in the diocese of New Orleans conducted by the Sisters of Perpetual Adoration, in which French is taught (to those who wish it)," c. 1910; Sr. Mary Elizabeth to Barbier, 21 January 1911; Sr. Mother Kathleen to Jeanmard, 23 January 1911; all in "School Reports 1910, (a) subject, " AANO.

hierarchy assisted in this process. In 1909, by removing black members from traditional interracial parishes and placing them into parishes with ministers who worked exclusively with African Americans, a race consciousness that had not been developed during the years of the use of the French language in universal churches certainly emerged in English speaking black and white parishes.²⁷

The use of English also gave former French-speaking black Catholics the freedom to move to other parts of the country as well as inside Louisiana where language differences could no longer inhibit them. The causes of black flight, however, had little to do with conditions in interracial parishes. Although motives for relocation varied, the first modern migrations occurred a few years into the twentieth century as the boll-weevil destroyed the cotton crops of rural Louisiana. Black Louisianians, as well as white, left the devastated areas for better lands in Oklahoma and Texas. Other waves of migrations from Louisiana occurred in 1912 and 1915. Black Catholics moved from downtown New Orleans upriver above the American sector and toward the city of Carrollton. For example, Sylvanie Williams, who had protested Janssens' attempt to build a segregated parish, had moved from downtown to uptown. It was in uptown New Orleans, as the area was called, that Southern University had been built and where Drexel utilized the former Southern buildings vacated in 1913 to create her university, to be named Xavier. In addition to the movement toward centers of education, flooding in the areas of Bayou Lafourche forced many African Americans to abandon their wet fields. In 1915, large numbers

²⁷Baiamonte, "Community Life," p. 376.

of African Americans migrated to Texas. The archbishop of Corpus Christie, Texas, requested assistance for an expected migration into his territory of "large numbers from Louisiana." The migrants often stopped in "hitherto unsettled parts of Texas." In Ames, Texas, the "colony" was composed entirely of black Catholics. The reported cause of the 1915 migration was the boll weevil and floods.²⁸

The migrations affected the urban ecclesiastical parishes as well as rural areas. In 1917, the European war became a world war with the entry of the United States. War industries needed workers. Many of the city of New Orleans' most skilled workers, those with a trade, took the opportunity to move North. They left in part because black skilled laborers had lost many of their job opportunities because of Jim Crow. Father Cuddy of St. Katherine's explained that black Catholics "complain of not being able to find work here [New Orleans] at their different trades. When the negro here had learned a trade he will not work at anything else and moreover the negro who has been brought up in the city will hardly ever go to the country for work unless for a short time. Some of those who went away say they will return for the Winter." Some did return and told their priest that "they did not find things as expected; the money was plenty, but the conditions poor." Most, however, did not return to Jim Crow New Orleans. The loss of skilled laborers struck at the core of the black Catholic community. For example, the president of the board of directors

²⁸The Colored Harvest, 4 [October 1910]: 10; The Colored Harvest, 6 [October 1912]: 197; Paul J. Nussbaum, Bishop of Corpus Christi to McCarthy, 23 February 1915, 67-K-15, JFA; The Colored Harvest, 9 [October 1915]: 5; Alberts, "Black Catholic Schools," pp. 89-91; membership book, St. John Berchman Willing Workers, 13 November 1919, "St. Louis Cathedral Correspondence," AANO.

of the Catholic Indigent Orphan Institute, which operated the Couvant School, the oldest black Catholic school in southern Louisiana, "resigned and left for Los Angeles" during this period.²⁹

Father John A. Clarke undertook a study of both why black Catholics migrated, and why they did not all return. One black Catholic told him that the African Americans from the rural parishes would not return because they "do not enjoy sufficient educational facilities." Another responded that "leaders of the race" only smiled with certitude "at those who accuse them of seeking social equality." Black Catholics sought not social equality but social justice. They objected not so much to "being Jim-Crowed in the street car" but "to poor, hard-worked mammy standing in the corner of the car, while there are many vacant seats for the 'white folks.' The white folk may move the screen when and where he wills; it means jail for the colored." In addition there was outrage over the lynching of African Americans: "the most recent disgraceful affair at Hammond, La.--the lynching of an imbecile woman resulted in no attempt on the part of the authorities to capture the murderers." The last response mentioned in Clarke's study was that black Catholics left and did not return to New Orleans because of "passing." The practice, in which light skinned, culturally and ancestrally African American people entered the white world for work, leisure, and frequently marriage, resulted in families being torn apart

²⁹Peter Cuddy to Jeanmard, 04 April 1917, "Miscellaneous-Mixed Correspondence," AANO; S. J. Kelly to Shaw, 07 January 1920, "Corpus Christi Parish Correspondence," AANO; see Board of Directors of the Catholic Indigent Orphan Institute, History of the Catholic Indigent Orphan Institute, Dauphine and Touro Streets (New Orleans: By the Board, 1916).

with members never acknowledging each other again. "Tis a pity--the 'almost whites,' with the refinement, the taste, the ambition of the white race--but colored in all the woeful conditions that surrounds the race,--ah, some cross the line," a black Catholic lamented, because "neither fish nor flesh, I know some families, indeed, whose lives are tragedies." Up North, individuals could escape the persecution of Jim Crow without having to turn their back on their families. Father Ph. L. Keller reported findings similar to Clarke, but added that another cause for the migrations was that "agitation in the press" that worsened race relations and Jim Crowism. The priests expressed hope that Catholic parishes in the North would accept their black brethren, but feared otherwise.³⁰

The railroad companies felt the heat of northern reaction first. T. F. Steele of the Southern Railway System urged the archbishop of New Orleans to use his influence to stop the migrations. The railroads had learned that African Americans "being lured by promise of higher wages" received only temporary advantage and that disappointments were already widespread. Steele wrote the archbishop that the executive officers of his company "discouraged the movement." Steele said that any efforts by the archbishop through his religious and charitable organizations would be an act of charity on behalf of the African Americans. But whether Steele and his executive officers really had blacks' best interest at heart was questionable. His request for assistance in stopping the migration seemed racist: the African American,

³⁰Clarke to Jeanmard, 09 May 1917, "Blessed Sacrament Correspondence," AANO; Jeanmard to Keller, 18 May 1917, "Miscellaneous-Mixed Correspondence," AANO.

he wrote, "were better off in south where he is known and where his labor will always be in demand . . . his habits and general demeanor is misunderstood in middle west and eastern mills." The black Catholics who migrated North were educated, skilled workers who were often light-skinned urbanites. Steele's contention that their habits and general demeanor were misunderstood was plain racism. The archdiocese expected as much and wanted to determine "if conditions are such as stated" in Steele's letter. After consulting with parish clergy, the archdiocese did not discover the conditions to be as Steele described them and did not instruct priests to urge an end to the migration. The administrator of the archdiocese advised the railroad to deal with individual priests if they wanted to pursue the matter. The migrations out of New Orleans to the North continued for the duration of the war, which ended by armistice on November 11, 1918.³¹

Migrations continued after the armistice, even in the face of a postwar depression. The interracial, rural St. Huberts parish in Garyville, along the Mississippi River, lost nearly two hundred black and white parishioners in 1919. The pastor reported the "exodus will continue as long as the sawmill is closed all or partially and the wages are very low (\$2.00) against a minimum of \$4.00 around the oil refineries in St. Charles [civil] parish." Adversity such as low wages affected other parts of rural southern Louisiana throughout the 1920s, and African Americans migrated out of the area. Along Bayou Lafourche, the Josephites lost most of the

³¹Steele to Jeanmard, 28 May 1917; copy of open letter from Jeanmard to Fathers of Archdiocese, 02 May 1917; Jeanmard to Steele, 02 May 1917; Steele to Jeanmard, 05 May 1917; all in "Miscellaneous-Mixed Correspondence," AANO.

members of their mission at Klotzville in 1923. A priest reported that "most people have left Klotzville for the North; and there is an exodus also from" his own town of Donaldsonville. Whatever the cause for migration, the movement of black Catholics from their native parishes while white members remained, weakened the black voice in the parishes.³²

The Great Migrations had removed thousands of black members from the interracial parishes in south Louisiana. For those that remained, maintaining their membership continued. It was a struggle to maintain interracialism, however. White support had been difficult to assess except when adherence of the hierarchy, clergy and white laity to interracialism was tested in September 1915. The un-named 1915 hurricane stressed how much affect white supremacy had on New Orleans black Catholic history. The effects of the use of English and black migrations became clear in the destructive wake of the hurricane.

Destroyed in the hurricane was the Couvant School, the legacy of Justine Couvant that had been operated under the auspices of the Catholic church by a black Catholic board of directors for nearly seventy-five years. To reopen it, black Catholics relied on the efforts of Katherine Drexel and the Sisters of Blessed Sacrament, who provided funds. Drexel's intervention brought attempts by the archbishop to obtain title to the property, a move that angered the independent-minded black Catholic committee who resisted his takeover. Many of the board members

³²St. Hubert Annual Reports, AANO; St. Laurent to Pastorelli, 18 June 1923, "Box Letters from Fathers," JFA.

migrated soon after America entered the war, which dealt a severe blow to attempts to preserve black Catholic control of the school. In addition to the Couvant school the hurricane completely destroyed Our Lady of the Sacred Heart parish church and heavily damaged St. Augustine, both the largest and most popular remaining racially-balanced congregations. The damage to churches ultimately effected far more than the loss of church buildings. In 1916, Blenk's attempts to suppress "national" parishes, the Benedictine's desire to possess a white-only parish, and black resistance collided in one final struggle to maintain interracial parishes.³³

Blenk used the destruction of the hurricane to suppress German St. Boniface and finally introduce the Josephites into downtown New Orleans, with its concentration of black Catholics. Both parishes had avoided the vicissitudes of the interracial parish history that plagued other interracial congregations. From its establishment by Perche in 1871, with several of the refugees from Maistre's schismatic congregation, Sacred Heart had been a model Catholic parish. The 5,000 member congregation shifted back and forth from black to white majorities throughout its history. As early as 1889, the congregation had built and supported good parochial

³³The Colored Harvest, 8 [January 1916]: 4; Chancellor of Archdiocese to H.H. Ahrens of Times Picayune, 03 August 1916, "St. Dominic Correspondence," AANO; LeBeau to McCarthy, 05 October 1915, 32-R-13, JFA; Board of Directors, History of Catholic Indigent Orphan Institute, p. 9; Paule Dominguez, president of Catholic Society for the Instruction of Indigent Orphans, to Shaw, 08 August 1920, "Holy Redeemer Correspondence," AANO. In 1944, the archdiocese took the title to the Couvant School property from the committee because the directors had disappeared years before. Josephites speculated that they migrated west in the 1910s-1920s. Rummel to Morrissey, 15 March 1944; and Morrissey to Rummel, 16 August 1944; both in "Holy Redeemer Correspondence," AANO.

schools for both its black and white children. During the fight against St. Katherine, many of the signers of the protest attended Sacred Heart and St. Augustine. In 1900, Sacred Heart's statistics revealed an increase in black baptisms but consistent white baptisms and constant school attendance figures. Prior to the hurricane, in sum, Sacred Heart had been a thriving interracial parish with a harmonious congregation whose schools met the satisfaction of the discriminative Blenk. Yet, after its destruction, the administration saw little need to rebuild Sacred Heart and its interracial congregation.³⁴

In 1916, the Benedictines appealed to Blenk that, with the destruction of Sacred Heart, the time had come to make their nearby interracial St. Boniface parish exclusively white. They argued that at St. Boniface they had spacious facilities but not enough members to fill them, in large part because they had cut off potentially half of their congregation when they stopped black baptisms fourteen years before. The Benedictines wanted to establish boundaries rather than remain a parish without limits. They also wanted to be relieved of their black members but still maintain their facilities in the downtown area of the city, where their prime location helped fund work in the rural areas. To give geographical boundaries to the Benedictines would force Blenk to dissect Sacred Heart's and Annunciation's territories, the resident

³⁴Our Lady of Sacred Heart Annual Reports, AANO.

territorial parishes. To facilitate the creation of new boundaries, the Benedictines pointed out, Blenk could "establish a distinct parish for the colored."³⁵

In the summer of 1916, Blenk acted quickly. Rather than rebuild Sacred Heart, he turned over the black members of both Sacred Heart and St. Augustine to the Josephites. Blenk then transferred, under the enactments of canon law, the boundaries of Sacred Heart to the Benedictines of St. Boniface parish. St. Boniface, the "national" parish, was suppressed, and the Benedictines kept the name of the territorial parish of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart. The Benedictines then physically removed the church building, formerly called St. Boniface, to a site within the territory of Sacred Heart, eleven blocks away. The site of the destroyed Sacred Heart church building was left abandoned. The Benedictines were delighted with the execution of the plan and potential of their new parish. In effect, the interracial congregation of Sacred Heart had been physically destroyed by the hurricane and its congregation sundered by Blenk. The sacramental records of African Americans from the defunct St. Boniface were physically removed to Corpus Christi, a new all-black parish. German records were removed to St. Ann, a territorial parish. The sacramental records of the destroyed interracial Sacred Heart remained with the new Sacred Heart; later the archbishop ordered the black sacramental records turned over to Corpus Christi. Also in the transfer, St. Ann ceded a block of wealthy white members from its territory in return for the white Germans. The descendants of

³⁵Paul Schaeuble, abbot of Benedictines, to Blenk, 23 June 1916, "St. Boniface & Our Lady of the Sacred Heart Church Correspondence, 1859-1917," AANO.

Germans who had traveled to St. Boniface from parishes other than Sacred Heart and St. Ann were to become members of their nearest territorial parish.³⁶

In the complicated transfer black Catholics lost their interracial parishes in addition to their churches. In reality, the Germans who were sent to St. Ann's had already attended there so the transfer was more official than anything else. The Benedictines finally received what they always desired, a white parish. The Josephites, practically overnight, obtained a parish in the midst of the largest concentration of black Catholics in the United States. They did it without having to build a single school! Many black Catholics attended Corpus Christi, and Drexel promised to send nuns to staff a parochial school. In addition, assistance would be provided for a grand church, to be designed and built by black Catholics. Some black Catholics did not acknowledge the church or the actions of Blenk. They attended interracial St. Ann's or continued their participation at Sacred Heart and St. Augustine parishes. Resistance had been minimal largely because of the migrations of the skilled black workers out of the city. Moreover, the momentum toward additional segregation was checked by the entry of the United States in World War One, which initiated an Americanization campaign against Germans that softened the reactions of

³⁶Blenk to Schaeuble, 24 June 1916, "St. Boniface & Our Lady of the Sacred Heart Correspondence, 1857-1917," AANO; Blenk to Drexel, 24 July 1916, M.M.K.-10, Box 6, No.25, SBSA; Decree of Blenk, September 1916; Blenk to Finney, 21 September 1916, both in "Corpus Christi Correspondence, 1916-1931," AANO; Gassler to Schaeuble, 05 January 1917, "St. Boniface and Our Lady of the Sacred Heart Correspondence, 1857-1917," AANO.

the German Benedictines to black attendance at their new parish, and Blenk's death.³⁷

The clergy and hierarchy's rapid and complicated drawing of the color line in the parishes of New Orleans caused by the destruction of the 1915 hurricane lost momentum by 1917. The German clergy only enjoyed their success for a few months because of World War One and suppression of German culture in New Orleans. Adherents to the universal ideal did not give up easily without extraordinary circumstances such as natural disasters to hurt them. After the war, the impetus to draw the color line continued with John Shaw and a new breed of diocesan clergy--no longer viewing themselves as missionaries--anxious to modernize the archdiocese's infrastructure to fit the pattern of archdioceses across the United States.

Blenk never saw the fruits of his work; he died in April of 1917. His successor, John Shaw, continued Blenk's program of establishing territorial parishes and building parochial schools. Shaw even convinced Hanrahan, the pastor of Sts. Peter and Paul, to accept boundaries. But building efforts had to be postponed in his first years as archbishop because of the country's participation in World War One. During the war, the rationing of materials halted any prospects for the Josephite's building more Catholic parishes. In addition to a shortage of materials, pastors opposed the Josephites' entry into their parish. For example, Father Chambon--an

³⁷Schaeuble to Blenk, 05 January 1917; Decree signed by Laval and Anselm Maenner, O.S.B., 26 January 1917; Laval to Marin, 04 December 1917; Badeaux to Schaeuble, 15 January 1917; all in "St. Boniface and Our Lady of Sacred Heart Correspondence, 1857-1917," AANO.

old-timer--of Ascension parish in Donaldsonville, rejected inquiries by the Josephites to work in his area: "it seems that the relations of the white and colored at present at Donaldsonville parish are very amicable and Father Chambon does not think it is yet time to establish a centre in Donaldsonville for colored work owing to the small number of colored Catholics in Donaldsonville." The amicable relations lasted for the duration of the war.³⁸

The black Catholics' loss of Sacred Heart was at first softened by their continued participation in St. Ann parish. After 1916, the year newly-ordained Francis Badeaux succeeded J. B. Bogaerts as pastor, the black Catholic membership of St. Ann amounted to 4,000 people, half of the congregation. With the destruction of the interracial congregation of Sacred Heart, Badeaux and his assistants could not keep up with the workload produced by new congregants, black and white. In June, 1918, he pointed out St. Katherine's was useless because black Catholics "live at a greater distance than ten blocks from the church of St. Catherine [sic], and as they will neither walk to that church nor pay car fare to reach it, they call upon the nearest clergy for nearly all of their confessions, sickcalls and funerals." Badeaux claimed that he could not adequately provide for the additional attendees without disrupting "white Catholics" at all masses on Sundays and Holy days. Badeaux wanted to turn away blacks "only presently baptized or later on received into the church" and serve

³⁸Chambon to Blenk, 06 September 1918, "Josephite Fathers Correspondence, (b), 08/09/1911-12/25/1919, rel. men.," AANO. For another view of the Catholic Church in Ascension civil parish, see the Charles Johnson study of black education in America undertaken in the late 1930s and early 1940s. Parish Ecological Profiles, Ascension Parish, Louisiana, 1941, pp. 6-15, Fisk University Archives.

only the long-time black parishioners (natives of New Orleans--Creoles). Badeaux presented a veiled attempt at white supremacy. The migrations of blacks (rather than whites) to New Orleans from rural areas who were looking for work posed a threat to even traditional race relations. Badeaux wanted to sell the Josephites all of St. Ann's parish facilities and build a brand new church at a site farther from the heavily black blocks and the nearer location for white parishioners.³⁹

Badeaux also wanted to get the best price for his existing parish facilities. The negotiations were private, of course, and black Catholic reaction was not considered. Father Bogaerts, the former pastor of St. Ann, complained to the archbishop about what he termed Badeaux's "quasi sacrilege," the attempt to relocate his parish seat nearer to white neighborhoods. Bogaerts gave several reasons for his disgust with the plan. He felt it unnecessary because black Catholics already had sufficient special churches; even if another church was needed, segregation "would create race friction." He felt the white members of St. Ann's would not support a new church, but rather "find their way to other churches." Bogaerts also pointed out that the church was recently renovated and could last another fifty years, so Badeaux had no complaints about inadequate facilities. Bogaerts concluded that the only success that awaited Badeaux if he moved St. Ann and segregated its black members was destruction of the parishes interracial heritage symbolized by the church and its shrine: "what I particularly dislike about the whole business is the intention and effort to trade away a sacred building, endeared to thousands of people white and black, inside and

³⁹Badeaux to Shaw, 05 June 1918, "St. Ann Correspondence," AANO.

outside of the parish." Bogaert's plea fell on deaf ears. From July 1918 to December 31, 1919, negotiations involving Bishop Shaw, Badeaux, the Josephites, and the Divine Word fathers continued. At first the Josephites failed to agree to Badeaux's price, arguing that the black Catholics of St. Ann should receive credit for their previous contributions to the buildings they would now use. Badeaux, in effect, wanted to make black members pay twice for the same buildings. In the face of Josephite intransigence, Shaw obtained a counteroffer from the Divine Word, who anxiously wanted a segregated parish in downtown New Orleans. The Josephites, unwilling to have the Divine Word fathers in "their" territory, then met Badeaux's demands. The new Josephite parish became St. Peter Claver.⁴⁰

The opening of St. Peter Claver caused the Josephite superior great anxiety. The project had not been made public until just days before its official opening in November. Nevertheless, black Catholic reaction was not negative, observed the Josephite pastor. Father St. Laurent reported that "the people are very anxious to have a school." In response, St. Laurent arranged with Drexel to receive some of her nuns to teach in the school. Of the black population in his territory, St. Laurent

⁴⁰Bogaerts to Shaw, c.1918, "Louisiana Colonization Bureau," AANO; Badeaux to Shaw, 11 June 1918; Pastorelli to Badeaux 01 July 1918; Badeaux to Shaw, 05 July 1918; all in "St. Ann Correspondence," AANO; Badeaux to Kellogg, 02 July 1918, 37-S-2, JFA; Badeaux to Pastorelli, 06 July 1918, 37-S-3, JFA; Pastorelli to Shaw, 16 July 1918; Pastorelli to Shaw, 31 August 1918; all in "Josephite Fathers Correspondence (c) 08/09/11-12/25/19, rel. men," AANO; Badeaux to Pastorelli, 10 January 1919, 37-S-7, JFA; Badeaux to Pastorelli, 12 September 1919, 37-S-8, JFA; Shaw to Pastorelli, 05 November 1919, "Josephite Fathers Correspondence (c) 08/09/11-12/25/19," AANO; Pastorelli to Shaw, 31 December 1919, "Josephite Correspondence, 1920-1932," AANO.

reported, "a big number" went "to other Catholic churches." He planned "to wean children from the schools they attend, and the parents from the churches they support." Neither St. Laurent nor Badeaux were happy with the arrangement because they both had expensive parishes and no way to control their membership. Rather than St. Peter Claver, many black Catholics attended the new St. Ann, and St. Peter struggled with heavy debt, unable to secure a large black congregation. The two priests wanted the archbishop to do something about the laity's attending any church they wanted, but the archbishop could not bar a Catholic from any Catholic church. As late as 1934, Badeaux still complained about the need to relocate. The costs of his new church was extravagant, \$110,000 expended at inflated post-war prices had to be repaid in a depressed economic climate; he had difficulty paying it off. Badeaux blamed African Americans: "for several years past a constantly increasing influx of Negro or colored families into the parish of St. Ann has been accompanied by an exodus of white families." The loss of white members undermined his ability to pay back his loan. To compensate, he asked the archbishop for white families from St. Rose de Lima parish to be incorporated into his parish. His plea fell on deaf ears this time. Shaw died in 1934, and his successor Joseph Rummel did not suffer fools gladly. He ignored Badeaux's constant appeals.⁴¹

⁴¹Patorelli to Shaw, 02 November 1920; St. Laurent to Shaw, 20 December 1920; census of St. Peter Claver, December 1920, all in "St. Peter Claver Correspondence, 1920-1962," AANO; The Colored Harvest, 9 [June 1921]: 3; Badeaux to Shaw, 08 March 1934; Congregation of St. Ann to Rummel, 07 October 1935; all Badeaux to Rummel, 17 April 1939; A. J. Bruening to Rummel, 11 May 1939; all in "St. Ann Correspondence," AANO; St. Laurent to Pastorelli, 22 May 1920, "Box Letters, St. Laurent Transcript," JFA.

African American unwillingness to support the Josephite parishes was a concern for the clergy because the money expended for St. Dominic, Blessed Sacrament, Corpus Christi, and St. Peter Claver had been borrowed and needed to be paid off. Pastors squabbled over black Catholics' attendance in the defacto white parishes. Often, signs in white parishes limited African Americans to the back aisle or along the wall, as in the St. Louis Cathedral. Frequently, pastors or ushers told African Americans to attend or to receive the sacraments in their own churches. The practice was too uneven and not backed by policy. Indeed, the archbishop instructed the Josephites that they were "to allow your people [African Americans] unrestricted liberty to confess wheresoever and to whomsoever they wish." Archbishop Shaw did not prevent African Americans from entering white churches. In addition to confession, some pastors were quite willing to accept money for sacraments from African Americans if whites were not inconvenienced. Only black membership in white congregations had been forbidden by parishioners and clergy.⁴²

Shaw and his successors had less control over the creation of parishes than any of their predecessors because the Vatican assumed control over the process. In 1918, the Vatican issued a new code of Canon Law that for the first time gave precise definition of a parish. In 1919, the Sacred Consistorial Congregation added further details. To be called a parish, four elements had to be present: (a) an appointed pastor, (b) a church or rectory, (c) certain territorial limits, and (d) a designated group

⁴²Shaw to Albert, 25 October 1919, "All Saints Correspondence," AANO; The Colored Harvest, 9 [October 1920]: 6.

of persons. Legal scholars argued that Canon 216 that defined the parish did not give canonical status to exclusively black parishes, but by inference black parishes were allowed for black Catholics because of terminology that parishes could be created for the "diversity of language or nationality of the faithful" or for merely family or personal purposes. The consensus of scholars had been that despite the fact black parishes had been erected in the United States, bishops could not legally require black Catholics to attend a segregated parish. The Code of Canon Law stated that the hearing of mass could be fulfilled by attending a mass celebrated in any Catholic rite, in the open air, or in any church or public semipublic oratory. Black Catholics could not be denied the freedom of attending any Catholic church.⁴³

* * *

Although not legally required to attend separate black parishes, most black Catholics joined the Josephites and sent their children to their schools. The out-migration of French descendants before and the in-migration of American descendants during the war shifted the make-up of black Catholic congregations and eased the acceptance of segregation. Even so, black Catholics criticized the loss of the universal ideal. In June, 1919, a long-time member of the former Sacred Heart parish expressed outrage that he had been turned out of church for a high mass and the door shut in his face for the "first time in my life." He was told that mass "is strickly [sic] for white and negroes are not admitted." The outraged black Catholic, who did not

⁴³Fichter, Dynamics of a City Church, p. 12; Harte, "Racial and National Parishes," pp. 168-169.

sign his name, asked how he could be blamed for having a "dark collar" when he was made that way by God. "Also if the church does it what then will the weeked [sic] men do out side I wonder" The priest should be ashamed, he claimed. "I think we are so badly treated that it is time that we should write to the Holy Father the Pope and let him know how the Catholic priests are treating us here and see what he will do for us not because we has [sic] these poor little Josephite churches only for colored that use should be doged [sic] about these poor Josephite Priests Church are not at all the same as the french church so I do not see why we should be foused [sic] to go there when we are in the old habit of going in the french church. When we were learning our Cathaism [sic] I learned that their was one God one Catholic church and I learned that God had created me to his likeness and his image and that I should like him love and serve him in which I am trying to do the best I can." If that were true, he could not understand how being turned away from mass and forced to attend a separate church served God. This long-time member of Sacred Heart posed questions left unanswered by Catholic doctrine. The clergy said white supremacy was just the way it was.⁴⁴

After 1920, universalism collapsed in New Orleans. Although both races attended the churches of their choice, they did not share parishes. Nor did parishes

⁴⁴unsigned to Shaw, 26 June 1919, "Sacred Heart Correspondence," AANO. St. Laurent wrote that he made an arrangement with the pastor of St. Augustine "that we will leave the people of color all the freedom they want to come and go." St. Laurent to Pastorelli, 08 November 1920, "Box Letters, St. Laurent transcript," JFA; Instructions for the Ushers and Pewholders, c. 1922, "St. Theresa Correspondence," AANO; Kelly to Shaw, 21 December 1921; Aensalm to Shaw, 29 December 1921; both in "Josephite Father Correspondence, 1920-1932," AANO.

any longer support parochial schools for black and white children. Blacks could not be parish members. The pew rent system had disappeared during the first two decades of the twentieth century only to be replaced by the "envelope system" in which parish members were given envelopes for contributions for each Sunday and Holy Day. Parish members signed up for parish membership and the envelopes were distributed personally. The pastor could exercise control of his membership just as easily with the envelopes as with pew rental.⁴⁵

Although parish membership had been revoked in many cases, black Catholics continued to attend mass at white churches and whites attended mass at black churches. A. J. Bell, a black Catholic migrant who settled in New Orleans and remained to become a renowned educator, had moved from St. Katherine parish to Blessed Sacrament in 1915. In 1920, he was glad that "our good white friends" occupied the black church at the six and eight o'clock Sunday masses and filled one-fourth of the seating capacity but was upset that "on several occasions our white friends who attend the church, that is especially set apart for the colored, have objected to colored people sitting in the pews with them and have frequently moved from pew to pew to avoid getting next to us, the colored people." Bell also expected the white attendees to contribute money to the church other than "pennies." Without a greater contribution it seemed unjust that "the white people come and sit any place they wish, notwithstanding that we are screened in nearly all the white Catholics churches in the city. Many of these churches have signs designating the place for the

⁴⁵Gremillon and Castelli, Emerging Parish, pp. 15-17.

colored." Black Catholics still attended mass at the original interracial churches. Years later, in his social study of parishes in New Orleans, Joseph Fichter revealed that about fourteen percent of black Catholics attended mass in "white parishes." In one parish, elderly black women made regular visits to the white parish and still claimed that the parish was "their parish church."⁴⁶

Nevertheless, interracial parishes declined in number, and few remained interracial after 1920. St. John the Baptist parish in Edgard, remained nearly two-thirds African American throughout the period and effectively maintained its expensive church. In 1935, Father E. D. Miller reported that his congregation consisted of 920 black members and 582 white members. Our Lady of the Lake parish in Mandeville, lost many of its black congregants, but throughout the period operated parochial schools for black and white members. St. Thomas parish in Pointe-a-la-Hache, reported membership fluctuations from 1,500 to 800 people between 1860 and 1934, yet black to white baptisms were consistently 2 to 1 throughout its history. Our Lady of the Most Holy Rosary in Taft maintained a 75 percent white population from 1890 to 1899, until the Italian population raised the white proportion of the congregation of the parish to 90 percent. As late as 1934, though, 10 percent of the membership was blacks. St. Peter parish in Reserve was a majority black parish until 1895, when the white population increased by 500 persons. The black population gradually declined to 30 percent by 1934; the church still maintained both a black and white

⁴⁶A. J. Bell to Shaw, 17 September 1920, Blessed Sacrament Correspondence," AANO; Fichter, Dynamics of a City Church, p. 233.

parochial school. At the turn of the century, all of these examples had been typical interracial territorial parishes; by the mid-1930s they were the few to survive. All were located in the rural areas of the archdiocese.⁴⁷

During World War One the transition from interracial parishes to white and black territorial parishes was virtually complete. Black Catholics united as language differences disappeared; so too did white Catholics. Over twenty-six interracial parishes in the archdiocese of New Orleans ceased performing black baptisms after 1915. After 1919, dozens of new parishes were built that never allowed black members. The Josephites would build more than fifteen black parishes. Segregating the biggest interracial congregations in the former French sections of New Orleans had been the last straw. Nothing stopped the progress of the dual territorial parish system.

* * *

The process of segregation never became easy for black Catholics. Although discrimination increased in the churches with the posting of signs, they still worried that the alternative of a separate parish would be worse. The facilities could be second class and the location could be unacceptable, as had happened when segregation came to Mater Dolorosa in New Orleans. Take the case of the efforts of Arthur Droesserts to build exclusive black facilities in the capital city of Louisiana, Baton Rouge, which took more than three years. In Baton Rouge, Father Arthur Drossaerts at St. Joseph's parish wanted to segregate his congregation; he asked the

⁴⁷St. John the Baptist, Edgard; Our Lady of the Lake; St. Thomas; Our Lady of the Most Holy Rosary; and St. Peter, Reserve Annual Reports, AANO.

Josephites to "take over our negro work in Baton Rouge." Drossaerts proposed building a new church for the white members of St. Joseph and St. Agnes parishes: the black members of both parishes would receive the old church of St. Agnes. Drossaerts was certain that he could find a suitable site for the new church and that he could convince the white congregation of St. Agnes to sell their church to the Josephites. The Josephites, however, could not afford Drossaerts deal so they turned to Drexel. She opposed a second-hand church and wanted to build a new black Catholic church and school on a lot that was convenient for them. In addition, she demanded that before she would commit resources to undertake the work, the black Catholics in the area would not only be accommodated, they would have to vote on it. She did not want any black resistance to her efforts.⁴⁸

Baton Rouge's black Catholics did express concern over the matter, although not enough to stop the process. The Josephites assured Drexel that "as to the opposition there is not anything in that. The few Creoles are [at] the bottom of it (and there not many of them). The Holy Family sisters (mostly Creole) are generally opposed to separation. We find that this sentiment don't [sic] amount to much in practice." Father Drossaerts reported that during a mass-meeting he polled the members of his parish about their stand on building a separate black parish: "not one was against the separate colored church [.]" To assure Drexel that the vote included

⁴⁸Transcribed letter on report of conditions from unidentified nun to Drexel, 30 April 1908, "Writings no.1027," SBSA; Arthur Drossaerts to McCarthy, 15 March 1916, 67-A-18, JFA; Drossaerts to McCarthy, 29 April 1916, 67-A-19, JFA; Drexel to McCarthy, 15 November 1916, 67-A-3, JFA; McCarthy to Drexel, 25 November 1916, M.M.K.-10, Box 30, No.33, SBSA.

the ballots of blacks as well as whites, he said that of the forty-six knights of St. Peter Claver, a black Catholic men's society founded in 1910, "only one is against the movement and he is one that lives close to St. Joseph's church." Drosserts dismissed the one negative vote because he did not think inconveniencing one man should stop the process. The segregation of parishes in Baton Rouge commenced in 1919 with the building of St. Francis Xavier, although war rationing prevented immediate construction. For black Catholics in Baton Rouge, like those in New Orleans, the attraction of a brand new school and church in a convenient location overcame any doubts about the dangers of segregation.⁴⁹

After the war, segregated parishes extended to the rural areas. The pattern had been for the Josephites to begin a separate black parishes by starting with a school (usually the black parochial of the interracial territorial parish). After they assumed control of the school, the Josephites attracted black members from the interracial parish by holding mass in the school structure. With the congregation developing through fellowship at the school, the Josephites and congregation built a church. After the church was built, black members no longer had need to attend mass with

⁴⁹Drossaerts to McCarthy, 01 December 1916, 67-A-28, JFA. Shaw reported that the first site selection drew opposition from black members because of its distance from "centre of colored" population. But, the opposition died out with the new location. Shaw to Pastorelli, 05 April 1919, 69-S-10, JFA; Shaw to Drexel, 09 July 1919, M.M.K.-10, Box 50, No.9, SBSA.

whites at the old territorial church. The spread of segregation, for good or bad, however, was complete.⁵⁰

* * *

The dual parish system in the archdiocese of New Orleans resulted from the collapse of the universal ideal that had been preserved since the antebellum period in interracial congregations. The segregation of more than 350,000 Catholics, of which a quarter were African American, in more than fifty parishes across south Louisiana occurred because of social forces. Only after economic decline and numerical decrease, particularly within their leadership, did black Catholics end their resistance. Black Catholics in south Louisiana did not want segregated racial churches. The black members that had requested a separate church in 1888 had done so out of a need for English-speaking services. By 1910, all parishes were English speaking, hence the chief need for segregation had been removed. Most white Catholics, who had achieved numerical supremacy by that time, wanted to be separate from blacks. In response, the clergy attempted to meet their demands. The majority of the laity, most of the clergy, and the archbishop combined to isolate black Catholics. Black Catholics themselves were willing to go along if they obtained better schools. To practice the Catholic faith required attendance at separate churches. Long term resistance accomplished much, even if it failed to prevent racial segregation. Black Catholics convinced the authorities that to keep them from joining the Protestant denominations,

⁵⁰The Colored Harvest, 9 [June 1919]: 2; The Colored Harvest 13 [July/August 1925]: 5-11; The Colored Harvest, 13 [September/October 1925]: 3-5.

schools would have to be provided. The Josephites, who were missionaries by training, became educators through the influence of Louisiana black Catholics. The order helped staff Xavier University and built an excellent high school for young black men, St. Augustine High School. Through education, quite often Catholic, black Catholics progressed through society to attain positions in law and government. Some of them led the legal fight that ended the white supremacist system that consigned them to separate churches in the first place.

EPILOGUE

After 1918, racial segregation in the parishes of Louisiana became more rigid as World War I removed traditional obstacles to the expansion of exclusively black and white facilities. During the war, all vestiges of the use of non-English mother tongues had been suppressed. With Germany an enemy of the United States, Louisiana's German Catholics were forced to choose between their German ancestry or their American homeland. Although the use of the German language had declined rapidly since the turn of the century--only after 1917 had Catholic churches not provided regular services in German--German ethnicity remained strong. By 1918, however, German Louisianians, frequently under pressure, had assimilated into American culture. Take the case of Holy Trinity parish, which had remained an English-speaking German ethnic parish until the adoption of boundaries converted it into a territorial parish. Although the geographical limits meant any person living within its territory became a member of the parish, the congregation opened its facilities to everyone--except black Catholics. It became not a German but a white church. The Josephites opened Holy Redeemer for the area's black Catholics. By 1919, as in the case of Holy Trinity, the social and governmental suppression of ethnicity strengthened racial segregation in New Orleans Catholicism.¹

¹William Robinson Konrad, "The Diminishing Influences of German Culture in New Orleans Life Since 1865," Louisiana Historical Quarterly 24 (January-October, 1941): 138-139; The Colored Harvest 9 [January, 1920]: 4; 9 [March, 1921]: 2.

The demographic character of south Louisiana's diocesan clergy, who had once ministered to interracial parishes and perpetuated the ethnic and language differences of the Catholic population, was also altered by the Great War. The German Empire's submarine campaign and wartime conditions in England, France, and Germany prevented European countries from providing clergy for the United States. The hardest hit diocese was New Orleans. In 1914, eighty-nine percent of the diocesan clergy were foreign born. The influx of new foreign priests virtually ended with the war. In 1920, Blenk's successor, Archbishop John Shaw, was compelled to build a seminary to provide native vocations to staff the parishes. The ascendancy of the English language and racial segregation no longer faced European cultural challenges, either through ancestry or directly from Europe. Native white Louisianians--blacks were not admitted--who entered the seminary brought with them American notions of white supremacy and were trained for work in a segregated archdiocese.²

While the remnants of traditional white support for interracial facilities had been undermined by World War I, the builders of segregated facilities, religious orders, faced no such handicaps. The Josephites, Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament, and Holy Family Sisters did not rely on Europe for vocations. They were able, therefore, to provide assistance when shortages of priests developed. Black resistance to segregation lessened as they, especially the Josephites, proved eager to help black Catholics. They built parochial schools and promised to provide a black Catholic high

²Josephite Missions 1 [June, 1917]: 328-347; Gremillon and Castelli, The Emerging Parish, pp. 22-23; Alberts, "Black Catholic Schools," pp. 93-98.

school. It took many years, however. Before undertaking the huge expense and commitment of building and staffing a secondary school in south Louisiana, the Josephites exercised their commitment to black education in their willingness to staff Xavier University and in training black priests. In 1954, the Josephites opened St. Augustine High School for young black men; it was located in the heart of New Orleans downtown section, the center of the black Catholic population for a century and a half.

In part as a result of the untiring efforts of the Josephites, Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament, The Holy Family Sisters, and the Holy Ghost Fathers, the strongest opponents of segregated black parishes, black Catholics reduced their resistance. In March, 1919, members of the exclusively black Corpus Christi parish dedicated a brand new church to replace the old house that since 1916 had been their place of worship. The Colored Harvest featured the opening of what was rapidly becoming the largest black Catholic parish in the United States. The writer noted the wide variety of support from African American men, in particular "a contingent of colored veterans of the civil war escorting the flag of the United States." The majority of black Catholics, the reporter explained, supported segregation. "A remarkable feature of the collection," he added, "was that it was not donated entirely by the members of the congregation. They did a noble part but were aided by colored all over the city, Protestants as well as Catholics." They all appreciated, he explained, "that a magnificent school is soon to be opened" Compared to the 1895 opening of St. Katherine, the festivities of bands announcing the arrival of many

"societies of colored men" testified to a new attitude among black Catholics of Louisiana. More segregated churches soon followed. During the summer of 1919 in New Orleans, the Josephites opened Holy Redeemer in the Marigny area and All Saints across the Mississippi River in Algiers. During the 1920s, the same order established new rural parishes in Bertrandville, Thibodeux, and Breaux Bridge, and staffed parochial schools for all of their parish churches. In the mid-1920s, however, exclusive activities slowed as black migrations in 1926 and again in 1927, following the flood that year, removed potential exclusive black parish members. By 1928, however, the Josephites opened another parish, St. Raymond, in Paillett Town in New Orleans. After 1929, the Great Depression stopped any further Josephite parish growth, but the Josephites had already shifted their attention from parish building to defending their racial policies on the national level.³

Ironically, as most of the Louisiana black Catholics adapted to the color line in their parishes, black Catholic leaders farther North began to criticize the Catholic church for its racially segregated facilities. The Northern criticism originated during the Great War, when the hierarchy in the United States founded the National Catholic War Council to provide welfare services for Catholic soldiers in much the same way that the Young Men's Christian Association furnished services for Protestant soldiers. The NCWC had to face the problem of serving black soldiers. One parish in New

³The Colored Harvest 9 [March, 1919]: 3-4; 9 [June, 1919]: 2-3; 9 [October, 1919]: 2-6; 9 [June, 1920]: 3-5; 9 [October, 1920]: 10; 11 [September/October, 1923]: 4; 14 [March/April, 1926]: 8-9; 15 [January/February, 1927]: 12; 15 [May/June, 1927]: 3; excerpt of article on St. Raymond's dedication from New Orleans Morning Star in The Colored Harvest 16 [January/February, 1928]: 13.

Orleans, Corpus Christi, alone had 232 men in the military. At first the NCWC simply ignored the black Catholic troops; later it set up separate shelters for the black troops, paralleling the YMCA's segregated facilities for black Protestants. These actions infuriated black Catholic leaders in the North and under the vigorous leadership of Thomas Wyatt Turner, challenged the hypocrisy of the Catholic Church. These black leaders, together with Jesuit priests William Markoe and John Lafarge, created a new organization, the Federated Colored Catholics, that raised issues such as why the Catholic church adopted Protestant practices and challenged the legality of separate racial parishes.⁴

The Josephites bore the brunt of the Federated Colored Catholic criticism. They responded to the criticism with a defense of their ministry published in 1929: The Catholic Church and the American Negro by Father John T. Gillard. Gillard outlined the work performed by the Josephites, particularly in Louisiana, and defended the need for separate facilities in the American South:

While no one more than these priests [Josephites] desire to see obliterated all 'color lines' in church matters, yet, because of prevailing social prejudices which they are almost powerless to repress, they find themselves accused of treason to a race the soul of which they choose to save in preference to its social status.

⁴The Colored Harvest 9 [June, 1919]: 3; Marilyn Weizke Nickels, "The Federated Colored Catholics: A Study of Three Varied Perspectives of Racial Justice as Represented by John Lafarge, William Markoe, and Thomas Wyatt Turner" (PhD. dissertation, The Catholic University of America, 1975), pp. 31-49; Ochs, Desegregating the Altar, pp. 365-366.

Gillard concluded with recommendations for the expansion of Catholic activities in the "negro apostolate."⁵

Criticism of the loss of the universal ideal, however, did not lead to a unity of die hard black Catholic anti-segregationists in south Louisiana with the Federated Colored Catholics. The Federated Colored Catholics were too late to alter the trend toward segregated parishes in the archdiocese of New Orleans. Since 1888, black Catholics of Louisiana had been fighting the battle for the universal ideal and recognized that the Josephites or diocesan clergy were not their opponents, but that the local hierarchy and white laity were. In his 1937 master's thesis at Xavier University, Charles Rousseve, a black Catholic and descendent of leaders involved in the St. Katherine's struggle, traced the history of black Louisianians. Similar to Desdune's Our People and Our History, Rousseve's The Negro in Louisiana: Aspects of His History and His Literature stressed black accomplishment, black pride, and black belief in interracialism. One of Rousseve's themes was the bitterness black Catholics felt toward the forces of segregation in the Catholic parishes. He praised the Josephites, particularly the director of his thesis, Josephite Father Edward Murphy at Xavier University. But these black voices of dissent were decreasing in number. Divisions in the black Catholic community once rooted in the use of language, French

⁵Gillard, The Catholic Church and the American Negro, pp. "Preface," 68-76, 284-289.

and English, had been transformed into philosophical divisions over the acceptance or rejection of segregated parishes in which English predominated.⁶

New Orleans Catholic opponents of the new segregated system developed their own civil rights organization, the Catholic Committee of the South. Founded in 1939, the CCS united black and white clerical and lay Catholics to effect "social change in the modern South through the use of religious principles"--in other words, a return to the old universal ideal. The biggest social change the CCS envisioned was racial desegregation. The CCS could, "lay the foundations for later efforts" and develop leaders to help form the vanguard of the civil rights struggle. The CCS, however, never had the power to desegregate the Catholic Churches in the South. Only the southern bishops, with Vatican approval, had that authority.⁷

The successor to John Shaw, Archbishop Joseph Rummel, used his authority to desegregate Catholic Churches. Rummel presided over the desegregation of the archdiocese of New Orleans Catholic churches and schools during his thirty year tenure from 1934 to 1962. Faced with the task of dealing with issues in the archdioceses' parishes that dated to 1861, Rummel took his time. "There is always something fascinating about the history of a Catholic parish," Rummel observed in the late 1940s about a parish in south Louisiana. "Usually modest and humble in its

⁶See Charles Barthelemy Rousseve, The Negro in Louisiana: Aspects of His History and His Literature (New Orleans: Xavier University Press, 1937).

⁷Katharine Ann Martensen, "Race, Religion, and Social Action: The Catholic Committee of the South, 1936-1956," The Catholic Historical Review 68 (April, 1982): 249-267; see John T. Gillard, Colored Catholics in the United States (Baltimore: Josephite Press, 1941).

beginnings. it grows larger, more dignified and more efficient with the years. It is almost human in its development, and quite understandingly so, for it is composed of vibrant human beings and is intimately influenced by their genius, their moods, and their fortunes. Equally true is it that a parish reflects the conditions, civic, social, economic, as well as religious, that prevail at various stages of its existence and development." Rummel waited for an opportune time to combine the will of the people with the stage of existence in history in the parishes. The story of the desegregation of the churches in 1950, as well as the story of the desegregation of the parochial schools in 1962, both lie beyond the limits of the present study.⁸

On the surface an interesting pattern appears. After 1920, the Louisiana Catholic parishes reflected the racial segregation of the United States and legal segregation of the American South that in turn created a black and white Catholicism. Rummel's statement was accurate for only a few decades, however. In the 1950s and 1960s, as Americans moved to integrate the races in the public arena, Catholics in the white and black parishes refused to abolish or consolidate their racial parishes. Parishioners of the exclusively black parishes created in the early twentieth century did not want to destroy the black institutions, churches, and schools; members of the white parishes expected their institutions to remain as well. Therefore, black Catholics resisted the well-meaning support of civil rights activists. Desegregation, in the minds of most black Catholics, served to deprive them of "national"-type parishes before black members were or wanted to be integrated into white American

⁸Gremillon and Castelli, The Emerging Parish, pp. 10, 18.

society. In contrast to the "national" language parishes of the nineteenth century that assimilated European immigrants into American society, New Orleans racial parishes of the twentieth century had kept Catholics apart and encouraged blacks as well as whites to perpetuate that separation.

Except for a brief period in the middle of the twentieth century, however, the Catholic parishes had brought the races together and offered a stark contrast to the social conditions in the rest of American society. Before 1920, black Catholics and diocesan clergy worked to keep the races together. Black members had resisted the segregation of Catholic parishes because they did not want to be isolated from American society. During the period from 1888 to 1920, black Catholics remained in the territorial parishes rather than build and maintain African American "national" parishes. Apart from the concern about a further loss in status in society, black Catholics wanted to maintain the tradition of their ancestors--universal worship. Resistance eventually dissipated, however. African American "national" parishes allowed blacks a separate but equal parish, with both a church and school, in the South. After 1920, the harsh racial environment pushed Catholics to postpone indefinitely the universal ideal in south Louisiana. For much of its history, however, the parishes in south Louisiana had reflected the Catholic ideal of universal worship and achieved greater interracial cooperation than the American South and North as a whole.

The origins of the all-black parish came from pressures outside of south Louisiana but its components were present from the establishment of the Church in

Louisiana. As early as 1727, the Ursuline nuns had segregated their students according to social status. Although the girls were taught in the same school by the same teachers, upperclass white girls received instruction apart from Native American and African American pupils. In the 1830s and 1840s, separate education expanded when black nuns taught black children and black schools catered to black children. Few whites sought education from the black sponsored facilities. Indeed, the schools of the Holy Family Sisters and the Couvant school became the basis for all-black parishes in the twentieth century. Mater Dolorosa's black school became the parochial school of St. Dominic in 1909 and Holy Redeemer adopted the Couvant school as its parochial school in the 1920s. The work of the Ursulines was also eventually undertaken by the Holy Family Sisters.

Together with the tradition of separate education, the actions of Irish and Germans to remove themselves from interracial facilities was a source of all-black parishes. Establishing an Irish congregation and a German congregation was making an all-white congregation. In 1861, the hierarchies' recognition of all-white parishes together with the support for Confederacy awakened black fears that white Catholics had a limited commitment to the universal ideal. Subordination of enslaved Catholics and harsh white reaction to emancipation confirmed doubts about white adherence to the universal ideal, so its achievement remained with black Catholics. Hundreds of blacks separated from the white parishes because of the inability of whites to practice church doctrine. Giving up on interracialism was too great a compromise. When national church authorities wanted to separate blacks and whites, blacks and whites

united to preserve their interracial practices. This resistance to segregation, perhaps the most outstanding example of the universal ideal after interracial worship, lasted for decades.

Resistance to segregation ended for most black and white Catholics, except for group of activists, when they assimilated into American society. By 1910, the use of French had disappeared, as had German and to some extent Italian. Black Catholics migrated to other regions of the country. The color line had been drawn and whites were supreme. To practice Catholicism became difficult as whites isolated black members and discriminated against them. A white Catholicism emerged from the interracial congregations. Blacks soon found it difficult to obtain Catholic education. Catholicism among African Americans became a concern of the authorities. The Holy Family Sisters, Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament, Josephites, Holy Ghost Fathers, and, on a more modest scale, other religious orders worked to keep blacks in the Church. With the disappearance of interracial worship and resistance to the color line, Catholic officials relied on the tradition of separate education--paradoxically an element of the old universal ideal--to maintain the faith among African Americans in south Louisiana. Provided with parochial schools and Xavier University, clergy and black Catholics created all-black parishes. Soon, the strength of faith that maintained interracialism for two centuries created a black Catholicism that rivaled and surpassed its white companion. By 1920, the universal ideal of one Catholicism, rather than a black and white branch, passed into history.

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VITA

Born and raised in New Orleans, the author attended Catholic schools through the twelfth grade. Upon graduation from Jesuit High School in the city, he attended Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge. The first college history class he took at LSU was taught by Gaines Foster, who later chaired the committee for this dissertation. With a bachelors degree in history, Mr. Alberts enrolled in the graduate school at the University of New Orleans. Joseph Logsdon, Jerah Johnson, and Raphael Cassimere directed his thesis on black Catholic schools. In 1990, he commenced doctoral studies at LSU and completed general exams in late 1993. From 1994 research, writing, and completion of this dissertation was done while working as a legal assistant at a New Orleans law firm.

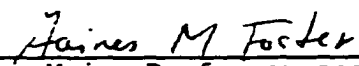
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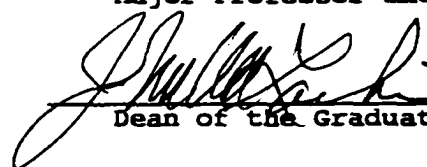
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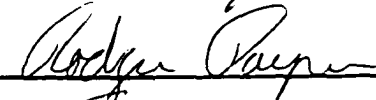
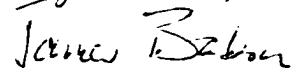
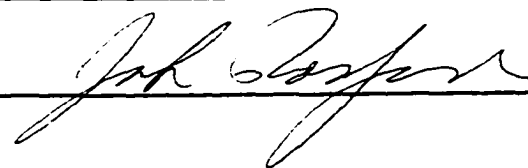
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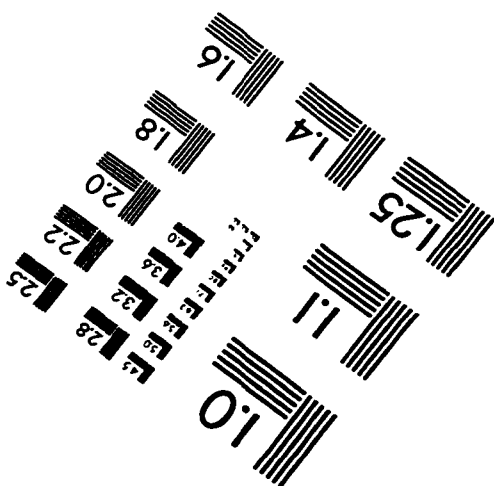
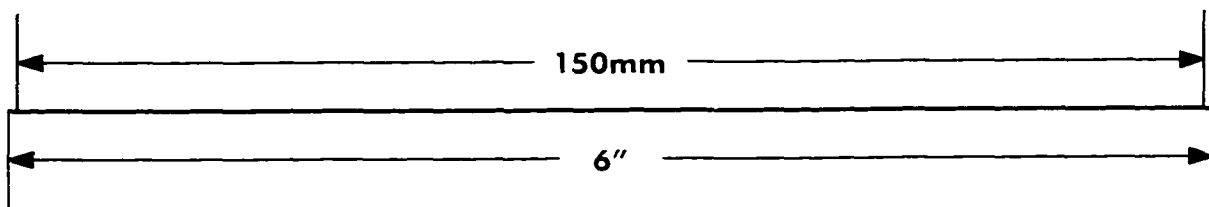
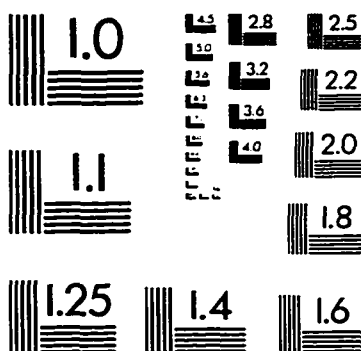
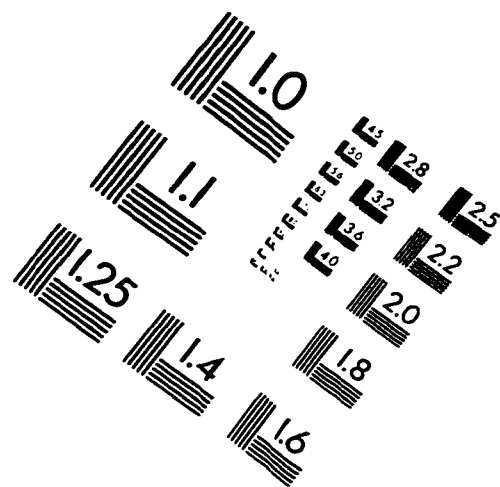
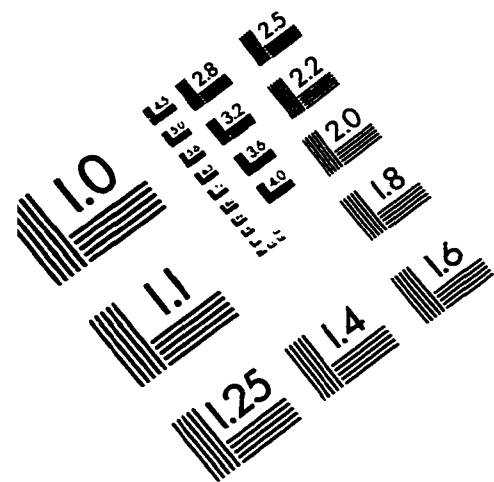
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