

CHAPTER 10

THE FRIARS AT MID-CENTURY

At the midpoint of the nineteenth century, the Dominican friars of St. Joseph Province, along with many fellow Americans, emerged from their pioneer status. Together they faced fifteen critical years in the life of the nation; a time of increasing European immigration, territorial expansion, continuing endorsement of the system of slavery and the consequent tragedy of Civil War. The years between 1850 and 1865 would also bring irreversible changes for the Church and the Order of Preachers within and outside the United States. In the midst of all changes from without, the life of the province survived, despite its own grave problems. Its mission continued.

By 1850 many elements favored the development of both urban and rural life in the region known as the Old Northwest. Immigrants and settlers claimed abundant farmland at low cost. An American genius for inventiveness provided new means of communication and transportation while civic stability, forged by the early American republic, encouraged people to live in the rising towns.^[1] By 1860 the population was quickly spreading from the Appalachians to and beyond the Mississippi Valley. Between 1850 and 1865 increasing numbers of Catholic immigrants arrived. They were largely from Germany and Ireland, the former fleeing political oppression, the latter their famine-stricken Emerald Isle. Especially among the German Catholics, bishops, pastors and people now had to face a new question that would affect the Church for many decades in relation to the arrivals from Europe. Should these immigrants whose language and customs were so different from their English-speaking confreres have parishes of their own? The liturgies of all groups were in Latin; but German parishioners, struggling to learn English, found the preaching and other pastoral activities incomprehensible, or at least frustrating. Moreover, they seldom found an American parish community as close-knit as the one they left in "the old country." Like the Lutherans, they maintained that in order to keep their faith they must use the German language in worship and in the schooling of their children. Their motto was: "Language saves the Faith." They led the way for the development of ethnic parishes during the second half of the 19th century.

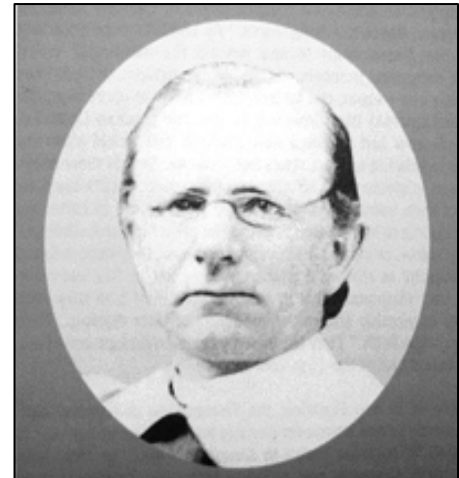
Following the example of Bishop Fenwick, the Dominicans understood such arguments and tried to provide priests whenever possible for the German families, as when in 1843 they opened St. Nicholas Parish in Zanesville, Ohio. In 1852 John Albert Bokel, O.P., a native of Germany, was called to Memphis, Tennessee to be "pastor of the German Catholics of this city and to care for their spiritual necessities."

He learned that forty families had already taken the initiative in the matter, and recorded:

May 23. Today I learned that the Germans were to have a meeting after Vespers at Mr. Handwerker's to find out the intention of the parish; if they wished to contribute to the support of the English church [St. Peter's, to be replaced with a larger building] or if they wished to buy a lot for themselves and to erect a church.^[2]

Like many of their co-religionists, Memphis families also chose to form a separate "national parish." Despite their poverty, they supported the first German parish in Tennessee called St. Mary's. Father Bokel played his own special role, knowing where to obtain help from other German Catholics. He noted,

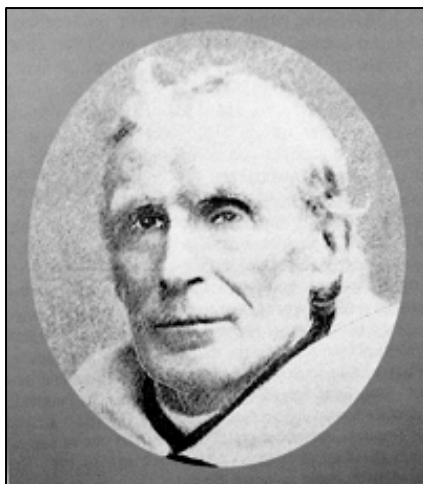
On June 2nd [1853] I went to St. Louis on the Steamer Bulletin to collect among the Catholics of that city money to pay as soon as possible the heavy debt on the lot. The most Reverend Archbishop [Peter] Kenrick readily gave me permission to collect. I received about \$633 from my countrymen and about \$370 from the others. The latter amount was for Father Grace.[\[3\]](#)



John Albert Bokel, Pastor and friend of German immigrants in Ohio and Tennessee

After 1850, Irish immigrants came in equally great numbers. Many unmarried women and men joined the veritable pilgrimage of exile, a custom different from that followed by most other nationalities. Most sought any kind of employment in order to relieve their relatives overseas and finance the journey of other family members from Ireland. Many of these Catholic immigrants were attracted to religious life in the United States. Among the 69 friars professed between 1850 and 1865 there were 42 born in Ireland, including 24 priests and 18 brothers. In 1856 eight of the ten Dominican friars ordained to the priesthood were natives of Ireland. This was the first and only year in which native-born Americans were outnumbered in province membership.[\[4\]](#) Given the ethnic pattern among American friars between 1850 and 1862, it is not surprising that three successive superiors of St. Joseph Province during that period were natives of Ireland. They were Matthew O'Brien (1850-1854), James Whelan (1854-58) and Joseph Augustine Kelly (1858-62). Under their governance the province enjoyed growth and relative stability, despite their participation in major changes in American society.

Matthew O'Brien, Dominican Provincial, 1850-1854

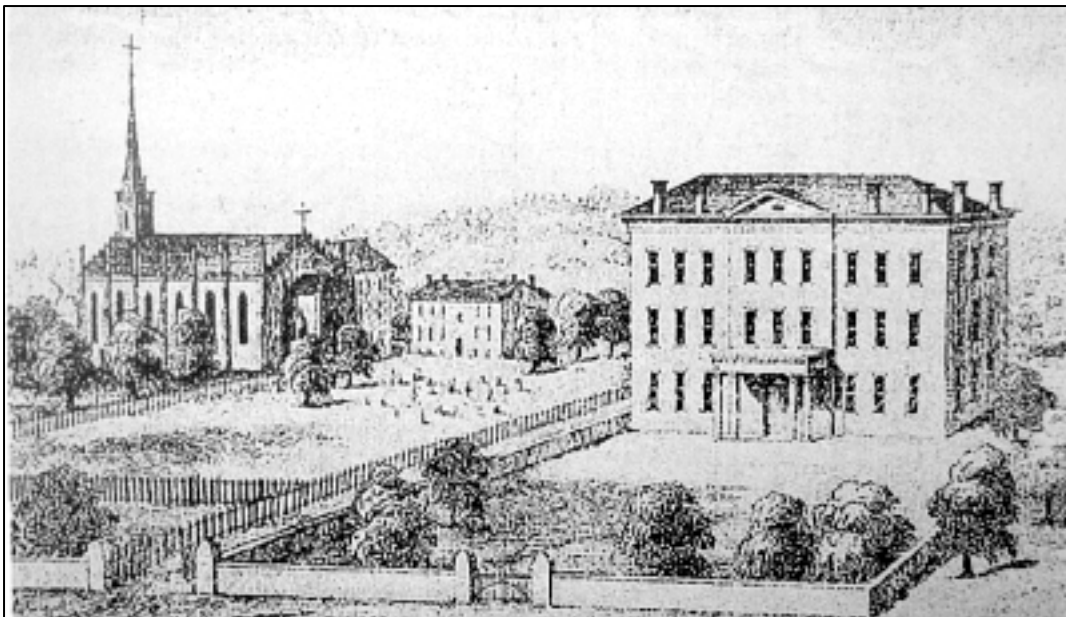


Matthew O'Brien was a strongly pastoral priest, long known for his success in welcoming converts, bringing back lapsed Catholics, and building churches and missions which he financed by begging tours. Zeal characterized his administration, although some critics considered him imprudent in admitting unsuitable candidates. In 1852, in the midst of his term, the vicar general Vincent Jandel sent an Irish Dominican, Robert White, as visitor to the American province. The American friars, who saw him as affable and complimentary, generally liked White. But on his return to Rome his reports seemed critical, especially of St. Rose Priory. He was candid with the provincial O'Brien about the

grievances of the friars there. He wrote,

I am sorry to have to allude to the subject which is somewhat disagreeable but just before I left America, I received letters which I cannot avoid noticing. At St. Rose's they were still complaining of ill treatment, & they furnished me with a catalogue of grievances which astonished me. They may be reduced to three heads: unwholesome diet in the refectory, neglect of the sick, & arbitrary conduct on the part of superiors which is almost unendurable, so much is it said to be contrary to the mild spirit of the government of our Order. I did not wish to take any step in regard to this affair, until I first made you acquainted with it.^[5]

How the provincial responded to White and the friars of St. Rose is unknown, but he pleased province members in 1853 by accepting an invitation for the friars to go to Washington, D.C. There they opened St. Dominic's parish and built the church and rectory under the direction of George Wilson and Nicholas D. Young.^[6] To have a mission in the nation's capital was a source of gratification to O'Brien and Young, and apparently to all the friars. Young wrote with confidence to Jandel about the *fait accompli*, "We beg your blessing & special prayers in behalf of this work, and that we may be governed in its foundation by the spirit that animated our holy Founder."^[7] However, they had not consulted the vicar general, thinking it was enough to discuss the foundation with Robert White. Jandel objected strongly to the Washington establishment. While obliged to accept the action, he admonished O'Brien not to undertake new commitments with such limited numbers of friars.^[8] Even O'Brien's critics did not fault his decision to send men to Washington. He brought the province to the east coast and founded a parish of great promise, even financially, because it could pay for itself. The province had been virtually subsidizing the parishes it staffed in Kentucky and Ohio.



St. Joseph College, Somerset, Ohio, 1850

Although Matthew O'Brien was not known as an intellectual, he fulfilled as provincial the earlier desire of Nicholas Young to open the College of St. Joseph at Somerset. The building was

ready in 1850 and staffing began a year later. The first president was James Whelan; other staff members combined teaching with pastoral ministry nearby.^[9] At the end of 1854 there were over one hundred youths enrolled at St. Joseph's, occupying a new building. Academic degrees would be conferred on the first class three years later.

At the 1854 provincial chapter, James Whelan was elected provincial. This was the same friar who six years later was named Bishop of Nashville and whose unhappy episcopacy has been described in Chapter 9. At the age of thirty-one, he was the youngest to hold the office until then and already had the reputation of being a brilliant scholar.^[10] After his profession in 1840, he was the only theology student, but had the advantage of studying with Eugenio Pozzo, the Italian theologian who was the first regent of studies in the province. Whelan became Pozzo's virtual assistant even before ordination, and in 1849, when Pozzo returned to Italy, replaced him as master of students. Upon the establishment of St. Joseph's College in 1851, he was named its first president, a position he held until elected to head St. Joseph Province. As provincial between 1854 and 1858, James Whelan sustained the emphasis given to study by his mentor Pozzo. He conducted regular visitation among the friars and sisters, sent written reports to the houses as well as to the Master General, urged the keeping of archives, and introduced the use of the customary Dominican form of assignment by *mandamus*.^[11]

Joseph Augustine Kelly was elected provincial on October 16, 1858. Although Kelly by his office became president of St. Joseph College, he was not a profound scholar. He was both respected and liked by his confreres.^[12] Like Whelan, Kelly believed that American Dominicans were best educated in their homeland rather than in Europe. Nevertheless, he sent four young men to study in Rome and France, with disappointing results: two died in Europe, and one left the Order after ordination.^[13] With increasing numbers of men ready for the missions, Joseph Kelly desired to bring the Order to the eastern cities by accepting invitations to staff several new parishes. The Master Jandel grudgingly agreed to accept only one: St. Peter's in London, Ontario, which, despite a debt held a hopeful future. The friars arrived there in September 1861.^[14] The development of parish ministry was one of several points on which Jandel and the American friars did not see eye to eye. The Americans knew the needs of their people as Jandel did not.

During the first half of the 19th century the Order of Preachers in Europe was weakened by problems, both religious and political, which were bringing all religious orders close to disaster. Following the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars, they were subject to political oppression and wholesale confiscation of property, the weakening of common life and the dispersal of members. To have friars living a "private life" apart from community was for the Dominicans the most serious problem, for they lost their traditional sources of strength for mission: their common prayer, purposeful study and communal decision making.

While the American province was struggling to develop its life and mission, the Dominicans in Europe were barely surviving the short, ineffective terms of leaders and the rarity of general chapters. To help revivify the Order while a general chapter was impossible to convene even for election, the Pope in 1850 appointed for six years a vicar general, Alexander Vincent Jandel. In his first letter to the friars the new head of the Order wrote candidly, "We are surrounded by ruins."^[15] However, he was confident that the weakness of the Order was not unto death. Jandel

was one of the men who studied at the house of strict observance in La Quercia, Italy, along with Joseph Alemany, Sadoc Vilarrasa and the preacher Henri Lacordaire who restored the Order in France.[\[16\]](#)

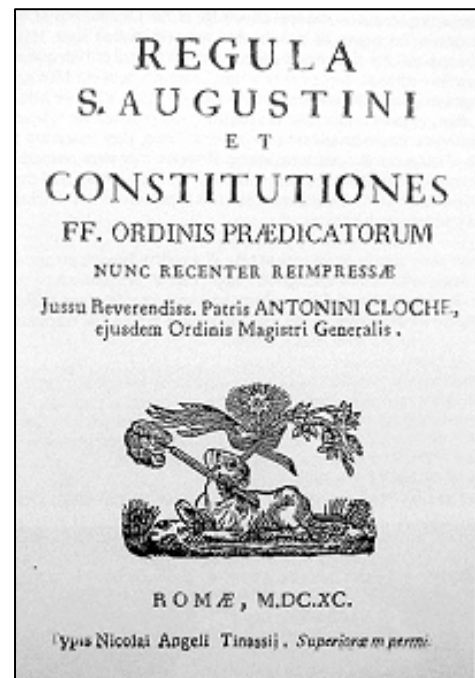
At the close of his six years as appointed vicar, Jandel was elected Master General by his brothers for successive terms until his death in 1872. The relationship of Vincent Jandel and the American friars was one of good will, but mutual understanding was hampered by cultural differences and Jandel's inclination toward the cloistral, monastic aspect of Dominican life. The French master was also mission-minded, but his giant efforts at renewal of the Order of Preachers led him to emphasize the communal character of their life as the basis for rebuilding.

The Americans of the Order from the beginning were necessarily mission-oriented. They were led by the call of the Church, the spiritual needs of the people, to be "useful" to the rapidly growing numbers who needed parishes and churches, preaching and sacraments. One problem was that although Jandel visited other countries, including England, he never came to the United States. Lacking personal knowledge of the American scene, he gave much credence to the Irish friars he sent as visitators. Their reports seemed to vacillate between flattery and sharp criticism.[\[17\]](#)

Constitutions of the Order of Preachers, 1690

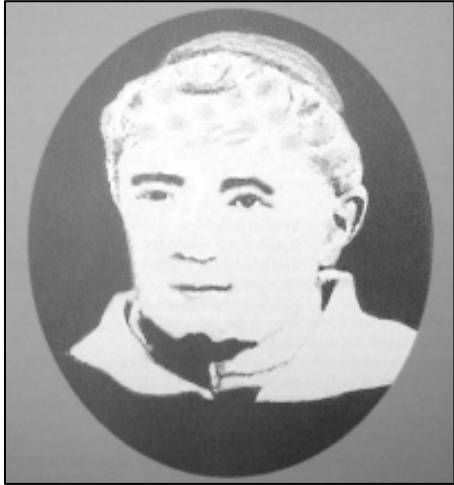
Jandel deplored the Americans' minimal knowledge of the Constitutions of the Order. But the few extant copies, all in Latin, had not been revised since 1690. Revision was the responsibility of general chapters, but in the turmoil of 19th-century Europe, the prescribed triennial chapters were seldom convened. Between 1806 and 1850, when eighteen general chapters should have met, only three could be held.[\[18\]](#) The American friars, even with their limited experience and penchant for independence, fully understood their relationship to the universal Order. They recognized in Jandel the kind of leadership that had been lacking. However, they were reasonably sure that he did not understand the Americans situation. He could not see how they were fulfilling the mission of the Order in ways different from those of their brothers in Europe. All his letters told them so.

Vincent Jandel never abandoned his hope to have all American Dominicans pursue their studies in Rome or another study center in Europe. One of his statements on the subject is found in a letter to Bishop Thomas Grace, who with other friars and bishops were petitioning for the restoration of the province founded in 1844 in Wisconsin. Jandel wrote,



Until I shall be able to obtain a nucleus of Religious who have been trained in Europe according to our laws and who have the true spirit of the Order and are suitable for the education of youth, and for establishing an entirely new community, without any admixture of the old elements, there can be no question of opening a new Novitiate in those parts and much less of the erection of a new Province.[\[19\]](#)

**Alexander Vincent Jandel, Vicar General,
1850-1855; Master General, 1855-1872**



Most American friars, who discounted the value of foreign study, resisted his ideas on study. Rome in particular had proven to be an unhealthy place for some youthful members who could not survive the climate or the food.

The dream of the province founders had been to establish a college such as they had staffed at Holy Cross in Belgium and a provincial studium, or house of studies. In keeping with Dominican ideals, the need for a studium was even greater than for a college of arts and sciences. But pioneer conditions frustrated the early attempts to give a studium a firm foundation. In the United States there was no urban university to sponsor such an institution for the friars. Few men were prepared for seminary teaching, except among the French Sulpicians. Catholic youth were themselves poor and generally uneducated until colleges would be well established.

Two questions present themselves. Who were the professors assigned to teach young Dominican friars called to the priesthood? And what was the quality of education offered to them? The province founders were well educated, with the exception of Fenwick, whose studies were cut short by political conditions after the French Revolution. Thomas Wilson earned advanced degrees in theology, as did William Tuite and Robert Angier. The Americans who followed them were decidedly limited in their studies until the coming of Eugenio Pozzo, Sadoc Vilarrasa, Joseph Alemany and other Europeans fully prepared to teach theology. Under their leadership the post of Regent of Studies was established in the 1840's. Regents, however, were required to share in parish ministry, which in fact could enhance their instruction and make it more than academic. Pozzo and Vilarrasa were brilliant scholars, but Vilarrasa joined Alemany in the California foundation in 1850 and Pozzo returned to Italy in 1857.

There were now two other sources of instructors. One was the group of immigrants from Ireland, Germany and Belgium who had been well educated before joining St. Joseph Province. Included in this group were James Whelan and Joseph Kelly. There were several Americans who had studied in Europe. Thomas Grace and Nicholas Raymond Young were the most outstanding. Young would be called to parish ministry and provincial administration; Grace would be named a bishop.

The quality of education offered at St. Joseph to novices was greatly enhanced by a rich library which proved a munificent resource. It was the collection of more than two thousand volumes bequeathed to the friars by Luke Concanen, O.P., before his unexpected death in 1810. Other resources had to be built up gradually.^[20] Unfortunately, the efforts of Eugenio Pozzo in the late 1840's to establish a formal studium met with little permanent success. Apparently he was incapable of adapting to the new situation. He alienated those in the province who felt that the ministry ought to determine the course of education. Had Alemany remained provincial for a

full term, he may have been able, with Vilarrasa, to improve the studies of the priests while not overlooking the needs of the parishes and outlying missions. Instead, his successor, the overanxious Matthew O'Brien, tended to truncate the studies of new members in his zeal to meet the urgent needs of the American missions.

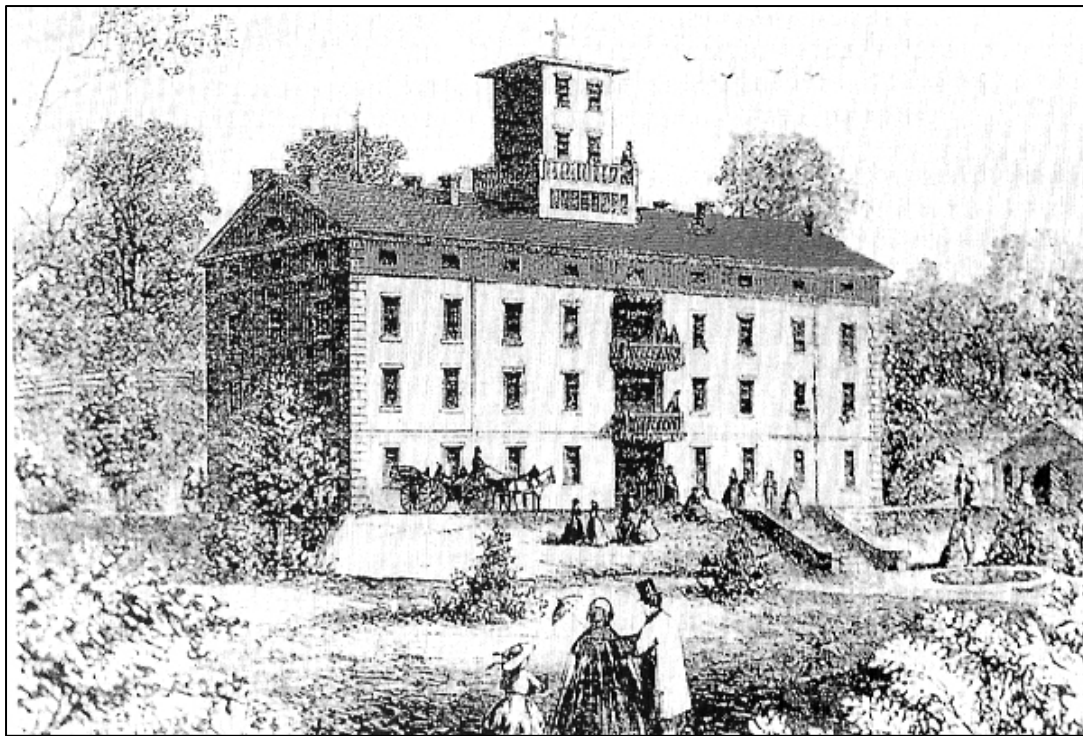
In the founding of the American province the idea of a college, even when only a dream, was inseparable from that of a house of studies. The founders had to leave Maryland for Kentucky partly because their projected college might be a threat to the one at Georgetown. But their dream did not fade from the day that the four Dominicans from Holy Cross College in Belgium launched their province and college in a Kentucky farmhouse. Although never set aside, the college idea was beset by many difficulties: the pull of men to the missions, the paucity of professors and funds and competition from two other colleges in Kentucky: St. Joseph's and St. Mary's, which were diocesan colleges at that time.

The detailed story of success and failures in Dominican higher education to 1865 is told fully by the historian James Bernard Walker, O.R, in his monograph, "The College Idea in the History of the Dominican Province of St. Joseph."[\[21\]](#) The chronology of higher education sponsored by St. Joseph Province to 1865, taken from that source, is here given in summary:

- 1806 Founding by Edward Fenwick and his first companions of St. Thomas College "on a five-hundred acre plantation in the very heart of the Catholic settlements ... the first Catholic educational institution for boys west of the Alleghenies, and the third founded in the United States since the Declaration of Independence." (p. 314)
- 1807 Enrolled twenty-two, and by 1817 two hundred students; One was Jefferson Davis, later president of the Confederacy. Others were Dominican friars, including Bishops Richard Miles and Thomas Grace.
- 1822 Plan to move the college to Cincinnati thwarted by a restraining order that friars should not leave St. Rose for Ohio
- 1828 College closed, partly owing to growing competition from St. Joseph College in Bardstown & St. Mary's in Lebanon, KY
- 1841 Ohio novitiate opened, leading to rapid growth of a studium and hope for opening a college
- 1846 Opening of St. Thomas College at Sinsinawa, Wisconsin by Samuel Mazzuchelli, O.R, with incorporation by Wisconsin legislature in 1848.
- 1849 Transfer of administration of Sinsinawa college to Province of St. Joseph upon the resignation of Samuel Mazzuchelli as provincial of St. Charles Province
- 1850 St. Joseph College opened at Somerset by St. Joseph Province [\[22\]](#)
- 1853-1864 Growth of Sinsinawa college, from which foundation twenty men entered the Province of St. Joseph to become priests or lay brothers

- 1857 Academic degrees conferred at colleges of Sinsinawa and Somerset; both affected adversely by financial panic of 1857
- 1861 Tentative suspension of St. Joseph College, owing to Civil War and financial problems
- 1864 Tentative suspension of St. Thomas College, Sinsinawa, by Provincial Matthew O'Brien

The suspension of classes at both colleges was soon changed to their final closing by the peremptory action of the appointed provincial from Ireland, William O'Carroll. He began his term on May 1, 1865, and within two months reported to Jandel from Sinsinawa, "The two colleges, those of St. Joseph and Sinsinawa Mound are suppressed." Since he was carrying out Jandel's orders, no explanation of the action was needed. "But," he added, "Bishop Henni of Milwaukee made some pressing and even menacing entreaties to oblige us to open the college."[\[23\]](#)



St. Thomas Aquinas College, Sinsinawa, Wisconsin, 1846-1865

Bishop Henni's protest had been sent to the prior at Sinsinawa, the young and inexperienced J. A. Rooney, three months before O'Carroll's coming as provincial. Henni, having heard that the provincial Matthew O'Brien was hoping to reopen the college, stated without menace or pressure,

I am truly glad that your provincial [O'Brien] does not give up the idea of reopening the Mound College as soon as it can be done in a satisfactory manner. For I, as the Ordinary of this Diocese, am absolutely in conscience bound to see that a property purchased and paid for Collegiate purposes be maintained for that purpose forever — the

more since Father Mazzuchelli obtained all such monies, not from the order but from his friends & benefactors in Europe & likewise from the Propagation of the Faith all of which had to be and was expended for said object. . .

I am willing to give my signature to any document, *provided it secures in full the reopening of the College* as soon as it can be creditably effected by the Fathers.
[Emphasis added.] [\[24\]](#)

Whether O'Carroll visited Bishop Henni is not known, but the college idea promoted by the province founders and supported by most of the American Dominicans was relinquished. After sixty years of struggle, their dream would now be left unrealized for sixty more years, while that of a thriving studium would await the growth and vigorous life of the province after the Civil War.

The internal problems of the American province were necessarily superseded by the attention of the friars to the problems of all Americans. In the fall of 1858, the ever-growing questions of slavery and states' rights, fanned by the Lincoln-Douglas debates, took center stage. A few days after the election of Joseph Kelly as provincial in October 1858, the presidential candidate William Seward warned the nation of the "irrepressible conflict between opposing and enduring forces" in the country. He emphasized the necessary choice of becoming "either a slave-holding nation or entirely a free-labor nation."[\[25\]](#)

Although Catholic slaves in Kentucky were usually called "servants," they and their owners knew they were not. Slaves belonged to the friars and sisters in Kentucky, beginning with Edward Fenwick's who arrived from Maryland with servants from the family plantation. As residents in Kentucky, the Dominicans continued to take slavery for granted. Even the friars from Europe were silent about the "peculiar institution." The Kentucky census of 1850 listed among slaveowners "St. Roses" with the following unnamed slaves:

No.	Ages	Sex	Colour
1	40	M	B
2	42	M	B
3	32	M	B
4	30	M	B
5	45	M	B
6	50	F	B
7	14	F	B
8	13	F	B [26]

The friars apparently differed little from other Catholic Kentuckians, concerning whom a recent study by C. Walker Gollar concludes:

Lay Catholics not only accepted slave labor as a part of Southern culture, but also, essentially endorsed the institution of human bondage... More Catholics than non-Catholics owned slaves.[\[27\]](#)

The Council Book of St. Rose priory records the purchase and sale of slaves; also the decision of the friars, following the passage of the Thirteenth Amendment, that all blacks should be given money and provisions and should then leave the property, with one exception. "Terry may remain if she chooses so to do for her support which we willingly give her, no service being required of her."[\[28\]](#)

Catholic families usually encouraged the practice of religion among their slaves by providing some instruction along with participation in family worship. Since the largest parish of the region was that of St. Rose, sacramental ministries were provided for many slaves by the friars.[\[29\]](#) Nonetheless, as Gollar demonstrates,

Once the cross of slavery had been lifted, black people found little use for Catholicism. No record confirms this fact more clearly than does the burial register of Saint Rose. Each year from 1830 to 1865 at least twenty-five percent of the people laid to rest were slaves. But from 1866 to 1875 barely five percent of the burials were of blacks, or "negroes" and not "servants" as they formerly were called. Many other Church records prove this mass exodus from Catholicism.[\[30\]](#)

According to the 1860 census, the slave population at St. Catharine's included more children than at St. Rose. This was true of family units as well. Census records give no such information and the records of St. Catharine's community were destroyed by a fire in 1904.[\[31\]](#)

The issues of slavery and states' rights were painfully present to the American Dominicans whose territory was located both above and below the Ohio River, in regions defined as North and South. Typically, their decisions were made relative to geographical location. The Province of St. Joseph supported the Union, even though the leader at that time, Joseph Kelly, was a southerner. Among the friars, allegiances were not clear-cut, since natives of Kentucky and Maryland served in Ohio, while northerners were at work in Tennessee and Kentucky. Yet, whatever the personal allegiance of members, the friars concentrated their efforts upon ministry to the people. When war approached, friars were called to be chaplains for both armies. In December 1861, Bishop Martin Spalding of Louisville requested the prior at St. Rose to send chaplains to the Union Army encamped at Lebanon, Kentucky.[\[32\]](#) As a Confederate army chaplain, Joseph Jarboe from St. Rose, barely escaped death while he attended the mortally wounded in the battle of Shiloh, Tennessee.[\[33\]](#)

Dominican Sisters at St. Catharine's, Kentucky, converted their convent into an army hospital during the nearby Battle of Perryville in October 1862. They nursed the men of both armies.[\[34\]](#) In Memphis the sisters at St. Agnes Academy were asked by Bishop Whelan to take over the City Hospital for the soldiers.[\[35\]](#) Both sisters and friars in Kentucky and Tennessee saw soldiers pass through their grounds in thousands, or encamp close by.[\[36\]](#) At St. Cecilia's in Nashville, the sisters instilled courage in their resident pupils during the occupation by the Northern army. Their situation was vividly described by Sister Frances Walsh, who with three others from St. Mary's, Somerset, had founded the Nashville Dominican community in 1860 on the eve of the War. She wrote,

Without resistance Nashville yielded to the inevitable, and the Federal fleet sailed up the Cumberland. From the windows each vessel could be plainly seen down to the water's edge. . . Many of those dear girls were cut off from all communication with those they loved better than life itself. . . hostile regiments unfolded their tents in the immediate vicinity. . . . Camps and tents, officers and soldiers were familiar sights.

One day two girls were halted by an armed sentinel. They returned to the Academy grounds "in double quick ... vowing never to leave them if by so doing they must take the detested Iron Clad Oath which meant allegiance to the Union." But officers assured the residents of their liberty of movement. Then courtesies were exchanged on both sides, and "the host that at first seemed so formidable became a protection rather than a menace."[\[37\]](#) Although not located on the lines of battle, both the sisters and the friars endured the privations resulting from the war, including the loss of horses and cattle to the moving troops. Nevertheless, their usual ministries continued, along with the unusual ones related to the war.

The perspective of the American Dominicans necessarily reached beyond their own concerns to the whole Church. In serving the parish, the diocese and the universal Church, friars and sisters experienced the far-reaching changes of the Church in the nineteenth century. They knew at first hand the retrogressive movements possible in both society and Church, as when the expansion of ideas aroused by the Enlightenment was confronted by the narrowing of theological perspective in the "Syllabus of Errors" of Pope Pius IX. In the United States the phenomenal growth of the Church required a rapid multiplication of dioceses. By 1852, fewer than fifty years after the single See of Baltimore had first been divided, there were thirty-two American dioceses. Dominican men and women were serving in seven of them.[\[38\]](#)

Beyond its ordinary ministry, one service that the American province gave the Church, albeit reluctantly, was to provide bishops for the new dioceses. Beginning with Edward Fenwick, able missionaries were called to bishoprics in every decade. They accepted with personal and provincial reluctance, and not without cost to the life and work of the Order.[\[39\]](#) Before the Civil War, the following Dominican men were appointed bishops:

1821 Edward Fenwick, Diocese of Cincinnati, Ohio

1837 Richard Miles, Diocese of Nashville, Tennessee

1849 C.P. Montgomery, Diocese of Monterey, California, refused.

1850 Joseph Alemany, Diocese of Monterey, California — later San Francisco

1859 James Whelan, Diocese of Nashville, Tennessee; resigned in 1863

1859 Thomas Langdon Grace, Diocese of St. Paul, Minnesota

The Church benefited from the leadership of Dominican friars as provincials, theologians or bishops. Like four of the Dominicans cited above, almost all the American bishops consecrated at this time were the first prelates in their respective dioceses. They recognized the value of meeting together for mutual assistance and decision-making, as had the prelates at the first meeting of bishops in 1810 and the seven Provincial Councils of Baltimore between 1829 and 1849. With one exception, Dominicans were present at all the meetings from 1810 through the first Plenary Council of 1852. Among those in attendance were the following:

- 1810 First meeting of bishops. Francis Antoninus Fleming, theologian and vicar general of Bishop John Carroll.
- 1828 First Provincial Council of Baltimore. Edward Fenwick, one of eight bishops of American sees.
- 1833 Second Provincial Council. Nicholas Dominic Young, provincial and consulting theologian.
- 1837 [Council convened April 10, six days before election of Miles as provincial; neither Young nor Miles could be present]
- 1840 Fourth Provincial Council. Richard Miles, Bishop of Nashville; Charles P. Montgomery, Dominican provincial.
- 1841 Fifth Provincial Council. Richard Miles, Bishop of Nashville; Samuel Mazzuchelli, theologian to Bishop Loras.
- 1840 Sixth Provincial Council. Richard Miles bishop, George Wilson, provincial
- 1849 Seventh Provincial Council. Joseph Alemany, provincial; Richard Miles bishop

In 1852 thirty-two bishops gathered in Baltimore for the first Plenary Council convened by Archbishop Francis Patrick Kenrick. Bishops Alemany and Miles participated in the major Council decisions and served on committees concerned with canon law, education, and Church property. Matthew O'Brien represented the Order of Preachers as provincial. So impressive were the united decisions of the prelates that papal approval of them was sent promptly. With the approval, however, came a warning about the danger of Americans developing a **national** Church, and also about granting too many dispensations or exceptions to Church law.[\[40\]](#)

For the most part, American bishops found mutual support among themselves, but international tensions supporting "ultramontanists" who were in favor of a strong papacy, occasionally affected American clergy. Most Americans, however, supported a collegial decision-making process for the American church.[\[41\]](#) Their views were strengthened as they observed the hostility most Protestants showed to Archbishop Gaetano Bedini who visited the United States as a papal emissary in 1852. In 1866 the bishops prepared for the opening of the First Vatican Council of 1869 during which the question of papal infallibility was raised. Some American bishops judged it to be an untimely subject, but all would finally give public support to papal authority as defined by the Church.[\[42\]](#) However, such issues were not of immediate concern to American Catholics. Their interests related to the need for parishes and the growing influence of pastors as well as bishops.

The orderly progress of the Dominican Province of St. Joseph at mid-century seemed to end with the provincial chapter that met in October of 1862. Unable to agree on an election, the friars once again requested the master general to appoint a provincial. Had they known the outcome of that request, the chapter might have been spurred to more decisive action. Jandel chose as provincial the nephew of Nicholas Dominic Young, Nicholas Raymond, or "Young Nick" to his brethren. He was blessed with every advantage, including his birth into a family of Maryland gentry. He had been sent with Thomas Langdon Grace to study in Rome for seven unhurried

years, despite the pressing needs of St. Joseph Province. It was there that he became known to Vincent Jandel. Subsequently in detailed letters to the master general, Young cited his efforts to introduce strict observance in every house of the province. But within the first year of his tenure, he had caused scandal and had to resign. Chaos resulted.[\[43\]](#)

The former provincial, Matthew O'Brien, assumed authority in place of the rightful vicar, Michael Lilly. O'Brien acted so quickly that many confusing assignments complicated Dominican affairs. Discredited, O'Brien was required to cede his leadership to Lilly who completed Raymond Young's original term in 1865. Next, the provincial chapter unanimously elected the Irish prior of San Clemente in Rome, Joseph Mullooly, who promptly declined the post. Jandel then appointed still another Irish friar, William O'Carroll, who arrived at Somerset in the spring of 1865 to close an era of fifteen years of lights and shadows.[\[44\]](#)

The shadows made the future of the Province of St. Joseph look dismal indeed. Believing that one problem was the great distance between houses of the Province of St. Joseph, several friars asked Jandel to authorize forming at least one new province within its vast territory. In response to one petition, Jandel stated all too candidly his reason for refusing. He wrote to Bishop Grace,

I confess to you that in my eyes, the principal motive which determines is the sad state of the province of St. Joseph; all the news that I receive of it combines to paint it under very somber colors; practical ignorance of our legislation, general lack of observance and of discipline, almost total absence of religious formation, etc. These are what stand out among all the reports and the facts of this poor province.[\[45\]](#)

Actually, there was already in existence another American province in California. It had been initiated in 1850. The development of that province between 1850 and 1865 is described in Chapter 12.

Despite weaknesses, St. Joseph Province had experienced growth in some areas. On the bright side were the steady increase of personnel, the opening of colleges and new missions and the faithful service given to parishes new and old. Almost all the province members and their meager resources went into this service. But they had spread themselves thin trying to meet the needs of burgeoning parishes and remote missions. Some were on the outskirts of settlements, in conditions that varied little from those of Fenwick's excursions in the forests of Ohio and Michigan. Others were ready to enter ministries in the large cities as soon as new foundations would be permitted by the Master of the Order.

Early in 1865 the roster of men in St. Joseph Province totaled forty-nine priests, at work in the following locations:

Chattanooga, Tennessee
Lexington, Kentucky
London, Ontario
Louisville, Kentucky

Memphis, Tennessee
Nashville, Tennessee
St. Catharine, Kentucky
St. Rose, Kentucky

Sinsinawa, Wisconsin
Somerset, Ohio
Washington, D.C.
Zanesville, Ohio

Between 1850 and 1865 twenty-nine lay brothers were professed in the Province. Most of them worked at Somerset, St. Rose, or Sinsinawa as farmers, tailors, carpenters and cooks. As brothers in community, they supported the other friars in their ministries.

The development of the missions of St. Joseph Province outside the heartland of Kentucky and Ohio is described in other chapters.

NOTES

1. See Malcolm J. Rohrbough, **The Trans-Appalachian Frontier: People, Societies and Institutions, 1775-1850** (New York: Oxford U. Press, 1978) 347-349.
2. John Albert Bokel, O.P., "A Record Book of the German Roman Catholic Parish in Memphis Tenn. A.D. 1852," ms. Apr. 3, St. Joseph Province Archives (SJP).
3. Bokel, "Notes," June 2, 1853, SJP
4. See J. B. Walker, "Studies of St. Joseph Province" Appendix IV, "Priests in the Province of St. Joseph," 1806-1865, ms. SJP; and Reginald Coffey, **Pictorial History of the Dominican Province of St. Joseph, USA** (New York, 1946) passim..
5. White to O'Brien, Rome, Oct. 9, 1852, SJP.
6. The land on which the impressive Gothic church of St. Dominic was built had been part of Notley Young's 400 acres that later became Southwest Washington. See William W. Warner, **At Peace with All Their Neighbors** (Washington, D.C., Georgetown U. Press, 1994) 63.
7. Nicholas Dominic Young to Vincent Jandel, Washington, May 20, 1853. Archives General, Order of Preachers, Rome, AGOP, XIII, 03150, 284.
8. Jandel to O'Brien in margin of White to Jandel, Rome, July 25, 1853, AGOP XIII, 03150, 161.
9. As provincial Alemany had encouraged the Wisconsin province of St. Albert to merge with that of St. Joseph, and in 1850 sent men to Sinsinawa to staff the College of St. Thomas Aquinas there. See Ch.7.
10. Whelan's education began in Dublin. His family emigrated to New York and he completed his early schooling in Troy, New York.
11. See Glossary.
12. Nicholas D. Young, ever the pessimistic judge, wrote to the master general that Kelly had no understanding of strict observance and that he allowed discipline to slide as he ran around the countryside. Young to Jandel, Kentucky, Apr. 21, 1862, SJP
13. The community at St. Rose persuaded the provincial to send their Irish students, Peter Hyacinth Doherty and Michael James Joyce, to study in Rome. Doherty died before ordination and Joyce soon after. The third student, Leo Adams, returned briefly to Kentucky after ordination and then left the Order. Bernard Brady, the fourth Roman student, returned to Kentucky, but gave joyless service in the Order. Kelly wrote candidly to Jandel about his negative view of American friars studying in Rome. See Kelly to Jandel, Somerset, Sept. 21, 1859, AGOP XIII, 03152, 390.
14. Kelly to Jandel, Somerset, Jan. 12, 1862; and Jandel to Kelly, Rome, Mar. 18, 1862. Both in SJP
15. R.P. Mortier, **Histoire des Maîtres Généraux de l'Ordre des Frères Prêcheurs**, vol. 7 (Paris, Picard, 1914) 489.
16. Following the French Revolution and succeeding political upheavals, no Dominicans remained in France, where St. Dominic had founded the Order in 1215. Lacordaire brought the Order back to its birthplace in 1843. Joseph Alemany and Thomas Langdon Grace were also students there. Both found in their later mission experience a need to balance monastic observance with apostolic action.
17. White to O'Brien, Oct. 9, 1852.
18. In 1838, on Pentecost, the first general chapter since the French Revolution took place in Rome. In 1841 a chapter of fourteen delegates, all Italians, convened in Rome. The third general chapter before 1850 met in Rome in 1844. See Mortier, vol. 7, 467-480.
19. Jandel to Mazzuchelli, Fortune, Power, Mar. 22, 1864, AGOP XIII, 03152,486 bears no name of writer or addressee; it was attached to the letter of Oct. 26,1863: Power, Mazzuchelli and Fortune to Jandel from Sinsinawa. Letters in Sinsinawa Archives (SDA).

20. See Katherine Boyd and Jordan Lenaghan, O.P., "A Theological Light on the American Frontier: Theological Texts from the Dominican Studium Library, 1805-1865." An Exhibit, 1996. Dominican House of Studies, Washington, D.C. 20017.
21. Reprinted from **The Catholic Historical Review**, 23 (1937):312350.
22. See Jordan Lenaghan, OP, **St. Joseph College, Somerset, Ohio, 1850-1861** (New York: Dominican Province of St. Joseph, 1997).
23. William D. O'Carroll to Vincent Jandel, June 6, 1865, AGOP XIII, 03152, 513 and SJP
24. Martin Henni to John Rooney, O.P, Milwaukee, Feb. 13, 1865, SJP and SDA XIV, 30.
25. Cited in **Almanac of American History**, Oct. 25, 1858, 274.
26. Kentucky Census of Nov. 14, 1850.
27. C. Walker Gollar, "Catholic Slaves and Slaveowners in Kentucky," **The Catholic Historical Review** 84 (1998): 42-44.
28. St. Rose Council Book ms. Dec. 27, 1865, 109, SJP.
29. The Dominican historian James Bernard Walker cites this tradition in a letter to William Hinnebusch, O.P., Sep. 25, 1975, SJP
30. Gollar 61.
31. See Paschala Noonan, O.P., for the history of the Kentucky Dominican Sisters, **Signadou** (Manhasset, N.Y.: Brookville Books, 1997).
32. Notes of John Albert Bokel, O.P, Dec. 2, 1861, SJP.
33. Martin J. Spalding to Archbishop John Baptist Purcell, Louisville, Apr. 16, 1862, Cincinnati Archdiocesan Archives (CM).
34. Ellen Ryan Jolly, **Nuns of the Battlefield** (Providence, R.I.: Providence Visitor Press, 1927) 88-91.
35. Frances Walsh, OP, "The Annals of St. Cecilia Convent, 1860-1888," Nashville, TN, ms 29, Nashville Dominican Sisters Archives (NDS).
36. John Albert Bokel, O.P, in "Notes" wrote on Jan. 12, 1862, "Several thousand U.S. soldiers past [sic] through Springfield [close to St. Rose] for Columbus, KY The march of soldiers continued several days." SJP.
37. Walsh, "The Annals," Nashville, Tennessee, 28-29, NDS.
38. Communities of friars and sisters were on mission in the Dioceses of Louisville, Cincinnati, Nashville and Milwaukee. Serving in the Diocese of Boston were John McDonnell and James Henry Taaffe of the Irish province; and in New York, assisting Archbishop John Hughes, was Thomas Martin on leave from St. Joseph Province. SJP.
39. When Bishop Miles took part in the 1852 Baltimore Council, the bishops and Propaganda Fide were asked to honor the request of the Jesuit major superior that no member of the Society be named bishop. No such restraint was honored in this case.
40. Peter Guilday, **A History of the Councils of Baltimore** vol. 4 (New York: Macmillan, 1932) 181. See Propaganda Fide to F. P. Kenrick, Rome, Sep. 28, 1852. Letters and Decrees, Kenneally, United States Documents in the Propaganda Fide Archives vol.4 (Washington, DC: Academy of American Franciscan History, 1966) 1513 and 1514.
41. One sign of the times was the establishment in Rome in 1859, of the North American College from which some alumni, including William O'Connell, Boston's later Cardinal, brought home "Romanist" views.
42. See Gerald Fogarty, S.J., **The Vatican and the American Hierarchy** (Collegeville, Minnesota: Michael Glazier, Liturgical Press, 1990) reprint.
43. Details of the resignation and the related scandal, which included an affair with a Janesville woman, are found in the letter of N.D.Young to Jandel, Zanesville, Ohio, May 23, 1863, SJP.
44. Province records, SJP. O'Carroll's term ended in Oct. 1869 on the eve of the solemn opening of Vatican Council I.
45. Jandel to Bishop Thomas L. Grace, Rome, Mar. 20, 1864, AGOP IV, 85-86 and SJP.