



Barquilla del Santa Maria

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MONSIGNOR JOSEPH JESSING
AND HIS PONTIFICAL COLLEGE JOSEPHINUM

by Monsignor John P. Kleinz

The Pontifical College Josephinum is a Catholic seminary located twelve miles north of downtown Columbus, Ohio at 7625 North High Street. It operates at two levels: a four-year College of Liberal Arts and a four-year School of Theology. Its primary purpose is to assist in the formation of men for the service of Christ and His Church in the Roman Catholic priesthood in the dioceses of the United States.

The purpose is put more specifically in a paragraph from the current catalogue of the School of Theology:

The seminary is a graduate school of theology, but it is established to be much more than that. It is to be a community in which those called to serve Christ in his ministry can grow in personal and spiritual maturity, acquire skills needed for pastoral works, and receive the intellectual formation necessary to become appropriate witnesses and ministers of Christ in the Church and in the contemporary world.

The thousands of motorists who pass the college campus each day might see it as a piece of Old World architecture with its tower tapering 200 feet to its summit from the flat land of the Midwest. Many of them must ask, "What is it?" If they would drive down the main entrance road to look at the two cornerstones which flank the entrance to the main building, they would find an initial answer to their questions. One of them inscribes the purpose of the institution in carved stone:

Pontifical College Josephinum
Founded by Rt. Rev. Msgr. Joseph Jessing
Dedicated to the Service of God and Country
A Monument to the Catholic Faith and The
Generosity of Our Benefactors and Friends

A second inscription tells visitors a bit of the history of the seminary:

Established in Columbus in 1888
Re-built and Enlarged in 1929
Cornerstone laid on October 20, 1929, in
the Year of Jubilee and Peace of Pope Pius XI

If the visitor would look diagonally across from the main entrance, he or she would see a rather heroic-sized bronze statue covered with the patina of almost fifty years. Beneath it is the grave of the priest who founded the seminary in 1888, almost a hundred years ago. The inscription on the base of the statue is this:

Monsignor
Joseph Jessing
Founder of the
Pontifical College
Josephinum
1836 - 1899
Si Deus Pro Nobis
Quis Contra Nos? (Romans 8:31)

The Latin quotation at the end of the inscription was the motto of Monsignor Jessing and remains the motto of his seminary today. It means: "If God is for us, who can be against us?"

The text engraved in the stone beneath the statue comes toward the end of the eighth chapter of Paul's letter to the Romans. That chapter is possibly the most moving and sustained piece of literature in all Christianity. Just

after the verse Monsignor Jessing took as the basic principle which would nourish the driving force behind his highly beneficial influence on American Catholic life, there is the sublime tribute to the power of Jesus in our lives by which we share life in the Spirit:

Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Trial or distress, or persecution, or nakedness, or danger, or the sword? ... Yet in all this we are more than conquerors because of Him Who loved us.

In the summer of 1891, Joseph Jessing needed all the faith and trust he had put into his motto. In 1877 he had brought, at the request of the Bishop of Columbus, the orphanage he had founded in 1875 in Pomeroy, Ohio, to 821 East Main Street in Columbus. In 1888, with that trust in God and St. Joseph which marked his work for the Church, he established a seminary at the orphanage for twenty-three "poor boys" with no other chance for priestly training; he had recruited them through the German weekly paper he edited. Its purpose, he said, would be the education of priests to minister to the special language needs of the thousands of German immigrants who had poured into the United States over the past decades. Now, in 1891, three years later, he experienced an enormous share of that "trial and distress" about which Paul had written because his seminary as yet had no official status or ecclesiastical sanction in the Church.

Joseph Jessing wanted his college to be a "mission-seminary" for the whole of the United States and not, therefore, under the control of any one diocese. He tried several approaches - to a religious order and a "German-American Priests' Association," but they made demands he deemed unacceptable. Then, in what to the priest on East Main Street must have seemed the Providence of God, Monsignor Paul Maria Baumgarten, a German theology student in Rome who had friends in high places there, came to visit Jessing on a vacation trip to this country. He listened sympathetically to Jessing's detailed account of the history and purpose of his institution - to the dream and vision of this German immigrant founder of the Josephinum.

Monsignor Baumgarten saw no reason why Father Jessing should not offer his seminary directly to the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith at the Vatican. Jessing composed a masterfully worded letter explaining his dilemma and his purposes to the Cardinal Prefect of the Congregation, who was a friend of Baumgarten. It took fifteen months of often frustrating communication between Rome and Columbus, but the joyous end came on December 12, 1892, when Pope Leo XIII accepted the Josephinum with all its departments, conferring on it the title of "Pontifical College." The property on East Main was transferred to the Holy See, and shortly thereafter Father Jessing was named a Monsignor. What one reporter in Columbus called the "engagingly helter skelter" complex of buildings on East Main Street became the Pope's American seminary.

In 1985 the Pontifical College Josephinum in Columbus remains the only pontifical seminary in the world outside Italy. It is not under the control of any particular diocese or religious order. (The Bishop of Columbus, of course, has a special role as ex officio Vice-Chancellor and member of the Board of Trustees.) The Apostolic Pro-Nuncio to the United States, who at present is Archbishop Pio Laghi, by reason of his office is the Chancellor of the Josephinum. The Board of Trustees, composed of clergy and laity,

determines general administrative, educational, and financial policies. The immediate direction of the seminary administration is under a Rector/President in residence at the Josephinum.

On May 26, 1982 Cardinal William Baum, the Prefect of the Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, signed a document stating the approval of that Congregation for a new constitution for the Josephinum. Its first paragraph summarizes its status:

The name of this institution is The Pontifical College Josephinum. By virtue of a decree of the Holy See issued on December 12, 1892, it is an institution immediately subject to the Holy See, enjoying the title, rights and privileges of a Pontifical College, and guided by the Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education. Evidencing its distinctive pontifical nature, the Pontifical College Josephinum maintains a commitment to the Holy See and to the universal Church in its service and in the character of its programs.

The history of the Pontifical College Josephinum begins on November 17, 1836, with the birth of Joseph Jessing at Münster in Westphalia, Germany. After a brief but thorough schooling, he was forced under the stress of poverty (his father died when he was four) to go to work to help support the family. Soon he was drafted into the Prussian army. He had always wanted to serve the Catholic Church and continued his studies privately. After his first term of army service, Jessing tried to enlist in the Papal Army, but the defeat of that army stopped enlistments. After three years in the Tyrol working to defend the Papal States by publicity, he wanted to go to the American College in Louvain, Belgium, to study for the priesthood. The wars of the Prussians called him back to his regiment.

Joseph Jessing's mother died in 1866. He was mustered out of the army, with five decorations for bravery. He sailed to America. At Joseph's parish in Hamilton, Ohio, he taught school. The people of the parish financed his theology studies at Mount Saint Mary's of the West Seminary near Cincinnati. There, on July 16, 1870, he was ordained a priest for the Diocese of Columbus by Bishop Sylvester Rosecrans, the first bishop of the diocese, which had been established two years earlier. Less than a month after his ordination he was sent as pastor to Sacred Heart parish in Pomeroy, Ohio, on the Ohio River. The parish numbered 1,500 souls at the time; most of them worked in coal and salt industries.

In March 1873 Father Jessing started a single-page German paper, printed on a hand press in the basement of the church, which he called Der Wächter (The Sentinel) to respond to the Pomeroy Volksfreund (Pomeroy Peoples' Friend), which was attacking the Church and the priesthood. Jessing's paper drove the Volksfreund (he called it the Volksfeind - the Peoples' Enemy) out of business within three months; he wielded a powerful pen. After Der Wächter stopped publication, the pastor of Pomeroy promised his people that he would publish a local paper in German every week. He started this paper, which he called Ohio, two months later. After a year he changed the name to the Ohio Waisenfreund (Ohio Orphans' Friend) and changed its orientation from local to national. This became the leading German-language weekly in the country, with



This view of the Catholic institutions at Pomeroy includes (1) the school, (2) the church, (3) the rectory, and (4) the orphanage.

a circulation of 38,000; this was greater than the combined circulation of the dailies of Columbus at the time. After Jessing's death in 1899, it was published by the Josephinum until well into the twentieth century. The name "Orphans' Friend" was chosen because the paper was intended to gain financial support for a proposed Catholic orphanage in Pomeroy.

In his first year as pastor of Pomeroy Sacred Heart, the parish bought a house next to the church for Father Jessing's first orphanage.(1) Bishop Rosecrans came to dedicate the residence and Franciscan Brothers came to care for the twelve orphans who were admitted within a month after the dedication in May of 1875. The orphanage and the Ohio Waisenfreund grew so rapidly that they took all of Father Jessing's time. The bishop sent Father J. W. Kempen to take over as pastor in 1876. Jessing wrote to his readers: "We have now resigned as pastor, and in September another priest will take charge of the parish at Pomeroy. The present publisher will then be able to devote all his time and energy to the Waisenfreund and the poor orphan boys." Father Jessing stayed on another year with his orphans, but then sought more ample housing and easier access to the railroads in the capital city of Columbus. He loaded his printing press on a packet boat, which took him down the Ohio River to Cincinnati and he then took the train to Columbus. (2)

(To be concluded)

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CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE.

Christlichen Lehre.

PREPARED AND ENJOINED

Gesahlt und auferlossen

BY ORDER OF THE

durch Bezeichnung 166

THIRD PLENARY COUNCIL OF BALTIMORE.

Dritten Plenar-Gerüts von Baltimore.

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ST. JOSEPH'S ORPHANS' HOME,
720 EAST MAIN STREET.

Columbus, Ohio:
St. Joseph's Waisen-Heimat,
720 E. Main Street.

A BALTIMORE CATECHISM PUBLISHED IN COLUMBUS

The above bi-lingual title page is a reduced reproduction from a small catechism which was donated to the Catholic Record Society's collection by Mr. John Lageman of Columbus. The catechism had been used by Mr. Lageman's father, Joseph Lagemann, while a young student at St. Vincent's Orphan Asylum in 1886 and 1887. It was presented to the Society in memory of Mr. Lageman's grandfather, Professor John Henry Lagemann of the faculty of the Pontifical College Josephinum.

As the title page explains, this book was "prepared and enjoined by order of the Third Plenary Council of Baltimore" and thus is one of the earliest editions of the famous "Baltimore Catechism" which was used in the education of many of the adult Catholics living today.

Ohio and the Diocese of Columbus were well represented at the Third Plenary Council of Baltimore, which met from November 9 to December 7, 1884. At this Council, Bishop Watterson of Columbus gave a sermon on "Faith and Reason;" Bishop Gilmour of Cleveland spoke on "The Necessity of Revelation;" Bishop Edward Fitzgerald of Little Rock, formerly pastor of St. Patrick's in

Columbus, spoke on "The Sacrifice of the Mass." (1) More to the present subject, Rt. Rev. Joseph S. Alemany, who as a Dominican priest had served the Catholic communities of Muskingum County, as Archbishop of San Francisco served at the Council as chairman of the commission to report on the expediency of preparing a uniform catechism for this country.

As a result of the report of Archbishop Alemany's commission, the Council established a committee of bishops to draw up the catechism which would be used in elementary religious instruction throughout the United States. The catechism is usually described as chiefly the work of Bishop John Spalding of Peoria. It followed closely the format, arrangement, and wording of a catechism written in the 1860's by Rev. John H. McCaffrey, president of Mt. St. Mary's Seminary in Emmitsburg. (2) The Baltimore Catechism was approved on April 6, 1885 by Rt. Rev. James Gibbons, Archbishop of Baltimore and Apostolic Delegate.

Very soon after its publication, a copy of the new book came into the possession of Rev. Joseph Jessing, founder and head of the St. Joseph's Orphanage on East Main Street in Columbus. According to his biography,

Monsignor Jessing was greatly concerned about the preservation of the German language in this country, and through it the preservation here of German culture, mentality, and thoroughness. His principal and nobler reason, however, was the preservation of the Catholic Faith of the German immigrants; for experience had taught him that too many immigrants upon coming to this country had cast off their Faith with their native language and custom. (3)

Thus it was consonant with his beliefs and goals that Father Jessing should translate and publish the new catechism in German. The only element of surprise is that the book was printed not at the orphanage's print shop but at the Columbus Electrotyping Foundry, headquartered on Pearl Street south of the State House. The translated edition was completed and reviewed and received Bishop Watterson's Imprimatur on August 1, 1885.

The paper-covered book now in the Society's possession measures four by six and one-half inches and contains seventy-two pages of text in each language. It presents 421 questions and answers, the same as the original English-language edition.

Though the method of teaching with the Baltimore Catechism is now criticized, the succinct and lucid questions and answers presented in this little volume make especially apparent today, a century after its publication, the timelessness of the truths of the Catholic Faith which Father Jessing wanted to preserve among his fellow German immigrants.

NOTES

- (1) The Memorial Volume, A History of the Third Plenary Council of Baltimore; Baltimore: The Baltimore Publishing Co., 1885.
- (2) New Catholic Encyclopedia; New York: McGraw-Hill, 1967; II/37, III/230, IX/5, and XII/1026.
- (3) Miller, Leo F. et alia, Monsignor Joseph Jessing (1836-1899), Founder of the Pontifical College Josephinum; Columbus: Carroll Press, 1938; p. 356.

ST. MARY'S PARISH, MINERTON, VINTON COUNTY
BAPTISMAL REGISTER, 1868-1873
(Continued from Volume X, Number 3)

Anna, of John LEYDEN and Mary Foley, b. 17 Mar. 1868, bapt. 15 Apr. 1868; spons. James Moloney and Mary Cusack. M. Ahern

Patrick, of Owen O. MARTIN and Elizabeth Carpenter, b. 24 Mar. 1868, bapt. 15 Apr. 1868; spons. Patrick Meade and Bridget Conahan. M. Ahern

John, of William LUNDY and Catherine Sweeny, b. 15 Apr. 1868, bapt. 26 Apr. 1868; spons. Bernard Quinn and Sarah Shelton. M. Ahern

Sarah THACKER, of John and Anna LEMAY, born about 1770, bapt. 17 Apr. 1868 at the house of Nicholas Thacker. M. Ahern

Cornelius, of Patrick MAHAFFEY and Elizabeth Allen, b. 27 Apr. 1868, bapt. 3 May 1868; spons. John Lawler and Margaret Dunn. M. Ahern

Mary, of William O'ROURKE and Ellen O'Brien, b. 13 May 1868, bapt. 20 May 1868; spons. James O'Rourke and Jane O'Brien. M. Ahern

Clement, of Joseph BLACK and Mary J. Thomas, b. 15 Mar. 1868, bapt. 31 May 1868; spons. James McCormack and [blank] Fagan. M. Ahern

Bridget, of Timothy HOCTER and Mary H. Murphy, b. 30 May 1868, bapt. 7 June 1868; spons. William Ring and Emily Murphy. M. Ahern

John, of James McCARTNEY and Elizabeth Morgan, b. 28 May 1868, bapt. 14 June 1868; spons. Charles McCartney and Mary Lawler. M. Ahern

Anna, of Patrick KELLY and Anna Moran, b. 11 June 1868, bapt. 14 June 1868; spons. Daniel Doherty and Rosanna Doherty. M. Ahern

David, of John GALLAGHER and Elizabeth Cibble, b. 3 Apr. 1868, bapt. 21 June 1868; spons. Philip Keck and Mary Ryan. M. Ahern

Agnes Ann, of Andrew SIMMONS and Henrietta Gallagher, b. 19 June 1868, bapt. 28 June 1868; spons. John Rafferty and Mary Murray. M. Ahern

Agnes, of James DOHERTY and Martha Moran, b. 26 June 1868, bapt. 28 June 1868; spons. George Moran and Mary McClory. M. Ahern

(To be continued)

197 E. Gay Street Columbus, Ohio 43215 Donald M. Schlegel, Editor

