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February 22, 1994

The year 1995 marks the hundredth anniversary of the presence of the Assumptionists in North America. This Centenary celebration allows us to pause and reflect on the quality and effectiveness of our ministry in the past in order to prepare for the future. This reflection is more necessary than ever because the prevailing culture militates against religious life as we have known it. We must seek new ways to respond to the different needs of our brothers and sisters in today's society.

Our past anchors our future. Our predecessors labored with zeal, foresight, dedication and a great love for Christ. Their desire to work for the extension of God's Kingdom urged them on to great effort and sacrifice. Throughout it all they maintained their concern for preparing young men and women for the priesthood and the religious life.

Today we strive to imitate these qualities of our precursors, but we must look in new directions because the needs of our society and church have changed. Our past serves as a springboard to the future on the conditions that we courageously abandon what no longer adequately serves the Kingdom and that we seek new means of proclaiming the Good News in a post-modern world.

This history of the North American Province serves as an excellent tool to relive our past and to envision our future. Fr Henry Moquin, a.a. began this work and Fr. Richard Richards, a.a. completed it. We owe them both a debt of gratitude for their research and dedication in making our story known to us.

In the name of the Province I also express our gratitude to Miss Mary Richards, whose generous contribution has helped subsidize most of the cost of this publication.

This year provides us with the occasion to praise and thank our Father in Heaven for the many blessings he has showered on us. The words of our father St. Augustine express beautifully the humility and thankfulness which should be ours on this occasion: "Brothers and sisters dwell together in unity not by their own strength or their own merits but by God's grace, like dew from heaven. This dew comes from Christ. All you who wish to dwell in unity, desire this dew and be moistened by it. Otherwise you cannot hold firm what you profess."

May we all rejoice in our past while we re-dedicate ourselves to Christ and His Church as Assumptionists and Sons of Fr. d'Alzon!

*Roland O Guilmain, a.a.*

Roland O. Guilmain, a.a. Provincial

**ASSUMPTIONISTS**

*In The United States*



## 1. Background: In France and Australia



The implantation of a religious congregation in a country, especially when that country is far distant from its home ground, often comes from a series of preparatory steps, each minor in value but weighty in ultimate consequences. Moreover, human events have a way of intertwining so that it is often difficult to have them fall into separate and neatly defined categories. Such is true of the Assumptionist foundations in the United States.

Father d'Alzon, as early as 1848, striving to obtain more freedom for Catholic education in France at a moment when the State was establishing a monopoly in this field, asked for liberty "as it exists in the United States." In 1868, in a talk to a group of Catholic workers in Nîmes, France, at a moment when Catholic groups saw in democracy as practiced in France a threat to religious freedom, Fr. d'Alzon bluntly stated that he saw no reason why the Church could not get along with a democracy. Later, at Vatican I, he met many American bishops and was further convinced on this point. These views became doubly impressive when, in 1880, the French Republic confiscated the residences of the Assumptionists and forbade the religious to form communities. Fr. François Picard, who had become Superior General when Fr. d'Alzon died in November, 1880, was forced to find shelter for his religious, in abandoned monasteries beyond the frontiers of France. Some were assigned to the Near East to reinforce building missions there; some went to Spain, to Belgium, or to Italy. Thus a fortuitous event gave to the small band of Assumptionists, especially its younger members, an occasion to come into contact with different cultures and to learn foreign languages. It might be noted that at the time of the Founder's death the Congregation consisted of 28 professed priests, 15 choir brothers, and 20 novices. The "exile" to Spain, as it was called by the novices, produced immediate results and prepared the way for missionary foundations in South America and the United States, by permitting the younger Assumptionists to learn Spanish. It even attracted a few Spaniards to the congregation.

A second line of converging events: early in his priestly life, Fr. d'Alzon, like many other apostles of his generation, became interested in

the possible return to the Catholic fold of members of the Anglican church. Of the Assumption family, communities of Sisters were the first to cross the English Channel. In 1850, the Religious of the Assumption, whose foundress, Mother Marie-Eugénie de Jesus, had been in communication with Fr. d'Alzon since 1838, established their first community in England.

Another converging line can be found in Father James Quinn, an Irish mission-minded priest whose letters to Mother Marie Eugénie seem to indicate that he had more than a passing knowledge of Assumption.

Events that were to merge these lines and determine the eventual activities of the Assumptionists in the United States were apparently insignificant. At Nîmes, Assumption College was, from its inception, in financial straits. Fr. d'Alzon was attracted by Paris, where his many friends had repeatedly urged him to undertake some educational activity. He also hoped to find there some vocations for his budding congregation. He was encouraged on this point by Mother Marie-Eugénie to whose community many upper-class candidates were coming. Another reason was the need for the Assumptionists to establish a second religious community in a different diocese and thus become less vulnerable to the whims of any one bishop.

In October, 1851, not far from the Arch of Triumph at the head of the Champs-Élysées, a small college was opened with six students and eight teachers, three of whom were Assumptionists. At year's end, there were 12 boarders and three part-time students, all from the upper class. Fr. Charles Laurent, Superior and Director of the college, succeeded so well despite cramped quarters that for the second year the enrollment reached 30, all boarders, since day students were not accepted. Because the locale was insufficient and allowed no room for expansion, Fr. Laurent sought more adequate and comfortable quarters. Fr. d'Alzon now became the recipient of a multitude of opinions and advice concerning a new location for the college. The Religious of the Assumption wished to be close to the new locale and Fr. d'Alzon agreed. Friends proposed locations in all quarters of Paris. Finally Fr. Laurent found the desired spot. The mayor of Melun owned in Clichy a large château on twenty acres bordering the Seine. It had been the hunting lodge of Henry IV. Letters and telegrams flashed between Paris and Nîmes. After two hectic weeks, the property was purchased on April 16, 1853. The families of the students visited the new locale on the outskirts of Paris and found it to their liking.

Needed furnishings would be obtained easily by means of a loan. The 12,000 francs originally paid for the rental of the small buildings in Paris would now become the interest payment for the loan. Enrollment immediately increased: by 1855 there were 90 boarders. But the college

of Clichy was to exist for only nine years; it was beset from the origin by internal and external difficulties. The Superior increased admission requirements in intellectual ability and individual conduct. This reduced the student body to an average of 60. This aggravated the financial difficulties. To reduce the debt, some of the land surrounding the château was sold, leaving the main building with some seven acres to cover the remaining debts of \$8,000. There remained the nagging belief that the institution really had no prospects of success. Fr. d'Alzon, showered by complaints, ordered the institution to close in August, 1860, at the end of the scholastic term, much to the surprise and consternation of the religious staff which entertained high hopes of success.

To abate their qualms, the possibility of distant missionary foundations which they had proposed was accepted. Even Fr. Paul-Elphege Tissot, then aged 60, asked for and obtained permission to become a missionary among the Maoris of Australia. After decades as professor of Latin, he expressed his yearning for distant missions "because the yoke of religious obedience imposed limitations upon his horizons." Fr. Rene Cusse, while in the maelstrom of the Clichy difficulties, had written: "I feel inclined to abandon my present post and to seek either absolute solitude or to sail for a distant foreign missionary field." Fr. Henri Brun simply stated that he was ready to board the first ship that sailed with a missionary contingent. Of these three, Fr. Cusse was given to violent outbreaks of temper, possibly because he suffered from tuberculosis. This would seem to have excluded any apostolate requiring vigorous physical effort. At any rate, Fr. d'Alzon, despite a temptation to grant a request that would place great distance between him and these temper tantrums, hesitated to allow him to depart for a foreign mission.

But such dispositions made for easy accommodations between Fr. d'Alzon and James Quinn who was now Bishop of Brisbane, Australia. Late in 1859, the Australian mission was accepted in principle but difficulties soon arose. Bishop Quinn wanted men who would remain under his jurisdiction like secular priests. Fr. d'Alzon wished his men to remain religious. By July, 1860, the talks had broken off and the mission effort seemed doomed. In fact Fr. d'Alzon wrote at that time: "I am happy to break off the discussion which would have made us too dependent upon Bishop Quinn."

Still, the volunteers for Australia insisted upon the mission. Talks were resumed, with the Bishop still refusing to accept any terms which would limit his authority over any missionary assigned to him. On November 19, 1860, a contract was signed which was to be the source of much dissatisfaction. Here are its clauses:

- 1) The Assumptionists at Brisbane will be there under the same conditions as the other missionaries and will abide by the rules set down by the Bishop.
- 2) The Bishop will be their Superior during the first ten years, but they will always be free to write to Europe.
- 3) Will be sent only choice candidates who intend to remain in the diocese during their lifetime. They can be dismissed at the request of the Bishop. If they do not ask to depart, they will be recalled only for the good of the Diocese and at the request of the Bishop.
- 4) As soon as he can, the Bishop will allow the erection of a canonical religious residence which will become the property of the religious, and thereafter they will fall under the canons that rule convents established in foreign missions.

It was believed that the fourth clause would eventually cancel the harshness of the others. In fact the Bishop never did establish a religious house and community, despite repeated pleas from the Assumptionists working for him. It seems that he had never really intended to do so. While in London, Fr. Brun had discussed at some length the contract with Bishop Quinn. Fr. Brun states in his diary that Fr. d'Alzon, in a letter to him, had stated that the religious would be under obedience to the Bishop only at the beginning. After that, the Bishop would grant a canonical religious house. But Fr. Brun states that the Bishop in his conversation did not agree with this interpretation. The diary also mentions that Fr. d'Alzon had mentioned to Fr. Cusse a waiting period of 18 to 24 months. The Bishop, according to Fr. Brun, had in mind a period of at least ten years.

First to leave for Australia were Fathers Tissot and Cusse accompanied by a Spanish lay-brother, Francis de Sales Gavette. With Bishop Quinn, they left Liverpool on December 7, 1860, aboard the sailing vessel *Donald MacKay* loaded with immigrants, mostly Irish. The voyage of nearly 100 days was followed by a 20-day quarantine at Port Philip near Melbourne. From there, Fr. Cusse accompanied the Bishop to the various mission centers. After thirteen months of such visits and much time spent at the Bishop's residence, Fr. Cusse broke with Bp. Quinn and offered his services to the diocese of Sydney. He wished to remain attached to the Assumptionists, but Fr. d'Alzon saw this move in another light and had him expelled from the Congregation at the General Chapter of 1862. Fr. Cusse worked for the Bishop of Sydney until his death on September 6, 1866, beloved by all.

Fr. Tissot and Brother Francis stayed at Brisbane with the Bishop some four months before being assigned to a mission late in July, 1861.

This first Assumptionist mission at Maryborough, located some 130 miles from Brisbane, had never had a resident priest. Fr. Tissot remained fifteen years in Australia, until August 15, 1875, when he returned to Nîmes.

After the closing of the college of Clichy, Fr. Henri Brun was assigned as chaplain to the second convent opened by the Religious of the Assumption, in London. He lived there from October, 1860 until March, 1862, dutifully studying English in preparation for Australia. While he was in London, some thought was given to establishing an Assumptionist mission in England, but lack of available personnel prevented it. Incidentally, Fr. Brun would have accepted such an assignment, but it was never offered to him.

On page 124 of Fr. Brun's diary, this note is found, along with a map: "Propositions made by the Archbishop of New Orleans [Most Rev. Jean Marie Odin] to Fr. H. Brun at the convent of the Vincentian Fathers in Dublin, October 18, 1862.

M  
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i           [+] ST. MICHAEL'S PARISH CHURCH  
P                   with rectory & garden  
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R.           O SECOND ANNEX

Conditions:

- 1) Two priests at first. A third within a year.
- 2) Become chaplain of the Sacred Heart nuns.  
Salary \$50 a month.
- 3) Serve the two annexes each about 10 miles from the parish church.
- 4) The Bishop says that the net income from these three chapels reaches some \$5,000. We could send half to the novitiate.

The Congregation will have its canonical house

immediately. The Church of St. Michael would be under the direction of the Fathers for as long as they wished to stay.

Possibility of establishing a Missionary community whenever we are ready.

The Bishop will pay for all the traveling expenses of the first two priests and the brothers who would accompany them.

All mass stipends go to the missionaries.

The Bishop retains 5% of the gross revenue of the Mission.

For the time being, the Archbishop would be satisfied with one priest, provided we promise to send him a second as soon as possible, and eventually a third. Such is the note read and accepted by the Bishop who, despite my telling him that this was impossible, insisted that I write to Fr. d'Alzon and who went himself to Paris to press his request upon our Fathers."

In the light of what we shall mention later on, this is a very interesting document, and we can wonder what would have happened if the Assumptionists had been able to accept this proposal. So we find Fr. Brun in London or in Dublin from 1860 until 1862, learning English and making contacts, especially in Dublin, with many people and even bishops interested in the missionary effort of the Church in Australia. Fired by his zeal to serve in Australia, he repeatedly wrote to Fr. d'Alzon asking for permission to follow Fathers Tissot and Cusse to Australia.

He finally sailed for Australia aboard the *Golden City* on December 13, 1862, accompanied by Brother Polycarpe Hudry. He arrived in Brisbane 84 days later, on March 7, 1863; the passage was considered a speed record. On August 8, he was assigned to Ipswich, several hundred miles away from Fr. Tissot at Maryborough. Both priests frequently asked permission to live and work together as a religious community. All their petitions and complaints were ignored. Their attempt to purchase a small plot of land to later establish an Assumptionist community was stymied by the Bishop. Yet, Fr. d'Alzon insisted that they abide by the terms of the contract.

Fr. Brun and Fr. Tissot were held in some esteem by the Bishop since both were named Deans in 1869, when there were only four deans in the entire diocese. They became members of the Bishop's Council, and Fr. Brun was named Secretary of the diocesan Synod. Fr. Brun left Melbourne for France on May 15, 1873, after the ten long years foreseen

in the contract, never dreaming that Australia had prepared him as an ideal candidate to open an Assumptionist mission in the United States.

Another converging line of events originated in 1889. During this year, Fr. François Picard received requests from various bishops and archbishops for foundations in Santiago, Chile; in Halifax to give spiritual aid to French fishermen; in New York City where the Little Sisters of the Assumption would continue their apostolate; in Louisiana, to take up the work of Fr. François Renaudier. On August 25, 1889, Fr. Picard wrote to Fr. Romanet, his Procurator in Rome: “In our century of revolution, a house in South America is not to be disdained and that a foundation in the United States would be desirable.” The very next year witnessed the departure of ten Assumptionists for Santiago.



## 2. The Louisiana Mission



The two earliest foundations in the United States were brought about by events that originated at about the same time. Father Henri Halluin, an Assumptionist, was the Director of a boys' orphanage in Arras, France. One of his goals was to find good openings for the boys leaving the institution. Knowing of the opportunities offered to immigrants in the United States, he contacted Father Pillain, a diocesan director in charge of helping French immigrants headed for North America. Fr. Pillain was well acquainted with Assumption and its activities since he had traveled several times with the Fathers on their pilgrimages to the Holy Land. In 1888 he advised Fr. Halluin to direct his lads to Quebec, a Catholic French-speaking Province, rather than to the United States, and added that they should be accompanied by a priest. Apparently nothing was done for Fr. Halluin's orphans. But the following year, Fr. Pillain visited Louisiana where he met a French priest. Father François Renaudier, who was pastor of St. Elizabeth's in Paincourtville, Louisiana, a country parish that included whites and some of the newly liberated blacks, many of whom were nominally Catholic because their masters had been Catholic. Fr. Renaudier was earnestly looking for someone who would continue and develop his missionary effort among the poor black population, whose civil rights were severely restricted even by their Catholic leaders. As a possible solution, Fr. Pillain suggested the Assumptionists.

Earlier Archbishop Corrigan of New York, impressed by what the Little Sisters of the Assumption were doing to bring back to the Church the really destitute people of Paris, had indicated that he would be pleased to see them come to New York. For more than a year, discussions dragged on. The Archbishop was pressing for quick action, as were the Sisters. But Fr. Picard replied that the Little Sisters would go to New York only if accompanied by an Assumptionist priest.

For those of us who have lived under the Canon Laws promulgated in 1917, laws that gave nuns greater freedom of action by accepting them as Roman Congregations, the action of Fr. Picard may seem strangely authoritarian. As a matter of fact, at that time any community of nuns automatically, according to Canon Law, became subject to the local

Ordinary. For that reason, the feminine branches of any order sought the protecting arm of the masculine branch. The rationale was that a religious community of men with similar ideals would be more understanding of their needs as religious, in the practice of their daily religious lives, and less apt to encourage activities detrimental to the practice of this life. Past experience had dictated this practical solution.

Meanwhile, in 1890, Fr. Pillain wrote to Fr. Emmanuel Bailly, stressing the dire needs of the blacks in Louisiana and including a letter from the Archbishop of New Orleans, Francis Janssens, which authorized him to request that the Assumptionists open a mission in Louisiana. On January 8, 1891, Fr. Renaudier, mentioned above, pleaded for help from Fr. Picard. This missionary had been in Louisiana since 1878; he had spent the first four years with his brother, a Marist priest. After his ordination to the priesthood in 1883, he had devoted all his time, except for one year, to the people of Paincourtville, whites and blacks. In his lengthy report to Fr. Picard, he eloquently pleaded the religious cause of the blacks.

“From the very first years of my ministry,” said Fr. Renaudier, “I have been appalled at the lamentable condition of the blacks, corrupted by politicians who use them as voting machines, and exploited by a swarm of gross and ignorant black ‘preachers’ ... In principle the diocesan clergy is equally devoted to the salvation of blacks and whites. In fact much more has to be done for these poor simple and uneducated blacks who do not really know what to make of their liberation from slavery, still very recent.

“The blacks, left to themselves, have created their version of religion, a mixture of voodooism and Protestantism. Even those blacks who have been baptized and brought up as Catholics, once they are in contact with Protestant blacks from the North, allow themselves to be drawn to their ‘meetings’. Many have shamefully abandoned the faith ... The Archbishop of New Orleans, Francis Janssens declared in 1889: ‘In New Orleans, many blacks are now Catholic only in name. Young people, older than 18, are never seen in church any more. Yet New Orleans alone has 20,000 blacks.’”

There was a sufficient number of parish churches open to both whites and blacks. But the blacks needed special care and attention which the diocesan clergy was in no position to give. The archdiocese had only 112 priests—each year there were too few ordinations; and the source of priests from France was drying up. Yet the Catholic population was increasing by 10,000 annually. Given these circumstances, what could be done to help the blacks?

Having given this information, and much more, to Fr. Picard, Fr. Renaudier then proposed his solution. On a plot located at the edge of his

territorial parish, he had built a chapel for the exclusive use of the blacks. At first the blacks protested violently, not wishing to relinquish the privilege of mixing with the whites in the Catholic parish church. But they finally understood that this innovation did not imply separation and in no way suppressed the privilege of mixing with the whites. Fr. Renaudier even opened a school for blacks, utilizing many methods very successfully used by black “preachers”; for instance he gave the blacks many occasions for communal singing. He imitated Protestant “wakes”, often attending and preaching on these occasions. All this had the salutary effect of cutting down to nothing the defections in his parish.

Fr. Renaudier sought collaborators, but his secular confreres refused to believe in the effectiveness of his methods and he had to seek elsewhere, among religious communities. The Assumptionists, should they accept, would reside with him at Paincourtville for the first few months, to acquaint themselves with these methods and to learn English. Only two or three would be needed at first. To support them he would grant them \$200. Since the black chapel had a net income of \$300 a year and obtained another \$200 from a lawn party, financial support would be sufficient and might even help establish similar chapels along the Bayou Lafourche. Finally, to top it all, the Archbishop had authorized him to become a member of the Congregation that would accept his apostolate. Such was Fr. Renaudier’s dream. Nothing came of it, at least not immediately. But he was not discouraged by the silence which followed his report to Fr. Picard. He enlisted the support of Fr. Pillain who was on good terms with the superiors of the Congregation. The role of Fr. Pillain was to prepare the Assumptionists for the personal visit of Fr. Renaudier, due to arrive in France on July 4, 1892.

In a letter to Fr. Picard dated April 5, 1892, Fr. Pillain wrote:

I am convinced that Bishop Janssens will take care of all the traveling expenses of the missionaries... Fr. Mignot, pastor of the Cathedral, offers you...his Institute for the Deaf and Dumb, a 500 acre property, heavily wooded in pine, near a lake...that could serve as an aluminate. All is ready, a large house, a chapel, a garden, a farmyard, and about 15 deaf-mutes, whom you could utilize if you brought a small press. We might even be able to furnish you one gratis.

Fr. Picard evidently gave him some hope because in a letter from San Francisco dated June 2, 1892, Fr. Pillain mentions how happy Bp. Janssens is over the encouraging news but finds that things are moving along very slowly. He says that Fr. Renaudier will be in Paris in early

July and in the name of the Archbishop will ask for four religious whose traveling expenses will be reimbursed by the Archbishop and Fr. Mignot. After mentioning housing arrangements for the missionaries, he mentions that they will receive \$5,000 to open a printing establishment. There is, he says, no good French newspaper in Louisiana and the Assumptionists could do there what they had done in Paris with *La Croix*. He jokingly tells Fr. Picard: You are aging and need the support of a cane; you need to act swiftly.

Finally Fr. Renaudier and Fr. Pillain were successful and Fr. Picard agreed to open a mission in Louisiana. At this time, Fr. Picard was planning to send to Canada an Assumptionist who would drum up enthusiasm among the Catholics for the Eucharistic Congress to be held in Jerusalem. He asked Fr. Marcellin Guyot who was chosen for this tour to visit New Orleans also and to discuss the necessary conditions and details with Archbishop Janssens.

Fr. Marcellin arrived in New York City on October 22, 1892. Fr. Henri Brun, who had meanwhile been sent there as chaplain of the Little Sisters of the Assumption, introduced him to the priests of St. John the Baptist Church. These were all French Canadians who by their advice and contacts might have helped Fr. Marcellin in his assignment of boosting the Jerusalem pilgrimage and Eucharistic Congress. The comments of Fr. Brun concerning this visit shed some light on the character of Fr. Marcellin and offer at least a partial explanation for the misunderstandings that would eventually lead to the closing of the Louisiana mission.

According to Fr. Brun, Fr. Marcellin talked too much and listened too little. Thus he learned little or nothing about Canadian feelings and dispositions. Shortly thereafter Fr. Marcellin, in a report to Fr. Bailly, praised the deep sympathy manifested by the American clergy, when he had seen exactly four Canadian and two French-born priests. Other visits were made in Brooklyn to Canon Fallon, pastor of St. Louis (October 25), and to the Fathers of Mercy (October 28). Again Fr. Marcellin orated about the War of 1870. Garibaldi, and the origin of languages, all this in the presence of Jesuits, White Fathers and others who had been chaplains during the War of 1870 or had worked among the Arabs. They kept asking leading questions only to further underscore the ignorance of Fr. Marcellin, who did not even note the irony of their questions. On October 29, during a visit to the Chancery, Fr. Brun wanted to serve as interpreter, but Fr. Marcellin insisted upon a lengthy exposition in French which the Bishop followed only vaguely. When the Bishop expressed some doubts about the pilgrimage movement, saying that for his people such trips were normally tours and not pilgrimages, for which his people were not ready, Fr. Marcellin brusquely replied, "But the

Popes want it.” The tone visibly displeased the Bishop who quickly ended the interview.

On November 3, Fr. Marcellin left for Canada. According to the Canadian clergy, he met with no success either for the pilgrimages or for the Eucharistic Congress. He returned to New York on December 31, 1892, for a four day period during which he managed to alienate Fr. Edwards, a close friend of Fr. Brun. On January 4, 1893, he began visiting Franco-American parishes in New England. From January 16-31 he remained in New York, making several announcements for publication about future pilgrimages from New York and New Orleans which were quite untrue. Finally he took off for New Orleans on January 31, 1893.

The discussion with the Archbishop abruptly brought him into close contact with local church problems. Despite all the arguments and efforts of Fr. Marcellin, Archbishop Janssens refused to grant to the Assumptionists any jurisdiction over the whites. In February, 1893, Fr. Marcellin was presented with a contract granting to the Assumptionists jurisdiction over all the blacks of the archdiocese; this document was destined to become the source of most of the difficulties of the mission. Here is the text of the document:

The mission entrusted by His Excellency Janssens, Archbishop of New Orleans, to the Augustinians of the Assumption Fathers extends to all the blacks residing in the New Orleans diocese.

Archbishop Janssens gives to the Assumption Fathers full and entire jurisdiction over all the blacks of his diocese.

Given the variety of conditions under which the blacks live in New Orleans and the outlying parishes, we must from the outset define the basic conditions under which the mission will be established according to varying localities.

**Article 1 - In New Orleans:** At first a rented hall will serve as a chapel. It will be located in an area easily accessible to the blacks. The Fathers will establish their residence nearby.

In this chapel, the Fathers will exercise their ministry: baptisms, funerals, weddings, according to the needs of the blacks who come to them. The blacks retain the freedom to turn, as in the past, to the pastors of their respective parishes.

For confession, the Assumptionist Fathers have special jurisdiction over the blacks; however, they may confess whites who come to their confessional (or whites who are sick and who call for them).

It would be advisable to build, near the chapel, a schoolbuilding with separate sections for boys and for girls. In the evenings, this facility could be used for lectures or for special meetings that the Fathers would judge useful in attracting the blacks, especially the Protestants who might hesitate to enter a Catholic church.

To prevent any possible take-over by the whites, as has happened in previous attempts, seat rentals will be allowed only for blacks.

As the mission develops, the Fathers are authorized, while keeping their central mission, to establish additional schoolhalls, in other sections of the city, which, in the evenings could serve as lecture halls, etc.

These halls will serve as centers for men's or women's societies, and will help unite the Catholics from various sections of the city. On feast days, all these societies would meet in the blacks' parish church.

To succeed, the Fathers will, especially at first, rely on evening meetings, the school, and visits to homes, hoping to gain the affection of these poor people.

**Article 2 - Mission in outlying areas:** The black church or parish in New Orleans will be considered as the center from which the missionaries will radiate to evangelize the blacks dispersed in other parishes of the diocese...

How to proceed in the farm areas, without upsetting the pastors, and without hurting the pride of the poor blacks who still hold to the privilege of attending services along with whites in a parish church?

While retaining full jurisdiction over blacks, prudence requires that the missionaries proceed as follows: they will begin by visiting a district, visiting especially the blacks, and ascertaining how many blacks reside in the district. When they deem an area ready for a trial, they will call a meeting of blacks in a home, set up an altar, pray with them, and instruct them at a level they can understand.

If, after several meetings, they judge that they are meeting with some success, they will take up a collection to rent a house or build a hall.... In all these halls, the Fathers may offer the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, even though they are not five miles away from a church, as prescribed in Article 30 of the Statutes of the 5th Synod.... But they will not hold other services there, such as baptisms, weddings, and funerals. Still, if they judge it opportune, they may

baptize adults, give them First Communion, and regularize marriages and hold other ordinary mission services. As they travel through the missions, the Fathers may give the Last Sacrament to blacks who call them. On Sundays, outside of the missions, the Fathers will, whenever circumstances allow, say Mass in the parish church and urge all their blacks to attend there. Near each chapel will be built a dwelling for the missionaries during their visits. Such a procedure has been followed at Paincourtville for seven or eight years, and the missionaries should find it easy to follow the same method elsewhere.

**Article 3:** To subsist and develop the black mission, the Fathers count on:

- 1) their share of alms of the Baltimore Commission;
- 2) pew rental revenue from the New Orleans church for blacks
- 3) stipends for weddings, funerals, baptisms in the above mentioned church;
- 4) revenue from fairs, lawn parties for charity, in New Orleans or in the country;
- 5) collections during services, morning or evening;
- 6) The central church and all the chapels will be exempt from diocesan taxes until the revenue is sufficient.

**Article 4:** To complete the mission, nuns are absolutely needed, to teach, to train girls to sing, to visit the sick, to instruct the adults who have not made their First Communion, to direct the girls' and women's societies when the priest is absent. We of course have a congregation of black nuns in New Orleans, but in many localities they would not have the necessary security. The Oblates of the Assumption, founded for a similar ministry in the Near East missions, would be of help in the evangelization of the blacks, since it is less by reason than by love that they can be reached.

Such is, we believe, the plan to be followed to assure the success of the mission. May St. Peter Claver, who used this method before us, obtain for us strength and light to follow in his footsteps and save the eight million blacks in the United States. As to the question of the nuns, this can be dealt with later although I have no objection to their coming.

+ Janssens  
Archbishop of New Orleans

Note: The Assumptionist Fathers are allowed to hear the confessions of whites in the whole diocese, to help the pastors; but they will do so only at their request and with their permission.

They may also, but only outside of New Orleans, baptize black children whom the parents have neglected to have baptized for a year or more. They will keep a register of such baptisms and will send copies to the respective pastors.

+ Janssens  
Archbishop of New Orleans

This contract project was examined by Fr. Picard and his Council, who rejected it. In a letter dated August 2, 1893, the Archbishop conceded certain faculties relative to the ministry of whites:

Dear Father Marcellin,

I am in receipt of your letter of July 20. Fr. Renaudier must have told you that I permit the Fathers to hear confessions of whites in their confessionals and also when called by such people. But they cannot give the Viaticum or Extreme Unction to whites without permission of the local pastor. I hope that this will satisfy you.

+ Janssens

Like the situation in Australia, where clauses set down in the contract by the Bishop were never fulfilled, so in New Orleans unrealized promises became the source of deep disagreement. But Fr. Picard, having learned of these concessions, accepted the mission. Fr. Marcellin was sent to New Orleans to take possession of the chapel and residence promised by the Archbishop and to prepare the arrival of other Assumptionists, which was planned for October, 1894.

Fr. Marcellin arrived in New Orleans bursting with expectations that much had been done. He found nothing of the sort. He immediately went to the Chancery to express with some vigor his astonishment over the absence of any preparations on the part of the diocese. The Archbishop, already annoyed by the numerous delays and the exaction of more favorable conditions, dryly replied that it would be best for Father to leave for Paincourtville to remain in the rectory of Fr. Renaudier, to learn

some English and become acquainted with the customs and needs of the blacks, and await the moment when the Archbishop would be good and ready to launch this new type of apostolate. Fr. Marcellin arrived in Paincourtville in January, 1894, and by March 26 he had already purchased in Klotzville, for \$490, a small lot of three acres located some five minutes walk from the parish church of Paincourtville, which would continue to serve both whites and blacks.

He busied himself drawing plans for the residence of the awaited Assumptionists. He would build according to local customs; because the entire area was often flooded during the rainy season, all houses rested on brick columns rising about four feet above the ground, thus permitting the flood waters, which seldom exceeded three feet, to circulate beneath the structure. Unaccustomed to the hot, humid climate of the lower Mississippi, Fr. Marcellin suffered greatly during the summer months. He therefore accepted gratefully the opportunity to go to a camp (a two-room cabin) owned by Fr. Renaudier in Chinchuba, not far away from the Kneipp Institute for deaf mutes. He returned to Klotzville once a month to check on the work accomplished by the blacks on the community residence. This was too infrequently, according to the Archbishop and to those who were later to occupy the house.

By June, 1894, the Archbishop had not yet given the authorization to open the mission. Yet on October 29, 1894, Fr. Renaudier deeded to Fr. Marcellin the camp and the land at Chinchuba, some 5,000 by 450 feet. And the Archbishop, visiting Fr. Picard in Paris, asked that the mission be activated only in 1895 in order to permit him to prepare the church and the rectory that would be occupied by the Assumptionists in New Orleans.

Back from Europe, the Archbishop and Fr. Mignot, pastor of the Cathedral, called several meetings with the blacks in a hall on Clairborne Street, New Orleans, where they hoped to locate the Assumptionists. The results were negative, and it was decided that the Fathers would first start working at Klotzville in Fr. Renaudier's chapel. So the Assumptionists went first to Klotzville, but took up temporary residence in the rectory of the Assumption parish in Paincourtville.

From the outset, there were difficulties. Fr. Marcellin was quick tempered, eccentric, and gruff, clearly not, according to the Archbishop, the man needed as founding pastor of a mission. But Fr. Renaudier insisted so fervently on the good qualifications of Fr. Marcellin that he was finally named pastor. Only a few short weeks later, Fr. Renaudier, aware of the disastrous effects of the new pastor's behavior, had to admit to the Archbishop that he had been mistaken in his judgment. The Archbishop delegated his Chancellor to investigate in Paincourtville. He reported that by his outbursts of temper Fr. Marcellin had lost the

confidence of both blacks and whites. He added that the Father had already spent on the construction of the residence \$1,100 instead of the \$700 allotted and sent by the Chancery. In conclusion, he suggested that a second priest not be sent until the present source of trouble had been eliminated. This seemed all the more desirable because Fr. Marcellin seemed to manifest little enthusiasm for the Klotzville mission, where he showed up barely once a month, spending most of his time at his Chinchuba camp.

As a consequence of this report, the Archbishop sent to Fr. Picard, on January 22, 1895, a petition signed by one of the priests and some of the parishioners of Paincourtville, which charged that Fr. Marcellin had alienated the people by his sermons and that the blacks detested him. The nuns did not wish to confess to him. Moreover, he was the object of much gossip; he lacked judgment, was too quick tempered, etc., etc. The Archbishop added a personal note that Fr. Marcellin be recalled.

Illness almost radically solved the problem; Fr. Marcellin was stricken with influenza. On February 3, 1895, under the impression that he would soon die, he wrote a touching letter to Fr. Picard, made his will, asked pardon for all his mistakes and begged him not to forget him in his prayers for the deceased. To his great joy, not to mention surprise, he recovered completely. Soon after he was announcing triumphantly that the residence for the religious was ready for occupancy. Later, occupants would note that a kitchen and a chimney for the kitchen stove had been forgotten.

Fr. Renaudier, who had promised to leave his entire estate to the mission, died on January 4, 1895. The Assumptionists inherited, among the rest, his fine library which eventually ended up at Our Lady of Guadalupe on 14th Street in New York City. During March of 1895, Fr. Marcellin bought the furnishings essential to a small religious residence; and on April 1, he celebrated Mass in the new residence for the first time.

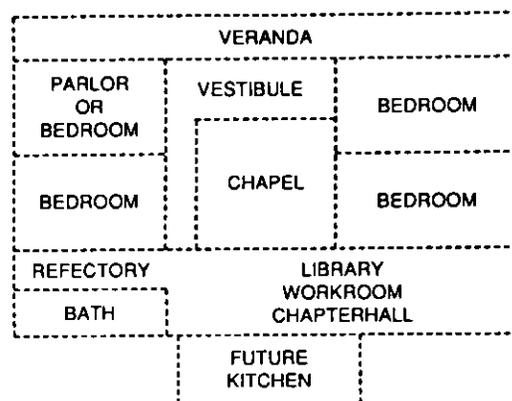
The Archbishop did not seem to begrudge the continued presence of Fr. Marcellin; in April he sent him a check covering half the cost of the new residence. On the other hand, he requested that Fr. Picard delay until autumn sending additional personnel. At that time they would better be able to adjust to the climate. This did not suit Fr. Marcellin who did not like to stay in the same place for very long. He wrote to Fr. Picard asking that he be allowed to make a pilgrimage "*ad limina* for a physical and spiritual renewal" as soon as his replacement arrived. While waiting, he made more frequent visits to Klotzville, thanks to an inherited horse and a buggy purchased from his savings.

His dealings with the Archbishop became more cordial, and in July he was named pastor of Our Lady of Lourdes in Klotzville, but with

jurisdiction for blacks only. Immediately he began to have trouble with nearby pastors. This did not greatly disturb him as he desired to leave the bayou country and found the promised parish in New Orleans. Learning that Fr. Ildefonse Causse was leaving the Near East, he asked that Fr. Ildefonse be assigned to Louisiana. Fr. Ildefonse left the Near East mission in early October and by November 7 he was in New York, accompanied by Brother Macaire Duclos, a convert of Fr. Brun who knew English. Their stay in New York was limited to a short visit with FF. Amedee Oilier and Fulgence Moris and with the Little Sisters of the Assumption, on 15th Street.

Fr. Ildefonse and Bro. Macaire boarded the train for a two day trip to New Orleans, where Father had a meeting with the Archbishop. They then set out for the mission. The three-hour train ride included a ferryboat crossing of the Mississippi before they arrived at Donaldsonville where they were met by a young black parishioner who took them for a two-hour buggy ride over bumpy, dusty roads leading to the religious residence in Klotzville, on November 15, 1895. The first impression was one of poverty and isolation in the midst of a population that was none too friendly. He wrote on December 10, 1895, that they had spent the first three weeks there organizing the house. "In the chapel, all we had for an altar was a table, without a tabernacle... There was no kitchen. The house didn't even have a chimney. We built a kitchen and bought utensils. The cold weather forced us to cut a hole through a wooden wall, to pass a stove pipe. We had to do all the work ourselves because at this moment all the local workers, carpenters, masons, etc., are employed in the sugar mills."

In the same letter, Fr. Ildefonse included a small floor plan of the residence. He noted that the chapel was the worst placed of all the rooms and received light only from the vestibule and from the library.



On the first Sunday after his arrival, Fr. Ildefonse said, there were about 150 blacks at Mass although there had been no notification that the Mass would be said. He noted rather sadly that it was expressly forbidden to admit whites at Sunday services although it was permitted to admit them during the week for reasons of ministry. He soon found that the neighboring pastors refused to allow the Fathers to do any ministry for the blacks on their territory even though this was expressly permitted in the written contract. He concludes by saying that the sum of our missionary activity in Louisiana is in the Klotzville chapel for the blacks living on the territory of the Paincourtville parish.

The situation of the Assumptionists, uncertain from the start, was further jeopardized by the rude and difficult character of Fr. Marcellin who quarreled with the neighboring pastors over the clauses of Fr. Renaudier's will, to the extent that the Chancery stepped in and declared that both parties were at fault. Fr. Marcellin finally obtained his permission to go to Europe and, as soon as Fr. Ildefonse had arrived, he left for Europe where he stayed until March, 1896. His reception at the Chancery upon his return was cool and indifferent, and he was deeply hurt when Fr. Ildefonse was officially named Superior of the mission. On April 15, Fr. Marcellin, a newly naturalized American citizen since the preceding week, decided to leave the responsibility of the Mission to Fr. Ildefonse. To escape the coming summer heat and fever, he would leave for Canada and St. Pierre and Miquelon. He added that he was thinking of seeking a position in some college in New York, there to learn English.

Fr. Ildefonse was thus left alone with Brother Macaire, and they concentrated on building a closer and more congenial relationship with the blacks. They met with some success, because the chapel was often too small to hold the crowd that came for Sunday services. Communions reached 100 per month; 60 were enrolled in religion classes. Encouraged by this, they planned to enlarge the chapel so that it could hold 300.

They were further encouraged when Fr. Picard sent help in the persons of Fr. Bamabe Gigaud and Brother Leon Bouly, who arrived on November 17, 1896. After a courtesy visit to the Archbishop, Fr. Bamabe noted that the reception had been most cordial and that the Archbishop asked the Fathers to establish themselves in a New Orleans parish as soon as possible. This led Fr. Bamabe to write: "Why keep two priests in Klotzville when one would be amply sufficient?" Any joy over new developments was somewhat lessened when the Archbishop notified them that he was reducing his financial aid, sending them only \$100 annually for the school, when it needed a minimum of \$225.

The presence of added personnel brought up again the possibility of the New Orleans parish. Fr. Ildefonse, naturally timid, thought that there was no need for haste: "We must be desired if we are to obtain a decent parish." He therefore asked Fr. Picard for permission to replace his modest chapel in Klotzville by a real church. On the other hand, Fr. Bamabe, much more aggressive, reasoned that at Klotzville the Assumptionists would be limited to an apostolate among blacks who spoke French. The real need was for a mission among English-speaking blacks, since they were by far more numerous. By March, 1897, Fr. Ildefonse tried to obtain some center of activity in the city. He started by asking help from Archbishop Janssens who dryly replied: "Four years ago I had a church and funds ready for you. It has since been sold and demolished. And then came the Lazarists who established their black mission in New Orleans. Your Fr. Marcellin preferred to bury himself in Klotzville. Just now all I can offer is encouragement."

This rather cool reception did not deter Fr. Ildefonse from examining two sites on Clairborne Street, but the asking price, \$7,500, seemed too high. Nevertheless he asked the Superior General for a loan in order to purchase the land in the name of the Congregation. Without the loan, nothing could be done. He also outlined the activities of the Assumptionists: Fr. Marcellin seeks funds but we receive nothing; Fr. Bamabe is quite active, preaching in many parishes; Fr. Amedee holds the fort at Klotzville with two lay brothers; and Fr. Ildefonse lives in the rectory of SS. Peter and Paul parish, at 2317 Burgundy Street, where Rev. T. Nelson Ayres is pastor.

Fr. Ildefonse located a likely site at 1819 Esplanade Avenue. The cost was \$18,000, with \$1,000 down payment and the rest payable in five months. Fr. Mignot, pastor of the cathedral, told Archbishop Janssens: "I fear that the Fathers by locating their mission for blacks on Esplanade Avenue will encounter much opposition from the whites." The Archbishop ignored the warning and authorized the purchase, even promising the Fathers an annual grant of \$600 for the expenses of the two missionaries. He promised to help pay for the site on Esplanade Avenue, and just before sailing for Europe told his Vicar-General: "The Assumptionist Fathers will soon open their mission in this city." The sale of the property, which included a large residence and three lots, was closed on June 8, 1897. It was hoped that most of the required transformations would be finished in time to have the religious from Klotzville take up residence in New Orleans by late August.

On June 9, 1897, aboard the *Creole* en route to France, Archbishop Janssens died suddenly. This signaled a complete change of attitude on the part of diocesan authorities. As early as June 17, immediately after the funeral, Fr. Bamabe wrote: "This is a great loss for us. He gave us

much support. His death places the entire mission in jeopardy.” Meanwhile alterations were continuing at the new residence. On September 9, 1897, FF. Ildefonse and Bamabe and Bro. Macaire moved in. Fr. Amedee remained in Klotzville. The plan was to have the main residence in New Orleans, from where one priest would care for the Sunday services in Klotzville.

The situation of the Assumptionists was by no means enviable; the Diocesan Administrator, Msgr. J.B. Bogaerts, did not conceal his opposition. Awaiting the nomination of a new archbishop, he refused to help the Fathers in any way, stating that the contract needed serious revisions. He categorically refused to grant permission to open a chapel for the blacks on Esplanade Avenue, knowing that the local pastors and the whites living in the neighborhood would oppose such a move. He declared that he would grant permission for such a chapel only if forced to do so, and he forbade ministry of any kind in the city, even forbidding the Fathers to say Mass privately in their convent chapel. Irritated by such tactics, Fr. Ildefonse wanted to open a chapel for blacks anyway, immediately, in order to prevent the new archbishop from reversing the authorization already given.

To further aggravate things, Fr. Bamabe fell ill while serving Klotzville in late September. Yellow fever paralyzed all activity in the region, and the religious wondered how they could raise the capital needed to pay their debts. As a mortgage would generate only half the amount required, they asked the Superior General for a loan, which was refused. Meanwhile the anger of their neighbors in New Orleans increased and there were even threats of lynching the religious if they dared open a chapel for the blacks. This kept potential benefactors at a distance, but the dreaded date of payment of \$17,000 approached inexorably. November 9 arrived and there was no money to pay the owner of the house, but after explanations and promises the religious were granted a few months’ extension. Their neighbors were circulating petitions to have them removed, and pastors and Creoles were united against the mission. In the midst of this snarl of antagonism, disagreements, and contradictions, Fr. Ildefonse proposed the foundation of an aluminate for English-speaking boys at Chinchuba. And early in December, 1897, discovering that his companions, FF. Bamabe and Amedee had complained to the General about his administration, he humbly admitted that some of the trouble could be traced to his youth (only 10 years of profession) and his lack of experience. He accepted to be replaced by anyone. On December 1, 1897, the Archbishop of Santa Fe, Placide Louis Chapelle, was transferred to the see of New Orleans, and announced that he would take over the direction of the diocese on February 15, 1898. This nomination pleased the Assumptionists who

were being harassed by clergy and lay Catholics, to such a point that they at one time thought that the new archbishop might sacrifice them and their mission in order to appease their opponents.

Fr. Picard still entertained hopes of success for the new mission, and in order to discover what had gone wrong and correct it he sent Fr. Marcellin, then in France, as Canonical Visitor in Louisiana. Fr. Marcellin judged severely that Fr. Bamabe was the only one leading a truly religious life and that Fr. Ildefonse had to be replaced. In a letter of February 2, he noted: "Up to now we had the bishop to contend with; now we are being harassed because we have a school for the blacks. City Hall has entered into the fray. We are not wanted on Esplanade Avenue. Fr. Ildefonse has no influence; he obstructs the work at Klotzville. No one likes him. I hesitate to present him to Archbishop Chapelle as Superior of the mission. I would like to see Fr. Bamabe replace him."

On February 5, Fr. Marcellin and Bamabe went to City Hall to refute the complaints brought against the Assumptionists. The result was that they decided to close the school in New Orleans, for the "general good." The school for blacks had lasted only four weeks.

Shortly after Archbishop Chapelle's installation, the Fathers visited him and he told them that he wished to honor the contract signed by his predecessor but that the inflamed feelings of people made it imperative to make no waves. During the remainder of February the contract was restudied, with emphasis on the clause granting to the Assumptionists faculties over the whites. This clause was maintained despite the bitter opposition of some members of the Bishop's Council. For the moment, this was as far as the Archbishop would go. Using his authority as Visitor, Fr. Marcellin relieved Fr. Ildefonse of his post as Superior and named him Treasurer, causing Ildefonse to say that such changes did nothing to allay suspicions, solve difficulties, or solve the financial morass. There was however some improvement in the attitude of the Ordinary and his Advisors.

The Canonical Visit ended in late March by the rapid departure of Fr. Marcellin. He had pacified somewhat Mr. Reiss, proprietor of the Esplanade Avenue house, by promising full payment...soon. But he neglected to hand Mr. Reiss the \$300 that Fr. Ildefonse had given him as part payment of the debt. The \$350 real estate tax was unpaid. The annual \$600 grant for the black mission was not forthcoming either, it went to others. By April 3, Fr. Marcellin was aboard the *Bourgogne* with Fr. Bamabe, en route to France and announcing that the mission was saved because the Archbishop had promised to give the Assumptionists a parish.

Here are the conditions, as indicated in a letter from the Archbishop, dated March 22, 1898:

- 1) Msgr. Chapelle promises to give to the Augustinians of the Assumption a parish as soon as possible. In this parish, the Fathers will have jurisdiction over whites and blacks.
- 2) It is perfectly understood that the jurisdiction of the missionaries over the blacks outside the parish will be as defined in the contract. They will not visit sick whites outside of their own parish. If a white is already one of their penitents and expressly asks for them, the Fathers can hear his confession, but can never give the Last Sacraments: Viaticum and Extreme Unction. It is desirable that the Fathers abstain from bringing the Blessed Sacrament outside the limits of their parish.
- 3) The Fathers will not encroach upon the black missions of the Lazarists; the Bishop reserves to set the territorial limits of the parish of the Fathers and that of the Lazarists.
- 4) Outside the limits of their parish, the Fathers will not administer the Sacraments except to regularize marriages or to baptize black children older than one year. Within the limits of their parish they will have the same rights as all other rectors. They will retain their residence on Esplanade Avenue until they have a parish, at which time they will sell the house.
- 5) It is possible that later on we will give the Assumptionists permission to engage in the apostolate of the press.

So Fr. Ildefonse remained in Louisiana, burdened with the difficulties that he had judged insurmountable. He renewed his request to be recalled to France and added that Brother Macaire should return to France, for his very salvation. The creditor, Mr. Reiss, upon learning that Fr. Marcellin had returned to France, demanded full payment without delay. When Fr. Ildefonse told him that the only solution was to sell at great loss, Mr. Reiss was taken aback and granted an extension until June 15, 1898. Fr. Amedee, still in Klotzville, mentioned that Bro. Macaire wished to leave the congregation and suggested that he be encouraged to do so as a pastor offers him a job as sexton.

The desperate position of the religious was further aggravated when the Archbishop became more distant. Thus during a confirmation visit at Paincourtville he neglected to visit the mission at nearby Klotzville, located on parish territory. Later the Bishop would declare that Archbishop Janssens had been ill advised in encouraging the

Assumptionists to open a black mission on Esplanade Avenue. In July, 1898, an incident at Klotzville further alienated the whites. During a lawn party, a black was attacked by a group of whites. Fr. Ildefonse tried to calm his black congregation which was deeply resentful, by filing a court complaint which he later withdrew when the whites promised to leave the blacks alone. But bad feelings remained.

On December 7, 1898, FF. Symphorien Terraz and Bamabe Gigaud arrived in New Orleans, leaving Fr. Ildefonse free either to remain in the mission or to go to New York. He remained just long enough to bring the new arrivals up to date, then left for New York. There he prepared a long, detailed report on the tangled situation in Louisiana, which he planned to mail to Fr. Picard. But to prevent any possible misunderstanding, he decided to hand-carry it to Paris himself, arriving there January 8, 1899. Fr. Picard refused to see him and he was finally obliged to mail his report, which, by the way, added nothing to what was already known.

In New Orleans, Fr. Bamabe had replaced Fr. Ildefonse as Superior and attempted to solve the problems of the mission, especially the financial ones. He accepted the fact that the annual grant from the Episcopal Commission was a total gift and that the Fathers had no reason to complain. The Fathers simply had to work harder and spend less. The Archbishop advised the Assumptionists that they could expect no more help in the future, because all funds were needed for the construction of his new seminary. He recommended that Klotzville be abandoned; he advised them of his decision *not* to grant them a parish, noting his displeasure at the pressures exerted upon him from churchmen in Rome. On the other hand, he would accept them as diocesan missionaries, but he set down some conditions: a numerous community, no old men or boys (an allusion to the youthful appearance of Fr. Ildefonse). The Fathers must abandon all thought of a mission for blacks until the day when they have as helpers a group of capable catechists. He repeated his desire to see them start a publishing house. And he concluded by telling the Fathers that if they did not accept his conditions they would be asked to leave.

In answer to all this, Fr. Picard insisted on the original contract with Msgr. Janssens. Archbishop Chappelle replied that he was abandoning the project of the black mission as pursued so far. In a letter to Fr. Picard on August 18, he said that it was impossible to keep the Fathers in their present capacity; he faults Msgr. Janssens for all the difficulties encountered and he renews his offer of preaching assignments and some publishing activity. Six weeks later, Fr. Bamabe was called to the Chancery and asked why Fr. Picard had not answered. The Archbishop knew that Klotzville had been abandoned since early September and

offered two chaplaincies to the Fathers. By October 11, no answer had yet been received. Both the Archbishop and the religious were running out of patience. Must they sell the real estate at Klotzville, Chinchuba, and Esplanade Avenue? Must they accept the Archbishop's propositions? Finally Fr. Picard gave his answer: stick to the terms of the contract. This satisfied no one.

In such an atmosphere the creditors clamored for payment. Mr. Reiss cabled to Paris: "Will sue religious if considerable payment is not made." On his part, Fr. Picard rejected by cable the proposals of Archbishop Chapelle, who considered this reply as impertinent. On the eve of sailing for the Philippines, Msgr. Chapelle left this order: "Tell the Fathers that I'll give them neither parish nor public chapel and I will not back up one step on this point." Msgr. Rommel who was to administer the diocese during the Archbishop's absence added: "We want no religious; this is final."

The result of all this is evident: the Assumptionists must sell all their possessions, pay their debts, and leave. Sales were made at great loss. Mr. Reiss regained possession of his house in February, 1900. Fr. Bamabe, now without shelter, tried to find other accommodations but was told that if he insisted on remaining in the diocese all faculties would be denied him. On February 25, 1900, Fr. Bamabe wrote: "Next Wednesday I am leaving for New York. All our clothing, religious vestments, and the library are being shipped to New York." At the moment, he was unable to sell or rent Klotzville or Chinchuba because he lacked the power-of-attorney from Fr. Marcellin. In March, 1901, a Paincourtville lawyer sold the Klotzville property for \$500. The land at Chinchuba, abandoned by the Fathers, became the subject of the exchange of many letters between the lawyer and the Generalate. In April, 1904, the Kneipp Institute for Deaf-mutes wanted to acquire the property and tried to get legal authorization. Finally, in August, 1906, Fr. Marcellin sent to Fr. Thomas Darbois in New York the authorization to sell. But it was too late; Chinchuba had been sold at sheriff's auction to pay the tax arrears. Thus disappeared the last trace of an Assumptionist missionary effort in Louisiana.

### 3. Apostolate in New York City



Because the apostolate of the Assumptionists in New York City is closely linked to the establishment of a mission by the Little Sisters of the Assumption, it is enlightening to trace the antecedents of that mission. Prior to 1880, several high-society English ladies, while residing in Paris, had been deeply impressed by the special apostolate of the Little Sisters of the Assumption, which combined assistance to the very poor with the involvement of the very wealthy for the same cause. The niece of Cardinal Manning was among them. A letter from the Cardinal to his niece, written in Rome, was considered as a heaven-sent indication of God's will. The Cardinal had written: "Tell the nursing sisters of the poor that I shall rejoice at their coming and that I send them my blessing.... Better still, the Archbishop of Baltimore [Gibbons] who is here would also like to have them work in his diocese. Ask the sisters to write to him and to make their work known to him."

In 1880, the first foundation of the Little Sisters was opened in London, in the Bow section. Later, in 1890, Archbishop Corrigan of New York, while on a trip to Europe, also became aware of the excellent apostolic work of the Little Sisters of the Assumption. He saw how this peculiar apostolate was highly beneficial to poor and rich alike, and he resolved to have them work, if at all possible, in his own extensive diocese which had many wealthy people but was also the receiving point for so many of the poor coming from many foreign countries. He expressed his desire to receive these nuns in New York to Fr. Etienne Pernet, their Founder, and to Fr. François Picard, Superior General of the Assumptionists. Both priests agreed to give the proposal serious consideration, adding the proviso that the Sisters would have to be accompanied by a Father who would be their chaplain and confessor. This was accepted. Fr. Pernet had for some time dreamed of sending some of his nuns to the United States and he chose for the site of the first foundation the poverty-laden area of lower Manhattan. On April 10, 1891, Mother Marie du Christ and Sisters Mary Anna, Marie Alexandrine, Marie Lactitia, and Marie Euphrasie left Paris bound for New York. Accompanying them as their chaplain, was Fr. Henri Brun, fluent in English as a result of years spent in England and Australia, and

always ready for distant missions. The small group docked on Sunday, April 19, 1891, at 2 A.M., at the French Line pier at the foot of West 14th Street. They were met at the dock by Mr. Geraldyn Redmond and Mr. Paul Chapin, husbands of old friends and benefactors of Mother Marie du Christ.

Fr. Henri Brun was a rare bird in his day. He was one of the few Assumptionists who could write and preach in English. This first Assumptionist to be accepted by a bishop in the United States, and the first to die in the United States, was one of the men who with Fr. Emmanuel d'Alzon, on Christmas Eve, 1850, had pronounced religious vows and thus founded the Assumptionists. He had been ordained in December, 1845, and when he took his first vows he was 29 years old. He had already lived and worked with Fr. d'Alzon at Assumption College in Nîmes, France, and was thus familiar with the major themes and apostolic objectives of the Founder, one of which was the reunion of the Anglican Church to Rome. After 10 years as Superior of the Australian mission, his assignments were mostly in education: 1873-1881, Superior of the aluminate of Le Vigan 1881-1882, Superior of the aluminate of Alais; 1882-1883, professor at Madrid college; 1883-1885, as professor at Alais; 1885-1886, professor at the aluminate of Nîmes; 1886-1891, as professor and main fund raiser at the aluminate of Mauville.

Fr. Brun first lived with the Fathers of Mercy in their rectory of St Vincent de Paul (116 West 24th St), a French national church founded in 1840. The Little Sisters were housed in the convent of the Sisters of Bon Secours de Troyes, at the corner of 81st and Lexington, which the Little Sisters later owned themselves. Later, while a convent was being prepared for them, they leased for one year a house at 208 Second Avenue. In July, 1891, Fr. Brun's address was 313 West 14th St., Manhattan.

Fr. Brun's first moves were to assure himself of some economic independence. Fortunately, as soon as it became known that he was available as confessor, he was in constant demand for his services and advice. He became the regular confessor of the Sisters of Bon Secours de Troyes (22 nuns); the Presentation nuns (21 nuns); the Sisters of Mercy (45 nuns); in addition to the Little Sisters. Early in 1892, he added to his list an orphanage of the *Filles de Marie*, where he made use of his knowledge of English.

Fr. Brun had not been in New York a full year when he wrote to the Superior General, outlining the pros and cons, and stating his opinion that there were openings for the Assumptionists in the United States. Alone he could do little. He asked as a companion a well-prepared younger religious. He knew most of them personally and he named as

possible and desirable candidates FF. Ildefonse Causse and Ephrem. He added that with his annual salary of \$100 from the Little Sisters, his \$1.00 daily mass stipends, and fees from other occasional services, he was able to pay board and room. Fr. Brun was told to wait patiently; companions would be sent later.

Finally, 53 weeks after setting foot on American soil, the Little Sisters took possession of their convent. By a quirk of fate, only a few weeks after the arrival of the Sisters, Sister Marie Euphrasie, while nursing a poor family in St. Gabriel's parish, where the pastor was Father Farley, later Cardinal, contracted typhoid and died as a result of her charitable ministrations. Cardinal Farley gloried in the fact that this martyr of charity had given her life in his parish and he always had a most fatherly and warm regard for the Little Sisters.

In November, 1891, Fr. Pernet sent two more nuns to New York, Sr. M. Angelina and Sr. M. Praxede, bringing their number to six. On May 7, 1892, Fr. Pernet himself arrived in New York, accompanied by four more nuns. During his four week visit, he stayed with Fr. Brun. He returned to France June 3, along with Sr. M. Angelina whose health was impaired by New York climate... Incidentally, she returned to New York some 15 years later and worked mere for several decades.

By August 16, 1892, the Sisters and their postulants numbered 12. Fr. Brun wrote jubilantly on October 21, 1892: "Only two more days and I shall have the joy of welcoming another Assumptionist Fr. Marcellin Guyot, who is coming to America, sent by the General to generate interest in the International Pilgrimage to Palestine on the occasion of the Eucharistic Congress." Yet the ebullient enthusiasm of Fr. Marcellin did not strike Fr. Brun as apt to please the American clergy who were becoming increasingly antagonistic to all foreigners. On this occasion, he warned the Superior General that the Archbishop disliked to see "foreigners" seeking apostolic work of any sort in his diocese. Fr. Marcellin's eight weeks in Canada met with only limited success. He made a few blunders in New York clerical circles, much to the distress of Fr. Brun; and on January 31, 1893, he left for New Orleans, to examine, as we have seen, the possibility of an Assumptionist mission there.

Fr. Brun wrote to the General that he did not think Fr. Marcellin suitable for the American mission. He repeated his hope that the General would send him a companion in New York, and on June 30, 1893, he deplored the fact that he could not return to France for a brief vacation. He did not want to leave the Little Sisters without a chaplain for any long period. The very next month, he was notified that, at the request of the Little Sisters, Fr. Pernet had interceded for him and had obtained that a companion be sent to New York. Fr. Brun wrote: I will now have a companion who can room next door to me and whose salary will be

sufficient to make him independent. Please send a man of experience. With such a man, I would hope to return to France for the celebration of my 50th ordination anniversary in 1896, for one month. Then I would return to New York to die.”

Always conscious of possible opposition, Fr. Brun mentioned the subject of a second Assumptionist to Fr. Edwards whom he frequently visited in his rectory at Immaculate Conception (408-410 East 14th St). Fr. Edwards, who was vicar for some fifteen religious communities, commented that the presence of another Father would reduce his heavy work load.

By the next summer, Fr. Brun was so thoroughly convinced that Assumption should develop in New York that he outlined for the Superior General his reasons:

- 1) The Little Sisters will soon open a second mission and they want an Assumptionist as spiritual director and instructor.
- 2) Thus the Fathers can participate in the good apostolic work of these sisters.
- 3) Other nuns' communities desire to have religious priests as spiritual directors and confessors.
- 4) At this moment the Archbishop is well disposed toward us.
- 5) Fr. Edwards, a member of the Bishop's Council, likes us.
- 6) He is in charge of many religious communities of nuns and wants more religious as confessors.
- 7) Recently Fr. Edwards told me that we Assumptionists should open our own chapel where we could exercise the apostolate of the confessional.
- 8) The same Fr. Edwards desires to open a residence for retired priests. He would like to see us in this work. The same residence could house retreat masters, etc.
- 9) I hope that we can soon open an aluminate.
- 10) In the near future, some Assumptionists could found a sort of orphanage for teenage boys who leave the sisters' orphanages. Some of these boys could continue their studies in an aluminate while others could become lay brothers.
- 11) If we cannot realize such a foundation, we could at least purchase as soon as possible a small estate to locate upon it an aluminate, a postulancy for lay-brothers, and even a refuge in case of our expulsion from France.

Late in August, 1894, Fr. Brun moved to another residence, at 220 East 14th Street, where he boarded with the family who owned the house. Still thinking of his 50th ordination anniversary, he wrote on October 8, mentioning as a possible companion Fr. Fulgence Moris. Meanwhile Fr. Ildefonse Causse could finish his theological studies. If Fr. Ildefonse “could join me by August, 1895, I would introduce him to English; he could assist me in the catechetical work at the orphanage, and finally replace me during my trip to France for my 50th ordination anniversary in December, 1895.” Fr. Picard promised to send both Fr. Fulgence and Fr. Ildefonse.

But Fr. Brun would not be there to greet them. In a letter dated January 11, 1895, to Fr. Ambroise, he complained of a severe grippe that caused the doctor to impose complete rest. Two days later, writing to Fr. Ildefonse, he mentioned how painful was the illness which had prevented him from saying mass for the past three days. He died on January 15, 1895, before the letter reached its destination.

Letters by Sr. Marie St. Vincent, L.S.A. give us some interesting details about Fr. Brun’s last days and funeral:

(Dated January 15, 1895) Father Henri Brun, whose death was announced to you by cablegram, was stricken by a sort of grippe earlier this month. He did not complain. He was able to continue celebrating Mass for the *Dames Servantes*, with no trouble other than voice extinction. For the next three days, at the insistence of Reverend Mother who wanted him to rest more, he promised not to come to say Mass for us at 6:30. But, feeling stronger, he said it at the Lambert Orphanage which is just across the street from his apartment.

The physician whom we consulted assured us that there was nothing seriously wrong with him, but that he was being bothered by asthma, which he had had for many years. Still the doctor forbade him from saying Mass on the 11th and 12th, Friday and Saturday. As he felt better on Sunday, we had Mass at 7:00 and then he was driven back to his lodgings although they are only a few hundred feet away. One of our devoted converts accompanied him and stayed with him all day Sunday. He even slept in the same room in order to be of help if needed. Yesterday morning, Monday, Fr. Brun sent this man to tell Mother that he felt better even though the night had not been too restful.

From the very first day of his fatigue and throughout his illness, two Sisters visited him three or four times daily,

bringing him his meals and whatever else he needed. Last night Sr. Anna left him, with no fear of any imminent outcome. The man who stayed nights was lying as usual on the couch, ready to help if needed. About 2:00 A.M., Father became delirious. He wanted to say Mass and worried whether everything was ready. "Go to the Little Sisters," he said, "and tell them that I am about to say Mass." As he repeated his demand, the man came to us and told us that Father was much worse. It was 2:30 A.M.

Sr. M. Alexander and Sr. Anna hurried to his bedside after having notified the doctor, who arrived shortly thereafter and diagnosed a complication due to heart trouble. We hastily notified Fr. Edwards who had visited Father only a few days before. He gave him absolution and Extreme Unction. Father was still conscious. He tried to swallow the Sacred Host but could not because his tongue was completely paralyzed. At 5:30 he was evidently dying. Fr. Edwards left to celebrate Mass for him. When he returned, Fr. Brun could still hear but could not speak. We noted how he tried to repeat with us the prayers we were reciting. He quite surely recognized Fr. Wurcher, from the French church, who came to visit him and pray with us during this sad morning.

Around 10 o'clock, the doctor gave him a heart injection. The dying man opened his eyes a last time, seemed to recognize those who were present, and at 11 o'clock he died. There was no agony. A few moments before his death, he moved his lips as we recited the Lord's Prayer and the Hail Mary in English. He kissed his crucifix each time we presented it to him. Warned by a telegram from Mother, Dr. Brosman arrived just after Father had died. They were close friends and the good doctor could not stop from weeping. He asked for the honor of robing Father in his religious habit.

At 5 o'clock, Father's body was placed in an open casket as is the custom here in New York, and he was carried to the parlor of the home where he resided, at the express request of the proprietors. Two Sisters will remain there all night. Tomorrow the body will be brought to the parish church, where Fr. Edwards wishes to treat him as if he were one of his own priests. Fr. Wurcher regrets that the funeral cannot be held in his church.

The funeral will be Thursday, the 17th, at 10:00 A.M. Mother Superior, also ill with the grippe, will, on doctor's

orders, not accompany us to the funeral and the cemetery. She is very sad about this. In our little cemetery, Fr. Brun's grave is in the center in front of the Cross.

We will never forget the submission with which Fr. Brun accepted God's will and how peacefully he left this world. His last words were: "I am happy; I regret nothing." And to the Sister who asked him if he had any last message for Fr. Picard or our Mother Superior, he replied: "No, everything is in order." No doubt he now enjoys the repose that his life of work and devotion earned for him. With you, we will pray for the repose of his soul and for our dear Assumption family."

(Dated January 18, 1895, by the same Sr. M. St. Vincent): Yesterday we accompanied to its final resting place the body of Fr. Brun whom we had had the consolation of seeing until his last moments. His features had not changed and he seemed to be already enjoying the repose of the saints.

From Tuesday afternoon until Wednesday evening he was laid out in the parlor of the family with whom he lodged. Prayers were continuous. The parlor was opened to anyone who wanted to visit and pray. All expressed their grief in touching terms. Father was greatly loved and esteemed by all who knew him.

At 9 o'clock in the evening, the casket was closed and brought to the Church of the Immaculate Conception. Fr. Edwards, vested in cope, received the body at the door. On the catafalque, the casket was again opened. The parish priests and parishioners remained the night in prayer.

Thursday morning we had the consolation of being next to Father during the Holy Sacrifice. All the Sisters received the Eucharist for the repose of his soul. The Office of the Dead, recited at 8:30, was followed by the Mass, sung by Fr. Edwards. The service was very solemn, and Father was treated as one of the parish priests. When Mother thanked Fr. Edwards, he replied that he had only done his duty. In the choir were 18 priests, among whom were two Dominicans, a Carmelite, and the Provincial of the French priests. Msgr. Corrigan, Archbishop of New York, gave the absolution.

The church was filled. Many religious congregations and institutions were represented: the Sisters of Bon Secours, the Little Sisters of the Poor, the Sisters of Mercy, the

Canadian Sisters, the Sisters of Charity and all their children, the Orphanage of Miss Lambert, the *Dames Servantes*, our Monicas, and many people among whom he had exercised his ministry of charity and devotion.

After the Mass, Fr. Edwards gave a brief eulogy of Fr. Brun, mentioning his life of silence and prayer, and the edification he himself had received from intimate conversations. He finished by wishing all of us a life as rich as his in order to deserve as beautiful a death.

At 11:30, after a last blessing, Fr. Edwards ordered the casket closed. Six Little Sisters accompanied it to the cemetery, (Calvary) some twelve miles from New York, and Fr. Edwards left only after everything was ended.

Fr. Brun lies next to our dear Sr. M. Euphrasie, at the foot of the Cross, in the spot he had chosen himself. We firmly believe that he is now in heaven, one more protector of our dear mission in America.

[NOTE: On November 18, 1905, Fr. Brun's remains were transferred from the plot of the Little Sisters to the adjacent plot that had been granted to the Assumptionists by the Trustees of St. Patrick's Cathedral. On May 15, 1987 he was re-interred in the Assumptionist plot in the cemetery of the Parish of St. Anne, in Sturbridge (Fiskdale), Massachusetts.]

The unforeseen death of Fr. Brun left the Little Sisters without an Assumptionist chaplain for some eight months. Meanwhile, they attended daily Mass at the parish church. On Sundays, a Dominican priest celebrated Mass in their chapel.

## 4. Early Chaplaincies in New York City



The companions that Fr. Brun had been promised docked in New York on Sunday, October 13, 1895. Fathers Amedee Oilier and Fulgence Moris along with Brother Macaire Duclos arrived aboard the *Gascoque*, having as their cabin-mate the Trappist abbot of Gethsemane in Kentucky. They were soon shown to their quarters at 312 West 15th Street. They knew no English. To make matters worse, they arrived when there was a considerable hostility against foreign religious priests on the part of the local clergy. Archbishop Corrigan did not like to see religious without an assignment. Fr. Fulgence was immediately named chaplain of the Little Sisters and Fr. Amedee became chaplain of the Lambert orphanage. We would suppose that they, coming to a country where English was the national language, would immediately give priority to learning the language. For many years, this was not the case, because many of those assigned to New York either had no intention of staying or hoped to be assigned to ministries where only French would be necessary.

We find this attitude from the very outset Fr. Fulgence expected to be recalled from his “exile” within a year and made no effort to learn English. On the other hand, Fr. Amedee studied so diligently that by January, 1896 he was able to hear confessions in English at the Orphanage. Writing to the Superior General in April, he said that it is erroneous to believe that because the Fathers serve French-speaking nuns they have no need to learn English. “On the contrary, it is essential that all the Fathers not only learn English but also become American citizens.” It followed that they should remain in the country for the time required to become naturalized. Thus did Fr. Amedee seek to counter the objections raised against foreign religious.

This first Assumptionist community was for a time to serve as a reception and transfer point for the religious assigned to Louisiana. Thus on November 7, 1895, arrived Fr. Ildefonse Causse. He was slim and very youthful looking, and unintentionally created a furor among the Little Sisters. They had learned that their chaplain, Fr. Fulgence, was

being sought by the Sisters of Bon Soeurs at 81st Street, and they feared that Fr. Ildefonse was his replacement. They were relieved when they saw him leave for Klotzville the following Monday, along with Bro. Macaire.

Fr. Amedee, casting about for new openings for his community, noted in a letter to Fr. Picard that Bishop Grand, of Nicolet in the Province of Quebec, would warmly welcome French religious able to give parish missions. "And this diocese is the source of many vocations. All he asks is five or six priests. So why not send the men who are leaving our missions in the Near East?" Nothing came of this suggestion, but it serves to underscore the desires of the Assumptionists in New York, namely to find new centers of apostolate and sources of additional vocations.

By September, 1896, Fr. Amedee, already quite proficient in English, had more work than he could handle. His companion limited his apostolate to French-speaking persons and otherwise spent all his time in his room. Repeated calls for reinforcements finally produced results since Fr. Picard announced the assignment of Fr. Venance Besset, who begged the General not to leave him too long in America. He arrived in New York on November 1, 1896, and as the oldest of the three priests he naturally assumed the duties and responsibilities of Superior until December 1, when Fr. Amedee received his official nomination as Superior.

The three priests, without any precise apostolate except chaplaincies and left pretty much to their own initiatives, soon disagreed. It was normal to expect such a diversity of opinion when one remembers that two of the three thought that their assignment was only temporary. Consequently the efforts of Fr. Amedee to establish meaningful contact with clergy and laity and to make the Assumptionists better known were viewed with jaundiced eyes. If he succeeded, the others might be forced to remain in their New York "exile."

Shortly after his arrival, Fr. Venance was ordered by Fr. Picard to set to work and learn English and was told, "... as for a recall, we'll consider that later." This was in answer to a letter criticizing the activities of Fr. Amedee, "who is not content to be chaplain of the orphanage. He visits the neighboring parishes, gets invitations to eat at these rectories several times a week.... He gives conferences with slides from the *Bonne Presse*, an activity which I judge unworthy of a priest. It is impolite and imprudent to visit rectories before receiving a formal invitation." So, while Fr. Amedee visits priests and delivers slide lectures, Fr. Venance spends ten hours daily learning English. As a result of an order from the General, Fr. Fulgence has also begun studying English.

Under such circumstances, Fr. Amedee would plead in vain for help from his brethren. They bluntly refused. "Anyway," said Fr. Venance, "my ambition is to go to Louisiana. Now, instead of ministering to poor blacks, I am living the comfortable life of a bourgeois in New York, with nothing to do."

Though they were few, they tried to have a bit of community life; they rose at a fixed hour and had meditation at 5:30 A.M. They noted that their duties in other communities prevented them from reciting the breviary in common. Always enterprising, Fr. Amedee learned that the chaplaincy of the Sisters of Bon Secours of Troyes was vacant and he asked the Chancery for permission to accept this position. This in no way pleased Fr. Venance, who interpreted the move as a maneuver to tie him down to the chaplaincy of the Little Sisters and thus cancel any chance of his going to Louisiana. In a letter dated December 22, 1896, he protested, and in great detail formulated his grievances against his Superior: Fr. Amedee goes out too often, visits even when uninvited, spends too much on lantern slides for his lectures, etc. Obviously things were not running smoothly, and Fr. Venance admitted that it would be hard to gain a foothold in New York, and that knowing English was essential. He concluded that the Assumptionists could not hope for parishes, nor preaching assignments, nor journalism. All that remained was education by means of an aluminate. Then he asks for a transfer.

Fr. Fulgence added his bit to the reports to the General, repeating much the same indictments, protesting over the accusation that he was planning to leave the Congregation. Yet, despite such carping criticism, the Fathers agreed that something more permanent and stable than chaplaincies was highly desirable.



## 5. St. Henry's Aluminate



Fr. Brun's friend, Fr. Edwards, was pastor of a large parish, but he was also a diocesan consulter with an office in the Chancery. Conversations between him and Fr. Venance touched upon the various apostolates of the Assumptionists in France. Learning about the special generosity of the alumnates, which kept on educating students until they were ready to enter major seminary or enter the congregation of their choice, he thought that such a foundation would be advantageous to the archdiocese. His proposal was simple: the Assumptionists would found such an institution beyond the city limits, while he would assure the recruiting of candidates and the financing. Moreover, in order to prepare candidates for an apostolate among the immigrants who were arriving in New York in large numbers, the students would be taught Italian, Spanish, and German. Fr. Fulgence could teach French and Fr. Venance, Latin. Fr. Amedee rejected the project, most probably because he thought that what Fr. Edwards wanted was a diocesan minor seminary.

By February, 1897, Fr. Venance received from the Chancery his appointment as chaplain of the convent of the Sisters of Bon Secours, located at the corner of Lexington Avenue and 81st Street. Moreover, Fr. Picard, acting upon the criticisms received, transferred Fr. Amedee to Louisiana. Regretfully he took the train, leaving his chaplaincy to an Irish priest.

The two remaining priests immediately began their attempts to found an aluminate according to the Assumptionist tradition. Fr. Venance had to travel each morning from 15th Street to 81st in order to say Mass for the sisters, so they naturally sought to establish the aluminate closer to this convent where the real estate was less expensive than in the 14th Street area. The Sisters found a place for them at 109 East 83rd Street. By June 4, 1897 Fr. Fulgence and Venance were living in this rented house, and a benefactor, Mr. Smith, had paid their rent for five months. Like many other brownstones of the period, it had been built for one family on a lot 100 x 25 feet, with windows only in front and back and side walls in common with adjacent buildings. The building itself was 60

feet deep and the rear yard was 40 x 25 feet. The top floor was turned into a dormitory for the students and living quarters for the maid/cook. On the third floor were rooms for the religious. The two lower floors were given over to classrooms, dining-room and kitchen, parlor and recreation room, and a small chapel. The Little Sisters helped furnish the essential linen and the kitchen utensils. If ever a foundation was started on a shoe string, this was it.

At the Chancery, the reaction was not too favorable. Fr. Edwards, who had previously encouraged them, was somewhat upset because the Fathers had begun without consulting him. The Archbishop politely encouraged their endeavor, gave it his blessing but no written approbation. He added that as soon as he established his own minor seminary, the aluminate would have to close. The Fathers saw in this a suggestion that they should look elsewhere, and their preference fell upon Brooklyn, just across the East River.

Meanwhile the new aluminate was being organized; by June, 1897, five or six lads had been recruited for the opening of classes in September. A "good French-Canadian widow" was hired as cook for \$12.00 a month. Continued recruiting became a problem; the clergy leaned heavily toward the Jesuits. The Fathers ranged farther afield, even to Providence, R.I. where two candidates were found. A third member for the staff of the school was requested from Fr. Picard. The first class was given on September 14, 1897, with seven boys in attendance: "two Franco-Americans, one Irish lad, and four Americans," at St. Henry's Clerical School.

The Assumptionists taught the Latin and French courses; two Marist Brothers took care of the courses given in English. In October, the expected third priest arrived, Fr. Omer Rochain. He was immediately loaded with work: 5 hours of English, 3 hours of French, 3 hours of Latin in addition to monitoring the study hall. Because of chaplaincies the priests were unable to assure Mass regularly in their own little chapel. The students attended Mass in the chapel of the Sisters at 81st Street where Fr. Venance was chaplain.

Fr. Venance sought other types of apostolate. Mindful of the opinions of Fr. Edwards, on September 18, he wrote to the Archbishop explaining that many Assumptionists were being forced to leave France and that some of them would be most happy to work in the Archdiocese among the Spanish or the Italians, or even both. This was, as far as our documentation allows us to discover, the first step ever taken by an Assumptionist in favor of the Spanish-speaking people of New York. The Archbishop accepted the proposal on the spot, saying that a written document with more details would be issued after the meeting of the Diocesan Council on October 2. Fr. Fulgence, who spoke Spanish,

wished to start by renting a hall for meetings and services. He estimated that expenses would be about \$4,000 a year, and from this humble start a church could later emerge. Its location would obviously depend upon the bishop.

As their aluminate had to remain in Manhattan, Bishop McDonnell of Brooklyn having turned down their request, the Fathers searched for larger quarters to accommodate an enlarged enrollment for the second year. They found what they wanted at 147 East 72nd Street, and Mr. Smith again accepted to foot the bill. They signed a two-year lease. The second year, the name of the school became St. Augustine's Clerical School. Only four students registered for the freshman class, and five returned for the sophomore year. Again the difficulty of recruiting was blamed upon the opposition of the clergy to "foreign religious." In fact they noted that some French religious returned to France because they could find no one who would accept them.

The Assumptionists now had plenty of work. They now had a third chaplaincy, with the Misericordia Sisters on East 86th Street. This helped finance the aluminate, but it required that the boys continue to attend Mass at the Sisters of Bon Secours. Ecclesiastical approval was not forthcoming; recruiting was hard; living quarters were inadequate. After one year, Fr. Omer bluntly concluded that the foundation was bound to fail. In December, 1898, Mr. Smith, their benefactor, left his wife and sailed for his "mistress" in Paris, abandoning the Fathers to their own efforts. By June, 1899, the situation was desperate. The anti-religious feeling of the local clergy became more evident when the Archdiocese closed all chapels of men and women religious to the public. Many communities replaced their foreign-born chaplains by priests of American or Irish ancestry. Thus Fr. Omer Rochain was replaced at Misericordia convent. He made the most of it by visiting Canada.

Once again, Fr. Edwards advised the Fathers to leave the city and establish themselves in the countryside. They refused. The third year of the aluminate was difficult, with only one freshman. Total enrollment was only five, distributed over three years. The loss of Mr. Smith's financial help made it impossible to cover all expenses. Another problem arose: two of the lads wanted to become Assumptionists, but there was nowhere to send them for training. In March, 1900, Fr. Venance bought a four-story building at 151 East 73rd Street for \$16,000. He did this without authorization from the Chancery because he thought they would refuse. In May, everyone, priests and students, moved in. During that summer, Fr. Omer, unoccupied and discouraged by the systematic opposition, asked for an assignment in Chile. Fr. Venance found this unfortunate, because two lucrative positions had just been found: one as a convent

chaplain and the other as week-end assistant at St Bernard's Parish at 330 West 14th Street. Fr. Omer therefore remained in New York.

In September, 1900, no new students and only two former students showed up for classes. In October, Fr. Venance closed the school. The Archbishop had just opened his minor seminary at Madison and 51st. Mindful of previous declarations, it was deemed wise to anticipate the desire of diocesan authorities.

Fateful 1900! February had seen the departure of four religious from Louisiana. The aluminate was closed in October. The religious remaining in New York sought other positions. Even during the short life of the aluminate, Fr. Venance used to give French lessons every Friday to the Archbishop's secretary. Through his contacts at the Chancery, he had become the French tutor of the son of the editor-in-chief of the *New York Tribune*. His visits to the Chancery made him known to several members of the staff, some of whom would later steer him in the direction of the Hispanic apostolate. A different and potentially more advantageous opening was explored a short time after the opening of the aluminate. On January 20, 1898, Fr. Venance noted that the elderly rector of the St. Jean-Baptiste Church would at his death leave an opening for a community that could take over the parish established in 1880 and which was the center of an active French-Canadian group. He asked the General to use his influence in Rome to obtain this parish for the Assumptionists. A formal request was sent to the Vatican on April 27, 1898, asking Cardinal Satolli to intercede in their favor with Archbishop Corrigan. Result: the Blessed Sacrament Fathers took over.

## 6. Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish



It is very difficult to establish just how many Hispanic Catholics resided in Manhattan at this time. The Fathers cited reports that gave totals varying from 15,000 to 50,000. United States census reports indicate that prior to 1903 the average number of Hispanic immigrants was about 500 per year. But in 1903, 2,080 entered. From that date until 1919, the annual average was 4,480, with men outnumbering women about 3 to 1.

In a report written for the Assumptionist General Chapter of 1912, it was noted that the first attempt to serve the spiritual needs of the Hispanic element by a Spanish secular priest met with little success. This priest was permitted to use the chapel of a community of nuns for a few hours on Sundays. The response was rather poor, the people through long years of neglect had lost the habit and the desire to attend church services. Discouraged, the priest moved to other activities. Early in 1883, Fr. Felipe Cardella, S.J., residing in the rectory of St Francis Xavier on West 16th Street, tried to serve and bring closer to the Church the Hispanics living in New York, many of them in his immediate neighborhood. He planned to group them in a Spanish church. Cardinal McCloskey agreed and on January 18, 1884, authorized this enterprising Jesuit to launch a drive to raise funds for the construction of this church which was to be called *Iglesia Catolica Espanola e Hispana-Americana*. The project was brought to the attention of several Ordinaries from Latin America as they passed through New York. They gave their wholehearted approval and blessing. Apparently, funds did not follow. Among those contacted were Don Jose Martin de Herrera y de la Iglesia, Archbishop of Santiago, Cuba; Bernardo Augusto Thiel, Bishop of Costa Rica; and Jose Telesforo Paul, Bishop of Panama.

The rosy future envisaged by Fr. Cardella failed to materialize, although he did collect some funds and obtained from the pastor of St. Francis Xavier the use of a large sub-church for those who answered his call. But he met with resistance resulting from years of neglect and absence of any contact with any parish church for prolonged periods.

When he died in 1893, no one took up the succession and the dream of giving the Hispanos a church of their own vanished with him.

In 1897, when the Assumptionists proposed to the Archbishop the idea of devoting themselves to a Hispanic apostolate, they were immediately encouraged to do so. However, it would be a few years before this dream became a reality. The Assumptionists realized that they needed a more definite apostolate. The aluminate could not remain in New York. Chaplaincies were not a guaranteed situation. They had failed to obtain an already organized parish (St. Jean-Baptiste). On the other hand, the Italian and Spanish groups offered a possibility because the local clergy was not caring for them sufficiently.

One of the deep desires of Archbishop Michael Corrigan was to establish in his polyglot diocese a church for these people, and he asked several religious Congregations to take over this apostolate, but without success. A few of the more influential members of the Hispanic colony, knowing that the Assumptionists were staffing flourishing missions in Chile, asked Fr. Venance Besset, the Superior of the Assumptionists in New York if his congregation would accept the direction of such a parish if it were offered. Fr. Venance advised his Superior General of this suggestion. The latter in turn contacted the Spanish Augustinians at the Escorial to see if they were interested. Because they had no personnel available at the time, they replied that they could not accept this disinterested proposal by the Assumptionists. The fact that there was in Spain at that time much resentment against the United States as a consequence of the Spanish-American war may have weighed heavily in the Augustinians' decision. The Assumptionist General then agreed to accept the mission and so notified Fr. Venance. He, in turn, in a letter dated September 17, 1901, advised Archbishop Corrigan that the Assumptionists would willingly accept apostolic work among the Hispanics.

The Archbishop's answer, dated October 4, 1901, said:

The Consultors were pleased to consider your proposition in regard to your Fathers to do our work for the Spanish speaking people in this Diocese, and approve of your intended purchase of 229 West 14th Street, to serve as a Church for Spanish speaking people, where you and your Fathers may preach in Spanish and administer the Sacraments to the Spanish speaking people. You may also hear the Confessions of all who go to the church for that purpose.

Wishing you every success in your efforts,

I remain, dear Father Besset,  
Yours sincerely,  
M.A. Corrigan  
abp. of New York

While awaiting the answers of the General and the Archbishop, and in anticipation of favorable ones, Fr. Venance had checked out the areas known to have more numerous groups of Hispanics. He found that the largest Spanish and Mexican groups resided in the area between 12th and 16th Streets, and between 6th and 8th Avenues. He hoped to buy one of the numerous Protestant churches that were being sold as their congregations moved uptown. But the asking price was far too high. After numerous visits and consultations, he zeroed in on a location: the brownstone of Miss Delmonico at 229 West 14th Street was available for 30,000 dollars. It was described as large and beautiful, on a major city street, and it could be altered to accommodate 200 to 300 persons.

With the encouraging letter of the Archbishop, the attitude of the community changed greatly; former letters had insisted upon difficulties but later ones looked to the future as promising. They requested from the General a loan of \$10,000 to supplement the \$20,000 they borrowed locally. They wanted to pay Miss Delmonico the \$6,000 down payment she requested, and planned to inaugurate the chapel by Christmas, 1901. The proposed name for the church was Our Lady of Seven Sorrows.

The much-desired additional personnel soon arrived. Fr. Isidore Gayraud transferred from Jerusalem to New York. Fr. Thomas Darbois, who had spent ten years in Chile, announced his arrival with Brother Felipe Uceda. Their arrival on December 31, 1901, brought the community to a total of six. But at this date the church site had not yet been purchased.

Fr. Venance's failing health had prompted him to ask for a replacement as Superior. Fr. Darbois was named Superior and quickly examined the various prospects and options. He decided to buy Miss Delmonico's house, and the sale was closed on January 12, 1902, at a cost of \$27,000. The community also decided to study the question of forming a legal corporation.

While modifications and preparations were going on at 14th Street, the religious were still living at 151 East 82nd Street. The first preoccupation of the new Superior was to impose upon the community a normal schedule. A week after his arrival, he could report that the Holy Office was recited in common. There was daily meditation and particular examen, and regular prayers before and after meals. Masses were said at prescribed moments. He further noted that as soon as they were living at 14th Street he hoped they would be able to return to more modest

standards of living. The widow who was their cook was to be replaced by Bro. Felipe, but complaints after only a few meals led the Superior to conclude that this was not necessarily a good change.

Wishing to avoid the mistakes and misunderstandings that had led to the disastrous termination of the Louisiana mission and the more recent closing of the aluminate, Fr. Darbois, in the time allowed, made a deep and serious study of the Hispanic situation in New York and especially in the area chosen for this apostolate. One conclusion was that all the priests, who were then French nationals, must immediately and diligently study Spanish and English. He decreed that even the older men with poorer memories must apply themselves to learning English.

The location of the church on West 14th Street did not please some of the wealthier Spanish families, who would have preferred its location nearer to them in the mid-western side of Manhattan. Fr. Darbois replied that, in compensation for this loss, we would be located in the very center of the poorer and less privileged classes. Despite opposition, he gained the respect and confidence of most of the Hispanic community.

The modifications of the first story of the Delmonico house, under the direction of the contractor, Mr. Muldoon, did not require much beyond the elimination of some walls separating the front rooms from those in back, thus creating a hall that occupied the entire first floor. Sunday, February 23, 1902, marked the official opening of the new but modest chapel, which was named Our Lady of Guadalupe. The Archbishop was supposed to bless the chapel, but as he was ill he sent his Vicar-General, Msgr. Mooney. The chapel was full, with about 200 people, including the Pastor of St. Bernard's Church, the Superior of the Blessed Sacrament Fathers, and the French and Mexican consuls.

It took only a few weeks for the Spanish-speaking population to attend services in slowly increasing numbers. The Fathers had been warned at the Chancery not to raise their hopes and expectations too high. If they succeeded in obtaining 25 Hispanics at regular Sunday services, they could count themselves very successful. Records show that the weekly Mass collections totaled \$20, which, considering the six Masses each Sunday, gives an average of 25 to 30 persons at each Mass. From the beginning, some of these were not Hispanic.

The first few months were hectic, to say the least. The community counted upon the revenues produced by the chaplaincies and the confessions of nuns, in order to live. Fr. Fulgence, who could have helped by preaching in Spanish, for some unknown reason refused to do so. He was confessor of the nuns at East 81st Street. The weekly trip, which required a transfer from the West side to the East side via the 42nd Street shuttle, so ruffled his feathers that the nuns, disliking his attitude,

asked for his replacement. To cap it all, the same Sisters asked that their chaplain, Fr. Venance, be changed also.

Fr. Darbois had hoped to sell the house on 82nd Street quickly, and thus decrease the debt at 14th Street. But the “For Sale” signs did not attract prospective buyers. The Assumptionists were now responsible for two houses, one owned by them and the other owned by the Archdiocese. The 82nd Street house had cost \$16,000 and only \$4,000 had been paid. The 14th Street house had cost \$27,000, plus several more thousands for furnishings, some of which had been advanced by the community and would have to be reimbursed by the parish.

To reach the numerous Hispanic people who ignored the existence of the new church, Fr. Darbois published the *Calendario Mensual*. Some 2,000 copies were printed and distributed throughout the city. To serve the people more effectively, a series of evening devotions were offered; a priest was to remain on duty throughout the day to receive those who presented themselves for consultation, advice, or confession. These customs lasted for more than 60 years, when the evening devotions were curtailed.

From the beginning of the parish, there was always the nagging problem of the proper balance between Spanish and English. What weight should be given to each? How did this relate to the apostolic obligation to serve everyone who came to the church? The problem became greater as the number of English-speaking persons increased. The Assumptionists had the permission to preach to and confess all who came. It seems that at the insistence of the General, and for his own protection, Fr. Thomas Darbois asked for a written document specifying these privileges. As a result, he was told to preach in Spanish and the priests dared not preach in English “for fear of antagonizing our neighbors east and west” (a clear reference to St. Francis Xavier and St. Bernard parishes). Yet, the educated Spaniards who listened to the sermons complained about the Spanish of Fr. Fulgence and Isidore Gayraud.

During the summer of 1902 the small community had internal troubles. On July 7, after a violent quarrel with Fr. Venance, Fr. Thomas Darbois relieved him of his responsibilities as Treasurer. The same day, Fr. Venance packed his bags and left, a canonical fugitive. Shortly afterwards, he was located living with the Fathers of the Blessed Sacrament. When contacted, he refused even to speak to his Superior, or to return to France. Fr. Isidore Gayraud, on his part, asserted that Fr. Picard had promised that he would have to stay in New York only one year. It was in such a turbulent atmosphere that first steps were taken toward a foundation in Granby (Holyoke) Massachusetts. We shall

consider that venture before returning to the Assumptionist work in New York City.

## 7. Granby



Rev. Charles Crevier, pastor of Precious Blood parish in Holyoke, Massachusetts, owned a large farm in nearby Granby. For a long time he had wanted a Congregation to establish an agricultural school there. Msgr. Marcel Dugas, pastor of St. Joseph parish, in Cohoes, N.Y., put him in contact with Fr. Thomas Darbois, Superior of the New York Assumptionists. On the eve of leaving for a trip to Europe, he had supper with the 14th Street community, and during the meal mention was made of the alummates as a kind of Assumptionist apostolate. Then and there, Fr. Crevier offered his house and farm in Granby for such an enterprise. Fr. Thomas was immensely pleased but said he could not make such a decision. He gave the pastor a letter of introduction to the Superior General in Rome.

After his return from Europe, he again contacted Fr. Thomas, seeking to spell out the details of establishing an Assumptionist community in the diocese of Springfield. On June 24, 1902, he offered the Fathers his 500 acre farm, 24 cows, various farm animals and machinery. He reserved for himself a dwelling and about seven acres as a summer camp. He indicated that if the Fathers abandoned the project the property would revert to him, or if he should have died, to the Bishop. He required that the Assumptionists offer a full range of courses, including philosophy and theology, along with a commercial, agricultural, and industrial school. Three priests and some lay-brothers are to arrive by September, in time for the harvest. The bill-of-sale will be signed once the religious have arrived in Holyoke. The official language of the establishment is to be French, although English may be taught, and the Superior can be only a Frenchman or a Canadian. Fr. Thomas sent Fr. Picard these conditions as signed by Fr. Crevier. Because he had been warned not to trust Fr. Crevier, Fr. Thomas asked the General not to assign religious until the land donation had been legalized before a notary. Fr. Picard judged that Fr. Thomas was too exacting, and he accepted the foundation in principle and began choosing the religious he would assign.

Meanwhile Bishop Thomas Beaven of Springfield indicated that he would be pleased to accept the Assumptionists in his diocese and that he would approve the Granby foundation as soon as Fr. Picard made the canonical request. Fr. Crevier was impatient; he wanted the foundation by August 15. On August 14, the required preliminary approval of the Granby foundation, duly signed by the Superior General, arrived in New-York, and the following day Fr. Thomas went to Springfield. Fr. Crevier received him warmly but remarked that the Bishop had raised some difficulties. According to him, the Bishop desired that the property belong to a corporation composed of the Bishop, the Superior, a diocesan priest and two laymen, who would become responsible for the administration of the enterprise. Father Thomas said he would accept such conditions for a parish but not for a work like that of Granby. When he heard of this, Bishop Beaven said he would give the situation more thought.

As he examined the psychological climate in Springfield, Fr. Thomas Darbois came to realize that there was a racial element mixed in with the religious problem. On October 4, 1902, he wrote to Fr. Emmanuel Bailly: "Groups of Canadians, unable to obtain from the Irish bishops priests of their own tongue, accept the propositions of interdicted priests and set up schismatic parishes. There are two in Springfield. (NOTE: These were Cheniquists. Under the leadership of the Canadian priest, Cheniqui, these groups gathered together the discontented and the violently anti-Irish.) "What also worries me in this affair is that the Bishop of Springfield may think that we are involved in this Canadian cabal, speak about it to his neighbor bishops, and thus close all doors to us. On the other hand, if I mention it clearly to the Bishop, he will not fail to make public my declaration. The pastor of Holyoke will be furious with us and we will lose the friendship of all the French-Canadian clergy."

On October 30, 1902, Bishop Beaven indicated to Fr. Thomas a new set of conditions under which he would approve the Granby foundation:

- 1) The property will be placed in the hands of the Assumptionist Fathers, on condition that the bishop and the Vicar-General be *ex officio* members of the Corporation.
- 2) The purpose of the institution will be industrial, commercial and agricultural.
- 3) The institution must not be devoted to the purpose of an orphanage.
- 4) The Fathers must not give themselves to parochial work unless invited to do so by the pastors with the

approbation of the Ordinary.

- 5) If after five years the conditions are such as to counsel the Fathers to abandon the work, they shall be free to do so.

The same privilege will be retained by the Ordinary of discontinuing the work, if it be thought advisable.

Either party must advise the other at least six months before the decision be put into effect.

Fr. Thomas raised some basic questions: No mention is made of an apostolic school. The Congregation commits itself to building. If the religious leave, who will pay the debts? During discussions, the Bishop remarked that he did not like Fr. Crevier's way of doing things. He himself remained somewhat mistrustful of religious. Weeks of polite negotiations followed and on January 10, 1903 Bishop Beaven sent Fr. Thomas Darbois the following letter:

As there seems to be no difficulty on the part of the Community in relation to the foundation at Granby, except the proprietorship, I am satisfied to allow the realty to be held absolutely by the Community, on one condition, viz:

that the Community contract no indebtedness and establish no indemnity during five years after their installation without the written approbation of the Ordinary.

This condition is suggested so that in the event of the Community ceasing for any reason to carry on the foundation, the diocese shall have had some share in determining the responsibilities arising from the cessation of the work.

If this meets the acceptance of the Community, there will be no difficulty about the Apostolic School, nor the independence of the Community in the administration of the property.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Thos. D. Beaven

Bp. of Springfield

Fr. Thomas requested from Fr. Crevier a letter ratifying the original promises because the General "Needs documents before acting." Bishop Beaven left for Rome on January 17, 1903. When he returned to Springfield, February 18, he brought the document from the Congregation of the Propagation of the Faith, dated January 29, 1903,

permitting the Assumptionists to open a religious house in his diocese, as an industrial school.

On March 11, Fr. Crevier wrote to Fr. Picard, urging him to accept Bp. Beaven's conditions, and adding that the deed to the property would be signed as soon as the religious were established in Granby. Thereupon, on April 3, 1903, Fr. Picard signed the contract for the foundation.

The religious assigned embarked at Le Havre in mid-April and arrived in New York on April 27. They were FF. Antoine Silberman and Marie-Elie Ladret and Brothers François Bourtembourg and Jean Despas. As Superior of the community, Fr. Antoine went to Granby on May 1. On Friday, May 5, the Bishop received him and in the course of their conversation mentioned with a trace of irony the "great enterprise." On Sunday, May 7, Fr. Crevier introduced Fr. Antoine to his parishioners at all the masses and announced the new foundation and the imminent arrival of additional religious. On May 8, FF. Isidore Gayraud and Marie-Elie Ladret and Brothers François Bourtembourg, Jean Despas, and Felipe Uceda, accompanied by Fr. Thomas Darbois, arrived in Granby. Fr. Marie-Joseph Laity, who was preaching a mission in Cohoes, would arrive on May 28.

Immediately they began to have problems with Fr. Crevier. They had to lodge in the farm house, where Fr. Crevier reserved the four best rooms for himself and his young nephew, Mr. Sainte Marie. Two other rooms were occupied by servants, leaving to the religious only two small bedrooms with no closet space, a dining room reached through the kitchen where the help ate, a parlor-recreation room, and a chapel which was "full when two people are in it" It became obvious that the religious would have to build. A small house with chapel, classrooms etc., large enough to take care of 40 youngsters would, it was thought, cost \$15,000. The Bishop figured that the cost would be greater, but authorized a loan of \$15,000. When the bids were opened on May 26, the lowest one quoted \$20,000. When Fr. Antoine mentioned this to Fr. Crevier, his response was, "Build or leave." He added that the lay brothers were incompetent farmers.

Fr. Antoine characterized Fr. Crevier as "our volatile benefactor," and the fact was that week by week the pastor diminished his gifts to the foundation: he reserved for himself 50 acres of the best farmland, instead of the seven he had said; and he kept the only well available to water the cattle. His continued presence and that of his nephew in a house with limited space was annoying. On May 26, Fr. Antoine wrote: "If this is a sample of his behavior, we can expect difficulties. In my judgment an agricultural school on this farm is impossible. My regret is that no competent authority examined this project before five religious were sent

from France. The pastor has not signed his contract yet, despite his promise to sign as soon as the religious had arrived.”

This rather pessimistic report determined Fr. Emmanuel Bailly to tell Fr. Thomas Darbois, on June 15, 1903, to take the Granby foundation in hand. Henceforth Fr. Antoine would take orders from Fr. Thomas, who was of the opinion that any and all sacrifices must be accepted in order to gain a foothold in Springfield and establish an aluminate for religious vocations. On June 18, the pastor showed the Assumptionists a new contract, in English, with very different conditions. When Fr. Antoine expressed surprise, the pastor said. “Yes, the contract is different, but it will remain such. Take it or leave it.”

After criticizing everyone and everything, Fr. Crevier left for Canada, but not before declaring that if construction by the Assumptionists had not begun by July 20 the contract would be null and void.

One of the first acts of authority of Fr. Thomas was to send Fr. Antoine to ask the Bishop for permission to obtain a loan. Meanwhile the pastor’s nephew kept interfering in the running of the farm, even contradicting the orders and directives of the Superior. When Fr. Crevier returned from Canada on June 27 he presented Fr. Antoine a fantastic set of new conditions: the Assumptionists had to keep 25 cows, 4 horses, 100 chickens, keep the farm machinery in working order, cultivate the land in such a way that all the manure was used. If they should depart, they should leave no debt, no mortgage. They would have to pay him \$500 for each year they stayed. By June 28, even Fr. Thomas had to admit that things were getting worse day by day. On July 1, Fr. Antoine wrote that the pastor was imposing “new, impossible conditions. He wants me to live in a small new house built by myself, all alone. It’s over. *Timeo Canadianos et dona ferentes*” He says. The total value of the property, land, buildings, livestock is \$3,780. And we are asked to spend \$20,000. Under such conditions, I have refused to sign any and all such terms. Whereupon Fr. Crevier announced that he will keep his farm.” The Assumptionists packed their bags and left Granby on July 4, 1903. It had been a sad enterprise, lasting barely two months!

Before leaving the diocese, Fr. Thomas and Antoine called upon the Bishop at the Chancery only to discover that he was absent for a few hours. When they returned later, the Vicar General said the Bishop, informed by telephone about what had occurred at Granby, said he could not receive them before Monday noon. As it was then Saturday morning, the Fathers concluded that the Bishop had no real desire to see them. So they left the same day for New York.

Fr. Thomas later wrote to the Bishop, deploring the events leading up to the departure from Granby and laying the blame at the feet of Fr.

Crevier. He further explained that the men assigned there were really competent. Fr. Antoine, the Superior, had for some 20 years presided over agricultural enterprises. Fr. Marie Emile and the three Brothers were all from farming families and had spent their early years as working farmers. The foundation required professors. The Superior had sent two experienced teachers, one a professor of college sophomores and the other a former professor of philosophy. Both were Doctors of Philosophy and Theology from Rome. In the name of the Superior General, Fr. Thomas asked for some other apostolic work in the diocese. They were ready to accept some sort of center from which missionaries could radiate to help the local pastors by preaching retreats or by week-end ministry. Alongside they might have an apostolic school. In reporting to the Superior General, Fr. Thomas added that he truly expected very little in the way of a favorable response. In his answer dated July 6, Bishop Beaven wrote: "I feel very keenly the situation at Granby, and regret exceedingly the outcome. I hope in a few days to give you an answer in relation to your request." As we shall see later on, this was an important promise.

## 8. More on Our Lady of Guadalupe



Ideally, historians would like to be able to treat a topic completely, all at once. As that is impossible, we must now return to the story of the community at Our Lady of Guadalupe, remembering that some of the threads of this story come from the Louisiana and Granby foundations while others lead to foundations of Our Lady of Esperanza and Worcester, MA.

We remember also that Fr. Thomas Darbois was the Superior at Guadalupe. He was a strict disciplinarian, steeped in the traditions of the early Assumption when poverty and hard work walked hand in hand. He tried to implant these traditions in his community. Most Assumptionists were anxious to implant the concept of alummates wherever they labored. Even Fr. Brun, a few months prior to his untimely death, had stressed the possibility of an alummate in the New York archdiocese, just as thirty years before, in Australia, he had dreamed of an alummate there. The Fathers in Louisiana had also dreamed of one. Fr. Thomas had been deeply affected by the failure of the Rengo alummate while he was Superior in Chile, and he was deeply distressed by the closing of Granby. Favorable openings for apostolic work had to be found for the religious under his care, while at the same time the parish of Guadalupe had to be developed. With this in mind, he asked Fr. Picard for reinforcements, specifying that he needed someone who could not only help but if need be even replace him in the Spanish ministry. He suggested the name of Fr. Adrian Buisson whom he had known in Chile. During this same time he examined and rejected the offer of the Bishop of Chilapa in Mexico, especially because “Mexico is living under a government of persecution.”

By September 1902, Fr. Thomas had opened a parochial school. The neighboring Sisters of Jesus-Mary at 251 West 14th Street staffed a kindergarten and the two first years of grammar school. Fr. Thomas noted that most of the children were Irish; the Hispanics were being reached primarily through the weekly bulletin.

On October 30, 1902, the personnel so urgently requested arrived in New York: FF Georges Demiautte, Conrad Ketels, and Ange Vermesch. The last two stayed in the country only about one year, but for the time being there were eight religious in New York.

On September 15, 1902, John Farley had become Archbishop of New York, after the death of Archbishop Corrigan. On December 14, the feast of Guadalupe, he came to sing a High Mass in the small chapel, and stayed for dinner after. Among the other guests was the Jesuit pastor of St. Francis Xavier, "who does not seem to hold ill feelings against us because of our school. The Archbishop suggested that the chapel needed enlarging and also a more dignified appearance. Fr. Thomas agreed; he was not at all satisfied with the small chapel fashioned from two rooms on 14th Street. It was evidently too small and destined to be replaced either by an enlarged church on the same site or by another church, possibly one of the Protestant churches which were for sale. For some time the Assumptionists had been convinced that Hispanic groups living on the West side between 90th and 115th did not come to their services because of the distance, four to five miles. In March, 1903, Fr. Omer, who had previously complained of lack of work, wrote: "Since twelve months the situation in New York has changed completely. The community is more numerous and the parish is growing. We have an active Spanish apostolate and we have hopes of establishing ourselves uptown away from the commercial centers. We are hoping to be able to buy a Presbyterian church on 116th Street, where we have been advised to go. This could be a second Spanish parish. At first we lacked work. Now we are overworked." Fr. Thomas mentioned that this church could hold 600 people whereas the 14th Street chapel's maximum capacity was 150. The asking price was \$65,000, but the Treasurer of the Chancery thought it could be obtained for \$30,000. In mid-April the Superior General granted permission to transfer Our Lady of Guadalupe uptown, and Fr. Thomas sent to the Chancery a request to do so. The request was acknowledged by the Secretary of the Archbishop, and the Fathers were asked to visit the district, get the names and numbers of the Spanish families there, and present this information to the Archbishop before the meeting of the Diocesan Consultors on Wednesday, May 6.

Fr. Thomas was pleased and encouraged by this reply since he believed that the chairman of the bishop's commission was favorable, at least in principle. He learned also that in case of a favorable reply the diocese would purchase the property and permit the parish to transfer to it. But the answer, dated June 5, 1903, was final and killed all hopes of moving uptown: "The Diocesan Consultors, at their meeting on last Wednesday, decided that it would not be opportune at present for the Church of Our Lady of Guadalupe to move uptown. Permission,

therefore, to purchase the property described in your application is denied.”

We noted above that Fr. Thomas had requested the help of Fr. Adrian Buisson. He arrived on May 10, 1903. Among his first remarks, he said that there was not enough work to occupy all his days and he bewailed the absence of a nice church. Fr. Thomas shrewdly took care of the work problem: he absented himself for several months, trying to find work in Massachusetts for his religious. We shall have more to say about this in a moment.

The summer of 1903 was busy enough for everyone. Fr. Thomas, whenever he was there, could not preach, because of a throat infection; but he continued to prepare articles for the *Calendario*. Fr. Fulgence and Fr. Omer Rochain took care of the English ministry and confessions, and Fr. Fulgence helped with Spanish confessions which had become numerous. So far, weddings, baptisms, and funerals were not numerous. During the frequent absences of Fr. Thomas and Omer in Worcester, and the week-end absence of Fr. Fulgence at St. Bernard's parish, Fr. Adrian now complained of the necessity to foresee carefully so that sufficient priests were available for the ministry at Our Lady of Guadalupe. “At times,” he said, “our little chapel was crowded with people coming for confession and only Fr. Georges was there, and he barely able to understand a little English.”

By September, Fr. Omer Rochain had to take a lengthy rest away from New York; his doctor feared that the debilitating climate there would bring about tuberculosis, which was rampant in Father's family. Fr. Ange Vermesch was soon to ask for exclaustation in order to give financial aid to his mother. Nonetheless the Assumptionists were chaplains in four communities: the Little Sisters on East 15th Street, the Little Sisters on 130th Street, the Jesus-Mary nuns, and St. Zita's on 52nd Street.

Repeated complaints by neighboring pastors now began to bear bitter fruit. Archbishop Farley decided to close the Guadalupe parochial school, and to transfer the Sisters to an Italian school. This move, along with the refusal to allow the move of the church uptown, left the community with the feeling that it did not rate very high with diocesan authorities.

Fathers Antoine Silberman and Conrad Ketels were recalled to Europe. After the beginning of the Worcester foundation in 1903, the surplus personnel situation of mid-1903 became in mid-1904 a shortage. The priests at Guadalupe felt that they could no longer guarantee the chaplaincy of the Jesus-Mary nuns, and the nuns were advised that their chaplaincy would cease in October, 1904. Mother Letellier turned to the Jesuits, and thus was terminated an arrangement whereby in exchange

for the chaplaincy the Sisters took care of the altar linens, provided the needed hosts, and paid \$15 a month. It also seems to have generated a misunderstanding, culminating in a small melodrama at the Chancery.

Fr. Thomas wrote on January 9, 1905: "To my great surprise, one day I was summoned to appear before the Archbishop with Mother Letellier. The Bishop addressed us in this manner, 'I have learned that the Sisters of Jesus-Mary have dismissed their extraordinary confessor, a Father of Mercy; and their chaplain and ordinary confessor, an Assumptionist Father, and that since two months Jesuit Fathers have assumed the duties of chaplain, ordinary confessor, and extraordinary confessor, all without my permission, and without jurisdiction. Such an abuse is intolerable and I wish to know the cause.' Mother Letellier spoke. I gave my explanation. The Bishop concluded: 'I regret to say that in all this the superior of the nuns has acted badly and is solely responsible. So I decide that she will, herself, present a letter to the former extraordinary confessor asking him to resume his duties, and that the Assumptionists will resume their post as chaplain.' I accepted. Mother Letellier then asked to speak to the Bishop privately. I had not yet put on my overcoat and overshoes when the Bishop returned to say to me: 'Renounce, I beg you, all your rights as chaplain to the Sisters of Jesus-Mary. If you do not, you will place me in a very uncomfortable situation.' This I did."

It was in such an atmosphere of suspicion that Fr. Thomas violently reacted when he heard, in May, 1905, that the Sisters were moving right next door, into 225-227 West 14th Street, into the very house he hoped to buy for the parish. He was scandalized at the thought that a simple six-foot wooden fence would be the only separation between the two communities. In our day, we are apt to smile at the exaggerated fears of Fr. Thomas. He was a firm believer in the observance of clouture for and by all. As was usual at that time of highly centralized government, he reported his fears to the General, Fr. Emmanuel Bailly, who apparently directed him to make a formal complaint to the Chancery. In order to check the facts, the Vicar-General visited and declared that he saw no inconvenience for the Fathers because a boarded wall separated the inner courts of the two communities; each community had its own entrance. The Vicar-General added: "If you are dissatisfied, you can always ask the Bishop to move out." Fr. Thomas solved the problem as far as he was concerned by forbidding his community the use of the small yard at the back of the building. Some resentment followed because the yard was the only place where the religious could sit and talk quietly and privately, breathing air unladen with street dust. Fr. Thomas was probably just a bit paranoid: he saw in this recent purchase by the Sisters a devious plot by the Jesuits who now were the nuns' chaplains. In

reality the purchase had been made with the intention of erecting a nine-story boarding house as a refuge for young, single Catholic girls. Fr Thomas suspected that the nuns' chapel, upon becoming public, would attract people away from Guadalupe church. Events were to prove otherwise; the house of Our Lady of Peace would contribute to the attendance at the Church until the nuns closed and sold their residence.

The popularity of the little Guadalupe chapel, with its numerous daily masses and a priest on duty in the office all day long, attracted many non-Hispanic persons. This caused protests by pastors and curates of some other parishes. Thus, a priest of St. Bernard's declared one Sunday, in the presence of a week-end Assumptionist helper, that the place of the Irish was not with the religious of the Spanish church. During the summer of 1904, three Assumptionists were told by curates from that parish that Our Lady of Guadalupe was encroaching upon their parish and that they could expect to have complaints sent to the Chancery. Fortunately the pastor disapproved of such intemperate attacks. But the pastor of St Francis Xavier vented his anger against his parishioners who frequented the Spanish church.

Commenting upon these attacks, Fr. Thomas added that "Msgr. Lavede at the Chancery seems to dislike the Assumptionists." He also wrote: "Fr. O'Flynn of St. Joseph's is bitter and accuses us of binating without permission and of confessing persons without knowing English. He even threatened to consult Rome in order to prevent us from opening a chapel so close to his church." But all this in no way stopped Fr. Thomas who went ahead with his plans to develop the parish. The property on East 82nd Street owned by the community was still for sale. With the proceeds, Fr. Thomas wanted to buy the house adjacent to the church, at 231 West 14th Street. Should this be impossible, he proposed to extend the chapel back to the end of the lot and transform one floor above the chapel into a large parish hall. Such a chapel could seat 400, and would be more agreeable to the faithful, provided of course that it be well ventilated and be two stories high. This would require purchase of 227 West 14th Street, creating a large but manageable debt.

Convinced by the success of the *Bonne Presse* in Paris that publications could be an effective means of apostolate, Fr. Thomas planned to publish a bulletin for the purpose of "fostering vocations and bringing in alms." He hoped to have his presses rolling by October, 1903. They would be operated by Ploermel Brothers who had offered their services through Fr. Emmanuel Bailly the preceding June. Their offer had been accepted, and rooms were prepared for three Brothers. They arrived in October, 1904, knowing no English. One month later the necessary printing equipment had been purchased and installed. Incidentally, after a few short years, the Ploermel Brothers were recalled

by their Provincial Superior and the printing equipment was sent, August 21, 1914, to Assumption College in Worcester, MA. Under the active direction of Bro. Armand Goffart, these presses served the purpose of the College until the tornado of June 9, 1953 spread pieces over thousands of square yards of the campus, for a total loss.

In May, 1904, the Superior General, Fr. Emmanuel Bailly, made his first Canonical Visitation at Our Lady of Guadalupe. The usual "Visitation Letter" that he left on May 23 deals, sometimes even in small details, with the life style expected of the religious. The main points treated are: 1) the community, i.e. the sanctification of the religious, 2) the apostolate and the parish, 3) social relations 4) temporal affairs. Fr. Bailly told the religious: "Let us prepare the way, study, pray, and above all boldly plan what Assumption can do here to expand the reign of Christ. For example, education in the field of alumnates, colleges, day-schools, professional schools, various publications...."

In November, 1904, Archbishop Farley made to the Synod the following declaration: "The priests of the Spanish parish have requested that I ask the pastors of other parishes to send them the addresses of the Spaniards living in their territory. I beg of you to accede to this request. I have fervently desired this Spanish parish whose success is unfortunately not too great. I wish to inform you that at the helm of this parish are very zealous men who are doing all they can possibly do and who are willing to devote their lives to this project. Please send them the addresses of those Spaniards who attend no church." Fr. Thomas was encouraged by this, but by early February Archbishop Farley dampened considerably any enthusiastic plans for a move uptown or for a new construction. Because of low attendance records at the church and its limited receipts, he objected at first to the payment of three salaries by the parish: \$800 for the pastor and \$600 for each of two assistants. When he had been apprised of the number of daily masses and of the way the daily work was organized, he admitted that the salaries were justified, but he added in no uncertain terms, "Pay your debts!"

They were able to make some payments because in January, 1905, they received an unexpected gift of \$2,000, because they were once again chaplains of the Bon Secours Sisters on 81st St., because of weekend ministry at St. Bernard's, and in August they were finally able to sell the 82nd Street property for \$16,000, with a net profit of \$6983. In May, Fr. Thomas had asked the Archbishop for permission to renovate the chapel: "Persons who attend services in our poor chapel have asked me to make some repairs and changes in it. In fact it is none too neat and still less comfortable. An expense of at least \$1,000 will have to be made. I beg Your Excellency to authorize this. As I promised you, we have reduced the amount due on the mortgage by \$5,000, on March 1. So

actually the church debt totals \$26,000. Without increasing it we could make the changes for which I am asking permission. Of course, you must be the sole judge as to whether or not the circumstances are favorable.” In a document that bears no date, the Archbishop granted the permission.

At this time the Fathers had a petition bearing some 800 signatures of Hispanic people, once again asking that the Church be relocated uptown, in the vicinity of 90th Street. The petition was held back for fear of unfavorable reactions. Fr. Thomas was gradually beginning to lean away from a simple beautification job and favoring either a new location or an enlargement of the building toward the rear. The active parishioners insisted on larger quarters and were intent on presenting to the bishop the petition held in abeyance. They were saying in effect, what we have here was sufficient for a beginning; now that the time has come to move ahead we will help. There are only two confessionals, no sacristy, the altar is pitiful and there are even water stains on the ceiling. Finally Fr. Thomas came to a decision: he would remain on 14th Street, deepen the church, acquire another house to lodge the religious, and especially he would avoid going too deeply into debt for the parish.

Besides the problems involved in enlarging the church, Fr. Thomas had other problems, especially personnel problems. We must remember that during this period the Assumptionists had begun another foundation in Worcester, that would eventually develop into Assumption College, and this required personnel. Fr. Thomas Darbois’ suggestions for personnel assignments went thus:

Fr. Adrian Buisson to remain at 14th Street.

Fr. Omer to be assigned outside New York, because of his health problems.

Fr. Fulgence should be sub-prior at 14th Street, but he refuses to accept any responsibility.

Besides these, he would like to have: Fr. Tranquille Pesse, Fr. Aurelien Buhner, Fr. Marie-Emile Ladret and one other.

For Worcester, Fr. Thomas proposes:

Fr. Symphorien Terraz, as Superior

FF. Gunfrid Darbois and Hydulphe Mathiot as missionaries

Fr. Omer Rochain for parish work

FF. Isidore Gayraud and Donat Cordier, and a Ploermel Brother, as teachers.

Fr. Ange Vermesch (who requests exclaustation) and

Fr. Marie-Joseph Laity should, as far as he is concerned, remain in France.

Finally he suggests that the title "Superior of the Missions" be suppressed.

The request and plans for changes in personnel had some unfortunate consequences. Fr Adrien Buisson was to be recalled. This sparked a blistering letter from Fr. Fulgence Moris to Fr. Bailly protesting that such a move would remove the kingpin of Spanish activities at 14th Street. "If Adrien leaves, two years of intense contact work and the result of innumerable visits will be lost. He speaks Spanish fluently. As to the others, New York is no place to learn Spanish. With Fr. Adrien we do quite well, but what we really need is more priests who know and speak Spanish well. I suppose this recall of Fr. Adrien was prompted by adverse reports by some undesirables in our community. Our need for Fr. Adrien is great." The result was that Fr. Adrien stayed in New York. On October 22, 1905, there arrived Fr. Tranquille Pesse (also known as Pesse), who was to become Superior of Worcester, and Fr. Symphorien Terraz, aboard the *Touraine* as second class passengers. Fr. Terraz wrote;" Here I am on American soil for a second time. The residence in New York is far more regular and fervent than the one I visited in 1898 on my way to Louisiana. With Fr. Aurelien (Buhrer) I'll be attending English classes two hours each evening."

Briefly let us return to the project of enlarging the Guadalupe chapel. The plans were ready by September, 1905. The cost would be almost \$9,000, causing Fr. Thomas to hesitate a moment. Finally the go-ahead signal was given, and throughout the fall and winter work continued, apparently to the satisfaction of those who frequented the chapel, for they increased in number. The addition to the back of the chapel extended into the courtyard of 229 14th, and would wonderfully solve the problem of the wooden fence between the two communities. By eliminating the yard! The chapel would still be an oblong room some 13 feet high, with a flat ceiling. A small sacristy was located behind the main altar, behind a wooden screen. Work was completed by April, 1906.

This is probably as good a place as any to interrupt our story of Our Lady of Guadalupe, in order to follow another thread of Assumptionist activity that leads to Worcester after the closing of the Granby venture.

## 9. Assumptionists in Worcester



After the closing of Granby, Bishop Beaven had written to Fr. Darbois that he would “in a few days” give him an answer to his request for some other kind of work for the Assumptionists in the Springfield diocese. Throughout the long weeks of July, 1903, the Assumptionists waited in vain for word from the Bishop.

Some of the Franco-American clergy opposed the coming of the Assumptionists; they feared the loss of their parishes to them. Some said in effect, “These damned Frenchmen, they’ll turn to English and anglicize our people, as the La Salette Fathers did in Hartford, in obedience to Bishop (Michael) Tierney.” Still, fed by continuing immigration, parishes were growing, and several pastors, setting aside all prejudices, called upon the Assumptionists for aid. Some even became temporary curates: Fr. Marie-Joseph Laity in Cohoes, and Fr. Isidore Gayraud at Notre Dame des Canadiens in Worcester. Some were scheduled to preach Lenten retreats for 1904. Fr. Thomas was residing in the rectory of Fr. Brouillet, in Notre Dame parish, when he heard that two Franco-American pastors might be able to obtain for him permission to open an aluminate, with public chapel. But they wanted the Assumptionists to promise that they would not accept any French parishes.

On September 23, 1903, Fr. Thomas, still lodging in Fr. Brouillet’s rectory, perceived a glimmer of hope, the Bishop gave him oral permission to establish a house for missionaries in Worcester. Fr. Thomas immediately sought a residence, and within few days announced he had found a twelve-room house on a five acre lot. The barn could serve as chapel. Because of the distance from Worcester, he gave up any thought of settling in Shrewsbury. On September 27, 1903, he wrote to the General: “You are recalling FF. Antoine, Conrad, Isidore. What shall we do? I am postponing their departure until we get a confirmation of your order, because now that we are in Greendale you may change your decision. I would like to stay here six or seven months to set things up. I don’t want Granby all over again. Could Fr. Isidore be Superior here?”

When the Superior General was advised of these plans, he thought that Fr. Thomas was acting too hastily and told him to obtain written permission from the Ordinary and the Congregation before acting.

Thereupon, Fr. Thomas wrote to Bp. Beaven asking for a document authorizing the Assumptionists to establish in the Greendale section a residence for missionaries and an apostolic and industrial school. An answer dated October 8, 1903, stated: "In reply to your letter of the 5th inst., the Rt. Rev. Bishop wishes to state that he is of the opinion that a written permission from him to purchase is not necessary. As the Holy See has approved your coming to the Diocese, you are free to go ahead and make arrangements for settlement in Greendale."

Fr. Thomas must have sought further specifications because on October 29, 1903, Bp. Beaven wrote:

We are quite satisfied that it would be more in accord with practical wisdom to establish a house at Greendale for Missions, and not forestall the future by determining the prospective works of the Community.

Whenever in the future it is opportune to open an Apostolic College, or begin the work of an industrial or Commercial school, these enterprises could be considered with better results.

For the present, we shall notify the Propaganda that the Industrial School with the Apostolic College heretofore located at Granby has been abandoned and that a petition for a new location has been presented by the Fathers of the Assumption for the establishment of a Mission house at Greendale.

Fr. Thomas Darbois then sought high and low to find a suitable property in Greendale. On November 1, 1903, he wrote to Fr. Bailly: "I haven't yet signed anything here in Worcester so you have no reason to worry that I will act hastily or without permission. In Greendale I have found a ten-room house on a lot 35 X 120 meters. That will be our missionaries' residence. By our work we will be able to pay for the house rapidly, then we will be able to build the aluminate, a work that the Bishop authorized in Granby, and orally for Worcester. Yesterday, when he heard we were buying a house, he sent me a letter indicating some restrictions." (Fr. Brouillet had asked that the Assumptionists have a public chapel where his parishioners could go, because from Greendale it was four miles to his church. The pastor would get the pew rents while the Assumptionists would keep the collections. The Bishop refused to grant this permission.)

On November 5, 1903, Fr. Thomas wrote: “Today we are owners in Worcester of a house we paid \$6,500 for. Worcester agrees with me; my throat no longer gives me much trouble.”

Many years later, when he had become the First Assistant to the Superior General of the Congregation, Fr. Thomas penned his own account of the discovery of the Greendale property. It appeared in the *Almanack de l'Assomption* for 1926 (the December, 1925 issue of *L'Assomption*, the magazine of Assumption College.) Because we think that the story, as told by its prime actor, is interesting and important, we give here the pertinent passages, in translation:

On the top of the slope where Assumption College now stands [the pre-tornado location in Greendale] was a modest farmhouse and a few run-down auxiliary buildings. Fr. Brouillet wanted us to buy it immediately. The price scared us at first. They asked \$12,000, then \$10,000. We had available only half that amount. Also, extensive repairs would have been required. Despite Fr. Brouillet's insistence, the religious, in the name of poverty, refused to go into debt to such an extent. Coming back down the hill, we saw, about half way down, a little cottage with hermetically closed windows. It looked good and we were envious. Nothing indicated that the property was for sale, so for many long weeks we sought elsewhere. Fr. Brouillet generously continued to shelter the future founders, who had refused to accept his advice. “Never,” he told them, “will you find a better place than I indicated to you in Greendale. The city is expanding in that direction. What you don't buy today for \$10,000 will cost you \$20,000 tomorrow and \$30,000 the day after.” He didn't fear financial responsibilities accepted out of love for God.

We lacked his apostolic audacity. In the whole region of Worcester we visited every available property. Nothing satisfied us. The Bishop of Springfield was not so patient as the pastor of Notre-Dame. The presence in Worcester of a couple of priests seeking vainly to found a school was making people restless. Bp. Beaven wrote a letter to the Assumptionists telling them that if in two weeks they had not left the Notre-Dame rectory and obtained a place of their own, the diocese would be closed to them. Fr. Brouillet was deeply upset by this ultimatum and once again insisted that the Assumptionists accept the property which he had originally pointed out to them. With the Assumptionists whom he continued to advise and treat

most generously and with their New York brethren, he prayed that the foundation which he earnestly desired for the benefit of Canadian youths in New England might be launched.

We returned to Greendale to re-examine everything. As we again passed the closed cottage, we still admired it and regretted that we could not acquire it. Curiosity impeded us to walk all around it. Then, as if in answer to our prayers, we discovered in the grass, where the wind had blown it, a post with a 'For Sale' sign. Fervent thanks to God sprang from our hearts. That same day, our real estate agent, Mr. Alexander Belisle, got in contact with the owner and we purchased the house. It was brand new and had radiators for central heating in every room. The people who had built it had lived there only a few months, frightened by a bereavement that had struck them a few weeks after they had moved in.

The asking price we could afford. Mr. Belisle, the lawyer, drew up the contract and had it notarized and we had our own dwelling, only days after Bishop Beaven's threatening letter. Not counting the basement, there were ten rooms, each independent from the others. It was a miniature monastery. In the bay window of the living room, which could be closed off by folding doors except when used for religious services, we set up an altar dedicated to Our Lady of the Assumption. The room was large enough to hold fifteen to twenty people.

The chapel and the house were blessed at the beginning of Lent, 1904, with Fr. Brouillet as the bishop's representative. Winter in Worcester that year was very harsh. Early in the morning, the person preparing for the blessing ceremony tried to light the furnace. Because he could not get the fuel to ignite, he threw in some gasoline. The gas fed on a few glowing coals. A terrible explosion occurred, with immense flames shooting out of the furnace and threatening the bare beams supporting the entire house. The danger lasted only an instant, and all the flames did was singe some hairs of the Father's black beard. The coal in the furnace ignited and soon heat filled the entire house. The devil, fearing all the good that would be done by the nascent school, wanted to destroy it at the outset, but Providence foiled his malice. The tiny cottage blessed by Fr. Brouillet subsequently became the convent of the wonderful Sisters of St. Joan of Arc. They continue the

prayers begun in 1904, and their life is offered in the service of the sons of Canadian families in New England.

By their ministry in parishes and religious communities where they had been invited to serve, the founders of the Greendale school were working at its development [NOTE: On December 10, 1903, the Assumptionists began serving as chaplains to the Sisters of Notre-Dame de Namur, at 555 Plantation Street, referred to as “the Lake,” a chaplaincy that continues even now.) They sought to purchase a second house right next to the first one, where they could install the school. They got in touch with its Protestant owner. During the course of the conversation, he spoke of his astonishment over the fact that we were unmarried. He understood nothing about the superior life of zeal and apostolic independence which was the basic reason for our celibacy. He claimed that wedded life was essential to man’s happiness. He was married but his condition brought him no bliss. One morning, we regretfully learned that he had hanged himself. It was after this sad event that we purchased his house. We built a connecting corridor to the first house and prepared to launch a prospectus for students.

God wanted something even greater for the service to French-Canadians. In 1905, Msgr. Brochu, protonotary apostolic and pastor in Southbridge, invited us to preach the Lenten series in his parish. During forty days various groups of his parishioners came to hear God’s word. The pastor was very satisfied with the results. He paid the missionaries very generously and promised a substantial gift for the Greendale enterprise. At his death he left us \$10,000, with which we began construction of the College of Our Lady of the Assumption. This outstanding benefactor deserves to remain in the memory of all the generations that will use the building which his generosity enabled us to build.

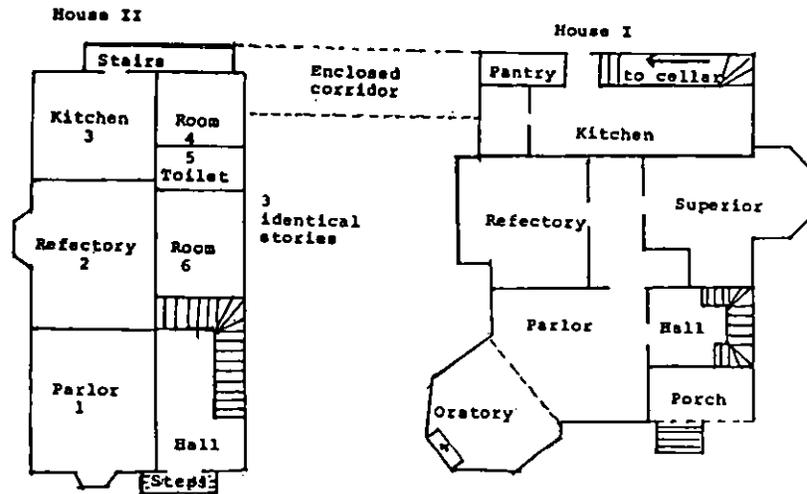
He had imitators. We were able to purchase the original house pointed out to us by Fr. Brouillet, and a large part of the Greendale valley is now ours. May additional generosity allow the enlarging of the building so that we may be able to receive a thousand students. We will teach them, along with the love of God, the love of their Canadian homeland and of the wonderful French language, so clear, so precise, so rich in masterpieces.

In the above account, written many years after the events, Fr. Thomas may have been slightly inaccurate. The written archives of the Worcester community indicate that it was on November 21, 1903, that Fr. Brouillet blessed the house, not as Fr. Thomas remembers at the beginning of Lent, 1904.

The first of the two houses mentioned above was the one at 27 Fales Street. It was purchased from a Mr. Ban and cost \$6,500. The original community in Worcester consisted of: FF. Isidore Gayraud, Georges Demiautte, Marie-Joseph Laity, Marie Emile Ladret, and Brothers Felipe Uceda and François Bourtembourg. Fr. Thomas Darbois was temporarily the “common father” (Superior) of both New York and Worcester. In November, 1903, the General named Fr. Isidore as “group leader” and in early April, 1904, named him Superior despite his protest that he was not the man for such a position. His nomination so displeased Fr. Laity that he asked for a transfer and was moved to Sardes-Moines (Belgium) on September 5.

On May 30, 1904, the Superior General, Fr. Emmanuel Bailly arrived for the Canonical Visitation of the Greendale foundation which at the time was called Our Lady of Consolation. He was accompanied by FF. Thomas and Eugene Monterlet. He noted that the religious were living modestly and poorly. He observed that “mission work is the only one we can actually pursue.” He urged the religious to learn English. He seemed dissatisfied that some religious were often absent for lengthy periods because of ministry in parishes and reminded them that it was urgent to establish the work that should be their prime objective, an aluminate. In his “Visitation letter” dated June 3, he says: “His Excellency formally affirmed to me that not only would he permit an aluminate or apostolic school, as had been agreed, but that he would be happy to see it Let us not hesitate to begin, even though we have to begin small and with few youngsters.”

Very soon Fr. Isidore began to set up the aluminate. On July 31, the second house, mentioned by Fr. Thomas in the account we quoted above, was purchased for \$5,500. The two adjacent houses were linked by a corridor about 45 feet long, which served as recreation hall, and occasionally as a meeting hall. Here is a sketch floor plan of the two houses on Fales Street:



When the walls of rooms 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, on the first floor of House II were torn down to make room for the chapel, the oratory in House I was then closed, on August 28, 1904. The second story was to hold a study had and two rooms for professors, while the third floor was to be the dormitory. The kitchen and refectory remained in House I, together with rooms for the missionary religious and visitors.

Classes were expected to begin in October, 1904. Recruiting proved difficult. Was it simply because of the difficulty of finding suitable students? Or was it, as Fr. Thomas thought, because of the severity of Fr. Isidore? In any case, as of August 25 there were only two students enrolled: Wilfrid Roy, son of a funeral director, and Stuart Girard, whose father was a Worcester jeweler. By September there were six, of whom two were from New York, leading Fr. Isidore to protest that he did not want to mix Americans and Canadians. "Really," said Fr. Thomas, "he is too inflexible." Classes did begin in October, and by the following January there were seven alumnists, of whom five were considered good students.

The staff was as follows: Fr. Isidore, Superior, FF. Georges Demiautte and Donat Cordier as teachers. Attached to the community was Fr. Lazare Chaband who would leave in December for New York and Baltimore. FF. Marie-Jean Tougas and Hydulphe Mathiot arrived as missionaries in November. There were also three Assumptionist brothers: Felipe Uceda, François Bourtembourg, and Jean Despas. Two laymen, Mr. Lorman and Mr. Kelley, gave courses in English. An Irish Ploermel Brother named Anthelme replaced Fr Georges as teacher, as of December 2.

Fr. Hydulphe wrote: "At the outset we were so zealous that we thought of offering classes free. Two pastors who had soon become our friends, Fr. Perreault of Holy Name of Jesus, and Fr. Grenier, successor

to Fr. Brouillet at Notre-Dame des Canadiens, tried to dissuade us, saying that free education would attract only greedy undesirables." So the Assumptionists decided to charge \$10 per month.

The first year had its ups and downs; the student population varied from 4 to 10, constantly changing. The teaching load was borne mainly by Fr. Donat and Brother Anthelme. On September 26, 1904, Msgr. Elzear Brochu died, and by the terms of his will the Assumptionists inherited \$10,000. They began to think of building a brick structure for the school.

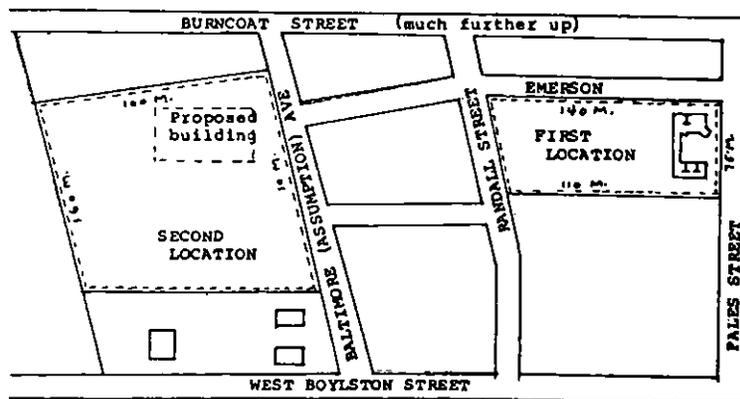
Meanwhile a rather acute problem was solving itself. Fr. Isidore was quite unhappy in his role as group leader, and kept offering his resignation as Superior. He realized that he had neither the authority nor the backbone to be in charge and control the religious. Fr. Thomas was too far away to be ready the Superior, still, the religious in New York were complaining that he was absent from there too often. He was aware of the situation in New York and in Worcester, and so informed the General. The result was that in October, 1905, two religious arrived in New York, Fr. Tranquille Pesse and Fr. Symphorien Terraz. Fr. Symphorien wrote on October 20: "Fr. Tranquille will spend a few days here in New York before going to Worcester to become Superior in place of Fr. Isidore."

This nomination was not the expected one. Fr. Gunfrid Darbois, brother of Fr. Thomas, had left Chile for Worcester, thinking that he would become the Superior there. When this became known, there was an uproar among the other religious, who asked "Is America becoming the fief of the Darbois?" Thereupon Fr. Gunfrid left Worcester for Ohio, where he lodged with a pastor for a few weeks. On December 5 he returned to Chile after declaring that he was indeed happy to have been relieved as Superior of Worcester. Fr. Isidore was even happier, he had become simply the Treasurer.

Daily life in the Fales Street aluminate proceeded as in any other aluminate, with the same schedule, same religious exercises, same spirit. The religious were constantly with the students, in study hall, during recreation. Fr. Isidore was the animating force; he took part in all the games, nursed all the scrapes and scratches, and even repaired and patched the pupils' clothing. Harsh and severe as he may have been for the religious, he was ever ready to forgive the students their pranks.

On Fales Street, the religious soon felt hemmed in by their neighbors. Their main preoccupation was to find a larger plot of land. On nearby Baltimore Avenue (later Assumption Avenue), only the two hundred yards north of the aluminate buildings, a lot was for sale for \$7,000, and all thought it should be purchased. To the East of this lot, along Baltimore Avenue, the diocese owned a lot and the pastor said that

the bishop was seeking to sell it. The Ordinary's permission was needed in order to change the community's place of dwelling. Because Bishop Beaven was absent for quite a long period, the Vicar-General took the initiative and decided that the new location was so close to the old one that it could practically be considered contiguous. "You may build your college without [further] permission," he stated. On February 26, 1906, Fr. Tranquille signed the purchase contract and paid the owner, Mrs. Hamel, \$7,100 for four acres. House I on Fales Street was moved to the newly purchased property on August 8, 1907. On December 24, 1914, it became the birthplace of the Sisters of Joan of Arc, founded by Fr. Marie-Clement Staub. Here is a small map of the two original Greendale plots (not drawn to scale).



Architect Onesime Nault prepared blueprints for the first wing of the projected building. In the Spring of 1906 bids were submitted, and on June 13 a building contract was signed with Mr. Dorais. The price was \$35,000, higher than expected, as usual. The Assumptionists had to obtain loans in order to build.

The Franco-American clergy remained suspicious of the Assumptionists. Even Fr. Grenier, who was very friendly toward them, asked to see the building plans, to make sure it was a school they were building and not a parish church. Applications for admission poured in. Soon some pastors were exerting pressure in favor of commercial courses. The Superior General, resisting the pressure answered "Stay calm; no college."

From the outset there were various names for the school. The General had called for an aluminate. The first letterheads, in 1905, read, in French, "Our Lady of Consolation, Apostolic School of the Fathers of the Assumption." At that time, the word used by ordinary people when referring to any kind of school, from parochial grammar school to commercial or classical high schools was "college." Thus when people visited the construction site of the new school, they referred to it proudly as "our college."

One of the founding religious died on October 11, 1906. He was a Spanish lay brother, Felipe Uceda, who in December, 1905 had become so ill that he was sent to a rest home in Montreal run by the Brothers of St. John of God. The written archives of the College say that he was a devoted and exemplary religious.

The academic year 1905-1906 began with 15 pupils and ended with 18. In September, 1906, there were 30. By January, 1907, religious and students were able to move from Fales Street to their new school on Assumption Avenue. On January 28, Bishop Beaven blessed the new construction. After the ceremony, there was a banquet attended by some 50 priests and religious. In his remarks after the meal, Fr. Tranquille very clearly stated that the Assumptionists wanted the school to be an aluminate, with courses in French as an important part of the curriculum. He stated: "When young men have finished their classes here, that is after their Rhetoric (College sophomore year), and are ready for philosophy, they may remain with us, enter Major Seminary, or any religious order of their choice."

Just before getting into his auto to leave, Bishop Beaven turned to Fr. Tranquille and asked, "It is precisely an aluminate that you wish to have?" "Yes, Your Excellency," responded Fr. Tranquille. As we shall soon see, this answer led to some difficulties.

Fr. Tranquille, reporting to the General, said: "His Excellency was exceedingly kind to us. He spoke in French, and declared that we were welcome, at home, in his diocese, much to the astonishment of the Franco-American priests who could not believe their ears.

It is very difficult to pinpoint the precise moment when the change from aluminate to college occurred. Fr. Marie-Louis Deydier who was the Superior from 1919 until 1923 wrote in a report: "After a somewhat fitful start, Assumption College began in January, 1907." For him, it seems, the change occurred when the move was made to Assumption Avenue. Fr. Clodoald Serieix, the Superior from 1923 to 1929, said: "The aluminate was soon forced by circumstances to widen its scope and become a real college, keeping as its main objective the fostering of vocations but also accepting students destined to other liberal arts careers." But he gives no greater precision concerning the exact time of the change. Probably greater precision may be found in this detail: in March, 1908, under Fr. Tranquille Pease, the printed letterheads still read "Apostolic School," whereas in August, 1908 they read "College de l'Assomption"

In any case, the appellation became official when, on February 6, 1917, Fr. Omer Rochain obtained from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts a charter of incorporation for ASSUMPTION COLLEGE, granting it power to confer the Bachelor of Arts degree.

The charter brought on difficulties with Bishop Beaven, as Fr. Hydulphe recounts: “When I returned from the war, in 1920, Fr. Marie-Louis (Deydier) brought me to the Bishop to renew my faculties. There followed a terrible scene. “You have deceived me odiously. You assured me that you were opening an alumnate, and suddenly, without notifying me, you have a college. Do you realize that there is a bishop in Springfield? It is I! I should have been informed. Fr. Marie-Louis remained dumbfounded. “For whom are you requesting faculties?” “For Fr. Hydulphe.” He had known me for a long time; I had preached before him often. In his anger he didn’t recognize me. He commented that my name sounded German to him. He spoke of suppressing the missionaries and of striking them from his list. Finally he agreed that the Fathers could go to parishes to preach and minister. But the pastors had to notify him each time.”

After 1907, the College continued to develop and grow, as we shall mention in a later chapter.



## 10. Our Lady of Esperanza Parish



The dream of the Assumptionists to relocate uptown in Manhattan was to be realized in an unforeseen manner. Fr. Adrien Buisson, who was practically in charge of Our Lady of Guadalupe because of the frequent and prolonged absences of Fr. Thomas Darbois in Worcester, was very friendly with the wealthy Mrs. Manuela de Laverrerie de Barril. As she was infirm, he often brought her Holy Communion. This Spanish lady, whose husband had been the Spanish Consul-General in New York, often commented upon the dreary poverty of the chapel on 14th Street and expressed her desire to see a more appropriate church for the numerous Hispano-American colony. Long a resident of New York City, Mrs. Barril was from a noble Spanish family and had many contacts with the wealthier people of New York. Among her friends was Mr. Archer Milton Huntington, a poet and scholar, who admired Spanish works of art and literature to the extent that he decided to build a museum devoted to Spanish culture, to house the many art treasures he had obtained during his annual trips to Spain. The location of this museum was to be on a large empty tract of land between 155th and 156th Streets, west of Broadway.

One day, in a conversation, Mrs. de Barril was thanking Mr. Huntington for all he had done and was doing for her countrymen. She slyly added that if she had his kind of money the Spanish colony of New York would soon have a fine church of their own. Mr. Huntington was an Episcopalian. Mrs. de Barril said to him quite simply, "If only you were a Roman Catholic, and given your interest in Spanish culture, you would build us a church. We do not have one in New York." To which Mr. Huntington is said to have replied, "Who knows? I might still do it. It is not too late." Mrs. de Barril died a few months later, but her daughter, Maria de Barril, often mentioned her mother's dream in her conversations with Mr. Huntington. One day, he said to her, "I have been thinking about your mother's idea and I would like you to give me a letter to Archbishop Farley so that we could discuss the church." This was not difficult, since the de Barril family had easy access to the

Archbishop. During the interview, Mr. Huntington asked the Archbishop if he would accept from him the gift of a church for the Spanish colony of New York. Archbishop Farley accepted and it was agreed that Mr. Huntington would give a parcel of land, valued at \$75,000, adjacent to the proposed museum. He would also contribute \$25,000 toward the construction of the church provided the Spanish colony gave a matching amount.

In January, 1906, Fr. Thomas was called in by Archbishop Farley who told him of Mr. Huntington's offer and inquired if the Assumptionists would like this new location. Fr. Thomas answered affirmatively, subject to the approval of his Major Superior. In a letter to Father General, dated January 15, 1906, he wrote: "The spot is not densely populated for the moment. We will have to suffer for several years. We will have few Mass stipends for ourselves and even fewer for Greendale, but with time the situation will become better than that of 14th Street. We shall have a subway stop nearby. Unfortunately, we will end up by having a tramway right in front of our door. We are separated from the nearest parish by an old Protestant cemetery, which serves as a buffer between it and us.... In front of us and to the side, hundreds of dwellings are being built. At this moment, the Archbishop is discussing the matter with the donor. He wants more land than is being offered... eight times more.... It is unfortunate that the transfer of our residence should be offered just now when we are lengthening the church, at a cost of almost \$9,000. But neither the Archbishop who had authorized the expense, nor we who requested that it be made, could have thought of the initiative presented to us by the Protestant benefactor. The Episcopalians, to whom he belongs, asked for land to build a Spanish chapel near the museum, which will surely attract numerous visitors. They were told that, as Catholicism is the religion of the Spanish-speaking people, to build anything but a Catholic church would be to insult them. It is the Archbishop who gave me these details, asking me to make nothing public before an agreement has been reached. It goes without saying that if we move to 155th and Broadway we will not be able to keep 14th Street for long. The Archbishop hinted at this. I will keep you posted on all this." In the same letter, Fr. Thomas seeks authorization to incorporate the Assumptionists legally and to become himself an American citizen. He claims that this would make it easier to obtain donations and inheritances.

About two weeks later, Fr. Thomas was again called to the Chancery and reminded that Mr. Huntington wanted the church built without delay and in the same style as his museum, pure Renaissance. "The cost of the chapel alone," wrote Fr. Thomas on January, 1906, "will be at least \$50,000, which we will have to borrow. I repeated to His Excellency that

I could not assume this responsibility without your consent.... I added that I could not see how, given the situation in that area, we could pay for the upkeep and interest charges, etc. He responded that he would let us stay on 14th Street for some years, and that we would only have to send a priest on Saturdays for confessions and on Sundays to say two masses in the new chapel. This arrangement pleases me greatly. It would allow us to benefit from the improvements made on 14th Street and, by our services, thank the good Irish people who alone have borne the financial burden. Maybe with time we will have two parishes?

“His Excellency promised to help us find funds. He seemed really impatient about the fact that for parish business we had to refer to a foreigner who did not know the conditions of the American market. I stopped him in the middle of his tirade and somewhat dryly told him that there was no way we would do otherwise. “I understand perfectly,” he said and we moved on to other matters.”

As we must realize by now, Fr. Thomas Darbois was a busy man in 1905-06. His duties as Superior obviously took some time. He was the key man in the changes being made at Guadalupe, he was deeply involved in the Greendale foundation, and also with the construction of Esperanza Meetings, planning sessions, fundraising events required his presence. Loans had to be negotiated with banks and the Congregation. A number of the threads of this story of the early Assumptionist communities in the USA lead to and from Fr. Thomas.

One source of distress was personal and sentimental. For a number of years, Fr. Thomas and his twin brother, Gunfrid, had labored side by side in Chile. In New York Fr. Thomas frequently expressed his sadness over the separation that obedience had forced upon them. Other Assumptionists, conscious of his merit as an organizer, suggested in their letters that something be done to abate this grief and enhance his ability to operate efficiently. During the summer of 1905, after seven years in Chile, Fr. Gunfrid spent some time in France. During this time, he was assigned to New York. He wrote: “My brother and I thank you (Fr. General) for reuniting us. His presence will compensate for the pain of leaving Chile to which I was deeply attached.” While in Paris preparing to sail, he was notified that his nomination as Superior of Assumption College had been canceled, much to his great relief. Upon learning of his brother’s assignment, Fr. Thomas had suggested that Gunfrid could be considered as a candidate to replace Fr. Isidore; but he added: “All here believe that this is undesirable because he is known to many religious and was disliked as Superior in Chile.” Fr. Thomas concluded that he would prefer that Gunfrid go to Worcester as a member of the missionary band. As this is not the history of the Darbois family, let us just say that after some months in Worcester Fr. Gunfrid went to Tiff-en,

Ohio, as curate of a Fr. Hultgen, who later wanted the Assumptionists to open a French parish in Toledo. When Fr. Thomas left for the General Chapter of 1906, Fr. Gunfrid served as interim pastor of Guadalupe. By October 13, he asked to return to Chile, feeling that he was disliked by too many religious. He sailed aboard the freighter *Charcus* July 18, 1907. Fr. Thomas held Fr. Tranquille solely responsible for his departure, despite the fact that Fr. Gunfrid had indicated that the cold climate was bad for him and that he had trouble learning English at his age. Thus ended one chapter of the Darbois "saga."

In an interview with Mr. Huntington, in February, 1907, FF. Thomas and Adrien learned that he wanted the church built within two years and that the Archbishop agreed. Moreover they discovered that the Archbishop and Mr. Huntington agreed that the chapel at 14th Street could be sold to cover costs of the new church. Obviously this would upset the Assumptionists' plans, and it caused Fr. Thomas to write to the General: "If instead of selling 14th Street we were to obtain from you a loan of \$20,000 we could keep 14th Street, build at 156th, and later, slowly, amortize the loan." A fund-raising drive was begun in April, and some gifts were received. With this in mind, Fr. Thomas planned to tell the Archbishop that the Congregation might make a loan to make up for any shortfall of the drive, but on condition that 14th Street be neither closed nor sold.

From the first moment of agreement to find the matching \$25,000, Fr. Thomas had in mind some kind of organization that would contact important members of the Hispanic colony. Thus was formed the Ibero-American Committee which met three times in the spring of 1906. One of the conditions imposed by the Archbishop was that the matching \$25,000 be in cash, not in pledges. It seems that this was a condition spelled out by Mr. Huntington. Fr. Adrien Buisson also learned in June that Mr. Huntington, probably prodded by Mrs. de Barril and her daughter, preferred to see Fr. Adrien in charge of the new church. Fr. Adrien, already to a great extent running Guadalupe, complained to the General that the three young priests assigned to him, FF. Aurelien Buhner, Symphorien Terraz, and Zacharie Saint-Martin, had little interest in things Spanish. "If only we could obtain Fr. Francisco Garcia, a Spaniard, now in Chile." Fr. Adrien sought to visit his old and dying father in France and was looking for a capable replacement in the demanding Hispanic apostolate. He was notified that Fr. Paul de la Croix Journet, fluent in Spanish, would soon arrive in New York. He did arrive aboard the *Savoie* on September 30, 1906, and Fr. Adrien left for France aboard the same ship. He returned to New York in late January, 1908.

The following March, Fr. Adrien became Superior of the Guadalupe community although Fr. Thomas remained pastor of the parish. Fr.

Adrien urged his Superiors in Rome to try to do something among the officials of the Propagation of the Faith (which was still in charge of the Catholic church in the USA) so that Guadalupe could become a territorial church.

The drive was bringing in funds only very slowly. Fr. Thomas, somewhat freer now, planned an extensive fund-raising tour of Mexico. He left on June 18, 1908, but before leaving he paid a courtesy call to the Archbishop, along with Fr. Adrien. The Archbishop was very kind, paternal, and encouraging, especially once the Assumptionists had told him that they thought that any shortfall in the drive might be made up by a loan from the Congregation.

Fr. Adrien felt cramped in the low-ceilinged Guadalupe church, and he vigorously pushed not only to enlarge it but also to raise the ceiling by taking two other floors of the house. This would obviously require the purchase of living space for the religious. As we shall see later, this was achieved only in 1917, when 231 West 14th Street could finally be bought. When he had a bit of a dark mood, Fr. Adrien wondered whether “we will ever become important and be other than a small Spanish mission.” He notified the General that the Community had \$14,000 in the bank and asked to be allowed to loan it for the 156th St. church construction. In this connection, he mentioned that Mr. Huntington always refused to deal directly with the Assumptionists: he dealt directly with the Archbishop only. He noted that the end of the two-year limit to acquire the \$25,000 matching gift was very rapidly approaching and that Fr. Thomas was having little success in Mexico. One week later the General granted the \$15,000 loan requested. When Fr. Adrien met with the Archbishop and Mr. Huntington on January 20, 1909, he was thus able to tell them that he had the necessary \$25,000 in hand and expressed his regrets at the delay in amassing this sum. To which Mr. Huntington graciously replied. “What is done slowly is done surely.” He then added; “Tomorrow I’ll send a check for \$25,000 to Archbishop Farley.” On January 27 1909, he and the Archbishop visited the site and arrived at an understanding regarding the exact location of the church Mr. Huntington would provide the architect, his cousin, Charles P. Huntington, who would submit all plans to the Chancery by February 10. There was hope that construction could begin in the Spring.

The fund-raising drive ended in May. The total received was \$10,295.73. According to the books some \$4,000 was due to the efforts of Miss de Barril who had organized two charity concerts among her friends. Six months canvassing many bishops in Mexico yielded Fr. Thomas a net of \$1,368.80. Much of the \$4,600 collected in New York can be attributed to Fr. Thomas and Adrien. All monies received were sent directly to the Chancery by the treasurer of the drive, who wanted

Father to accompany him to the Chancery. But Fr. Thomas refused, saying that he understood that the Archbishop's orders were that he be by-passed in these financial matters.

A cursory examination of the architect's plans revealed the absence of any sort of residential quarters. A letter to the Archbishop proposed that somewhere, somehow, there be provision for accommodations for three religious. The Archbishop's answer, by return mail was:

In reply to your letter of the 7th inst., in which you suggest the need of a residence, etc., for three Fathers at the new Spanish church. I beg to remind you that such a thing was never contemplated when the first suggestion was made by Mr. Huntington. All he asked, and all I proposed, was that this chapel be succursal to the one in 14th Street, and that one Mass should be said in this new chapel every Sunday with a sermon in Spanish delivered by one of the Fathers residing in 14th St.

It never was intended to make, in that locality, a new Spanish parish with a residence, and all other things mentioned by you, unless, in the course of time, a Spanish population resident in that neighborhood would call for it.

I still hold to this understanding, and I cannot approve of any further demand on Mr. Huntington's generosity. We must be careful, lest, in striving for too much, we may lose everything.

This answer did not quite match the high hopes entertained by the Assumptionists concerning the future of this new church. But, knowing that the concern of the Archbishop for the Hispanic apostolate was genuine, they resolved to make the best of the situation. Fr. Adrien accepted the absence of residential quarters in the same building and agreed to rent an apartment in some nearby building. He found a place for sale some 275 yards away; it was in fair condition and could be remodeled to serve as a rectory. As their available funds were earmarked to buy quarters for the religious at 14th Street, the Fathers could not buy it, and Mr. Huntington paid no heed to a hint dropped sometime during that winter.

Yet, by June, 1909, they had purchased 557 West 156th Street, at a price of \$18,500. They paid \$7,500 and took a mortgage for the remainder. They did not notify the Archbishop. They planned to rent the house out until it became convenient to occupy it.

Just prior to the ground-breaking ceremonies, Miss de Barril handed Fr. Adrien a check for \$5,000 "to help furnish the church." She also

promised to contact some of her wealthy friends for additional donations, and in fact she personally raised some \$25,000 for the furnishings of the church. She even obtained a \$2,000 gift from J. Pierpont Morgan.

Ground was broken in July, 1909, and by August 19 the foundations were being poured. Monsignor M.J. Lavelle, Vicar General of the archdiocese, blessed and laid the cornerstone on April 9, 1912. Donations kept coming in; one benefactor promised to pay for the marble main altar. The stained glass windows were already paid for and the roof was "still under construction." Fr. Stéphane Chaboud, who had meanwhile become Superior at 14<sup>th</sup> St., wrote that enough pews had been ordered to seat 300 on the main floor and another 50 in the gallery. Unfortunately the architect's plans provided for little space for liturgical movements in the narrow choir. A ball brought in \$10,000 and immediately an altar of Sienna marble was ordered from Italy. Because of this, the benediction of the chapel scheduled for December 8 was postponed, much to the relief of the religious who would have been obliged to live in cramped rooms and the sacristy during the winter months.

As the construction neared its completion, Fr. Adrien still regretted that the Archbishop had not accepted to provide some sort of living quarters for the staff of the chapel. He remained pessimistic on this point and made plans to continue residing at 14th Street, traveling each day for one mass on weekdays and for two or three masses on Sundays. He commented that when the attendance became numerous enough the Assumptionists could plan a second community in the neighborhood. This would mean that more priests would have to be assigned to New York. At the moment there were only three who knew Spanish well: Adrien Buisson, Fulgence Moris, and Paul de la Croix Joumet, who had been in New York since 1907. For a time, Fr Stéphane thought of putting Fr Adrien in charge of the new chapel, with an assistant who knew English well; but Fr. Adrien objected, reminding the General that he had just been appointed pastor of Our Lady of Guadalupe and that the Archbishop had clearly told Fr. Ernest Baudouy "in my presence" that at first a priest from 14th Street would say daily mass and on Saturday could stay over in the small room over the sacristy.

Personnel changes were occurring at 14th Street. Some of them seem to have been occasioned by a clash of personalities. There was some question about the future of Fr. Zacharie St. Martin who had been in New York since 1906, yet did not get along well with Fr. Adrien. Fr. Aurelien Buhner had finally been accepted by the Bishop of Portland, Maine, on a trial basis; he would work there until his dying day. Fr. Paul de la Croix Joumet was somewhat dissatisfied with Fr. Adrien's treatment of the religious. Fr. Paul wrote that he now knew enough

English to hear confessions and that he frequently preached in Spanish. His knowledge of French and Italian also came in handy. He had adjusted to life in New York and was content to remain there. Fr. Thomas had taken a liking for Mexico and hoped for a foundation in Monterey but it was believed that he would encounter problems because he had publicly criticized the President. Fr. Ixile Frappier for some reason did not succeed in Worcester and was reassigned to New York. On August 17, 1909, Fr. Tranquille Pesse returned to New York from his vacation in France. FF. Marie-Clement Staub and Stéphane Chaboud left Italy and arrived in New York on December 21, 1909. In a letter to the Archbishop, Fr. Emmanuel Bailly, Superior General, notified him that on the recommendation of his doctor Fr. Thomas Darbois was being recalled to France and that Fr. Stéphane Chaboud was replacing him as Common Superior.

These changes would solve several nagging problems. The return to France of Fr. Thomas would satisfy both him and the New York community. Fr. Stéphane's nomination would free Fr. Adrien to spend more time at Our Lady of Esperanza. The problem of the pastor of Guadalupe was also solved; Fr. Adrien had been unsure and hesitant over whether he was the pastor and Superior as long as Fr. Thomas Darbois remained in the background. The new Common Superior would become pastor and Superior of Guadalupe and could act more decisively.

But a new problem was created by the Provincial Superior of the Ploermel Brothers when he recalled the Brother who served as organist and printer at 14th Street and announced that the others would soon be recalled too. They left on August 10, 1910. Immediately a cry went to Paris for replacements; three priests would be needed at 14th street and one at 156th.

The main altar for Esperanza left Italy on April 17, 1911, and arrived in New York only in August, packed in 60 crates. Shortly after, all work stopped in the church because of a strike among marble workers. As they visited the church, some of the religious and even some of the diocesan staff realized that the omission of a rectory in the original plans would be regretted. The Archbishop finally accepted to approach Mr. Huntington during the summer of 1911. This gentleman, who was unfamiliar with the requirements of any Catholic parish, stated that it was unfortunate that this necessity had not been brought to his attention from the beginning. The construction was so far advanced that changes in the plans were impossible. Nevertheless, he granted an extra five-foot passageway along the side of the church so that the religious serving the church could reach the small rooms located over the sacristy.

Fr. Adrien, as caretaker of the church under construction, visualized many more activities than the original plans called for. He observed that

there soon would be enough work to occupy three priests if they wanted to do justice to the needs of the people, and he wanted the Superior at 14th Street to foresee such an eventuality. There were nine priests at 14th Street and four would be sufficient to care for parish needs. The others could lighten his load and take care of various chaplaincies.

As the completion of the construction approached, dates were discussed for the inauguration ceremonies, but they were rejected because Archbishop Farley, who had been created Cardinal on November 27, 1911, wished to attend and have the principal donors present. On July 21, 1912, His Eminence headed a throng of Church and civil dignitaries as he blessed the new church and opened it to public worship. Monsignor Patrick J. Hayes, then Chancellor of the Archdiocese, sang the High Mass. Fr. Stéphane Chaboud preached the sermon in Spanish. In his remarks at the end of the ceremony, the Cardinal said: "God bless the noble and generous benefactor of this church. I hope and pray that God may pour forth upon him His most bountiful blessings. In this church, let there be no North or South among you, as we say here. Let South Americans, Cubans, Mexicans, Spaniards all come here without the thought of racial distinction and kneel together as Catholics."

Our Lady of Esperanza benefited from the generosity of many others besides Mr. Archer Huntington. We have already mentioned the great efforts and the contributions of Miss de Barril. It should also be mentioned that the high altar and communion rail of Sienna marble were the gift of Mr. and Mrs. Frederick Courtland Penfield (in 1913 he became American ambassador in Vienna). Mrs. Penfield also donated the side altar of St. Joseph, above which hung the painting of "St. Joseph and the Christ Child" donated by the famous Spanish artist himself, Joaquin Sorolla y Bastida. The altar of the Blessed Virgin was the gift of J. Pierpont Morgan and Amos T. Emo. The organ was given by Mr. and Mrs. Frederick W Vanderbilt, and Mrs. Vanderbilt also gave the crucifix and six candlesticks for the main altar. The unusual sanctuary lamp was the gift of King Alfonso XIII of Spain, who personally commissioned Father Felix Granda, a noted priest-sculptor of the time, to make an exact replica of a work by the XVIII century sculptor Urquiza. From a crown at the top representing the Royal Family hang three chains representing the Cotiar of the Order of the Golden Fleece. The tray for the vigil light is surrounded by the coat of arms of Spain.

In November, 1912, the Dowager Queen Maria Cristina sent the church a gold chalice. In February, 1913, Maria Teresa, sister of the Spanish king, sent an embroidered chasuble. The Infanta Paz, an aunt of King Alfonso, donated a beautiful ciborium decorated with 211 precious stones.

In less than a year, after all debts had been paid, the church was solemnly consecrated by Cardinal Farley on Sunday, April 20, 1913, in the presence of the Ambassador of Spain, Don Juan Riaffo, and of 18 consuls. The consecration proper had taken place privately the day before, Auxiliary Bishop Thomas F. Cusack officiating.

Large anonymous gifts arrived in 1913: on May 22, Fr. Adrien found \$10,000 in the poor box in the back of the church. On August 13, he received an envelope containing three \$5,000 bills. He reported this to the Chancery and was told to keep silent about the donation. Somewhere along the time, the Cardinal must have changed his mind and expressed the wish that the pastor would live near the church. Consequently Fr. Adrien took quarters in a five-room apartment at 611 West 156th Street. For the time being, he was alone. The fervent and generous Mrs. Penfield, noting his difficult financial situation, gave him, in early August, a check for \$880 to take care of his back rent and the expenses of the apartment. Moreover she promised to send a monthly check for \$100 for the rent and the services of a maid. She also helped by renting a pew for \$200.

For two months, Fr. Adrien lived alone in his apartment. He said Mass daily at 7:00 A.M. On Sundays, he said three Masses, at 7:30, 9:00, and 11:00, and preached in Spanish at the last one. Every Sunday there was Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament at 4:30 P.M. When, in October, 1912, Fr. Crescent Armanet arrived as assistant and companion, the Sunday Masses were increased to four. Fr. Crescent handled most of the English ministry; and exactly the same thing happened at Esperanza as had happened at Guadalupe: attendance by English-speaking people grew month by month.

In September, 1913, the Vicar General, noticing that the Protestant mission centers were very active in Upper Manhattan among the Hispanic groups, suggested that the Assumptionists open similar centers in the same neighborhoods. He advised Fr. Adrien to do this despite any complaints that might come from local Catholic pastors.

In March, 1914, began a rather unpleasant interlude involving Miss de Barril, who, as we have noted, had raised a very large sum of money to furnish Esperanza. She began to clamor for a native-born Spanish priest for Esperanza. It seems that she was peeved one day when she arrived in church late and found her pew occupied. She protested loudly to the sacristan. Fr. Adrien told her she was interrupting his sermon. She complained to the Cardinal, who called in Fr. Adrien and urged him to try and pacify the lady. By now she had begun to read a book each time Fr. Adrien preached in Spanish. She stopped coming to church and circulated a petition to have the Assumptionists ousted in favor of a Spaniard. The Cardinal was told all this and answered to let her go on

but to send a Spaniard to the church. The New York superior, Fr. Stéphane, requested the General to send a Spaniard, although it might create a bit of difficulty with the South Americans who preferred Esperanza precisely because it was not Spanish. The result was that Fr. Francisco Garcia, a native of Spain, arrived on November 27, 1914. He would serve the parish until 1948.

Miss Maria de Barril died on January 24, 1919, having received the Last Sacraments of the Church. Her role as an outstanding benefactress of Esperanza is remembered by a bronze plaque in the narthex.

In its original state, the Esperanza church was some twenty feet above the level of the street and was reached by an imposing set of thirty steps interrupted by landings, leading to a small terrace in front of the edifice. The facade of the church was Italian Renaissance, with Ionic pillars of Indiana limestone. A dozen years after the church was opened, the increasing number of parishioners began to crowd it seriously. It was decided that although the small building was indeed beautiful, it must give way to the needs of the parish, at least in part, and be enlarged, possibly adding a rectory for the priests who found it increasingly hard to minister to their parishioners. An extension was planned, bringing the church's recessed front up to the sidewalk. The entrance was to be at street level, enclosing the required stairway; the rectory was to be above the new extension. The task was difficult, but the religious were fortunate in securing the services of the son of Stanford White, Mr. Lawrence G. White, of the firm of McKim, Mead, and White. To replace the old Neo-Classical facade, he chose to erect a Spanish Plateresque one. This did not suit some of the original donors and created some difficulties for the parish authorities. In any case, the work began in February, 1925, and the official opening took place on October 25 of the same year. The ceremony was presided by Monsignor Lavelle, Vicar General, representing Cardinal Hayes. Fr. Gervais Quénard, Superior General of the Assumptionists, was the celebrant of the Solemn High Mass.

Fr. Adrien Buisson served Esperanza as pastor for 40 years, except for a short period, 1930-1933, when he was at Our Lady of Guadalupe. In 1952, when he was 90, he retired. About a year later, many parishioners saw him off as he departed for his native France, where he died on July 10, 1954.

Fr. Paid de la Croix Joumet served as pastor between 1930 and 1933. After Fr. Adrien's retirement, Fr. Francis Soutberg was pastor from 1952 until 1955. Later pastors were as follows:

Fr. Bernard Gudlet	1955-1959
Fr. Antoine Philippe	1958-1961

Fr. Bernard Gudlet	1961-1963
Fr. Francisco Dominguez	1963-1966
Fr. Jean Paul Casaubon	1966-1969
Fr. William Dubois	1969-1970
Fr. John Charles Mercier	1970-1973
Fr. Francisco Dominguez	1973-1978 as Administrator
Fr. Joseph Grenier	1978-1979
Fr. Bernard Gudlet	1980-1982

During the pastorate of Fr. Soutberg, an interesting outgrowth of the ministry at Esperanza took place when the *Centro Catolico de Information* (Spanish Information Center) was begun in 1952 to help Hispanic Catholics, especially the newcomers in New York City. The first purpose of the Center was spiritual: giving religious instruction to adults and offering information regarding the Sacraments and religious services. The second purpose was the temporal improvement of the situation of New York Hispanics; advice about Social Security, social services, housing problems was offered, and language classes were held.

The area in which Our Lady of Esperanza was built had borne the name Spanish Hill because of the nature of its population. Over the years the complexion of Spanish Hill changed very greatly and the links between Esperanza and the neighboring population diminished. This change, along with dwindling numbers of available Assumptionist personnel, caused the Congregation to turn the parish over to the secular clergy of the Archdiocese in 1982, and Monsignor James J. Wilson became pastor. Leaving Esperanza was obviously painful for the Assumptionists who had ministered to the parish since its inception in 1912.

## 11. Still More on Our Lady of Guadalupe



As we return to Our Lady of Guadalupe, we might say that by the Spring of 1910 all seemed to be going well. There was plenty of work for all and the religious seemed happy. The financial situation was greatly improved. The *Calendario* now served as bulletin for both Guadalupe and Esperanza. The personnel problem was improved when Fr. Albert Catoire arrived. In 1900, he had been sent to Chile, later to England, then to Bulgaria. He served at Guadalupe from 1911 until 1940. He retired to the Assumptionist community in Quebec City (Bergerville), and died there on March 14, 1945, aged 70.

Through the years, many devoted Brothers served the Guadalupe parish. Many of the earliest ones stayed only a brief time and then served elsewhere or returned to France. Among the earliest ones in New York City was Brother Vincent Ferrier Petro. He was a viscount from Brittany and had a twin sister whom he loved dearly. He made his novitiate in Louvain and then was sent to Guadalupe. Because his parents were violently opposed to his becoming a religious and especially a lay brother, he postponed making his profession until 1920. At that time he professed vows for three years, and in 1924 made his perpetual profession. He served at Guadalupe from 1910 until 1921. Then this learned, humble, witty, but definitely unhandsome Brother was sent to Assumption College, in Worcester, Massachusetts, where he worked until his death in 1968.

### ***CASA MARIA***

About 1905, *Casa Maria*, at 251 West 14th Street was begun; and because this was in effect an extension of the apostolate of the Assumptionists, it bears mention here. The poverty of many parishioners, and especially of the newly-arrived immigrants from Spain, was recognized early. It called for action. A pious and charitable woman living nearby helped some of the poor immigrant girls, sometimes by

sheltering them overnight and most of the time by finding them decent jobs, mostly as servant girls, who were then in great demand. This fine woman, Mrs. Maria A. de Lopez, a widow of moderate means, was American-born of Spanish parents. She was well educated and spoke Spanish and English fluently. Now nearing fifty years of age, she was doing by herself everything that she could to alleviate the misery of the young immigrant girls, who were often preyed upon by greedy and shady characters. Let it be remembered that at that time Lower Manhattan was notorious for its sweatshops, with 12 to 14 hour workdays, six days a week, for measly salaries.

Mrs. Lopez began to shelter some of the girls for extended periods of time in her own apartment. She taught them a smattering of English, the ways of the big city, and some of the requirements of housemaids, cooks, or servant girls.

The paths of Mrs. Lopez and Fr. Thomas Darbois crossed sometime in 1906. Their common desire to do more to help better the condition of the poor, led them to unite their efforts. Fr. Thomas asked Mrs. Lopez to devote more time to her charitable work and to do so in collaboration with other volunteers recruited through the medium of the parish. Thus was organized the *Sociedad Auxiliadora de Nuestra Senora de Guadalupe*, with offices near the church.

A four-page flyer outlined the spiritual and corporal charitable works to be undertaken by these volunteers in all the parishes of the city. The spiritual works included religion classes for youngsters preparing for Baptism, First Communion, or Confirmation. Religion classes for adults were given every evening from 8 to 9 PM. Members were asked to have the classes in the homes of those who for any valid reason could not attend classes in the center. Members were even asked to contribute to the transportation of those who lived far away. Another thrust of the group was to help regularize marriages, and to persuade those planning to marry to do so in a Catholic ceremony. There were also to be visits to the sick and the infirm, with preparation for the reception of the Sacraments if necessary. The corporal works of charity included aid to job-seekers; teaching of useful trades where higher wages might be earned; collection, repair, and distribution of used clothing to the needy.

From October, 1907 until May, 1910, the Society slowly expanded its aid to immigrants, and in effect the office became an employment center, a clearing house for the girls seeking employment and for prospective employers. Mrs. Lopez sometimes lodged in her apartment as many as twelve girls. Even once they were employed, some of the girls stayed on, helping train less fortunate ones. The Assumptionists realized the value of this undertaking to the parish. The parish bulletin

reported its activities each month and pleaded for donations and volunteers.

In March, 1910, Mrs. Lopez, a practical woman, advised Fr. Stéphane, now pastor of the church, of the need for expansion, and proposed that the church develop her work by establishing a shelter for girls wishing to pay for board and room at a reasonable rate and still live in a protected environment. Fr. Stéphane approved and suggested that she call upon the Chancery, outline her work among the Hispanic immigrants, and, without mentioning that the pastor had sent her, ask the officials of the Chancery if they would permit the Guadalupe parish to buy and furnish such a home for immigrant girls. She was received by the Cardinal who was highly pleased by her work and her plans. He referred her to the Vicar General who, after consultation with the Chancellor, told her that her plan was accepted. The Vicar General later called the pastor and two trustees of the parish and with them examined the financial records of the parish. After a favorable report, he authorized the parish to purchase the house at 251 West 14th Street, at a figure not to exceed \$28,500. The deal was closed within ten days; the price was \$28,000.

The house was in good condition; the plan was to occupy the building in September, 1910. The tenants were notified that they were to vacate the apartments before that date. In October, 1910, Fr. Emmanuel Bailly, Superior General, passing through New York, gave the shelter its name, *Casa Maria*, after Maria Lopez who had started the project. The tenants did not in fact vacate the building by the desired date; rents were collected as late as April, 1911. But through March and April, 1911, alterations were being made. The blessing of the new house took place on May 22, 1911, feast day of St. Rita, for whom devotion was great in the parish church. The blessing was done by Msgr. Edwards, new Vicar General of the Archdiocese, and a long standing friend of the Assumptionists.

From cramped quarters in a tiny office beneath the chapel and a rented apartment, the pastor of Guadalupe now had at his disposition what he considered spacious quarters, capable of housing various societies and activities. On September, 1911, the Sacred Heart Society was founded in the parish; and on September 5, the Holy Name Society was established.

The original purpose of *Casa Maria* was not neglected in its new quarters. During afternoons and evenings, classes were held in English, Spanish, French, drawing, typing, shorthand, bookkeeping, sewing, music, cooking. A summary of the activities of *Casa Maria* from October, 1907 to August, 1912 carries:

700 visits to hospital patients  
 40 elderly men and women placed in homes for the aged  
 40 children, aged 4 to 7 years, placed in orphanages  
 800 Christmas dinners for entire families  
 2750 persons receiving clothing or shoes  
 980 religion classes  
 580 persons prepared for Sacraments (Confession, Communion,  
 Confirmation, Marriage)  
 2605 jobs found, especially for women  
 5615 classes in language.

Mrs. Lopez was aided in all this by charitable persons, but the success was mainly due to her zeal and know-how. By 1912, it was becoming evident that it would soon be necessary to replace the aging Mrs. Lopez. Mrs. Maria de Lopez died on February 11, 1920, and soon after was born the idea of obtaining nuns to staff *Casa Maria*. On March 4, 1920 a certificate of incorporation of the *Casa Maria* was duly filed with the Secretary of State of New York State. Officers of the Corporation were: Fr. Octave Caron, president; Fr. Paul Jour-net, vice-president; Fr. Tranquille Pesse, treasurer, and Fr. Zacharie St. Martin, secretary. Other members were: Mr. Austin Finegan, Miss Marie de Choisel, Delores de Leon, and Maria de la Barra. On May 3, 1920, Miss Maria de Choisel was chosen as manager of the Casa; on December 1, Miss Elise de Jarcillan replaced her

On May 20th, 1922, at the request of Archbishop Patrick Hayes, the directors of the corporation voted to obtain a community of nuns to take over the direction and operation of the *Casa*. The *Siervas de Maria*, *Ministras de los Enfermos* accepted; and a contract was signed on March 7, 1923. At the same time the Archbishop gave \$5,000 for necessary repairs. A loan for \$25,000, guaranteed by the Archdiocese, was obtained, late in 1923, in order to pay for all the required repairs. Work was finished by March 7, 1924, but the Sisters had already moved in on February 11, 1924 in order to operate the home in accordance with the contract with the Archbishop. At the present time, the work of the *Casa Maria* for working girls is done by the *Centre Maria*, at 539 West 54th Street, run by the Religious of Mary Immaculate. The Servants of Mary now do private nursing in homes and have their convent at 3305 Country Club Road in the Bronx.

## ***OTHER ACTIVITIES***

On April 11, 1913, at the direction of the Superior General, the building behind the church, at 226 West 15th Street, was purchased for \$19,000. The down payment, including all fees, was \$10,200. A mortgage for \$9,000 covered the rest. It could be used by various parish organizations, and some of its rooms could be used for visiting clergy and religious. Meanwhile it was rented.

The declaration of war between France and Germany in August, 1914, was the signal for a call to arms for many religious, even those who were naturalized American citizens, because France did not recognize any naturalization of its French-born citizens. On August 4, five priests and two brothers, all from Worcester, embarked for France. On August 12, Fr. Paul de la Croix Joumet from Guadalupe and Fr. Crescent Armanet from Esperanza also left.

### ***CHERRY STREET***

In 1913, Cardinal Farley had asked the Assumptionists to try to do something for the poorer Hispanic groups living in lower East Manhattan. In a letter dated September 24, 1915, Fr. Stéphane Chaboud wrote to Fr. Bailly: "We shall in two or three weeks have our mission chapel in lower Manhattan. For two years the Cardinal has been asking that we do something. We are furnishing a hall about 50 X 25 feet with an altar behind a movable screen. This will permit the use of the place as a meeting hall.

The *Caendario* had this to say: "Our friends will be glad to hear that a new Catholic mission has been opened downtown at the intersection of Cherry Street and James Slip, very close to the Brooklyn Bridge, for the spiritual welfare of the Spanish persons who live in the lower East Side and who cannot very well attend the services at West 14th Street. Most of them belong to the working class engaged aboard the many ships trading along the Coast and the West Indies or Central America. His Eminence the Cardinal of New York gave his hearty approval and encouragement to this new addition to the numerous Catholic activities in this diocese.

Msgr. Lavelle, V.C., visited the humble chapel and found the conditions most satisfactory. Thus with the blessing of God the new chapel, dedicated to Mary, the Immaculate Virgin, *La Purissima* will look after the lost or wandering sheep who bleat the sweet Spanish language. Every Sunday and on Holy Days, two masses are assured for them. Everything there is poor the chapel, the surroundings, the people. On November 28, 1915, over 50 persons attended the first mass celebrated in the new chapel. During weekdays the chapel will be

convened into a clubroom and provide games and reading material, even moving pictures. A number of young ladies of this church have already taken an active interest in the new mission and are going downtown every Sunday to sing at Mass.... Senora Lopez and two ladies from *Casa Maria* give religion classes after the Sunday Masses of 8:00 and 10:00.”

The Cherry Street mission was opened during the days when Miss de Barril, who had been instrumental in interesting many wealthy benefactors in the church of Our Lady of Esperanza, was waging a bitter campaign against the “French” fathers in charge of Guadalupe and Esperanza. *La Purissima* on Cherry Street was to feel the ire of this woman. A Basque priest, Fr. Belanstegui, expelled from Mexico, was living in New York City, supporting himself by giving music lessons. He heard about the mission and perhaps encouraged by Miss de Barril, according to Fr. Stéphane, went to the Cardinal and stated that most of the Spaniards in lower Manhattan were Basques and desired to confess in their native tongue because they did not know Spanish well enough. Consequently they needed a priest of their language and race. The Cardinal, taken aback by this, replied that he would examine the problem. He then asked the Assumptionists what he should think. The religious obediently conducted a survey and found that indeed there were some Basques in Lower Manhattan, but they were a minority and, moreover, all spoke Spanish. The Assumptionists also notified the Cardinal that this same Fr. Belanstegui had published the preceding month in the *Prensa* a violent article against the Spanish parish given to French priests. The Cardinal himself did not escape the ire of the author. A translation of the article was given to the Cardinal who called Fr. Belanstegui to the Chancery and expelled him from the diocese. The priest refused to obey, and to obtain funds started to beg, with the result that he was arrested. The Vicar General then found a boardinghouse for him, at \$1.00 a day. A few weeks later, this same priest was again arrested, for operating a shoe-shine stand without a permit. His rather violent reaction on this occasion led the police to send him to Bellevue Hospital for psychiatric tests. After this, no further trace of him can be found in our records.

During 1916, the *Calendario* lists five locations where the Assumptionists were involved in Spanish apostolate: the two parishes, Guadalupe and Esperanza; the *Purissima* on Cherry St.; the *Centra Calle 86*, located at 114 East 86th Street, opened in December, 1915, where a meeting was held for Hispanics of the area on the second Sunday of each month. It included the Rosary, a Spanish sermon, and the Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament. Fr. Francisco Garcia usually took care of this ministry. During the school year the Sisters Helpers of the Holy Souls taught catechism classes for children three times a week. At a fifth

location at 334 East 22nd Street, catechism classes were taught every Sunday during the school year. On November 8, 1928, the Chancellor advised the Assumptionists that they need no longer take care of the Cherry Street mission. A Spanish priest had been assigned to the nearby church of St. James and would thereafter be in charge of the mission. The Assumptionists had no objection to this decision.

For many years, the community had expressed its hope and desire to acquire 231 West 14th Street, in order to have more room for church activities and especially to relieve them from the cramped conditions in which they lived. During all of 1916, #231 had been empty and neglected. On January 10, 1917, the religious purchased it for the community. They paid \$10,727.50 cash and accepted a mortgage of \$12,500, at 5%. Many needed repairs were made and the religious slowly transferred the kitchen, the refectory, and several of their bedrooms to #231.

As we have noted earlier, there had been for some time a desire for a larger, more spacious, more presentable church. The acquisition of #231 now made this possible. The second story of 231 became a large hall which was used for parish society meetings and which was foreseen as a temporary church while the church itself was being enlarged and beautified. On June 6, 1919, the pastor, Fr. Octave, received official approval from the Archbishop to raise funds for a "new and suitable church." The permission was signed by T. Donn, Secretary of the Diocesan Council. It was estimated the cost would be in the vicinity of \$25,000.

There was still much charitable work to do in the Guadalupe parish, and Fr. Octave Caron, established a chapter of the St. Vincent de Paul Society for the men, in 1918. He planned to do something similar for the women and addressed a petition to the Archbishop. On April 15, 1918, by order Cardinal Farley, a chapter of the Confraternity of Our Lady of Guadalupe was established and on July 25, 1918 the group received from the Guadalupe Basilica in Mexico City the diploma of association granting the indulgences and privileges attached by the Pope to the Guadalupe Archconfraternity.

Another foundation like *Casa Maria*, but for young men only, was begun by Fr. Octave Caron. The idea had originated with Fr. Toppa, a Salesian whose apostolate centered upon immigrants. He was sent by Msgr. Lavelle to ask the Assumptionists to cooperate in the venture. Fr. Octave contacted Mr. and Mrs. Resonoff (the wife was Mexican) whose hotel in Mexico had been burned by bandits and who had moved to New York seeking opportunity. They liked Fr. Octave's plan to have them manage a boarding house for male Hispanic immigrants, which was called *Casa San Rafael*, after a similar center in Barcelona. Because the

parish and the Assumptionists agreed from the outset that this venture would have to be self-supporting, the first priority was to find the funds to start the operation. Mr. Manuel Danz agreed to advance \$1,500 to purchase essential furniture; but because he lacked confidence in total strangers, he demanded and obtained Fr. Octave's personal guarantee for the loan. This was done despite the parish and community decisions to avoid such entanglements. The *Casa San Rafael*, with the Guadalupe pastor as its director, was supposed to open its quarters at 240 West 14th Street on March 1, 1919. At first, Fr. Octave found enough donors to contribute about \$190 a month. But expenses soon exceeded revenue. Creditors began to call upon Fr. Octave to pay them some \$700 due them, and he sought donations desperately.

There was a Canonical Visitation of Guadalupe, November 18-21, 1920, by Fr. Joseph Maubon, Vicar General of the Congregation after the death of Fr. Bailly. He made some personnel changes, including the naming of Fr. Paul de la Croix Joumet as pastor in the place of Fr. Octave Caron. Because the Archbishop had asked that a priest be named director of all the activities in favor of Spanish immigrants, Fr. Octave Caron was named to this position. Fr. Maubon praised the work that had been done on 231 West 14th Street, and asked that the house at 225 West 15th Street which was occupied by tenants be utilized for some parish activities. So far, it had never been used for this purpose. The last rental payment recorded was in July, 1921. Sometime between August 1 and October 15 the house was sold, for a price which we could not discover. Whatever it was, all or part of it was used a few months later to make a final payment of \$9,750 on 231 West 14th Street.

While a drive for funds to enlarge the church was going on, Architect Gustav Steinback was working on plans, which were presented to the pastor on February 23, 1921. One month later, March 21, permission was asked of Msgr. Dunn of the Chancery to proceed with the proposed alterations. The answer, on April 6, was that a diocesan committee would examine the project on location. The visit was made on April 17, and on May 6 permission was granted to make alterations for a total of \$21,000. The contract for all the work was awarded to Moore, Wolf & Company. The required building permit was obtained only on June 28. During construction, Sunday Masses and church services would be held in the parish had. On July 15, contracts were let out for new pews, confessionals, and a healing plant, and at that time the total of all the contracts surpassed the sum obtained by the drive. \$10,000 was borrowed from Our Lady of Esperanza. When the target date in September arrived, much work still had to be done, but by November 27 all Masses were being held in the renovated church. The solemn benediction by Bishop Dunn and the official inauguration took place

December 12, 1921. The project had cost \$27,820. The church now occupied two stories of 229 West 14th Street and had an organ loft capable of seating 50 people. The wads and ceilings had no decorations as yet. In November, 1923, two stained glass windows for the side of the church were donated by two families. Each paid \$200.

For a few lines, we now interrupt this history of Guadalupe to mention an event of importance for the entire Assumptionist Congregation. By a decree of the Sacred Congregation for Religious dated March 25, 1923, the Assumptionist Congregation was divided into four distinct Provinces. All the communities in the United States and Canada became a Vice-Province which was part of the Province of Paris. At that time, Fr Clodoald Serieix became the Vicar Provincial, and he was to be succeeded in 1929 by Fr. Crescent Armanet who remained Vicar until the Province of North America was erected in December, 1946.

By August 13, 1925, the \$10,000 borrowed from Esperanza was repaid and the Guadalupe church was free from debt. For some years, the Assumptionists had been paying taxes on some properties owned by them, including 231 West 14th Street. In order to avoid these taxes legally and also in order to place all their real estate and bank accounts in the name of a group rather than in the name of individuals, the Assumptionists incorporated themselves under the name Augustinians of the Assumption. This was done under New York State law, on November 27, 1925. In April, 1926, the house at 231 West 14th was transferred to this tax-exempt corporation.

As soon as Fr. Paul de la Croix Joumet returned from his vacation in France, on June 3, 1926, the planning for the Silver Jubilee of the parish in 1927 went into high gear. On January 23, 1927, the Cardinal was asked for permission to decorate the church and to install a new marble altar. On March 27, permission was granted to spend \$12,000 on these projects. Between May first and August 31 the church was painted. By September 10 a new altar of Carrara marble was erected, with a new picture of Our Lady of Guadalupe above it. This altar was consecrated on October 3 by Bishop Dunn who in his sermon declared, "What is wanting in the dimensions of the church has been filled up artistically by the decoration."

A few days later, a group of Mexican women donated \$780 for a stained glass window of the apparition of Our Lady to Diego at Guadalupe. The window was placed over the main entrance to the church.

On December 12, 1927, the Silver Jubilee celebration was presided by His Eminence Patrick Cardinal Hayes. Fr. Thomas Darbois, founder and first pastor of the church, had come from Rome to be present. Before

a full church, Fr. Paul de la Croix Joumet delivered an address in English. In it he recounted some of the history of the church, gave a brief account of the ministry of the Assumptionists in the church and elsewhere in New York City. In answer to the pastor's address, Cardinal Hayes congratulated the Assumptionists on behalf of the diocese. He reminisced how, as Chancellor of the diocese when the church was founded, he was well acquainted with the hardships of the beginnings of the church. Since then he had witnessed the progress made and had been greatly interested in its growing influence, appreciating the zeal and devotion of the religious community which had accepted the mission, refused by many others at the time. He was glad to meet on such a happy occasion the founder of the church. He was satisfied to give public testimony of esteem and confidence to the priests of Our Lady of Guadalupe.

All this was deeply appreciated by the Assumptionists, who, even after the death of Miss de Barril, were still being violently attacked in Spanish newspapers because they were "Frenchmen" in charge of Spanish churches.

During the summer of 1928, the facade and main entrance of the church were remade and given the distinctly Spanish style they still have.

Fr. Cassien Dubost, who was to develop the social activities of the parish to a great extent, arrived on October 29, 1931. But on September 26, 1932, Fr. Zacharie St. Martin died at St. Joseph Hospital after a yearlong illness. He was mentioned in Dorothy Day's autobiography as the priest whom she consulted during the crisis of her conversion. At the time of her conversion she was employed by the Communist *Daily Worker*. She asked Fr. Zacharie whether she had to quit her job because of her conversion to Catholicism. He replied that she could keep it to support herself and her child during the difficult days of the Depression. We might also mention here that Thomas Merton, in his book, *The Seven Storey Mountain*, mentions Our Lady of Guadalupe as the church he liked to frequent.

In 1935, the church decorations were washed, refreshed, retouched where needed. New canvases were prepared and installed on the walls flanking the main altar. On the left, the painting represented a typical South American landscape with thatched huts, showing the first Spanish missionaries bringing the faith to the natives. On the right, the converted nations are shown bowing and honoring Our Lady of Guadalupe, in the presence of Pope Pius X.

The early apostolate of the Assumptionists consisted, as we saw earlier, of chaplaincies. Over the years, the situation changed, but we might mention that for many years, and down to the present time, the Assumptionists have often been called by St. Vincent's Hospital, located

between 11 and 12 Streets on 7th Avenue, especially when Hispanic people are involved. Fr. Oscar Zoppi became somewhat of a legend there; the jolly good humor of this priest often enabled women who were experiencing difficult labor to relax and have their baby easily and rapidly.

In 1949, Fr. Alfred Guenette conceived and organized the Assumption Guild, a Mass Association, for the purpose of financially helping the training and education of young Assumptionists. This was very important at that time because a novitiate and scholasticate had just been opened in Hyattsville, MD. Fr. Guenette borrowed 20 typewriters and called upon the volunteer services of 20 girls from the Peace Boarding Home near the church on 14th Street. They mailed 100,000 first-class letters to people all over the United States. The project cost \$3,500 and brought in \$8,500 during the first year. From 1950 until 1952, the Guild was directed by Fr. Leopold E. Moreau. Fr. Albert (Emile) Brochu then took over and directed the Assumption Guild for 26 years. The Guild still functions, still fuddling its original purpose, and counting at present more than 12,000 active members.

The Assumptionists had their own Father Flanagan in the person of Fr. Luis Madina, a Basque priest, who founded Boys' Towns in Madrid, Costa Rica, Panama, and Columbia. In 1955 and 1956 he was temporarily stationed in New York City. He was asked by the Archbishop to deliver radio talks for Hispanics. The main portion of the programs was devoted to answering questions sent in by listeners. The talks were printed in the Hispanic Journal, *Excelsior*, and later published in a book entitled *Luz por las Ondas*. His work fit in beautifully with the extended services of Guadalupe parish.

In 1950 arrived in New York a priest who was to have an immense impact upon the people of Guadalupe parish, until his untimely death in 1980. He was Fr. Dennis Comelisse, a Dutchman, who had for a few years immediately after his ordination been a missionary in Brazil. He felt great sympathy for Latinos and in countless ways helped them with their housing, employment, or health problems. He visited landlords to get minor repairs made for his parishioners, put in a good word for them with employers, served as their interpreter, introduced them to agencies, helped them fill out forms, questionnaires, and even income tax returns. In an effort to procure for them good reading material, he purchased an entire bookstore run by the Piarist Fathers: books, pamphlets, religious articles, and even the counters and shelves which he installed at 14th Street. This was the origin of the present, larger, more elaborate Hispanic bookstore which for some time was managed by Fr. Elphege Pollender.

In 1950, Fr. Antoine Philippe obtained from the Chancery the permission to purchase for the parish the house located at 230 West 15th

Street, the yard of which connected with the yard at 231 West 14th. The two top floors were renovated to serve as additional rooms for visitors to Guadalupe. Rooms on lower floors were used by various parish organizations.

It will be remembered that the house at 231 West 14th Street was bought in the name of the Congregation and not the parish. It housed some of the religious serving the parish. It was also used for a short while in 1951 by the first Provincial of the North American Province. The situation was somewhat confused and required clarification. In 1962, Cardinal Francis Spellman tentatively approved a plan to sell to Our Lady of Guadalupe parish the rectory and Provincial House owned by the Province and to purchase a suitable residence in Manhattan or the Bronx for the Provincial staff. When, in 1964, a separate Provincial House was purchased at 329 West 108 Street, 231 West 14th Street could be used exclusively by the parish personnel. The Superior General, Fr. Wilfrid Dufault authorized Fr. Henri Moquin, the Provincial, to negotiate its sale to the Archdiocese. The sale took place in December, 1966.

For many years, Fr. Francisco Dominguez, while stationed at Guadalupe, worked at Our Lady of Esperanza where, among other things, he sponsored the Social Center for 25 years. In this capacity, he was able to learn a great deal about the many problems which Hispanics face. He was thereby well prepared when Cardinal Cooke named him, in December, 1978, as Director of the new Archdiocesan Office for Immigrant Services. When the Amnesty Law went into effect in 1987, Fr. Francisco spearheaded the Archdiocesan effort to train personnel to help undocumented and legal aliens in the New York area.

Beginning December 12, 1977 the parish opened a yearlong celebration of the 75th Anniversary of the founding of the tiny mission church. The anniversary year was climaxed with a Jubilee Mass on July 23, 1978. It was held outdoors and the street was closed to traffic for the occasion. Bishop Austin B. Vaughn, rector of St. Joseph's Seminary in Yonkers and a native of the neighborhood, was the principal celebrant. Incidentally, this celebration meshed well with the annual week-long fiesta in honor of Santiago (St. James), a product of the collaboration between the Guadalupe church and the Little Spain Merchants' Association.

At the time of the 75th Anniversary of the parish, the following societies are mentioned as being active in the parish:

Pastor's Advisory Committee  
Holy Name Society  
Confraternity of Our Lady of Guadalupe  
Youth Group of Our Lady of Guadalupe

Confraternity of the Sacred Heart  
 Society of St Vincent de Paul  
 Auxiliaries of St Vincent de Paul  
 Legion of Mary  
 Cursillistas  
 Catechists  
 Pre-Cana Group  
 Boy Scout Troop and Pack 304

Under the auspices of the church, volunteers from some of these groups have for years performed the humble but caring service of preparing and distributing sandwiches and food to the needy, every weekday.

During the pastorate of Fr. Leonard Larocque, some slight changes were made in the exterior of the rectory facade, and the interior of the church was again painted. Frequent repainting has been necessitated because of the dust and pollution of the New York atmosphere. In 1985, a smoky, sooty fire that began accidentally in the recreation room of the religious necessitated the repainting of the entire rectory and the building of additional staircases as fire escapes.

Admittedly, this history of Guadalupe has been somewhat long. Yet it has omitted a great deal, and still does not do justice to the many years of devoted service by Assumptionist priests and brothers and many lay people to the Hispanic people of the Archdiocese of New York. Obviously we cannot recall everyone who was at any time a part of the 14th Street community, but we think that we should list, in the cause of history, the pastors of the parish.

Fr. Thomas Darbois, founder	1902-1908
Fr. Adrien Buisson	1908-1912
Fr. Stéphane Chaboud	1912-1918
Fr. Octave Caron	1918-1920
Fr. Paul de la Croix Joumet	1920-1929
Fr. Adrien Buisson	1929-1933
Fr. Paul de la Croix Joumet	1933-1934
Fr. Cassien Dubost	1934-1943
Fr. Lambert Saive	1943-1949
Fr. Antoine Philippe	1949-1958
Fr. Bernard Guillet	1958-1961
Fr. Antoine Philippe	1961-1964
Fr. Louis-Robert Brassard	1964-1965
Fr. Charles Lavoie	1965-1972
Fr. Camillus Thibault	1972-1978

Fr. Leonard Larocque 1978-1984

Fr. Claude Grenache 1985-1988

Fr. Peter Precourt (Administrator) 1988-

At the time of this writing, the community at Guadalupe consists of:  
FF. Bernard Guillet, Albert Brochu, Peter Precourt, Teodoro Asarta, and  
Brothers Edmond St. Gelais, Richard Gagnon (Vocation Team and  
Community Treasurer).

## 12. Assumption College



Let our religious understand that they are called to contribute to a very great work, to the magnificent extension of the Reign of Jesus Christ

Because of the importance of the objective pursued, let our missionaries and our professors be imbued with the necessity to work, above all else, for their sanctification....

They will be preoccupied to find vocations, because, said Fr. D'Alzon, a good priest always has this concern.

Fr. Emmanuel Bailly

The religious working at Assumption were given directives like those above, contained in the "carte de visite" of September 29, 1910. It must be said that the Major Superiors of the Congregation gave to the new community their close attention. The Superior General, Fr. Bailly, made a first Canonical Visitation in June, 1904. Fr. Ernest Baudouy visited officially in April, 1908 and again in June, 1909. There was a second visit by Fr. Badly in September, 1910, following his attendance at the Eucharistic Congress in Montreal. It was during this visit that Brother Joachim Bosseno renewed his vows for three years. Brother Joachim had been in Louvain for four years after his novitiate, where he exercised his considerable culinary talents, having been taught by a former chef of Emperor Napoleon III. After a year in England, he was assigned to Worcester, where he arrived, with Brother Armand Goffart, on September 15, 1909. He was entrusted with all kinds of jobs: boiler stoker, maintenance, sacristan, and laundryman (which was quite a chore because he had to launder all the clothes of the 85 boarding students). Later, because of a hip infirmity, he served mostly as porter/telephone operator and as cashier of the small deposits left with him by students. He would even repair their clothes and darn their socks. He served devotedly until his death December 1, 1943.

A beautiful grotto of Our Lady of Lourdes was erected on the College campus, due to a generous donation by Mrs. Crompton-Wood. It was blessed in a ceremony presided by Fr. Grenier, pastor of Notre Dame parish, September 12, 1909.

The Assumptionist community at the end of 1909 consisted of: FF. Omer Rochain, Superior, Isidore Gayraud, Treasurer, Renaud Burdin, Xavier Marchet and Brothers Morand Ohrel, Roland Leroy, and Paulien Vassel as professors. Assigned as missionaries were: FF. Joseph-Marie Laity, Hydulphe Mathiot, Barnabe Gigaud, and Marie-Clement Staub. The Lay Brothers were: Joachim Bosseno and Armand Goffart

The school, which had begun as an aluminate in 1904 with four students, had an enrollment of 70 when the 1910-11 academic year began. As the original wing of the school had been planned to accommodate only 50 students, the building would have to be enlarged. This was discussed during the stay of the Superior General who, in October, 1910, granted the required permission. A ground-breaking ceremony was held on October 15, at which both religious and students enthusiastically shoveled away.

Work on this central section of the College began on October 27, 1911. Mr. Onesime Nault was again the architect and Mr. Urgel Dorais was the contractor. Because of freezing weather, work ceased on December 8, but was resumed in March, 1911. In November, 1911 the College exchanged the land it owned on Fales Street for land previously bought by Fr. Walsh in view of a church on Baltimore (Assumption) Avenue. On May 9, 1912 Bishop Beaven blessed the finished central portion of the College, the section under the impressive tower. The story about the Bishop's presence deserves telling. We tell it here as reported by Fr. Marceau who was curate in Spencer at the time. Fr. Grotieau, O.P., was pastor in Spencer and was very friendly with Bp. Beaven. He was shunned by the Franco-American clergy. The College remained on good terms with him but avoided inviting him to functions in order to avoid difficulties with the clergy. Fr. Grotieau understood and accepted the situation.

Fr. Omer Rochain invited the Bishop to bless the central wing; and as soon as the Bishop received the invitation, he phoned the rectory in Spencer. "Hello. Is Fr. Grolleau there?"

"No," responded Fr. Marceau, "he is absent for a few days."

"Well, do you know whether he was invited to the blessing of Assumption College on May 12?" "I don't know, Excellency."

"Try to find out; and let me know, because unless he is invited I shall not go to Greendale."

Fr. Marceau immediately notified Fr. Omer, who was ready in a dilemma: if he failed to invite Fr. Grolleau, he offended the Bishop, and

if he invited him, he would get all the Franco-American clergy on his back.

“Invite him anyway,” suggested Fr. Marceau. “He is away and will not return until after your ceremony. Your letter will stay on his desk and I will be able to tell the Bishop that you invited him.”

Fr. Omer men sent a “Special Delivery” invitation to Fr. Grolleau. The next day, the Bishop called Spencer again. “Has Fr. Grotieau been invited by the College?”

“I don’t know, Bishop, but his mail is on his desk. Maybe there’s a letter from the College.”

“Look.”

A moment later, Fr. Marceau said, “Yes, Bishop, there’s a letter from Greendale.” “Open it and read it to see if he’s invited.”

Fr. Marceau did as he was told and said to the Bishop, “Yes, he is invited to the ceremony.” “Fine,” said the Bishop, “then I will go also.”

Fr. Grotieau returned too late for the Blessing, which was in fact performed by the Bishop, before which he confirmed fifteen of the students.

The beginning of World War I in 1914 caused the departure of a dozen of the French religious, who were mobilized. Two were killed during the hostilities and one was seriously wounded. The remaining religious carried on as best they could, and in September, 1915, the student body numbered 175.

During December, 1914 and January, 1915, Fr. Marie-Clement Staub founded the Sisters of St Joan of Arc. He said that they were to be “Victims of the Sacred Heart for Priests.” Seven women formed the original community, living in the “cradle” of Assumption College which had been moved from 27 Fales Street onto the campus.

### ***GRANT OF THE ORIGINAL CHARTER***

In September, 1915, philosophy courses were offered for the first time; and Fr. Omer Rochain petitioned the Massachusetts Legislature to grant the College a charter. This charter, granting power to confer the Bachelor of Arts degree, was signed by Governor W. McCall on February 6, 1917.

An event that would have an impact on the Worcester community took place in September, 1918. Cardinal Begin, Archbishop of Quebec, officially accepted the Assumptionists in his diocese. Fr. Marie-Clement Staub was the first religious assigned to Bergerville (Sillery) at the house placed under the aegis of the Sacred Heart. Later many Assumptionists

would do their novitiate there and pursue their theological studies at Laval University.

September, 1918, found the student body at 200. Those above 18 years of age (52 of them) were drafted and, while still in school, followed military courses leading toward a commission. Two lieutenants, named Mahan and Plummer, were in charge of this Students' Training Corps, which used the facilities of a house that stood in the field beneath Burncoat Street. On December 14, 1918, the students were demobilized and could return to regular classes.

The first Assumptionist to the in Worcester was Brother Eleutherios Schinas, who died January 2, 1919, aged 28, a victim of Spanish influenza. He was born at Marathocambos on the Greek island of Samos. When he was 13, he arrived at the Assumptionist school at Constantinople (Kum Kapu). After stays at the aluminate of Bure and Taintignies, he took the Assumptionist habit in 1908. He studied philosophy at Louvain, and in September, 1913, arrived in Worcester. When Assumption College was authorized to have its private cemetery, Brother Eleutherios was reinterred there, May 8, 1919.

When Fr. Marie-Louis Deydier became Superior and thus President of the College in 1919, he discovered two things: that he had inherited a large debt, and that the College building, as it stood, resembled an airplane with only one wing. He proceeded to amortize the debt and also to construct a third section of the building, which was blessed by Bishop Thomas O'Leary on November 7, 1922. It was during the superiorate of Fr. Deydier that most of the land for the Greendale campus was purchased.

At the end of 1922, the community was composed of the following religious: Fr. Marie-Louis Deydier, Superior, FF. Damascene Dhers, Reginald Bonnet, Anastase Baudart, Rumold Spinael, Hydulphe Mathiot, Lambert Saive, Evariste Buytaers, Rodolphe Martel, Odilon Dubois, Marius Dumoulin, Basile Filaire, Bemardin Balfontaine, Engelbert Devincq, Roland Leroy, Antoine Philippe, Yvon LeFloc'h, Hermes Fuchs, Polyeucte Guissard, Leocade Bauer, Jude Verstaen, Giuseppe Alavena. Lay Brothers were: Joachim Bosseno, Armand Goffart, Vincent Petro, Albert Gagnon, Hyacinthe.

## ***FIRE***

During the night of Friday to Saturday, 24 March, 1923, at 2:50 A.M., a fire alarm shattered the night stillness. A fire had broken out in the elevator shaft. Fire hoses kept the fire contained in the elevator shaft but the flames shot to the upper floor, where the Physics and Chemistry

laboratories were. Students evacuated the large dormitory without panic. Firemen were unable to save the laboratories and the roof, but they did manage to save the two wings. The fire was under control by 7 A.M. Roof and labs were completely destroyed; the large dormitory was a mass of charred beams, and water damaged the lower stories. Students were given breakfast in the homes of sympathetic neighbors and left for their homes. It was the eve of Palm Sunday. Two weeks later, when they returned from their Easter vacations, they found that a temporary roof had been erected, and that a substitute dormitory and study had had been arranged. Life could return to a semblance of normal.

To most of the Presidents of Assumption College could be applied a paraphrased version of Caesar's famous dictum: They came, they saw, they built, they moved on. The 1925 enrollment was 268, and Fr Clodoald Serieix again called in Mr. Onesime Nault to prepare plans. The problem was somewhat more complex than it had been in previous enlargements. Some sort of separation between the high school and college sections seemed necessary. And the community desired to build amply enough to satisfy some kind of future expansion. Ground was broken for the College wing and the gymnasium on November 16, 1925. The contractor was Mr. J. Roberts, who had done a splendid job of the rebuilding after the 1923 fire. By December, 1926 the construction was complete. With this work, the College took on the aspect it would have until the construction of the large student chapel and a dormitory over the gymnasium, in 1947. As classes began for the 1926-7 academic year, the student body was as follows:

High School:	48 Seniors
	40 Juniors
	51 Sophomores
	<u>87 Freshmen</u>
Total	226
College:	16 Seniors
	17 Juniors
	20 Sophomores
	<u>27 Freshmen</u>
Total	80

After the completion of construction, the College section could finally be separated, for the most part, from the High School, and for the first time many of the collegians could have the luxury of semi-private rooms.

## **SILVER JUBILEE**

By 1929, twenty five years after its foundation, the school could rejoice over the fact that 64 of its former students had been ordained to the priesthood. The Silver Jubilee of Assumption College was dramatized (I use the word advisedly) by the visit of the Ambassador of France, Paul Claudel, on April 14-16. Mayor Michael J. O'Mara issued a proclamation urging Worcester citizens to fly the American and French flags on the occasion of this first visit to Worcester by a French ambassador. Among the reception committee were Fr. Clodoald Serieix, Rodolphe Martel, and Lambert Saive. The great poet/dramatist and his wife were greeted at the Worcester railroad station by the band of the 101st Infantry, and escorted by 500 National Guardsmen to the City Hall, where they were greeted by Mayor O'Mara. Mr. Claudel stated that Worcester had given him the greatest reception of his entire career. After a banquet at the Worcester Club, the ambassador arrived at Mechanics Hall, and he was greeted by a trumpet fanfare. The College orchestra and chorale had just finished the first half of their annual concert. In his remarks, Mr. Claudel gave the three reasons why he had come to Worcester first, he wanted to imitate Lafayette, who had visited the city in 1824. "No Frenchman," he said, "can do better than follow Lafayette." And he wanted to visit his countrymen, whom he addressed in French, recounting his recent trip to visit the Acadians of Louisiana. Finally, he wanted to keep his diplomat's promise to accept the Assumptionists' repeated invitation. He expressed his gratitude to Mr. and Mrs. Gage for their generosity toward the *Cite Universitaire* then being built in Paris. The College orchestra and chorale then finished their concert.

On Monday, May 15, Ambassador Claudel visited a number of Worcester schools: Holy Name of Jesus parochial school, North High, Holy Cross College, where he autographed some of his books in the library, Worcester Tech, and Clark University, which conferred upon him an honorary degree of Doctor of Letters. This was followed by a reception and banquet at Assumption College, and by the presentation of two short plays, before the Ambassador had to leave for another banquet at the Bancroft Hotel.

On Tuesday, May 16, the Ambassador visited St. Joseph and Notre Dame parochial schools, St. Anne's Orphanage, and the St. Francis Home. He and Mrs. Claudel made a brief final visit to Assumption before leaving for Woonsocket, Rhode Island.

May 19 through 21 saw many other celebrations planned by Fr. Clodoald Serieix: drill-team performances, a banquet for civil leaders and representatives of Franco-American societies, a Solemn High Mass for students and their parents, multi-colored illuminations gleaming from

the College windows, an Alumni reunion, an Exhibition tracing the history of the Assumptionists and of the College, a reception and banquet for priests, at which it was announced that Fr. Clodoald Serieix had been named Provincial of the Paris Province of the Assumptionists.

### ***BAKER LAKE***

Already in 1925, Fr. Clodoald Serieix had requested from the Paris Provincial the permission to seek and purchase a summer camp for the religious. After the request had gone through the appropriate channels, Fr. Gervais Quénard granted the permission on January 8, 1928. On January 18, 1928 a 50 acre property on Baker Lake in Charlton was purchased from Mr. & Mrs. Nils Anderson. Fr. Clodoald wrote to Fr. Gervais on January 28 that he had acted so rapidly because the Y.M.C.A. had also been eyeing the property for a summer camp.

During the summer of 1929, a sad page in the story of Baker Lake was written. On July 4, Fr. Louis Robert drowned while swimming in Baker Lake. He was only 31 years old. He made his novitiate in St. Gerard (Belgium) in 1921-23, and pronounced perpetual vows on November 5, 1925, being the first alumnus of Assumption College to do so. He was ordained on July 29, 1928 and returned to the U.S.A. in August. In September he became a member of the Assumption high school staff, serving as monitor and as Medieval history teacher. The sudden, tragic death of this young priest deeply affected the community. Their sadness was somewhat diminished when another young Franco-American Assumptionist, Fr. Marcellin Parent, from New Bedford, returned to sing his first Solemn High Mass, on August 11.

On August 8, 1929 had arrived the next Superior/President of Assumption College, Fr. Crescent Armanet. He had been ordained in Kadikoy (Turkey) and had been a missionary at Bursa (Turkey) and Plovdiv (Bulgaria) before being sent to England and then to Our Lady of Esperanza in New York City where he served from 1912 to 1929. Besides his other occupations, he served as a sort of foreign correspondent for *La Croix*.

Fr. Crescent was to prove an energetic fund-raiser and an able administrator. This was fortunate, because the diminished student body for the 1929-30 academic year (159 in the high school and 79 in the college) seemed to indicate that the Depression was affecting the school. Records for the following years indicate that during the summers the religious would travel throughout New England in an effort to recruit students. For instance, during the summer of 1932, 14 religious recruited in 91 cities and towns of New England and New York.

Some policy changes and a number of physical embellishments took place during Fr. Crescent's superiorate. During November, 1929 a statue of Fr. d'Alzon was placed in front of the latest wing. It was sculpted by Paul Roemaet from Louvain, from Meuse stone, and showed the Assumptionist founder with right arm extended as if gesturing to his religious. The inscription on the impressive granite pedestal read: "Go forth, be bold, generous, unselfish. Know how to fight and die for the Church and for me Pope." The statue itself cost \$280 but the granite base cost \$450. Students, who can at times be mildly irreverent, have through the years hung scarves, hats, and even a kerosene lantern on Father's extended finger.

In May, 1930, partly because of the worsening economic situation of the country, the decision was made that "extems" or dayhops would be accepted the following September. Until this time, the school had been composed only of boarders, who stayed at the school seven days a week, week in and week out. Fr. Crescent also decided that henceforth students living near Worcester could go home at noon on Saturdays, to return by 8:00 P.M. on Sunday.

At Baker Lake, the "Vida d'Alzon" was completed at a cost of \$10,000; it was blessed and inaugurated on the Feast of the Assumption, 1930. For many years it would be a pleasant place where the religious from all the Assumptionist communities, including those from Canada or New York, could relax. Fishing and frogging, card playing, horseshoes and boccie, gardening and brush cutting filled many a summer hour. There had been a tragic drowning in its early years, and another tragedy marred its later years. Ironically it happened to an Assumptionist brother who was a master electrician; while telephoning a friend during a thunderstorm. Brother John Lesage was electrocuted on August 6, 1978, the same day as the death of Pope Paul VI. Then, because of dwindling use by religious, the Baker Lake property and buildings were sold in 1982.

But let us return to the 1930's. The construction of the 1926 wing had necessitated the destruction of the Lourdes grotto built in 1909. A second, more impressive grotto, was constructed next to the so-called Joan of Arc Park. It was the generous gift of Fr. Joseph Marceau, who blessed and dedicated it on December 8, 1932.

In February, 1934, the Worcester community learned that a young priest who had been a member of the school staff since September, 1932, Fr. Leopold Braun, had obtained a visa from the Soviet Union and would leave in order to become chaplain of Americans in Moscow. He would thus be able to help another Assumptionist, Bishop Pius Neveu, who had been in Russia since 1906. Fr. Braun would be followed in this role by other Assumptionists, most of them from the Worcester community, and

as of this date, in 1994, there is still an Assumptionist there, Fr. Norman Meiklejohn.

On October 8, 1934, Assumption College inaugurated an impressive new entrance and access road up the Greendale slope. It was named after Mrs. Homer Gage whose generosity had made it possible and who officiated at the ribbon-cutting ceremony.

Effective as of August 15, 1935, Fr. Crescent was succeeded as Superior by Fr. Rodolphe Martel, whose term, because of World War II, would exceptionally extended the summer of 1946. When he began as Superior, the Worcester community counted 18 priests: Rodolphe Martel, Marius Dumoulin, Oddon Dubois, Engelbert Devincq, Roland Leroy, Oscar Zoppi, Yvon Le Floc'h, Antoine Philippe, Etisee Rathoin, Etienne Aubert, Pierre Martel, Marcedin Parent, Ulric Charpentier, Henri Moquin, Edouard Moreau, Armand Desautels, Wilfrid Dufault, Leo Mania There were also 6 brothers: Joachim Bosseno, Armand Goffart, Vincent Petro, Sylvestre Troussard, Gerard Brassard, Arthur Blais. There were also seven laymen and one secular priest as pan of the teaching staff. When students returned for classes in September, there were 80 in the College and 159 in the High School. At the time, total fees for board, room, and tuition amounted to \$350, with a slight surcharge for collegians who wanted semi-private rooms.

The same year saw the inauguration of the Apostolic School, whose members were thinking of joining the priesthood. Fr. Crescent, at the urging of the Provincial Chapter in Nîmes in December, 1934, and of the General Chapter in Rome in January, 1935, had already sought to establish such a school in Bane, MA, but had been prevented from doing so because of lack of personnel. Instead, in the Fall of 1935, 17 students were accepted as members of such an Apostolic School (alumnate style). They followed the same courses as other students, but had weekly meetings with the Director; Fr. Oddon Dubois. In return for diminished fees, they were expected to perform certain chores and they had fewer vacations.

During 1936, a former shower room in the oldest part of the building was transformed into a refectory for the community. Red monastery tiles were laid for the floor. The wads were of knotty pine. Fr. Hermenegilde Boutin, pastor in Northampton donated a beautifully carved wooden crucifix for the room. Two alumni, FF. Doria and Telesphore St. Jean donated a fine wooden statue of *Notre Dame Panetiere*, a reproduction of a XV century Madonna much venerated in Fr. Rodolphe's native region. Stained glass medallions in the windows helped give the room a truly monastic tone. Two years later, the decor of the refectory would be completed by a complete set of tables, chairs, and sideboards of heavy oak. They were made by the Gendron Company of Sanford, Maine to

pay some of the fees for five Gendron boys who had studied at Assumption. They are now in the refectory at 50 Old English Road, Worcester.

The Fall of 1936 found 21 members in the Apostolic School. Of these 6 would eventually become Assumptionists: Adrien (Alexis) Babineau, Joseph (Donat) Durand, Georges Bissonnette, Charles Lavoie, Harry Morrison, Louis (Gregory) Boisvert.

Beginning in 1937, some Assumptionists began graduate studies: FF. Armand Desautels and Antonio Laberge at Boston University, and FF. Henri Moquin and Ulric Charpentier at Columbia in New York. When Fr. Armand obtained his doctorate in Romance Languages from Harvard, he became the first American Assumptionist to earn a doctorate. Many others would follow in his footsteps, preparing themselves professionally for their teaching roles.

Some damage to buildings and grounds was done by a violent hurricane on September 21, 1938. Slates were torn from the roof; the cross on the main tower was spinning in the wind; some damage was done to the farm outbuildings; some handball courts were destroyed; about fifty beautiful elms and maples came crashing down, sometimes with daredevil students riding them as they fell. Supper was by candlelight, and in the evening the retreat for the high school students was begun by the light of candelabra borrowed from the chapel. Although there were casualties elsewhere, no one at the College was even injured.

On June 8, 1941, at the annual alumni reunion, the Superior announced that beginning the following September, the High School would accept students who did not already know French. During the first two years they would follow accelerated courses in French in order to be able to follow along with the other students by the time they were Juniors.

Between April and September, 1942 the High School chapel was completely remodeled according to plans by architect Albert Roy. Main altar, side altars, pews were tastefully designed, and stained glass windows representing the Mysteries of the life of the Virgin Mary were installed. Everyone thought the change was a great improvement, even though the pews seemed somewhat uncomfortable. The chapel was blessed on October 25, 1942 by Msgr. Phelan, Vicar General of the Springfield diocese.

World War II affected the community only slightly; it meant fewer vacations and longer working time, as collegians attempted to squeeze four years into three. Fr. Etienne Aubert undertook to put the collegians in shape by compulsory daily calisthenics under his direction and example, on the baseball field and in the gym. For a man of his age he

was in remarkably good physical condition. By December 1942, Fr. Henri Moquin had already published the third in a series of newsletters entitled *Assumption at War* which were sent periodically to all Assumption alumni in the service. They contained news items from the school and from the letters written to Father by the servicemen. One was received written on Adolph Hider's private stationery which had been "liberated" at Berchtesgaden by Victor Mulaire. Sadly, some of the newsletters returned with the dreadful stamp "Killed in action." There were 40 such letters published, the last one on November 30, 1945.

February, June, and November, 1942 saw the departure of three groups of students for the Assumptionist novitiate in Bergerville (Quebec). It was felt that their future as religious was more important than their being drafted. On the other hand, in March, 1943, Fr. Germain Guenette left to join the Army as a paratrooper chaplain. During a test jump, his parachute got caught in the door of his aircraft and for quite some time he "hung around" in the freezing cold before being hauled in by the jumpmaster. For the rest of the war he was known as "The Dangling Padre."

Beginning in January, 1943, attempts were made to do something that had been thought about for some time: to separate the College and High School campuses. At first the Assumptionists wanted to buy the Ellis estate on Salisbury Street which was for sale. But Bishop O'Leary refused to authorize this, in January and again in July. It was thought that he wanted the property for the needs of the diocese. But the proprietors, although ready to sell to us, would not consider selling to him.

Attempts were made to establish the College in the dioceses of Providence, Hartford, or Boston. A fine property in Lexington seemed very attractive, and the Assumptionists came within one day of purchasing it, but this attempt also had to be abandoned, because it is said, the new Archbishop of Boston, Richard Cushing, would have required that the school change its Franco-American character.

When classes began in September, 1944 there were 320 boarders and 20 externs enrolled in the high school; but the college population had hit rock bottom, total enrollment was 21, including 12 student brothers. Yet preparations had to be made to receive an increased enrollment when the war would come to an end. The same month, Fr. Rodolphe Martel launched a drive to raise \$250,000, to finance a projected College complex along Burncoat St., the plans for which were drawn by architect Albert Roy. The goal of the drive was exceeded by some \$50,000. A few years later, an additional 23 acres were purchased across Burncoat St., for possible expansion. This acreage was later sold by Fr. Louis Robert Brassard, as no longer necessary once the College had moved to Salisbury Street, instead of along Burncoat Street.

The written archives of Assumption College give, at the end of 1944, i.e. for the first 40 years of the school, a brief report of revenues. We have no way of guaranteeing its accuracy, but we present it here for what it is worth:

Board, room, tuition:	\$2,214,523.17
Gifts from benefactors:	\$375,310.00
Contributions from Assumptionist ministry:	\$854,401.37
Total revenue:	\$3,444,234.54

As of January 11, 1945, the College had no outstanding debt. On June 11, 1945, work was begun on the construction of a large student chapel above the gym. Above this there was to be a large dormitory. Plans were again by Albert Roy. Erection of steel girders began in September. Persistent "rumors" maintain that funds gathered for the construction of the Burncoat project were employed to finance this construction, completed in late 1947.

On Sunday, July 7, 1946, Fr. Rodolphe Martel announced that he had been recalled to France and that his successor would be Fr. Wilfrid Dufault, who would enter into function once the Letters of Obedience had been received. On July 18, Fr. Wilfrid took over as Superior, and had as Assistants FF. Henri Moquin and Engelbert Devincq. This was a significant moment: until now the Superiors had all been Europeans, and now the reins of government were being passed to a younger generation of Franco-Americans.

In the interests of historical completeness, we might mention here that an effort was made in 1946 to change the location of Assumption College in order to foster its growth. Sights were set on an estate of some 250 acres in Lexington, Massachusetts. Congregation approval had been obtained and Fr. Wilfrid Dufault had in hand a check for \$10,000 to buy the option. When it developed that Archbishop Cushing was less than enthusiastic about the foundation of a Franco-American college in his diocese, the matter was dropped. The time to change the College had not yet come.

We might in concluding this chapter present the list of the Superiors of the Worcester community until the separation of the Prep and the College:

Thomas Darbois, Founder and "Common 1903 Father" of New York and Worcester,	
Isidore Gayraud, Superior "de facto,"	1904-5
Tranquille Pesse,	1905-9
Omer Rochain,	1909-19

Marie-Louis Deydier,	1919-23
Clodoald Serieix,	1923-29 Vice Provincial for No. America
Crescent Armanet,	1929-35 Vice Provincial for No. America
Rodolphe Martel,	1935-46
Wilfrid Dufault,	1946
Henri J. Moquin,	1946-52
Armand Desautels,	1952-56



## 13. A New Province and a Deadly Tornado



The new Superior of Assumption College, Fr. Wilfrid Dufault, was not to remain long in that position. He had begun his term, as we said, on July 18, 1946. On January 2, 1947 he announced the creation of the Province of North America and his nomination as its first Provincial.

In late January, FF. Crescent Armanet and Henry Moquin were named Provincial Councilors. At that time the personnel of the Province numbered 113 religious:

Priests:	54
Scholastics:	21
Choir novices:	6
Coadjutor brothers:	30
Coadjutor novices:	2

The Province had communities in the United States and Canada (at Bergerville). By February, 1947, the Province was truly to become the North American Province because FF. Cassien Dubost and Bernard Guidet were in Mexico, seeking to establish a mission there. In 1948, the religious took over the Sanctuary of the Sacred Heart in Beauvoir, in Canada.

On March 14, 1947, Fr. Henry Moquin succeeded Fr. Dufault as Superior of the Worcester community and as President of Assumption College; in February, 1950, he was named for a second three-year term. Fr. Dufault used Assumption College as his base of operation from January, 1947 until September, 1950 when he moved his Provincialate to Our Lady of Guadalupe.

In the beginning of February, 1950, the diocese of Springfield was divided and Bishop John J. Wright became the first bishop of the new Worcester diocese. Because he was an ardent Francophile, Bp. Wright was very interested in Assumption, a fact that was providential, as we shall see when we deal with the future of Assumption College.

At the General Chapter of the Congregation, in May 1952, Fr. Wilfrid Dufault was elected Superior General. Fr. Henry Moquin became our second Provincial in July, and Fr. Armand Desautels took over as Superior in Worcester.

## ***TORNADO***

In 1953 a disaster occurred which upset the peace and prosperity of the young Province and created immense problems for its young leaders. The annual retreat of the religious was interrupted when, on June 9, at 5:12 P.M., a devastating tornado tore a swath through the Greendale campus and other sections of Worcester. Massive sections of the impressive central tower plunged through four floors of the building and ended up in the main parlor, killing Father Engelbert Devincq in the process. The convent of the Antonian Sisters was ripped from its foundations and squashed flat. Two Sisters, Marie de Ste Helene and Jean de la Croix, were killed. The upper floors of most of the older wings of the College were badly damaged. Surplus army barracks that had housed the science labs and classrooms for the college students were smashed. The “frat” houses on West Boylston Street and Randall Street suffered extensive damage.

Fr. Louis-Robert Brassard suffered multiple leg fractures. Other religious had cuts and bruises, but most escaped unharmed and spread through the neighborhood to help people whose homes had been damaged. Later in the evening, the College of the Holy Cross opened its buildings to shelter most of the religious until other arrangements could be made.

Largely through the tireless efforts of Fr. Armand Desautels, the College President, Assumption rose, phoenix-like, from its ashes and rubble. At a cost of more than \$1,000,000, reconstruction of the buildings began without delay, in order to be ready for the Fall opening of classes. Summer classes previously scheduled were held in the facilities of the College of the Holy Cross.

Fund raising began immediately. In rooms donated in the Sheraton Hotel ACORF (Assumption College Reconstruction Fund) coordinated the efforts of the religious, alumni, friends, and volunteers. Successive Office Managers of ACORF were: Fr. Leopold Braun, Richard Richards, Roger Ferland, Joseph Pelletier. All the bishops of New England ordered special collections in their dioceses. Bishop Wright made a very generous personal donation and was instrumental in obtaining a \$150,000 gift from the Kennedy family.

The tornado, from one point of view, seemed like a blessing in disguise: the decision was made to physically separate the Prep School from the College section. The reconstructed Greendale campus would house the Prep and another location would be sought for the College. Meanwhile the Ward Business School building at 1010 Main Street was purchased and would house the College while the Salisbury campus was prepared. So until the Autumn of 1956 each school day saw religious faculty members, scholastics, and a few other students being bussed from Greendale to Main South in a rickety old bus bought from war surplus. When classes began in late September, 100 students were enrolled. Many of them were forced to live in boarding houses throughout the city although some were lodged in the Aurora Hotel, along with Fr Norman Meiklejohn, the Dean of Men.

The College enrollment for the 1954-55 academic year was 159 undergraduates, 50 graduate students, and 150 in evening courses.

December, 1954 marked the Golden Jubilee of the founding of Assumption College by the Assumptionists. They celebrated it in a grand way, from December 3 through 9. It is beyond our scope here to write about this at length, but we can say that there were many distinguished guests from the clergy and the laity to help the Assumptionists celebrate. Cardinals Cushing and Spellman, Bishops John Wright, Christopher Weldon, George-Leon Pelletier took part. A Symposium on "France and Christianity" let large audiences hear from Fr. John LaFarge, S.J., Fr. Raymond Bruckberger, O.P., Dr. Wallace Fowlie, Dr. Helmut Hatzfeld, Luc Estang, and Hugh Mason Wade among others. The first "Emmanuel d'Alzon Medal" in the name of the Congregation of the Augustinians of the Assumption was awarded to the internationally known philosopher Jacques Maritain. Unfortunately he was unable to be present in person to accept the award. Needless to say these celebrations helped encourage and re-invigorate the Assumptionists, who had seen their work of five decades badly damaged by a 90-second tornado.

## ***BACK TO OUR PROVINCIALS***

Later we will continue the story of the Prep and of the College; but for now we shall try to deal with the odyssey of our Provincial Superiors.

Our first three Provincials, FF. Dufault, Moquin, and Desautels, continued to use the rectory of Our Lady of Guadalupe (which belonged to the Congregation) as their Provincial headquarters. Because this imposed somewhat of a burden upon the local community, and because the diocese rightfully expected some sort of remuneration for the

continued residence there of religious who were not members of the parish staff, Fr. Moquin sought another locale for the Provincial House.

He found a building that seemed appropriate; it was at 329 West 108 Street, between Broadway and Riverside Drive. The building had been completed in June, 1900. Since 1926, one half of the building had been occupied by the Jesuits who staffed *America* magazine, and from 1930 they had occupied the entire building. Fr. Moquin purchased it and paid for it completely December 31, 1964. Repairs were made and by March, 1965 the canonically erected Provincial House community was established. Fr. Vincent Dolbec was put in charge of the renovation of the building and of purchasing the required furnishings. Meanwhile the rectory of Our Lady of Guadalupe was sold to the archdiocese, as had long been desired.

Fr. Vincent served as Superior until 1966. The Assumption Guild was moved from 14th Street to 108th, with Fr. Albert Brochu continuing as its Director. Fr. Robert Fortin was Superior from 1966 until 1976 when he was succeeded by Fr. Edgar Bourque, who for one year served as both Provincial and local Superior.

The Provincial House was an imposing building on a quiet block, only a few minutes' walk from Columbia University or St John the Divine Cathedral. It had a nice chapel, an impressive main staircase, quite a few immense bedrooms, bathrooms with stained glass windows, multiple fireplaces, and a sort of courtyard/cloister in back. Of course police or fire sirens often rent the serenity, but people easily adjusted. The house was admirably suited to receive guests (religious from other houses, Assumption College staff members, foreign visitors, graduate students) to the point that it sometimes seemed like a hotel.

Among the religious who at one time or another were stationed there were, besides those already mentioned: Ulric Charpentier, Joseph Richard, Luc Martel, Richard Lamoureux, Edward Pepka, Roland Guilmain, Claude Grenache, Antonio Laberge, Donald Espinosa, Gerald Roy, Edmond St-Gelais, Richard Mandeville.

Along with all the advantages of having our Provincial House in New York, there were, some felt, some disadvantages, including the long distance between Manhattan and the houses of most of the other religious of the Province. The Provincial, Fr. Joseph Loiselle began a search for a suitable dwelling, and ended up by purchasing the Forbes estate, at 328 Adams Street in Milton, MA.

This house has been described as "a spacious and comfortable Edwardian manor... with flair and elegance." There were 30 rooms in the house which was set on almost 8 acres of land. It had once been the residence of Ralph Waldo Emerson Forbes, the grandson of the famous New England writer, Ralph Waldo Emerson. The religious added a

chapel wing and another wing to hold the Assumption Guild offices. On March 15, 1983, Cardinal Medeiros of Boston blessed the community chapel.

For the first year, the Provincial, Fr. Loisede acted as local Superior. Fr. Donat Lamothe was Superior from September, 1983 until January, 1985. He resided in Milton, but his teaching duties required him to drive back and forth to Worcester a few times each week. Since 1982, he was also been kept busy as Secretary of the Province. Fr. Donald Espinosa was Acting Superior in Milton between January and September 1985. Fr. Richard Richards had become Executive Director of the Assumption Guild in January, 1985 but was obliged to finish the academic year at Assumption College. He moved to Milton in May, 1985 and in September became Superior until 1989.

The Provincial Chapter of 1987 mandated the Provincial to undertake a “serious and comprehensive study of the real estate holdings in the Boston area.” The Forbes property in Milton and the two houses in Brookline, known as the Assumptionist Center, seemed to a number of religious as too “rich.” They seemed to be a countersign of the simple way of life to which we are vowed. The Provincial Chapter of 1987 mandated the Provincial “to undertake a serious and comprehensive study of the real estate holdings in the Boston area,” the necessity of keeping them, or the possibility of housing the communities elsewhere.

As a result of this mandate, Father Donald Espinosa and Brother Stephen Goguen began to seek suitable properties, especially among the available convents of the Boston archdiocese. Finally it was decided that the convent of the Sisters of Saint Joseph, at 330 Market Street, in Brighton, would admirably suit our purposes. This building was just across the street from the church of St. Columbkille. It was purchased on October 13, 1988. Fittingly the first person to cross its threshold on the very day of the purchase was our Father General, Claude Maréchal, who was making his Canonical Visitation.

On June 19, 1989, the move to the renovated Assumptionist Center began. Incidentally, the name “Assumptionist Center” was very deliberately given because the house was intended for far more than just a Provincial House. It was to be a real center for a variety of ministries and activities.

The community was composed as follows:

Fr. Richard Lamoureux, Provincial  
 Fr. Donald Espinosa, Provincial Treasurer & Local Superior  
 Fr. Yvon Dubois, chaplain, Veterans’ Administration hospital  
 Fr. Ernest Fortin  
 Fr. Robert Fortin

Bro. Paul Henry  
 Fr. Antonio Laberge  
 Bro. Armand Lemaire, Treasurer & Assistant to Fr. Donald  
 Fr. Elphege Podender  
 Fr. Richard Richards, Assumption Guild Director  
 Fr. Georges Tavard  
 Fr. Paul Vaudreuil

On October 22, 1989, the chapel and house were blessed by Bishop Lawrence J. Riley. On October 31, the community held its first local chapter. Life in another Assumptionist community had definitely begun.

During most of January, 1990, the Community was pleased to have a very special guest, the Superior General, Fr. Claude Maréchal, who made very serious efforts to improve his English before making a canonical visitation to New Zealand and an exploratory trip to Korea, where the Congregation planned to extend its activity.

On March 8, 1990, Fr. Roland O. Guilmain accepted Father General's nomination to serve as Provincial Superior, effective in June, 1990.

In late March, 1990, the Community suffered the departure of one of its valued members, Fr. Robert Fortin, who left to assume the position of Superior at St. Peter in Gallicantu, in Israel.

For the record:

Fr. Donald Espinosa was named Superior of the Assumptionist Center, effective January 1, 1988, but Fr. Richard Richards and Brother Stephen Goguen would remain Superiors of their respective communities until the move had actually been completed.

When Fr. Donald had to be away for some months, beginning in the Spring of 1990, Fr. Richard Richards became Interim Superior until a permanent Superior, Brother Stephen Goguen, took over on December 16, 1990.

Meanwhile attempts were made to sell the Milton property. Negotiations dragged on for three years, complicated by the fact that some Moslems wanted the property for a mosque and abutters feared that this would diminish the value of their properties. The abutters finally bought the house and land on November 4, 1991, to the great relief of most people involved.

As we end this chapter, it seems appropriate to list here the Provincials who have led the Province:

Wilfrid Dufault	December 1946-1952
Henry Moquin	1952-1964

Armand Desautels	1964-1969
Joseph Loiseau	1969-1975 and 1981-1984
Edgar Bourque	1975-1981
Richard Lamoureux	1984-1990
Roland Guilmain	June 1990



## 14. Novitiates and Scholasticates: Hyattsville



Because one of the problems facing the new North American Province was assuring its future personnel, the Provincial authorities gave great thought to a scholasticate and a novitiate.

Fr. Wilfrid and Fr. Henry wanted to see the Province develop outside Worcester and New York City. Minutes of the Provincial Council indicate that already in January, 1948 they began to search for a location near the Catholic University in Washington where they could establish a scholasticate and an American novitiate. By 1949, some religious, with Fr. Aime Deschamps as Director, were residing in the Marist Brothers' building known as Champagnat Hall, at 2400 Queen's Chapel Road in Washington, DC. The Assumptionists considered purchasing that property but refrained from doing so because the price was too high. Other properties considered were those of the Passionists and of Mr. Metzert, which was only a few miles from Catholic University.

On May 19, 1950, having obtained the permissions from the Superior General and from the Archbishop of Washington, Patrick O'Boyle, the Assumptionists signed a purchase agreement for the fifty-acre Metzert property in Hyattsville, with the understanding that they would sell much of the land "in order to help avert public scandal." In any case, the Province now had a property for its scholasticate.

In August, 1950, Fr. Aime Deschamps became Superior and Spiritual Director of the Hyattsville community. The community treasurer was Fr. Arthur Clermont. Brother Marius Drolet became the cook, and there were seven student brothers.

On April 6, 1951 canonical permission was obtained from the Superior General to erect a second novitiate for the Province in Hyattsville (the first being in Bergerville, P.Q.). On April 27, Archbishop O'Boyle gave his permission to open this novitiate in his diocese, adding "It is my...understanding that this Novitiate would be in Hyattsville for several years at the most."

On June 11, 1951 Fr. Joseph (Frederic) Richard was named Superior and Master of Novices. In 1953, Fr. Leo Martin became treasurer instead of Fr. Germont. Given the fact that the novitiate in Hyattsville was to be temporary, and given the decision not to continue sending Americans to Canada for their novitiate, in 1953, the Provincial authorities began searching for another property.

### ***SAUGERTIES***

A suitable property and dwelling was found along the banks of the Hudson River, in Saugerties, N.Y. It had belonged to an old tobacco millionaire who had recently died at the age of 92. A bit of a problem developed when the Assumptionists tried to purchase it. This problem is mentioned in the following extract from a report (unsigned but obviously by Fr. Henry Moquin):

My impression (of the property) was so favorable that I told the agent that I was willing to buy but had to obtain permission from the Cardinal and from Rome. I pleaded asking that he reserve the property for me. But orders were to sell fast and he would not promise. Upon returning to New York I immediately asked to see Mgr. Kedenburg [Chancellor of the diocese].... Then I wrote to V.R. Father General to ask permission to purchase and to establish the Hyattsville novitiate in Saugerties.

Wednesday evening, May 6, the agent phoned me from Saugerties to advise me that he had been unable to hold the property and had just sold it.

A bit depressed I regretted the ability to act quickly when a good opportunity presented itself.

On Monday, May 11, Anne Cowhey [one of three sisters who ran some summer camps in the Catskills, staffed partly by Assumptionist brothers] called me on the phone asking to see me that same evening. She expressed her satisfaction over the wonderful buy she had just made of a property in Saugerties. I immediately suspected that she was referring to the same property that I had in mind. In fact she was. She had bought it over the phone, without even visiting it, the moment she heard it was up for sale.

Miss Cowhey offered to pay the taxes on the property and to let the Assumptionists use it for their novitiate, rent free. Just what happened

next is not clear but Fr. General wrote to Fr. Henry on May 22, 1953: “If Ann C. lets you use the house she bought perhaps in the end you will inherit it anyhow.” Fr. Henry then asked Cardinal Spellman for permission to open a novitiate in his diocese, and in February, 1954 he requested the permission of the Sacred Congregation for Religious to transfer the novitiate.

The *Nouvelles de la Province* for April 14, 1954 had this to say: “The answer long awaited—for eleven months—has finally arrived. Cardinal Spellman allows the Assumptionists to establish a novitiate in his archdiocese... Since March 29, Fr. Clair Boisvert and Brothers Thomas Mc Hugh, Odoric Roy, Roger Gagnon, and John Poehler are at work preparing for the arrival of the novices.” The next paragraph of the *Nouvelles* indicates that on April 3, Fr. Joseph Richard received the vows of Brother Richard Mandeville, the last novice at Hyattsville. In May, Fr. Joseph was to go to Saugerties as Master of Novices in the new foundation. The purchase of the Saugerties property from Anna M. Cowhey was closed on May 5, 1954.

Fr. Joseph Richard served as Superior and Master of Novices at Saugerties until August, 1956. He was succeeded by Fr. Ulric Charpentier who served until 1964. Then Fr. Oliver Blanchette became Superior and Master of Novices until 1967. The last Superior and Master of Novices at Saugerties was Fr. Edgar Bourque, who served there until the novitiate was moved to Dedham. The Saugerties property was sold in January, 1968.

## ***DEDHAM***

The problem of the best location for our scholasticate still hovered over the Province. Various solutions were considered from 1965 to 1967: the Divinity School at St. Louis University, the School of Theology at the University of Chicago, St. Meinrad Archabbey in Indiana. The decision was finally made to keep our theologians in the East, and not to send them to Europe.

In September, 1967, Fr. Provincial, Armand Desautels, wrote to Cardinal Richard Cushing of Boston, that he would like to move our novitiate to the Boston area and join our theologians to the novitiate community, so that they could follow courses with the Jesuits at Weston. Because the house he wanted to obtain would not be ready for a year or two, he asked the Cardinal’s approval to have the Assumptionists lodge temporarily with the African Mission Fathers in Dedham. In all there were to be 23 religious: 6 theologians, 10 novices, 3 professed brothers and 4 priests (FF. Edgar Bourque as Superior and Master of Novices, FF

Oliver Blanchette, Leonard Larocque, Albert Poirier). The Cardinal responded that “your plan has my hearty approval.... Your scholastics and novices will be most welcome by all of us in the Archdiocese.”

The Superior at Dedham, Fr. Edgar Bourque, wrote to Father General in December, 1967: “The bringing together of the Novices and the Theologians has been extremely well received by both groups. There are no complaints and no abuses. I can only marvel at the great fraternal charity they have for one another. The Novices definitely help to keep the Theologians formation conscious and the Theologians keep the sights of the Novices raised high by their doctrinal contributions to the conversation. At this time, I would say that if we had no shortage of personnel and if it were possible for both groups to be separated, my personal opinion would be that they should be kept together.”

Fr. Edgar Bourque was Superior during the entire time the Assumptionists resided in Dedham.

### ***ASSUMPTIONIST CENTER — PINE ROAD, BROOKLINE***

As the search for adequate real estate continued, some possibilities showed up: an apartment hotel at 333 Commonwealth Avenue in Boston; two private homes in Newton Center, town houses on St. Botolph Street, Boston; a house near St. Peter’s Church in Cambridge; and Brookline, off route 9. But there was always the question: Should we rent or should we buy? At a number of levels there was a feeling that we should not buy but rather rent, in the spirit of Vatican II. Finding large enough facilities that could be rented posed a problem: they just did not seem to exist. As someone stated at the time: “Poor people don’t generally construct houses large enough for our needs. Unless we can find a so-called “rich” house in a neighborhood which has evolved over the years, both the house and the neighborhood might have to be what we can get.”

The Superior General granted permission, on February 12, 1969 to purchase a dwelling at 40 Pine Road in Brookline, MA. It was a two story house with basement and attic, and it had 15 rooms. Thought was given to adding rooms in a separate building because the inhabitants of the “Assumptionist Center” ranged from 13 to 18. In 1971, plans were drawn up for a two-story building with basement and ten rooms. This was never built, and some religious (e.g. Donat Lamothe, Roger Corriveau) lived in a Hammond Street apartment. When even this was insufficient, a house was rented on Heath Street.

The Pine Road community had as Superiors: Fr. Edgar Bourque from 1969 until 1971; and Fr. Maurice Adaire 1971-1972, at which time

the community moved to Buckminster Road in Brookline. The Pine Road property was sold on April 1, 1974.

### ***ASSUMPTIONIST CENTER — BUCKMINSTER ROAD***

The search for adequate living facilities for novices and scholastics, which had lasted five long years, seemed to come to an end in June, 1972. At that time the Province purchased two properties in Brookline. The Linsey property at 364 Buckminster Road, at the corner of Buckminster and Chestnut Hill Avenue; and the Sullivan property, just across Chestnut Hill Avenue.

As they now had all the room they needed and then some, the Brookline community accepted to share their facilities and their life with some priests, religious, and laymen who were pursuing graduate studies and wanted at the same time to deepen their Christian commitment.

The history of the Assumptionist Center on Buckminster Road came to an end in the Spring of 1989 when some religious were re-assigned and others were transferred to the recently renovated Assumptionist Center at 330 Market Street in Brighton.

Superiors:	Maurice Allaire	1972-1974
	Edgar Bourque	1974-1975
	Richard Lamoureux	1975-1976
	Roger Corriveau	1976-1977
	Richard Brunelle	1977-1980
	Philip Bonvouloir	1980-1984
	John Franck	1984-1985 Acting Sup.
	Yvon Dubois	1985-1986 Acting Sup.
	Stephen Goguen	1986-1989

Brother Stephen was thus the first Brother in the history of the Congregation to be named Superior, with a special indult from the Holy See.



## 15. Assumption Prep, Post Tornado



We have mentioned that after the tornado it was decided to separate the facilities of College and of the Prep, keeping the reconstructed Greendale campus for the Prep. Until the new buildings for the College section were completed in the Fall of 1956, the religious assigned to the College continued to reside in Greendale. For purposes of clarity, we will now deal only with the people and events of the Preparatory School, reserving for the next chapter our history of the College community.

Just when the Assumption High School became Assumption Prep is somewhat difficult to pinpoint. The catalog for 1953-54 called it a high school, whereas the catalog for 1955-56 termed it Assumption Preparatory School. Moreover House Council minutes from 1955 and after mention the "Prep." But it was only on December 5, 1961 that Assumption Preparatory School was incorporated.

On September 20, 1953, a dozen Antonian Sisters returned to Greendale and were temporarily lodged in a repaired house on Randall Street Cater (purchased by Professor Lucien Desjardins). Within a year a new convent for them was begun on Emerson Road. This was completed, with Fr. Louis Robert Brassard as "de facto" contractor, in time for an Open House on September 18, 1954.

Meanwhile Fr. Armand Desautels and about two dozen of the younger religious started living in the former Bailly Hall on West Boylston Street, which had been rapidly rebuilt from a three-decker to a two-story building.

On September 29, 1953, the Prep reopened, with 330 students, of whom 260 were boarders. Bishop John J. Wright blessed the renovated chapel of Christ the King and the new convent of the Antonian Sisters, on June 6, 1955.

On August 17, 1956 Father Provincial announced to the community that the new Superior of the Preparatory School was to be Fr. Oliver Blanchette, the sub-prior was to be Fr. Edgar Bourque, and the second councilor was to be Fr. Arthur Clermont. But Fr. Armand was to stay in function until the College community moved.

At the time of the actual separation of the communities, the Prep community was composed thus: FF. Oliver Blanchette, Edgar Bourque, Marius Dumoulin, Roland Leroy, Etienne Aubert, Edward Moreau, Alfred Berthiaume, Gilbert Chabot, Yves Garon, Charles Berube, Ildefons van der Linden, Donat Durand, Arthur Germont, John Gaudet, Gregory Boisvert, Yvon Dubois, Noel Colette, William Dubois, Michael Carey, Camillus Thibault, and Brothers Armand Goflart, Vincent Petro, Gerard Brassard, Arthur Blais, Rosario Roy, Vianney Trecmbly, Leopold Bemier, Roger Chagnon, Paul Maurice Gossetin, Richard Mandeville, Leandre Morrisette, and John Lesage.

The early 1960's saw the establishment of a Summer School program at the Prep. A number of grants from the National Science Foundation through Assumption College made possible a Mathematics Institute under the direction of Fr. Ildefons van der Linden. 1962 was saddened by the deaths of three religious: FF. Roland Leroy, Clair Boisvert, and Charles Berube. Just a few years later, on November 12, 1968, the Prep lost one of its beloved characters, Brother Vincent Petro. Born a Viscount, Brother Vincent had become an Assumptionist despite family objections. He served some years in New York before being transferred to Greendale, where he became Brother Armand Goffart's "side-kick" and worked humbly at maintaining the school spotless.

On June 9, 1963, the 10th anniversary of the tornado, it was announced that the Prep would undertake an ambitious building program that included a new classroom building with a fine auditorium, and a new gymnasium with indoor swimming pool. With the fight of hindsight, some people believed that possibly this building program may have been too ambitious, given the times and circumstances.

The Fifties and Sixties were times of immense changes for the Church, our Congregation, and for the Prep and College as well. Catholic institutions and orders were re-thinking their mission, direction, and authority. Many of these changes were the result of Vatican II and the subsequent revision of our *Constitutions*.

On June 2, 1965, Fr. Yvon Dubois was named Superior of the Prep community, while Fr. Edgar Bourque remained as Headmaster until June, 1967, when he was replaced by Fr. Vincent Dolbec.

In 1967, a planning council was formed to evaluate every phase of the total Prep School operation and to prepare a ten year plan for the future academic and physical growth of the school.

The same year, it was decided that the high-school seminarians of Our Lady of Lourdes Seminary in Cassadaga would be transferred to Worcester. A residence for them was purchased on Leeds Street, where they would be under the direction of Fr. Philip Bonvouloir.

A significant change was effected in the composition of the Board of Directors of the Prep, the policy-making group. In June, 1968, the Board, which had hitherto been composed only by Assumptionists, was reorganized to include lay persons as well. The new Board met for the first time on June 27, 1968.

On September 20, 1968, Fr. Oliver Blanchette became the Superior of the community, which at that time numbered 31.

In 1968 there was introduced the TRIAD program which would allow selected students with academic promise to follow a program which allowed them to complete high school in three years. About this time some thought was also given to accepting co-eds.

These steps were taken or contemplated because the situation of the Prep was becoming perilous. Enrollments were dwindling. Five elderly religious (Marius, Etienne, Ulric, Edward, Alfred) were approaching retirement age, and some young religious were to absent themselves for graduate work. This necessitated hiring more lay professors. This aggravated the school's financial situation which was already in bad shape because of the debt caused by the building of the classroom and gymnasium buildings.

At the request of Fr. Joseph Loiselle, Provincial, Fr. Henry Moquin carefully and exhaustively studied the situation and reported to the Provincial. These are some of the items that he mentioned: too numerous a leaching staff for the actual enrollment; too numerous a maintenance and secretarial staff, overly generous spending; not enough provision made for higher tuition fees; too lethargic a recruiting effort.

Basing himself on Fr. Henry's report and other sources, Fr. Loiselle told the Board of Directors and, later, the Plenary Council of the Province that the School was carrying a debt of \$2,700,000. During the academic year 1969-70 it would incur a deficit of close to \$400,000, of which \$107,000 was operational debt. Without outside help, the Prep would register an additional debt of close to \$500,000 for 1970-71. That meant a debt of close to one million dollars for two years, which was quite unacceptable.

Added to the financial problem, there was the dwindling enrollment. The projection for 1970-71 was for 400 students, or 16 less than the previous year. A nation-wide survey of private boarding school enrollments revealed decreasing enrollments across the country. Fewer religious teachers at the Prep only compounded the difficulty. Fr. Loiselle recommended that the Plenary Council accept to close the School. In a letter dated March 16, 1970, the Superior General, Fr. Paul Charpentier, authorized the closing of the Prep.

The decision to close the Prep in June, 1970, was announced to the public by Fr. Loiselle and Fr. Philip Bonvouloir, the Headmaster, on

March 16, 1970. It was a sad day for the Assumptionists and for all the alumni of the School.

On November 30, 1970, after nine months of negotiations, the Prep was sold to the Board of Regional Community Colleges of Massachusetts for \$6,825,000. Three and one quarter millions of that amount went to pay the mortgages, notes, current bills, faculty gratuities, and other outstanding obligations of the Prep. Three months later, on February 21, 1971, the Courts ordered the transfer of the remaining Prep assets and obligations to the Assumptionists. Three million dollars were invested to guarantee a bond issue that the Assumptionists had floated in 1968. A house (246 Salisbury) was purchased to lodge the older religious who had been at the Prep. On March 10, 1971, the Courts dissolved the Corporation known as Assumption Preparatory School Inc. This terminated the legal existence of the Prep School; it also marked the end of an era.

At the closing of the Prep, the community was composed thus: Oliver Blanchette, Yvon Dubois, Marius Dumoulin, Etienne Aubert, Ulric Charpentier, Leopold Moreau, Alfred Berthiaume, Gilbert Chabot Ildelfons van der Linden, Gregory Boisvert, Philip Bonvouloir, John Martin, Jean Falhun (from France), Albert Poirier, Gerard Messier, Roger Perreault, Joseph Fredette, Georges Charland, Henry Roy, Luis Rios, Gary Perron, Leo Brassard, Donald Espinosa, and Brothers Armand Goffart, Roger Chagnon, Paul-Maurice Gosselin, Robert Trahan, Thomas Mc Hugh.

Many of these religious would be reassigned to existing communities or would form new communities, e.g. in Tampa or Weirton.

#### PREP SCHOOL SUPERIORS from 1956 on:

Oliver Blanchette	1956-1962
Edgar Bourque	1962-1965
Yvon Dubois	1965-1968
Oliver Blanchette	1968-1970

#### PREP SCHOOL HEADMASTERS

Edgar Bourque	1952-1967
Vincent Dolbec	1967-1969
Philip Bonvouloir	1969-1970

## 16. Assumption College, Post Tornado



Assumption College rose, phoenix-like, from its tornado destruction in 1953. Although it is not our purpose here to write a history of the college, we must mention some of the more important events if we are to consider the story of the Assumptionists missioned to serve at the College.

In our chapter dealing with the 1953 tornado and its aftermath, we mentioned how the College staff and community commuted to a temporary campus at 1010 Main Street. Soon after the tornado, a search was begun for a new campus for the College. Among the locations viewed were those of the City Farm, the Brewer estate in Shrewsbury, a property across from the Lincoln Mad, another one near an outdoor theater on West Boylston Street, and the Ellis estate on Salisbury Street. None of these proved suitable.

A very desirable site was found on Salisbury Street, and on March 2, 1954, the Board of Trustees approved the purchase of almost 100 acres for the campus. Other land would be added by subsequent purchases. The Board also approved the construction of: a dormitory with chapel, a dining hall, a laboratory building, a library, and a nuns' convent. No mention is made of a central heating plant, but it was one of the five original buildings constructed.

On July 30, 1955 a contract for the first five buildings was signed, with a cost of slightly over one and a quarter million dollars. It was awarded to the Granger Contracting Co., which had been the lowest of nine bidders. It called for the completion of the buildings in one year, according to plans drawn by two alumni, Norman and Albert Nault, whose father had drawn the plans for much of the Greendale building.

The Acadians among the Assumptionists were greatly pleased when, on November 25, 1955, a Carrara marble statue of Our Lady of the Assumption was unveiled, commemorating the Bicentenary of the expulsion of the Acadians from Acadia. This gift from the Union Saint Jean-Baptiste was placed in front of the Maison Française, blessed by Bishop Wright in the presence of Archbishop Norbert Robichaud of

Moncton, N.B., who was awarded an Honorary Doctorate in Laws on the occasion. Because the Madonna was shown with her arms upraised, she was immediately dubbed “Touchdown Mary” by the students.

We might note here (chronologically but somewhat irrelevantly) that at the Commencement on June 8, 1956 the first Master’s degree in the history of the College was awarded to Sister Agnes Gaire Fitzpatrick of the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur.

On September 1, 1956, six Oblate of the Assumption Sisters arrived from the Netherlands, accompanied by their Provincial. Until their convent was completed they were to live at “Bailly Hall” on West Boylston St. and would commute to the College. As their knowledge of English was limited, a Dutch Assumptionist, Fr. Ildefons van der Linden served as interpreter and helped them become adjusted to their first foundation in the USA. A convent for them, attached to the Taylor Dining Had was begun in March, 1959. The Oblates continued to serve as cooks at the College until 1967 when they left to undertake social work for the Worcester diocese. The Assumptionists were very sad to see them leave, as they had shared the rugged first years on the Salisbury campus.

Except for the Kennedy Science Hall, the College buildings were ready for occupancy by November, 1956. The students began using Alumni Hall and the Taylor Dining Hall on November 4, but until early December classes continued at 1010 Main for the 87 Freshmen and 114 upperclassmen enrolled for the academic year ’86-’87. The religious moved to the new campus on November 10 and 11, 1956.

At the outset, the religious community included: Fr. Armand Desautels as Superior, Fr. Polyeucte Guissard as First Councilor, Fr. Vincent Dolbec as Second Councilor, Fr. Antonio Laberge, Fr. Louis Dion, Fr. Aime Deschamps as Librarian, Fr. Alexis Babineau, Fr. Anselm Morrison as Treasurer, Fr. Richard Richards, Fr. Ernest Fortin, Fr. Norman Meiklejohn as Dean of Men, Bro. Robert Lemay, Bro. Arnold Glazier, Bro. Armand Lemaire, Bro. Odoric Roy, Bro. Jon Poehler. Soon Fr. James Dover was added to their number and replaced Fr Anselm as Treasurer of the College.

Living conditions were somewhat uncomfortable for the religious during the first months. The campus itself was still so “wild” that on one occasion one of the Oblate sisters had to go out searching for some of the other sisters who had gone out picking berries and had not found the way back soon enough to start cooking supper. The paths connecting buildings had not yet been blacktopped, and there was so much mud that duck-boards had to be laid down to enable people to walk. The long wing of the first floor of Alumni Had was the “cloister” for the religious. Besides that, they had only a single room in the basement that served as

a recreation/TV room. This “tight” situation was to last for 17 years, until 1973 when the religious moved into their own residence at 50 Old English Road.

That Assumption College thrived and developed on its new campus on Salisbury was recognized by everyone. An editorial in the *Worcester Gazette* for June 7, 1963 stated:

Assumption’s success in building a full-scale new home for itself in just 10 years would be achievement enough for any institution. But the last 10 years also have seen radical changes in Assumption’s approach to the world.

The college had always been known as a center of French culture in the Americas. Since the tornado, however, it has become much more than this. Its curriculum has been broadened extensively; its program in foreign affairs has won international recognition for excellence.

Most importantly for the Worcester area, Assumption has become a rich community resource. Through its evening program, its extensive lecture series, and its sponsorship of public seminars, Assumption has earned a place of major significance in stimulating intellectual activities here.

The Assumptionists were, in their apostolate in Worcester, trying to realize their Founder’s desire: that their work be intellectual, social, and ecumenical. As a result of Vatican II, a number of important changes were made and the Assumptionists began the revision of their Constitutions, which took a number of years. It was a long process which came to an end on December 8, 1983, when the Holy See formally approved the Assumptionist *Rule of Life*.

One of the changes took place in 1964. If I may indulge in a bit of personal nomenclature, I would call it a change in the “power structure” at the College. Until 1964 the Superior of the community had also been President of the College. In 1964 the two positions were separated: Fr. Louis Dion became President of the College while Fr. Ernest Fortin became Superior of the community at 500 Salisbury Street.

The April, 1965 issue of *Bits of News* (the Provincial newsletter) carried two very short but important announcements. Our scholastics would no longer be sent to Europe for their philosophy studies but would instead do them at Assumption College. And beginning in September, 1965 college-age alumnists from Cassadaga would be sent to Worcester and would enter novitiate only after graduation. Fr. Paul Goudreau was

named responsible for the alumnists in Worcester, who would be lodged in the newly built Founders Had. In the summer of 1967, Fr. Camillus Thibault became Director of the seminarians at Assumption College.

We might mention here another decision that the Provincial, Fr. Armand Desautels, announced in June, 1967. He said: "We intend to keep in the United States most of our American theologians from now on. We realize that we are losing something important in depriving these students of the contact with the Congregation in other parts of the world and with the culture of Europe, and we shall try to take positive steps to reduce this loss insofar as it is possible.

"But the reasons that prompt us to take this action seem imperative. One is the contact with the Church of America during these years of preparation to the priesthood. Another is the conviction that we are losing vocations because the study of theology is conducted in Europe through the French language, and we have no right to limit our vocations to people who are familiar with French."

Another very important change was made by the Assumptionists in the wake of Vatican II. Until 1968 the Board of Trustees of the College had been constituted solely by Assumptionists. In June 1968, after having received authorization from Rome, they changed their By-Laws and voted themselves out of existence in order to be replaced by a new Board consisting of both Assumptionists and lay persons, with the Assumptionists being at least one third of the Board. In fact, for approximately one year the laymen had already been participating unofficially in the meetings of the Board.

The membership of the new Board of Trustees was as follows:

William E. Aubuchon  
 Alexis A. Babineau, A.A.  
 James Barringer  
 Edgar A. Bourque, A.A.  
 Armand H. Desautels, A.A.  
 Sacket R. Duryee  
 Ernest L. Fortin, A.A.  
 Robert J. Fortin, A.A.  
 Francis M. Gerli  
 Paul B. Hanrahan  
 Raymond F. Harold  
 William L. Henry  
 Joseph G. Loisede, A.A.  
 T. Curtis Lloyd  
 Cosmo E. Mingolla  
 Norman D. Nault

Frank N. Ryan  
Edmund H. Taylor (Honorary)

The new lay/cleric Board of Trustees named Fr. Georges Bissonnette as President of the College. Previous Presidents had been named by the Provincial. Fr. Louis Dion, the previous President had resigned and had returned to Moscow as chaplain to the American (and foreign) embassy staff.

In October, 1966, Assumption College was approached by the Education Committee of the Greater Worcester Area Council of Churches and asked to consider the possibility of establishing a program of continuing education for clergymen and lay teachers of religion. A survey had indicated that such a program in Central Massachusetts was greatly needed. After consultation with the Deans of four prominent theological schools in the Boston area, a proposal was submitted to the Council of Churches, Assumption College, and the Bishop of Worcester. The Bishop Flanagan endorsed it wholeheartedly and expressed his own desire that such a program might train lay teachers of religion and provide advanced training for the clergy of the diocese.

Therefore, in 1968 the Ecumenical Institute of Religious Studies was established at Assumption College. All three Christian groups, Catholic, Protestant, and Orthodox, were represented on its Board of Consultants and on its Executive Board. Its Co-Directors were Fr. Ernest Fortin and Dr. Oscar Remick. Subsequent directors were Fr. Luc Martel and Dr. Wayne Rollins. At its inception, the Institute registered 136 students, some 60 more than had been anticipated. Nine courses were offered to 62 Protestants, 72 Catholics, and 2 Orthodox.

For some time, the Trustees, faculty members, and representatives of the undergraduate students had been studying the possibility of accepting women at Assumption. In 1968 the Trustees agreed to the principle of coeducation on the undergraduate level, to the establishment of a co-ordinate college, and to admitting women in September, 1969. When the women arrived for classes in September, they were greeted with roses by the male undergraduates. Very soon after, the co-ordinate notion was dropped and Assumption became simply coeducational.

During all these years the community had been living in what might be called a "fishbowl." The students gleefully made bets on who would place first as the religious moved from evening prayers in the chapel to their refectory in Taylor Dining Hall. Fr. Polyeuete Guissard won the race most of the time, with his rapid "sidestep." Although some aspects of the community's life were only annoying, others were enervating: basketballs bounced in the rooms overhead, golf balls rolled down the corridors, radios and high-fi's blasting until the wee hours of the

morning. The noise and lack of privacy became intolerable, and real community life impossible.

As early as 1958, some thought had been given to providing living quarters for the religious. A loan application had been made to the HHFA, to build what had to be called "faculty residence." But other building claimed priority: another dorm, the nuns' convent, a gym. In 1964, plans were made for a combination chapel/monastery to be located between the Maison Française and Desautels Hall, but this too was dropped. Finally, in March, 1972, a contract was signed between the Assumptionists and the Rene Burdet building and Design Co., for the construction of a residence at 50 Old English Road. What had happened was that the Assumptionists had bought the former Coontz house at 26 Old English Road and were now exchanging it with the College for about 3 1/4 acres at the end of the street. It was stipulated that the Coontz house would be used to house 2 or 3 religious and be used for campus ministry. Sad to say the Trustees of the College did not accept to cede land on campus for the residence, even though the Assumptionists had recently transferred control of the entire college to them. Nor did the Trustees help in the financing of the religious residence. Instead a \$50,000 home was exchanged for the land at 50 Old English Rd., valued then at \$13,000; this represented, in fact, a substantial "donation" to the College.

To minimize costs, it had been decided to use the so-called Deck house type of dwelling, which had previously been used for professional office space. It was pre-engineered, and standard modules were combined to produce the largest Deck-house yet made. It was to house 24 religious (but one suite was destined to become a chapel). TV room, library, spacious living-room, kitchen, and refectory occupied a central position in the building, with living quarters on either side forming a sort of T-shaped structure. One third of the costs was borne by the Province and much of the rest was financed by a mortgage taken out with the Union St. Jean-Baptiste, paid for by the religious. The construction was supervised by Fr. Alexis Babineau, as *de facto* clerk-of-the-works. The religious moved into their new dwelling in January, 1973.

In the 1970's, the Assumptionists saw another important change take place, as a successor was sought for Fr. Georges Bissonnette as President of the College. Effective July 1, 1971, Fr. Wilfrid Dufault became Acting-President and a search committee was named. On March 24, 1973, the 13th President of the College was inaugurated, and for the first time he was a layman, Dr. Pasquale Di Pasquale. In March, 1977 Dr. Di Pasquale resigned as Assumption's President in order to assume the Presidency of Loras College in Dubuque, Iowa. Again a search

committee was formed and again Fr. Wilfrid functioned as Acting President.

At the meeting of the Board of Trustees, on Friday, May 19, 1978 Mr. Joseph H. Hagan was elected as 14th President of the College, effective July 1, 1978. From 1970 to 1973 he had been Vice-President of Bryant College, in Smithfield, R.I., and then Special Assistant to the Chairman of the National Endowment for the Humanities, Washington, D.C.

1980 was an important year for Assumptionists, as the centennial year of the death of Fr. d'Alzon, and the religious in Worcester had been making elaborate plans for its celebration since 1975. The annual retreat week in June was preached by Fr. André Sève, on the Spirituality of Fr. d'Alzon. On Saturday, August 16 was held a one-day conference on "D'Alzon and Ecumenism" with presentations by FF. Daniel Olivier, a.a. and Julian Walter, a.a., with comments by Assumptionists George Tavad, Ernest Fortin, Patrick van der Aalst, and Amo Burg.

On August 17 to 22 was held an Anniversary Ecumenical Institute entitled *Ecumenism: The Next Decade*. We will not give here a complete program of the week, but we might mention that each evening there was a lecture:

- "Dialogue within the Church: some Theological Perspectives" by Cardinal Jan Willebrands from the Vatican Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity
- "Toward an Ecumenical Spirituality" by Rev. George Maloney, S.J., Director of Fordham University's John XXIII Institute
- On Tuesday the lecture was replaced by an evening of prayer and dance led by the Monks of Weston Priory in Vermont.
- "The Orthodox Churches in Dialogue" by the Greek Orthodox Bishop of Pittsburg, PA, Maximos Agiorgoussis
- "Dialogue within the Church: some Historical Perspectives" by Dr. Jaroslav Pelikan from Yale University

There were Plenary Sessions each morning, dealing with theology, history, spirituality, Orthodoxy, and Mary. Afternoon workshops and panels dealt with the Third World, Women's ordination. Liberation theology, Charismatic renewal, Jewish-Christian dialogue, Ethics and Technology, Holocaust Awareness, etc.

The liturgical highlight of the week was a concelebrated Mass in the Chapel of the Holy Spirit, with Cardinal Humberto Medeiros of Boston as main celebrant. Concelebrants included Cardinal Willebrands, Bishop Thomas V. Daily, and Bishop Timothy Harrington, and FF. Wilfrid Dufault, Joseph Loiselle, Edgar Bourque

The Institute attracted people from 23 states and 10 foreign countries. Fr. Luc Martel was largely responsible for its great interest, variety, and success.

Events like the Ecumenical Institute did not come very often, and usually the Assumptionists could enjoy the quiet and privacy of their home at 50 Old English Road. Some of them thought that the distance from the campus was diminishing their presence and their influence on the campus. They sought for a solution to the problem. Part of the solution came when a distinct community began to live in Emmanuel House, on the campus near the Holy Spirit Chapel. We will treat of this Community in another chapter, but we would like to mention here the men who formed the Old English Community after the Emmanuel House Community left:

Babineau, Alexis  
 Bissonnette, Georges  
 Brassard, Louis-Robert  
 Brunelle, Richard  
 Chabot, Gilbert  
 Charpentier, Ulric  
 Dargis, Andre  
 Dion, Louis  
 Gemme, Omer  
 Gosselin, Paul Maurice  
 Lemaire, Armand  
 McHugh, John Thomas  
 Messier, Gerard  
 Pelletier, Joseph  
 Roy, Odoric

#### SUPERIORS AT 500 SALISBURY STREET:

1956-1964	Armand Desautels
1964-1967	Ernest Fortin
1967-1970	Alexis Babineau
1970-1973	Norman Meiklejohn

#### SUPERIORS AT 50 OLD ENGLISH ROAD

1973-1975	Norman Meiklejohn
1975-1977	Richard Brunelle
1977-1982	Robert Fortin (then sabbatical in Israel)
1982-1985	Edgar Bourque
1985-1988	Richard Brunelle (then to Nairobi, Kenya)
1988-1989	Wilfrid Dufault

1990-1991	Louis Dion
1991-	Claude Grenache



## 17. Austin House



The Provincial Chapter held at Cassadaga on June 24-30, 1973, made the following recommendation: "In order to promote community interest in the fostering of vocations, the Chapter recommends that the local community chapters study ways of attracting possible candidates. In addition, a religious shall be appointed by the Provincial to study the question and stimulate general interest on the Provincial level."

A report of the meeting of the Plenary Council of the Province on February 2-3, 1974 contained the following:

A proposal has been made that the Province establish in Worcester a residence for college students, the purpose of which would be to foster Assumptionist vocations.... Some members judge that it would be desirable only if it fostered Assumptionist vocations in a rather direct way... Other members judge that the best way to foster Assumptionist vocations would be to avoid a *seminary* situation and to work with serious students who would not exclude a possible vocation and who would want or appreciate a deeper Christian life experience.

There was then a discussion among the Council members, and at the end of it the Provincial asked for a vote on the following proposition: "Do we want a residence to foster vocations which would be composed of a community of three or four religious and would receive candidates having expressed some interest in Assumptionist religious life, or in the ministry more generally, or in a more intense Christian life experience?" The vote was unanimous in favor of the proposal, and it was indicated that the Provincial Council should implement it. Please note the possible triple thrust of the proposal, about which more will be said later in this chapter.

Fr. Joseph Loiselle publicized the plan, and invited religious who might be interested to submit their names. Fr. Wilfrid Dufault and Fr.

Luc Martel sought appropriate housing for the group, during the spring and summer of 1974. On July 2, 1974 Fr. Joseph named the initial community: Fr. Donat Lamothe who was “to get the bad rolling as leader of the group”; Fr. Luc Martel; Fr. Ronald St. Pierre who subsequently asked that he not be named; Brother Roger Corriveau, who was to be ordained priest by Bishop Flanagan on November 23.

The final papers for the purchase of 1 Tahanto Road were passed early in the week of September 8; the previous owners vacated the premises by September 11; and the community moved in on September 14, 1974. At that time, Fr. Donat Lamothe was officially named Superior of the community and Fr. Luc Martel became the Treasurer. It was recognized that during his term as Superior (1974-1977) Fr. Donat did “much to create a homey and religious atmosphere at Austin House.” His successors as Superior were:

Fr. Richard Lamoureux	June 1, 1977 to June 30, 1983
Fr. Dennis Gallagher	July 1, 1983 to Jan. 12, 1985

From the outset, it was understood that everyone, religious and students, would share in household chores, including cooking, as a way of witnessing to poverty and service. From a remark made in the Visitation letter of November, 1976, it seems that the housekeeping chores were less popular than the cooking. Shared prayer life and family-style meals were important aspects of the life at Austin House, and there was a common Eucharist three times each week. Group trips e.g. to Maine and Cape Cod helped unite the group, especially at the beginning of each academic year when goals were set by students and religious together. Occasionally there were a few problems but both religious and students thought the living experience worthwhile and enriching, and felt happy and enthusiastic.

As indicated earlier, in 1974 the Plenary Council of the Province had voted to establish a house that would have as its ultimate goal the fostering of Assumptionist vocations. But unlike the Passionists who accepted only young men who sought the Passionist life specifically, Austin House had a broader scope. Like the earlier alumnates it accepted young men who might want another form of religious life or to be secular priests. And it also found room for students who were seeking a deeper, more studious, more prayerful Christian life.

At the risk of repetition, we would like to quote here from a report by Fr. Lamoureux, dated January 24, 1980:

... the overriding purpose of Austin House was to foster the growth in young people of a vocation to Assumptionist

religious life. The Plenary Council also foresaw the admission into the community of any young man interested in Christian community. ...we distinguish between the ultimate goal of the community, which is to foster the growth of vocations to Assumptionist life, and a more immediate goal which is to help every resident in the community come to a deeper understanding and appreciation of the Christian life.

We have insisted on this point because some religious and even some communities did not always seem to realize the purpose(s) of Austin House. Probably there was a lack of sufficient communications.

Five years after the opening of Austin House, the religious were reflecting upon and trying to evaluate their apostolate. They realized that their venture had “moderate success.” But “nagging” problems existed. “Expense, in terms of time and funds, is not inconsiderable. Recruiting has not been easy,” said Fr. Richard Lamoureux, in May, 1980. There had been relatively few qualified students applying, in part because the students at the College saw Austin House as “a minor seminary.” Fr. Lamoureux continued, “...we think it to be a luxury to operate a residency program such as ours at Austin House,” because “we think that we can do vocational work at least as effectively and better serve the campus and those students... who do not want to be publicly or too closely identified with a religious community.” The Community was therefore proposing that the Tahanto Road residence be closed and the residency program be discontinued.

Such thinking led to the closing of Austin House in 1985, when the newly constructed Emmanuel House opened on the College campus.



## 18. Assumption House—246 Salisbury Street



When Assumption Preparatory School was closed in June, 1970, there arose the necessity of finding a dwelling for some of the religious from the Prep, who were not being transferred to another community or establishing a new one. In November, 1970, the Assumptionists purchased from Becker Junior College the so-called Heywood House at 246 Salisbury. They also bought a house at 29 Whitman Road in order to lodge the Sisters of St. Joan of Arc who had accepted to staff the kitchen for the Assumption House community.

Initially, the community was composed of the following ten religious:

Fr. Ulric Charpentier, Superior  
Fr. Marius Dumoulin  
Fr. Etienne Aubert  
Bro. Armand Goffart  
Fr. Leopold Edouard Moreau  
Fr. Leo Martin  
Fr. Alfred Berthiaume  
Bro. Richard Mandevide, Treasurer  
Fr. Georges Charland  
Fr. Gary Perron

Attached to this community were: Fr. Gilbert Chabot who served as chaplain of the Gardner State Hospital, and Fr. Joseph Frederic who was Director of a youth group known as COME ALIVE.

At different times other religious became members of the community:

Fr. Louis Robert Brassard in 1972  
Fr. Anselm Morrison who became its Treasurer in 1975  
Fr. Joseph Pedetier (temporarily) in 1977

Fr. Donat Durand became Acting Superior/Treasurer, 1980 and Superior in 1983  
 Fr. Francis Chiasson in 1979  
 Fr. Oliver Blanchette

Attached to the Community were: Fr. Joseph Richard and Vincent Dolbec. What is interesting and edifying about the Assumption House community was that in the measure that health and mobility permitted, they strove to continue some kind of ministry. Fr. Ulric served as chaplain of the Sisters of Mercy on Barry Road. Fr. Edenne did weekend ministry at Holy Name of Jesus parish; Fr. Alfred was chaplain at Mount St. Anne orphanage; Fr. Louis Robert helped as chaplain of the St. Joan of Arc Sisters; Fr. George Chariand was very busy with the Spanish apostolate in the diocese of Worcester, Fr. Leo went to weekend ministry in Linwood and occasionally said Mass for the elderly in nursing homes; Fr. Edouard used his talents to give some 15 talks each month to the elderly in nursing homes; Fr. Anselm was one of the chaplains at St. Vincent Hospital. And the entire community declared that their “common apostolate” was one of prayer for the Province.

As might be expected in a community that had more than its share of elderly religious, some deaths occurred:

Fr. Marius Dumoulin	1972
Fr. Leopold Edouard Moreau	1974
Fr. Etienne Aubert	1976
Bro. Armand Goffart	1980
Fr. Alfred Berthiaume	1981
Fr. Donat Durand	1985

By 1985 the number of religious at Assumption House had dwindled to the extent the house was sold and the religious moved to 50 Old English Road. They were Fr. Ulric Charpentier, Louis Robert Brassard, Joseph Richard, Gilbert Chabot.

## 19. Fiskdale



The story of St. Anne's parish and shrine began in 1879 when Monsignor Elzear Brochu, pastor of Notre Dame church in Southbridge began planning a church for the Franco-Americans in Sturbridge. He began construction of St. Anne's church in 1883. The same year Fr John Kremmins began St. Patrick's church to serve the English-speaking people of Sturbridge. In 1887 both churches became one parish, St. Anne and St. Patrick's, with Fr. Jules Graton as pastor. St. Anne's soon became a pilgrimage center and a number of cures were reported.

On April 23, 1932, Fr. Crescent Armanet, as Vicar Provincial, wrote to Bishop Thomas M. O'Leary of Springfield. In his letter he reminded the bishop that the Assumptionists had been in the diocese for 28 years. For many years, they had helped in weekend ministry at St. Anne's. If Bishop O'Leary saw fit to entrust the parish to the Assumptionists, Fr. Crescent promised to assign one priest there, who would be helped on week-ends by 3 or 4 other priests who could hear confessions and preach in a number of languages, thus better serving the pilgrims. He mentioned the possibility of a house for closed retreats for both clergy and laity, and even the start of an Apostolic School, with the students helping out in liturgical ceremonies. No one could ever accuse Fr. Crescent of timidity. If, in this case, he ever received an answer from the bishop, it seems to have been "lost." But the interesting thing is that the request was made, which may have influenced a later decision by the Bishop of Worcester.

On December 7, 1955, Bishop John J. Wright wrote to Fr. Henry Moquin:

I am happy to tell you that the petition addressed to the Holy See for the entrusting of the parish of St. Anne and St. Patrick in Fiskdale, together with the Shrine of St. Anne in that same town, to the spiritual care of the Assumptionists has been favorably received....

Accordingly, effective Wednesday, December 14, 1955, the care of the parish and the shrine in Fiskdale is entrusted

by me, as Roman Catholic Bishop of Worcester, to the Augustinians of the Assumption...

...the revenues from the shrine and those revenues from the parish which would, under Church law or diocesan policy, accrue to the pastors of the parish will be used for the work of education and religion done by the Assumptionists here in the Diocese of Worcester....

You will recall that I personally initiated the plan by which this assignment is given to the Assumptionists. I did so in the hope that it would serve the best interests of piety at the shrine and of religion in that area of the diocese. I also had in mind that it might prove an important source of revenue for the Assumptionists in the work of building and maintaining their college in Worcester and their preparatory school. I pray God that all these hopes will be fulfilled.

This was the source and the reasons for the Assumptionist community's presence in Fiskdale. Fr. Marcellin Parent was named Superior and Pastor, while Fr. Joseph Pelletier was Director of the Shrine. Over the years, it sometimes happened that the director of the Shrine and the Superior/Pastor were not the same person.

In 1970, the almost century-old church of St. Patrick, which stood along the main highway in Fiskdale, route 20, was declared unsafe for continued use as a church. Rather than raze it, Fr. Ferland asked the Parish Council to donate it to the Shrine. This they did and the Bishop and the Provincial gave their permission to move the old church to the Shrine grounds. The actual moving began in December, 1970, but because of snowstorms and sleet it could not immediately be placed on its new foundations. Finally, strengthened by large steel cables, it was deemed safe to house the icon collection.

This collection of Russian icons had been put together by the Assumptionists who served in Moscow as chaplains to the American and other embassies. Some had been received as gifts and others had been purchased or salvaged. Given the situation in Russia, many were irreplaceable. They were exhibited in the old church along with memorabilia of the Assumptionist bishop, Pie Neveu, and immediately became very popular with visitors to the Shrine.

Another initiative of Fr. Roger Ferland as pastor was his offering of a large plot in the parish cemetery to the Assumptionists. Because of the closing of the Prep School, the private cemetery there had to be closed and the graves transferred. This was done in 1972, with the permission of the Bishop. The Assumptionists soon started to celebrate an outdoor

Mass on Memorial Day, in St. Anne's cemetery, for their departed brothers and for the deceased parishioners. As we mentioned in our first chapter, the remains of Fr. Henri Brun were transferred here in 1987.

On Sunday, March 6, 1977, Bishop Bernard Flanagan dedicated a fine parish center, the result of a fund drive organized by Fr. Donat Durand. The Center had a large multi-purpose hall (dedicated to the memory of Fr. Roger Ferland), a large lounge, offices and rooms that could serve as CCD classrooms.

The Assumptionists held a number of Province-wide meetings in the Center, and they would have refreshments mere for religious and family after an Assumptionist's funeral.

For many years, Brother Arthur Tanguay ran a religious articles store in the basement of St. Anne's church. It was quite small and only a limited amount of merchandise could be displayed. In August, 1984, construction began on a votive center and shrine store, octagonal in shape. The store was tight and spacious, capable of displaying much more merchandise; and it was noticed that sales increased, as a result. On the second story was an entire floor where votive lights could be burned. In the walls were placed some of the beautiful stained glass windows that had been part of the first chapel, in Alumni Hall, at Assumption College.

Attached to the shrine store by a connector was another octagonal building which was destined to provide better and more secure exhibition space for the icon collection, with necessary temperature and humidity controls. In 1984, Fr. Richard Lamoureux applied to the National Endowment for the Humanities for a grant to install the collection in its permanent home at St. Anne's, and to improve its presentation aesthetically and educationally. The Planning Project grant was obtained and experts studied the icons, their need of restoration, and the overall pedagogical program that might accompany the exhibit. Unfortunately, despite repeated applications, the Implementation Grant itself was never obtained and the icon exhibit was more modestly presented. Still, the icons could serve as "windows" into the spirituality of Russian Orthodox Christians.

Assumptionists liked to serve their diaconal year at St. Anne's. Fr. John Franck even chose to be ordained there on May 14, 1977, in the Parish Center which had been dedicated the preceding March. This was the first ordination ever held in the parish.

As we close this chapter, let us mention other Assumptionists who have served at St. Anne and St. Patrick's parish: Fr. David Hennessey (from the English Province), Fr. Timothy (Patrick) Croghan, Fr. Antoine Philippe, Fr. Leo Martin, Fr. Charles-Ephrem Lavoie, Fr. Gregory Boisvert, Fr. Henry Roy, Fr. George Char-land, Fr. Dennis Gadagher, Fr.

Leo Brassard, Fr. Odver Blanchette, Bro. Stephen Goguen, Fr. Claude Grenache. Bro. Jean L'Heureux, Fr. Patrick Cronauer.

**SUPERIORS**

1955-1958	Marcellin Parent
1958-1959	Joseph Richard
1959-1961	Anselm Morrison
1961-1964	Louis Robert Brassard
1964-1973	Roger Ferland
1973-1979	Donat Durand
1979-1982	William Clermont
1983-1984	Roland Guilmain
1984-1992	Phillip Bonvouloir
1992-	Donald Espinosa

## 20. Cassadaga: Our Lady of Lourdes Seminary



Ever desirous of fostering Assumptionist religious vocations and seeking to spread Assumption outside of New England, Fr. Henry Moquin should be credited with founding Our Lady of Lourdes Seminary. He found just what he was looking for, in Upper New York State, in a region with a strong Catholic population. Buffalo at the time was 65% Catholic.

The land and buildings he wanted were up for sale in the summer of 1959; it was the Newton Memorial Hospital (for tuberculosis patients) in the town of Cassadaga, and was scheduled to close its doors that summer. On approximately 106 hillside acres there were five two-storied buildings in tan brick, some of which were connected by underground tunnels, a great convenience during the severe, snowy winter months. There were also other ancillary buildings.

In July, 1959, Fr. Henry wrote to the Bishop of Buffalo, Joseph A. Burke, saying: "For some years it has been my dream to establish a Juniorate west of the Hudson River." He asked permission to open in the diocese of Buffalo such a minor seminary which would be operated in the Assumptionist aluminate fashion, provided the Newton Hospital could be bought. He also requested the necessary authorization from the Superior General.

Fr. Henry said that the Bishop had the reputation of being anti-religious. Shortly before this, the Lazarists had closed their major seminary; they had lost much of their land because of the building of the St. Lawrence Seaway and were moving elsewhere, to the great displeasure of the Ordinary. Fr. Henry feared that the Bishop would not grant his request. But his fears proved groundless: by return mail the Bishop answered: "I will be very happy to receive you into the Diocese of Buffalo and grant you formal permission to establish a religious house here as a Religious Juniorate." On August 16, 1959, Father General also gave his permission to buy the desired property even though the cost might run over \$100,000.00. all systems were "Go" and on January 19, 1960 the land, buildings and many of their furnishings were purchased

from the County of Chatauqua, its Board of Supervisors having accepted Fr. Henry's bid of \$125,000.00.

Immediately work began. Arriving with Fr. Henry had been Fr. Louis Robert Brassard, Provincial Treasurer, and Brother Arnold Glazier, who had spent the night of January 18 in what would be called St. Mary's Hall at the seminary. On January 19 others arrived, bringing supplies from Saugerties; they were FF. Donat Durand, James Dover, and Brothers John Lesage and Robert Francis Beaulac. They started taking inventory and preparing buildings for occupancy. Their daily schedule, which we give here, reveals that they were very busy indeed.

6:40 A.M.	Rise
7:00	Prime, Small Hours, Meditation, Mass
8:30	Breakfast
9:00	Work
12:30	Dinner and return to work
6:30	Supper, night prayers, Rosary, Litany of Our Lady while washing dishes. Vespers and Compline.

On Friday, February 19, FF. Moquin and Brassard had left New York City to go back to Cassadaga, and they ran into the worst blizzard of the winter. The New York Thruway was completely blocked west of Syracuse. Once their motor conked out because of the accumulation of snow under the hood. Then they slid into the median and were stuck there. They hitch-hiked until the nearest rest area. Only late on Saturday, helped by State Troopers, were they able to continue to a motel in Buffalo. Arrival at Cassadaga on Sunday; Fr. Louis Robert with a bad cold, and Fr. Henry with a pleurisy attack. Well, aren't all great ventures said to begin with pain and trials?

Two days after, on February 23, work was started on the chapel. No time was being lost.

In late March, the Provincial assigned the following religious to the initial community at the Seminary:

Fr. Raymond Bosse, Superior  
 Fr. Camillus Thibault, First Assistant  
 Fr. Antonio Laberge, Second Assistant  
 Fr. Joseph Arsenault, Treasurer  
 Fr. Leonard Larocque  
 Fr. Roger Perreault  
 Fr. Robert Fortin  
 Bro. Jean Lesage  
 Bro. Edgar Lecuyer

Bro. Robert Francis Beaulac  
Bro. Stephen Goguen

To this number, within a year, were added Brothers Omer Gemme, Jon Poehler, Thomas McHugh. On balance, it was a very young community, just what was needed to deal with the young men due to arrive in September.

Joining the community later were Paul Goudreau, Richard Brodeur, Eugene Brassard, Francis Brassard, Brothers Mark Roy (scholastic) James Blythe.

The various buildings were named after the patron saints of the Congregation. The main building was called St. Mary's. Other buildings were called St. Augustine's, St. John's, St. Michael's, St. Peter's, St. Paul's, St. Joseph's, and the convent for the Mexican Passionist nuns who would become cooks for the seminary was called St. Monica's. The names had been proposed by the Provincial, agreed to by Fr. Raymond, "and not objected to by anyone, at least not publicly!"

The seminarians arrived on September 17 and 18. Their arrival had been postponed one week because of problems with the heating system that left the Seminary without hot water or cooking facilities. There were 44 Freshmen, 7 Sophomores, 6 Juniors; 30 were from New England, 2 from New York, add 25 from Pennsylvania. Within the first week, five asked to return home because of homesickness. Another left on October 9, and two more on October 26. On October 30, the feast of Christ the King, the seminarians were invested with their cassocks. The black cassocks had blue buttons, blue sash, and blue piping, and were modeled after the cassocks of the American College in Rome. In mid-November began the publication of the school paper, *THE CASSADAGAN*, and some of the students undertook to keep hand written archives of the house, which have proven very useful in the writing of this chapter.

Hikes, sing-along parties and skits, "championship" ping-pong tournaments Christmas decorating and caroling, intra-mural hockey or basketball games, hot-chocolate parties after skiing, amateur theatricals, and the making of maple syrup were among the means employed to unite religious and students into a closely knit community, aluminate style.

On March 19, 1961, Brothers John Lesage and Robert Francis Beaulac made their perpetual profession, the first such ceremony at Our Lady of Lourdes.

Fr. Henry Moquin enjoyed visiting Cassadaga and often spent happy hours fishing for muskelunge, once catching one 32 inches long and weighing 8 pounds. And he closely supervised the many changes and improvements made at the seminary.

As the second academic year began, there were 37 Frosh, 28 Sophs, 6 Juniors, and 6 Seniors. In October, 1961, Brother Thomas Mc Hugh was assigned to Our Lady of Guadalupe parish, and Brother Robert Francis Beaulac was transferred to Assumption College.

During the summer of 1962, a Probation session was held for religious with some ten years of priesthood. The directors of this Probation were Fr. Alfred Fame, Assistant General, and Fr. Remade Thibault. Doing this Probation were: Georges Bissonnette, Donat Durand, Charles Ephrem Lavoie, Gregory Boisvert, Richard Richards, Ernest Fortin, James Dover, Roger Ferland, Theodore Fortier, Norman Meiklejohn, William Dubois, Roland Guilmain, Yvon Dubois, Joseph Grenier, Alexandre Beaudet, Noel Codette. all experienced the typical Fame dryness, and some of the fedows took up golf. During their Probation they went on excursions to Alleghany State Park and to Niagara Fads. The annual provincial retreat was held at Cassadaga that summer, with a large contingent coming from Worcester in an old war-surplus bus.

As classes began in 1962, there were 89 seminarians: 34 Frosh, 27 Sophs, 21 Juniors, 2 Seniors, 5 College Frosh. In September, 1963, there were 108.

In April, 1960 the seminary had been visited by representatives of the New York State Board of Regents, in view of accreditation of the high school section. A list of recommendations was submitted by the Board, and within three years all these recommendations had been implemented except for the construction of a gymnasium. Permission to build the gym was obtained from the Superior General on January 17, 1964, and again the accreditation was sought. On June 25, 1965, the Board of Regents granted the accreditation for five years, retroactive to September, 1964.

In September, 1965, the cornerstone of the gym, dedicated to Fr. Henry Moquin, was laid. When completed it would have a fine basketball floor, two bowling alleys, and would be used also for the weekly Bingo games. During September, 99 high school students were enrolled. There were no college students, because it had been decided to transfer them to Assumption College, under the direction of Fr. Paul Goudreau.

Beginning in 1966, Fr. Vincent Dolbec served as Superior at Cassadaga for one year.

By 1967 it was becoming clear that minor seminaries, of which there were more man 50 in New York state alone, would have to be re-organized, probably by some sort of amalgamation as had been done at the seminary of Cap Rouge in Canada. Various solutions to the problem were examined. Amalgamation with the Passionists in Dunkirk, the

Divine Word Seminary in Bordentown, N.J.; the Passionists' Holy Cross Seminary in Union City, NJ.; Saint Paul's Abbey of the Benedictine Missionaries in Newton, N.J.; or Cardinal O'Hara High School in Philadelphia was considered.

The Cassadaga Community was of course deeply interested in the problem, and in March, 1967, ten of its members sent to Father General and the members of the Provincial Council a letter (somewhat to the displeasure of the Provincial) in which they stated some very interesting ideas. "It is our firm conviction," these religious said, <sup>41</sup>that in the education to a Christian apostleship we must be willing to go beyond the currently operational goals of education. Our actual schools are adequately structural zed to implement academic, cultural, and vocational goals, but they do not, and perhaps cannot, focus on the most important element of them ad, the *human person* within which these goals are to be realized."

They went on to say that, for an aluminate, the primary function of the community would be the development of the personality of the individual student. To carry out this function, the religious had to have a real and deep love for each student, and foster a family atmosphere and discipline. Even the furnishings of the aluminate had to be homey, not institutional. The alumnists should be offered every opportunity to exercise self-responsibility. All this required that the alumnists have a separate dwelling, a separate community, and a distinct Superior.

### ***LEEDS STREET***

Such ideals seem to have prevailed because *Assumption North America* for June, 1967, announced the decision to move the high school students from Cassadaga to Assumption Prep, for the 1968-1969 academic year. They were to continue seminary life in their own separate residence(s). Suitable housing was found quite close to the Prep.; for one year some lived in the Randall Street house which was rented from the Prep. Others lived in a newly purchased house on Leeds Street.

Fr. Philip Bonvouloir was Superior (from 1967 to 1969), of the small community of FF. Roger Perreault, John-Charles Mercier, and Bro. Jean L'Heureux. Despite their number, they accepted two weekly ministry assignments: Holy Rosary parish nearby and Immaculate Conception in Lancaster. During the week they served as chaplains at the Notre Dame Sisters (the Lake) and once a week for the Oblate Sisters of the Assumption.

In August, 1969, it was announced that the Leeds Street seminarians would be totally incorporated into the Prep, and organized as a regular

High School Catholic Action cell, under Fr. Roger Perreault. The following November, Fr. Philip Bonvouloir was appointed Headmaster at Assumption Prep. In 1971, the Leeds Street property was sold.

### ***THE JOHN XXIII RETREAT CENTER***

Even after the departure of the seminarians, the Assumptionists did not abandon Cassadaga; they simply changed their form of apostolate. With the authorization of Bishop James McNulty of Buffalo, they undertook family retreat work. At the outset, Fr. Antonio Laberge was the “Leader” (for one year, after which he became Superior until 1970). Working with him initially were: FF. Arthur Clermont, Francis Brassard, Bros. Edgar Lecuyer, Jude McMullan, and Stephen Goguen. Staff members occasionally changed as religious joined or left the Community. In December, 1970, Fr. Roland Guilmain became Superior, he served in this capacity until October 15, 1977, when he became Superior of the Provincial House at 108 Street. Fr. Oliver Blanchette, Fr. Paul Vaudreuil, and Brother Richard Mandeville also served at John XXIII.

The work of these religious took a number of forms: There were the Family Vacation/Retreats; there were classes for school children preparing for Confirmation (600 during one year); in the summer young religious acted as baby-sitters while the parents had a few days of peaceful time with God and each other. Fr. Oliver Blanchette even began retreats for divorced Catholics, the first one in the diocese to do so. The Assumptionists did not do all the retreat work themselves; quite often groups would arrive with their own retreat master and avail themselves of the splendid facilities.

With apologies to Fr. John Franck, we would like to include a story about him as one of the baby-sitters mentioned above, as found in the priceless pages of ANA:

“Wednesday evenings were known as ‘Chautauqua Nights.’ On that night many of the parents and some of the staff would spend the evening at Chautauqua Institute enjoying a concert. The children were under the protection of the summer staff. On our first Wednesday evening, all the parents decided to attend the concert. There were 5 or 6 of us baby-sitting and our main concern was to see that the children got ready for bed.

“This is the setting as our story opens to find John with his floor of children. Everything was moving along rather smoothly until John walked into Brad Gay’s room to get him ready for bed. Brad was four years old and didn’t wear a diaper anymore, except at night. ‘Just in

case...' he told John. Now John has three younger brothers. But prior to this Wednesday evening he doesn't seem to have had much experience with diapers. Undaunted, John set out to find one. For some strange reason, directions on the proper application of a diaper are not printed on a diaper. Nor do the words 'front' or 'back' appear anywhere on it. John struggled to get the diaper on correctly. Brad immediately sensed John's problem and came to his rescue. "This is how Mommy puts it on", he patiently explained to John. Next John looked around for pins to hold 'things' together. Finding some, he set about trying to get them through the layers of the diaper. Finally Brad was ready for bed. Well, almost. But first a drink of water which was followed by a trip to the bathroom. Not wanting to undo the diaper, John hit upon the idea of unpinning only one side of it. This worked well getting Brad out of the diaper, but not so well getting him back in again. Things went from bad to worse. But God is merciful. At that moment Sister Sharon arrived on the scene and within seconds the diaper was secured and Brad was off to bed on his way to pleasant dreams. John was on his way to his next little customer, a little wiser.

"Our story has a 'happy ending.' Before leaving, Brad's parents presented John with a small gift in appreciation of John's efforts with Brad. The gift was a diaper!"

In such episodes can be revealed a warm concern for people, which was a characteristic of Cassadaga.

Young married couples, numerous teen-age groups, Canisius College students, between 60 and 70 Protestants from the area, the High school division of the National Conference of Christians and Jews were just some of the organizations using the Center's facilities. Retreatants urged the Community to continue and expand their work; they said the place had magic, was beautifully located, and was most hospitable. Non-Catholic groups felt at home, expressed their gratitude and promised to return.

Obviously, no one can ever say just how much spiritual benefit the Center's retreatants and guests received. We believe it to have been great. Nonetheless, because of continuing problems with staffing and finances, the John XXIII Center was closed in 1977. On September 26, the property was sold to the United States Department of Labor which would use it as a Federal Job Corps Training Center, for 250 students. As a *Courier-Express* writer put it "A Paradise in Cassadaga is lost."



## 21. Weirton



“Since Vatican II, religious have been urged to seek new forms of religious life and apostolic commitment. When the decision was reached to close the Prep School in June of 1970, we were encouraged by Father Joseph to give serious thought to these new forms. Four of us felt that, while wanting to remain in secondary education, we would like the chance to do this in a poverty area, where we would feel that we were rendering a real and needed service to the Church. And we also felt that this would provide us with an ideal opportunity for a long dreamed for experiment in small community living.... After some study and discussion, we decided on the region known as ‘Appalachia’ because of the extreme poverty of the people as well as the sad state of education in the area.”

“...this new community would provide us with an answer to a plea that is often heard within the Province: Why haven’t we spread outside New England?”

“Our apostolic activity would certainly include secondary education.... However, it would take on a special character in an area where highly trained teachers are especially difficult to find; and by accepting to work for salaries smaller than those required by most laymen, we would hope to be of service to the Church and witness to community poverty at the same time. We would also hope to spread our activity beyond the school and into the community (evenings and week-ends) in such areas as adult education, discussion groups, CCD., parish ministry, etc. Being in the area would provide us with opportunities to do more ‘social’ with the underprivileged classes. And, in an area where Catholics are somewhat feared and disliked, hopefully we might contribute to the growth of an ecumenical spirit as wed.”

The preceding lines were part of a PROPOSAL FOR AN APPALACHIAN COMMUNITY (unsigned and undated). In part two of the proposal, we find: “Since our last report Brother Donald [Espinosa] was...invited to visit Parkersburg and Charleston to look into possibilities in both places. We have abandoned considerations of Tennessee and are

now considering these locations in West Virginia: Charleston, Weirton, and Parkersburg.” This was the rationale and the origin of the Assumptionist presence in the steel mid city of Weirton, where they finally decided to start a community.

Consequently an agreement was signed by Fr. Joseph Loiselle and Most Reverend Joseph H. Hodges, Bishop of Wheeling, West Virginia, on June 30, 1970, dealing with the conditions of the Assumptionist presence in the diocese. Fr. Albert Poirier was named Superior, with Fr. Leo Brassard and Bro. Donald Espinosa teaching at Madonna High School, and Fr. Philip Bonvouloir (Treasurer) and Fr. Paul Vaudreuil engaged in parish ministry and adult education. The reason that the Assumptionists never served the real Appalachia and its hillbillies was that Bishop Hodges judged that their educational role in a more heavily Catholic section of the state would best serve the Diocese.

In his Canonical Visitation Letter of November 28, 1971, Fr. Provincial could say, “...it is rather evident from my conversations with the Bishop, with a couple of pastors, and with yourselves, that your contribution to God’s People in Weirton and in the diocese of Wheeling is significant and appreciated.”

On August 21, 1971, Donald Espinosa had been ordained priest by Bishop Flanagan in Assumption College’s Chapel of the Holy Spirit. In October, 1972, Fr. Philip Bonvouloir had become Superior of the Community, when Fr. Albert Poirier left for personal reasons. In 1973, Fr. Paul Vaudreuil joined the Community at John XIII Center in Cassadaga. By January, 1975, Fr. Leo Brassard was in Brookline where he would soon become one half of the Vocation Team. That left only two members in the Community, Fr. Philip Bonvouloir and Fr. Donald Espinosa. Viable community life was no longer possible and Fr. Loiselle notified Bishop Hodges that he would withdraw the two remaining religious as of June 30, 1975 and reassign them, Fr. Philip as Chaplain in Moscow and Fr. Donald as Chaplain at Assumption College. The Appalachian venture had ended. Fr. Loiselle stated, “...I remain convinced that it has been a good experience for you and for the Province.” Bishop Hodges accepted the Provincial’s decision “...in the same spirit of sadness with which you had to write it,” and he thanked the Assumptionists “for all they have meant and done for our diocese.”

## 22. Tampa



The Assumptionist presence in the Tampa area was the result of an invitation by the Bishop of St. Petersburg, Charles B. McLaughlin, through the intermediary of Rev. Norman Balthazar, an alumnus of Assumption Prep. In June 1969, Fr Balthazar, Pastor and President of Tampa Catholic High School, with some 1100 students, wrote to Fr. Armand Desautels, inquiring if perchance the Assumptionists might not be interested in educational work in the diocese. Fr. Armand responded that the Province was rethinking its apostolate, and asked whether the question might be kept open.

There was a great shortage of priests in the St. Petersburg diocese, established only in 1968. Some priests had to combine parish commitments with teaching duties at Tampa Catholic High. The Assumptionists, with their prior experience in the classrooms, would free these priests for the specific duties for which they had been trained. After the closing of the Prep, in 1970, some religious became available; three of them, plus Fr. Joseph Loiselle (who had become Provincial in 1969), visited Tampa to seek information. The result was a contract between the Diocese and the Assumptionists, signed on June 30, 1970, setting out the terms of the religious' service to the Diocese. The *Florida Catholic* of August 14, 1970 quoted Fr. Balthazar as saying: "The Assumptionist Order decided to spread their manpower into new missions, without administrative or financial responsibilities."

The original group of religious going to Tampa Catholic consisted of Fr. Roger Perreault, Superior and teacher of Spanish and Latin; FF. Yvon Dubois and Paul Goudreau, teachers of religion; and Brother Roger Chagnon as Community Treasurer and manager of the school plant and custodial care. In 1971 Bro. Roger was named Director of the Diocesan Central Purchasing Office.

This small community was also an experimental one, in the sense that all the religious were not necessarily to work at a common apostolate. Their primary apostolate was as teachers and staff members of Tampa Catholic, but they would accept a variety of other works in the

diocese. They were chaplains of the Adrian Dominican Sisters and of the Sisters of Ste. Chrétienne. They helped in two parishes, St. Lawrence and its mission church for blacks, St. Peter Claver, as well as at Incarnation parish (where Brother Stephen Goguen became its administrator in 1978). Fr. Roger Perreault was named Diocesan Coordinator of the Charismatic Movement, and Fr. Paul Goudreau taped a series of meditations to be shown on the local TV station. Fr. Yvon Dubois became involved in the Charismatic Movement and CCD, gave classes and lectures in religious education, and was especially active in teaching Scripture courses.

Effective July 31, 1973, Fr. Gary Perron was assigned to the Tampa Community, to teach French and Spanish. Also in 1973, Fr. Francis Chiasson was sent to Tampa, to live and work at the Retreat House of the Franciscan Sisters of Alleghany. Typically, he remained there only briefly.

1973 Fr. Paul Goudreau became Treasurer, then Pastor of Tampa Catholic, and Vicar for Religious of the St. Petersburg diocese. On June 10, 1975 Fr. Paul was appointed Chaplain of the 20,000 student University of South Florida. He was replaced as Pastor of Tampa Catholic High by Fr. Roger Perreault on the same date.

By 1975 the Community had moved from 1521 River Lane to 3410 West Hillsborough Avenue which was more spacious but further away from Tampa Cathode. In house, as a concession to Florida temperatures, the religious chose to wear white Assumptionist garb. In 1975, Brother Richard Gagnon was named to Tampa, where he taught religion. On July 1, 1978, Fr. Paul Vaudreuil arrived in Tampa, and by July 6 he was named chaplain of the student body and of the Catholic Student Center at the University of South Florida in Temple Terrace replacing Fr. Paul Goudreau who was leaving for a sabbatical in Rome and Jerusalem.

On June 1, 1980, Fr. Yvon Dubois became Treasurer. In October, 1980 Fr. Yvon was named "Teacher of the Month" by *Cornerstone*, the Tampa High School paper, which said of him, "Father Yvon is a teacher who can be relied upon. He will set aside his own work for any student that needs him. He is a good example of what a teacher should be." They also noted that he could be found at every football game, which is understandable because he was the team chaplain.

In 1984-85 FF. Yvon Dubois, Paul Vaudreuil, and Gary Perron, were living on Ellicott Street None of the three residences they had in Tampa was ever owned by the Assumptionists; their living quarters were always furnished by the diocese.

Occasionally Assumptionist postulants, such as David Gado, tried their hand at teaching in Tampa Catholic, and their efforts were greatly appreciated.

In early 1984, Fr. Norman Balthazar, the Vicar for Education of the diocese, announced that the administration of Tampa Catholic would, as of September of that year, be conveyed to the Christian Brothers. Earlier, there had been talk of the Assumptionists staffing a parish provided they assumed responsibility for a diocesan retreat program (probably staffed by religious from the John XXIII Center in Cassadaga). Personnel shortage made this impossible. In any case, the new Bishop, Thomas Larkin did not want to lose the services of the Assumptionists as educators. Despite this, the Provincial Chapter of 1984 decided that, given our “serious shortage of personnel,” the Assumptionist presence in Tampa must come to an end, effective at the end of the 1984-85 academic year. Fr. Richard Lamoureux, Provincial, notified the Bishop of this decision.

**SUPERIORS in Tampa:**

- |           |  |
|-----------|--|
| 1970-1979 | Fr. Roger Perreault  |
| 1979-1983 | Fr. Paul Goudreau, who requested exclaustation in view of incardination in the St. Petersburg diocese. |
| 1983-1985 | Fr. Gary Perron, who was then sent to Brookline.   |



## 23. Emmanuel House



The *Worcester Evening Gazette* of April 5, 1985 quoted Fr. Edgar Bourque as saying, “It’s not unrealistic to say that we’ve been talking about this for five years. There has been a desire amongst the order to be more visible on campus and to be closer to the chapel.”

What Fr. Edgar was referring to was a new residence on the Assumption College campus which would be named Emmanuel House, so named as the result of a Province-wide contest. Already in May, 1984, *Assumption North America* had contained a proposal made to the entire Province, concerning such a residence. The goal of such a residence: establish a visible Assumptionist community presence on campus. The operative words were “visible” and “community.” It was felt that the Old English Road residence was too faraway and too isolated. The new residence must be “easily within sight of people on campus,” and make it easier for the Assumptionists to be more closely involved with college life. The residence was to emphasize the “community presence” it was not meant to be simply a place for individual religious on campus.

The religious of this community would have the campus as their apostolic priority, with all other apostolic involvement as secondary. The Campus Ministry Team was to be an integral part of this community, and the Chapel of the Holy Spirit was to be the locale for the Community’s liturgical life, thus integrating it into the life of the College. Common prayer, hospitality, and an atmosphere of silence and study would thus have apostolic dimensions affecting students, faculty, staff, and friends.

Mr. Pierre Belhumeur, an alumnus, was chosen as architect for a wooden frame house, located near the Chapel on land leased from the College. It was to have rooms for 10 religious, 3 guest rooms and common rooms. Fr. Donald Espinosa (Provincial Treasurer) and Pierre Belhumeur had considerable trouble with the contractor who delayed in the construction, but by 1986 the religious began living there.

Originally, the following men were assigned to Emmanuel House: Edgar Bourque as Superior, beginning September, 1985, Robert Francis Beaulac, Roger Corriveau as Treasurer, John Franck, Dennis Gallagher,

David Gado, Donat Lamothe, Aristide Tessitore, and Paul Vaudreuil who was to become a member of the Campus Ministry Team. Paul Cole, a New Zealand postulant, lived there while awaiting the start of his novitiate.

In line with their goal of hospitality, the Community often hosted meetings and meals for Trustees and for members of various College departments. They hoped to be able to host all of the departments within a year. They invited many student groups, and became involved in a series of Candlelight Prayer Services for the students.

Fr. Edgar Bourque, a man of many ventures, despite heart bypass surgery, continued to preach retreats to religious communities (e.g. Sisters of Joan of Arc and the Religious of the Assumption) and to give "Twilight Retreats." Beginning in September, 1987, he undertook to computerize all the known writings of Fr. d'Alzon and of Blessed Marie Eugénie. He obtained a Kurzweil Scanner that transferred texts from any print medium directly into the computer, thus eliminating all need for re-typing. He was aided by Sister Cecile Brassard, of the Daughters of the Holy Spirit, who did the work in memory of her brother, Fr. Louis Robert. She soon became adept at programming the Scanner to read different type faces. All 79 volumes of Fr. d'Alzon's works were computerized, indexed, and organized so that certain themes or even words used by Fr. d'Alzon could be easily accessible to scholars.

## Conclusion



In the *Tempest* Prospero once said “Our revels now are ended.” So is this story of the Assumptionists in the United States. It is sketchy and far from complete, and we fully realize that to it should, some day, be added the interesting Assumptionist saga in Canada and Mexico. Still, we hope that it may be useful, especially to younger Assumptionists who will carry on the Assumptionist life.

Among the events that we have deliberately omitted are: Meetings...meetings...and more meetings Committees, that were formed, blossomed, and wilted.

Many Assumptionists who have left the Congregation, with or without indult, practically a whole generation, whose departure has saddened and impoverished the Province, and sometimes was deleterious to the efforts of many others.

Some of the heartbreaks as houses were closed and their communities broken up and the religious separated.

Mention of service of religious “out of country,” in missions or in the General Administration of the Congregation.

The sacrifice of many summer days by religious Province-wide, so that the annual Mission Co-op appeals might benefit others.

Hours and days spent in the study of Fr. d’Alzon, his charism and that of the Congregation, in working for the Coming of the Kingdom.

And we realize that we have often omitted mention of the day-by-day fidelity of most of the religious who have served humbly and devotedly, prayerfully and faithfully. By itself, this would require another entire book.

We plead guilty of “plagiarism” in using the ideas and sometimes the very words of Assumptionist writers, editors, and archivists. In their fraternal charity may they forgive us.

In the Summer of 1990, began the Saint Augustine community, on Barry Road, in Worcester, quite near the Assumption College campus. It was to be “An Assumptionist Vocation Community” designed for men attracted to Assumptionist life. Members of the new community were: Fr. Edgar Bourque, Superior, Fr. Richard Lamoureux, Fr. Paul Vaudreuil, Fr. Donald Espinosa. There were two novices: Fr. Bill Carey

and Kim John, a Korean. Sad to say, neither of these men persevered until perpetual vows. In 1993, the Saint Augustine Community was disbanded, and the novitiate was transferred to Emmanuel House, with Father Dennis Gallagher as Master of Novices.

We hope that one thing will stand revealed by these pages, as a kind of “golden thread” running throughout: the constant effort by the Assumptionists to find and foster vocations to the priesthood and religious life. Some ventures failed and methods that once worked have had to be changed. But efforts were made. We hope that they will continue and bear fruit for the Congregation that we chose and love, and for the Church that is the sign and channel of God’s Love.

We have added to these pages a sort of pictorial history of the Assumptionists in America, because we think that faces and places might make these pages more interesting and significant.

**May His Kingdom Come**