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THE HOLY CROSS FOREIGN MISSION CONVENT:

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AN EARLY EXPERIENCE IN COLLABORATION

by

Sister Charlotte Marie Bayhouse, CSC

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AN EARLY EXPERIENCE IN COLLABORATION

When it was decided in 1921 that as Sisters of the Holy Cross they could no longer resist the pleas for Sisters to serve as missionaries beside the Holy Cross men in Bengal voiced by Joseph Legrand, csc, Bishop of Dacca, and Father Michael Mathis, csc, head of the Mission effort at the Holy Cross Foreign Mission headquarters in Washington, D.C., the General Council was authorizing the third venture of the Sisters into the apostolate in faraway Bengal (now Bangladesh).¹

The first foray had lasted barely twenty-three years - from 1853 to 1876. Father Moreau had yielded to the request of Pope Pius IX for Holy Cross "evangelical workers" in East Bengal. To heighten the attractiveness of the idea of saving many souls in the Orient was added the implication, in a letter from Cardinal Franzoni, Prefect of Propaganda, to his "dear friend Basil Moreau" that swift compliance with the papal wishes would hasten the approbation of the Constitution of the Congregation of Holy Cross, then under consideration in Rome.² How could a zealous missionary resist?

After a frightful journey of seven months, three Sisters arrived in Dacca in June, 1853, where they were joined four months later by four more. They took charge of the school and orphanage and hoped for more companions. In 1855 one came, only to be drowned in a accident on the monsoon-swollen Meghna River almost within sight of her destination.³

Four more had arrived by 1866, but all had been recalled to the West by Father Moreau by 1871. By 1876 all the Holy Cross Priests and Brothers had also been recalled, and the Vicariate Apostolic of East Bengal had been transferred to the care of the Belgian Benedictines.

The second group of Holy Cross Sisters - ten strong this time - left Saint Mary's on September 5, 1889, and arrived in Calcutta in November.⁴ Mother Augusta (Anderson), first Superior General of the newly approved Congregation of the Sisters of the Holy Cross, insisted that she had no Sisters to send when Father Edward Sorin, Superior of the Holy Cross men in the United States requested them; so he sent ten from the Convent at Notre Dame, where all were in the domestic service of the University.⁵

Without any training as educators, the Sisters were doomed to failure from the first. Their problems were compounded when Father Michael Fallize, csc, Administrator of the Diocese of Dacca, kept five of them in Dacca and sent the other five to Akyab, Burma (then a part of East Bengal). By 1892, Augustine Louage, csc, then Bishop of Dacca, had received so many complaints about the Sisters' work in the schools that he wrote to the Bishop of Fort Wayne, Indiana, (the Motherhouse of the Sisters of the Holy Cross was in his Diocese), requesting that the Sisters be replaced at once by other Sisters capable of operating the mission schools. Mother Augusta's reaction was to ask Bishop Louage to send them all home. As she wrote to the Bishop in a letter dated December 19, 1893:

I am sorry to have no Sisters to send. Your Lordship knows that such a mission should have the best and I can scarcely keep our home missions supplied. I was sorry to see those poor Sisters sent to India; I knew it was a mistake but I could do nothing at the time.⁶

Bishop Louage was devastated at the thought of losing all the Holy Cross Sisters from his Diocese, especially as he was practically blind and growing more feeble day by day from his strenuous years as a missionary. He pleaded for time to find substitutes before sending the Sisters home. They remained in India until December 1896, when they were replaced by the Sister Catechists of Mary Immaculate in Dacca and by the German Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary in Akyab.

Some twenty-three years later, Father Michael Mathis, csc, editor of the newly-founded Bengalese⁷ magazine and stationed at Holy Cross College, Brookland, DC, began to importune Mother Aquina (Kirwan), then Superior General, to send Holy Cross Sisters to help the Holy Cross Fathers in East Bengal. As Father Mathis wrote in retrospect to his Superior General, James W. Donahue,⁸ on April 29, 1927:

Naturally, we thought of the Sisters of the Holy Cross as co-workers with us..., not only for the reason that they were once in India, but also because they were founded and have grown in the Holy Cross spirit. It took several years to convince Mother General, then Mother Aquina, that they should embark on this new enterprise... Accordingly, on my visit to the Mission in 1922-1923, I asked Bishop Legrand csc, for a final answer to the question as to whether he, as Bishop of Dacca, would ask the Sisters of the Holy Cross to come to Bengal as missionaries.

Also looming large in Father Mathis' plans to secure the Sisters for the Holy Cross Mission was the plan to open a Convent for them in the Foreign Mission Seminary, since he saw clearly as a result of his visits to Maryknoll and his talks with the founder, Father Michael Walsh, that the Sisters would provide a money-saving workforce for the Bengalese. He judged (correctly, as events would show), that the Sisters could be recruited more easily and in greater numbers for such work than could Holy Cross Brothers or Priests. Three

years after the opening of the Convent, he pointed out to his Superior General:

Regarding the financial aspect of the question, both in the matter of wages and in that of the support given the Sisters ...by the Bengalese..., I dare say there is no more economical and efficient way of conducting our offices, on the one hand, and on the other hand, of securing through the friends of the sisterhood whatever they shall need for the field. In the matter of wages, a comparison between what is paid to the Sisters and what is paid to our hired help, will show the economy of this arrangement. Our lowest paid wage earner is the assistant cook, who receives, besides board and room, \$40.00 a month, whereas the Sisters receive, besides board and lodging, only \$12.50 a month. Our highest paid wage earner is Mr. Riordan, who receives \$200.00 a month. To secure the services of lay people who can do the work the Sisters are doing, namely, that of supervision, would require very high wages, and then we could never be as sure of the supervision as we can with religious on the job.

Regarding the support of the Sisters on the field, in so far as they are not able to earn their own livelihood through their work, this can very easily be procured through the friends of this sisterhood, which is one of the largest in the United States. We are even now securing a good deal of support from the friends of the Holy Cross Sisters. Thus far, they have given \$39,000.00 for the Sisters' convent.

I do not hesitate to say that in the organization of our foreign mission work in this country I have made the Sisters of the Holy Cross the keystone of the arch of our strength. I have not done this on my individual authority. The original invitation to the Sisters of the Holy Cross came from the Bishop of Dacca. The contract covering the relations between the two congregations was signed by the Acting Provincial of the United States Province, and both Rome and the Bishop of Fort Wayne have approved, in so far as there was need of further ecclesiastical approbation.

As a matter of fact, Mother Aquina had been moved by Father Mathis' appeal to bring up the question of a foreign mission at the meeting of the General Council on August 3, 1921, when it was decided "to accept candidates for foreign missions to be trained in our novitiate and later to send them to a foreign mission field, preferably the Philippines and/or Bengal."⁹

Aware of the Sisters' interest in foreign mission work, Father Mathis wrote on September 4, 1921, to his Provincial, Father Charles L. O'Donnell, CSC that among the many concerns facing the Bengalese and the Holy Cross Foreign Mission Society,

the first is that of sending the Sisters of the Holy Cross to the Mission. They are waiting for Bishop Legrand's consent. If he refuses (and his attitude has been discouraging), they have very attractive offers from missions in China and the Philippines to accept in place of our Mission. To lose them means more than the loss of the Sisters' services in Bengal. It means also the withdrawal of a large part of their present interest in Bengal, and to date they have been more active than all other groups of Sisters combined... Another and equally important question... just what kind of work the Sisters are to engage in and what special preparation for the work they will need. In Father Crowley's judgment, the Holy Cross Sisters, if they go to Bengal, must, at least in the beginning, take up catechetical and medical relief rather than teaching... We ought to be in a position as soon as possible to give the Sisters and prospective candidates definite information as to the Mission's needs.¹⁰

At Saint Mary's, interest in choosing Bengal for the site of the proposed missionary efforts was strengthened further when Father Crowley painted in glowing colors the work awaiting the "plain Sister of the Holy Cross" (as opposed to highly trained doctors and nurses). Just as in America, she would be teacher, inspirer, and guide to Bengal's womenfolk. She would be the supervisor of the village school and someone would be the foundress and teacher of a native religious order, since there were already many young women who wanted to be nuns, even though they might have seen a nun only two or three times in their lives. And he concluded on a lyrical note:

So, dear Reverend Mother, we look forward to the coming of the Sisters of the Holy Cross with the conviction that they are destined to do big things for Bengal. No one of us but understands the extent of the sacrifice you are making. But it must be plain to you that it is a sacrifice you can never really have reason to regret. Your least trouble will be to get volunteers. And when, in due time, a knowledge of how God blesses (as assuredly He will bless) their undertaking has become known in America, recruits will join the ranks. Such at least is the earnest prayer of the missionaries, who have learned from sweet experience that God blesses in a singular way prompt generous sacrifices made in His Name.¹¹

Then, in 1923, Bishop Joseph Legrand, csc, the old French missionary, wrote from Dacca of his eagerness to have the Sisters. He wrote, in part:

...I send you an official restatement of my earnest desire to have the good Sisters of the Holy Cross back in Bengal. As the first work of major importance which I desire the Holy Cross Sisters to take up here is a novitiate for native Sisters, I would be so grateful if you could send two or three Sisters, one of whom ought to be qualified for a Mistress of Novices, to begin as soon as possible. As Father Mathis will be returning to America early in summer I shall ask him to tell you more in detail the nature of the opportunity which our Mission holds out to the Sisters of the Holy Cross in educational, medical, catechetical work and in the great task of creating a native Sisterhood.¹²

On the basis of that invitation from the Bishop of Dacca, Mother Aquina and Father Charles L. O'Donnell, csc, Provincial, worked out an agreement to govern the Sisters' mission work in Bengal. The minutes of the General Council meeting of February 2, 1924,¹³ report that a contract had been signed by Mother Aquina and Father O'Donnell, after approval by the Council, governing relations between the Sisters and the Bengal Mission Society, Inc. Much of this agreement covered the personnel and support of the Foreign Mission Convent, but it covered also recruitment and formation of Sisters destined for the Mission in Bengal, as well as a financial agreement covering Sisters in the mission field. Next day, Mother Aquina wrote Father Mathis an enthusiastic letter, declaring: "The Sisters of the Holy Cross in re-entering the Bengal field of Foreign Missions, desire most earnestly to be associated with the Fathers of Holy Cross, in preference to all others. This union will give us guidance and courage to do our share of the good work zealously."¹⁴

Mother also set about renewing the papal permission for the Holy Cross Sisters to act as foreign missionaries, since their Constitution had been revised since the first permission given in the nineteenth century. Mother's

letter to the Congregation of the Propaganda received a favorable reply dated August 22, 1925,¹⁵ from Giulio Chiavon, the official charged with the matter. At the same time, she received Bishop John Francis Noll's approval. As Ordinary of the Fort Wayne Diocese he had a voice in such matters involving Saint Mary's. It was late in 1925, then, before all papal and congregational permissions had been obtained, and Bishop Legrand made arrangements for four Sisters to go to India in September, 1927.

In the meantime, the plans for a Convent for the Sisters destined for the Bengal Mission were built into the Holy Cross Foreign Mission Seminary being constructed adjacent to the Holy Cross Theological College on Harewood Road, near the Catholic University of America in Brookland, DC. This had been strongly urged in time and out by Father Mathis, beginning in 1922 when he had visited Maryknoll Headquarters in New York. He had written to Father O'Donnell that "ultimately our office force must be our Foreign Mission Sisters of the Holy Cross.... That means...that there ought to be a chance to build a house for our Sisters near our Foreign Mission Seminary."¹⁶

What actually happened was that a wing of the new Holy Cross Foreign Mission Seminary was assigned as a "temporary" convent to the Sisters. Since the first floor and basement were devoted to the offices of the Bengalese, the Sisters were left with the top floor for Chapel, dining room, community room, superior's room, and dormitory - cramped quarters indeed! The dormitory contained six beds with small chests, separated by curtains, with the beds put on the diagonal so they could all fit. The community room boasted a small radio, a boon to the young Sisters who listened to the Opera on Saturdays as they mended their clothes and the seminary vestments.

While this appeared to be adequate the first year, when the number of Sisters was only four, it proved untenable for seven or eight, especially when most of the Sisters were young and vigorous and in need of physical space for exercise.

Resources in that line were limited to the flat cement roof of the Convent, which did provide a magnificent view of the city, and the Soldiers' Home grounds across the road, which offered chances for long walks. Occasionally, there were excursions to the Rock Creek Cemetery, in the woods at the foot of the Seminary hill.¹⁷

But to return to 1924. By the end of August, Sisters Patricia (Ryan) and Henrica (Porsoska) arrived in Washington and went to Saint Joseph's Orphanage (operated by Holy Cross Sisters), to prepare for the changes at the Seminary necessitated by the coming of the Sisters. As Father Mathis wrote to Mother Aquina, all these changes coming at the same time might result in major confusion at the Office of the Bengalese, which the Sisters were slated to manage, without prior awareness on the part of the Sister Superior.¹⁸ "All these changes" meant the substitution of young women for the young men then on the office force and other adjustments needed to preserve the cloister which Rome demanded of Sisters.

The entry in the Convent Archives for the Feast of the Seven Dolors, 1924, presents an interesting picture of the coming of the Sisters. In the early evening, Sisters Patricia, Henrica, and Olga (Hughes) - Sister Emeliana (Neeson) would join them later - went to the Foreign Mission Seminary to take up their

residence there. The workmen had been dismissed at 4 p.m. as the Priests and Seminarists wanted to put some additional touches to the Sisters' rooms. When the Sisters arrived they found the men busily engaged with brooms and scrub-brushes, and they received a hearty welcome. Later in the evening, the Blessed Sacrament was brought to the Chapel and Benediction was sung by the Seminarists.¹⁹

Thus simply and quietly began the thirteen-year career of the Foreign Mission Convent. The Sisters had a chance to celebrate, though, eight days later, when the Foreign Mission Seminary was dedicated in the presence of Mother Aquina, Sisters Antonine Farmer, Remigius Murphy, Angelita Zahm, and a dozen unnamed other Holy Cross Sisters. Michael J. Curley, Archbishop of Baltimore, blessed the whole house, including the Sisters' Chapel and quarters, with the assistance of Philip H. McDevitt, Bishop of Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. After the Dedication, a banquet was served for all involved. Wishing the Sisters to enjoy it also, Father Mathis arranged to have them served in the Sisters' community room.²⁰

During the first weeks, the Sisters were initiated into the mysteries of office filing in the Bengalese, gradually taking over the work in connection with the office routine of the magazine. Their clerical helpers were young women hired to replace the men who had served in this capacity before the advent of the Sisters. At the same time, Sisters Olga and Emeliana began a class in the history of India, along with its religions, customs, and peoples. But because of Father Mathis' frequent trips on Mission business, the class was very irregular. The class in the Bengali language, begun in November, 1924, for Sisters Olga,

Emeliana, and the Seminarians and taught by Dominic D'Rosario, a Seminarian who was a native of Bengal, fared better.²¹ Actually, as is clear both from the Foreign Mission Convent Archives and from Sisters who served at the Seminary, classes were frequently ended abruptly because of a transfer of the teacher or because the Sisters could not give adequate time to their studies and keep up with the Bengalese work. Another obstacle in the way of proper mission preparation was the frequent withdrawal of Sisters from the Mission Convent to supply help needed elsewhere. With the rapid growth of the Sisters' apostolate throughout the United States during the period of the 'twenties, it is hard to see how there could have been enough Sisters to supply the needs of the Bengalese mission, as it was envisioned by Father Mathis.

The plan for reorganizing the Bengalese offices at the beginning of the Convent's second year shows this most clearly. With only four Sisters, *one of* them in charge of food and laundry services for Convent and Seminary, Father Mathis visualized the Fathers in charge of three departments and the Sisters of three. Fathers James P. Kehoe, csc, and Francis Goodall, csc, were to be held responsible for "Activities" and "Propaganda"; Mr. Riordan was charged with the publication of the Bengalese - publicity, circulation, and subscriptions. Sister Patricia had charge of the Filing Department, with the assistance of three lay women; and Sister Olga ran the Department of Finances and Bookkeeping. According to Father Mathis' plan, this meant the "handling of all finances, bookkeeping, complaints, and all general business not otherwise provided for." For this, Sister Olga had one lay woman assistant. Sister Rose Bernard (Gehring), who was the Sister to be trained for the foundation of the Native Sisterhood that Bishop Legrand was waiting for, was in charge of the Mailing Department, which included

addressographing, graphotyping, downstairs files, wrapping, and mailing. No doubt she had some help, but none is indicated in the plan.²²

The time to be given to this work by the Sisters destined for the Mission was seen as five hours a day,²³ a figure Mather Mathis arrived at in his visits to Maryknoll Headquarters, where he observed the seventy-five Maryknoll Sisters who worked there. The Holy Cross Sisters worked their hours dutifully, even when there was no time to study Bengali and when their classes in Mission Medicine and the Treatment of Indigenous Diseases had to be cut short. In January, 1928, for instance, the Convent Archives note that the "Religion Class taught by Father Havey, csc, was discontinued."²⁴ That there were few breaks in the work weeks, two entries in the Archives give evidence. They note that at Christmas and at New Year's all were given a holiday of three days; and the offices were closed from Good Friday until Easter Monday.²⁵

Of course, the problem of the inadequate Convent did not go away. In mid-1925, Father Mathis wrote to Father O'Donnell that the heavy salaries they were paying monthly could be checked only by reaping to the full the advantages of the arrangement with the Holy Cross Sisters. They should have been ready to take the missionary postulants who were beginning to enter in significant numbers, but the crowded conditions in the Convent precluded that possibility. Hence, the separate house for the Sisters should be got under way at once.²⁶

By May, 1926,²⁷ Father Mathis was again imploring Father O'Donnell for permission to buy a small (1½ acres) property adjoining the Sisters' end of the Seminary. He foresaw nothing but trouble in the future if the building was delayed, and he gave six reasons, all of them sound. First, there was the indis-

putable need to have enough Sisters to dispense with the services of the lay employees. According to Mathis' calculations, based on payments to religious and lay workers at the Bengalese, the economic benefit from a full staff of Sisters was an overriding necessity. We have already noted the details he gave in his report to Father Donahue in 1927.²⁸ The second argument for a Convent providing for more Sisters was also economic, though in a more subtle way. He saw that the large sums being paid for secular help would discourage contributions so badly needed for mission work when visitors to the Bengalese saw the disproportionate numbers of seculars to Sisters there. He repeated his argument that the number of young women (he spoke of five hundred who had shown interest!) demanded immediate action on the building problem. Another argument was that if the Convent were built, the Bengalese offices could occupy the entire left wing of the Seminary, part of which the Sisters now occupied. More importantly, he saw that a Convent separated from the Seminary would give both Holy Cross Communities the privacy to which houses of religious men and women, especially houses of formation, were entitled and which was really commanded by the practice of the Church. "Finally," Father Mathis said, "since there is a disposition in our Congregation to defer as much as possible whatever has to do with foreign missions to the General Chapter... we respectfully ask that this request be not so deferred because it is not strictly speaking a matter for the General Chapter, since it concerns a contract made by the Provincial of the United States Province with the Sisters of the Holy Cross." With that, he dispatched his letter to Father O'Donnell, commending it to "the Little Flower and to your interest in foreign missions."

But things were not yet settled for the Foreign Mission Convent. By 1928, James Burns, CSC, had been elected Provincial, so Father Mathis began again

his pleas for more space and more privacy. But Father Burns was not inclined to do anything about it at once. He came up with several new reasons for delaying the project in his letter to Father Mathis, dated May 21, 1928:²⁹

I am inclined towards postponement of the building at present. Mother General (this was Mother Francis Clare (Counihan) has just been over and told me of her visit to Washington. She is, of course, in favor of the building whenever we can see our way to do it.

It appears to me, however, that we can get along without the convent for at least another year. There are four Sisters there now, and three more are to join them after the fifteenth of August. As I remember the house, you have room for seven Sisters. Is this so? Furthermore, a new convent will require space for the offices where the girls work. If their offices are moved over to the convent, where will be the priests' offices? Would it not be very inconvenient to have the priests' offices in the present building and the other offices in the convent building? Again, where will the Sisters do the cooking? I should not like the idea of their cooking in the convent and sending the meals over in a cart.

In addition to these considerations, there is the likelihood that the men in Bengal will feel that the convent is unnecessary at this time. Unnecessary friction with Bengal must be avoided. A final consideration which weighs with me is that the preparatory seminary (this was a foreign mission seminary) is the more important of the two projects at the present time. You had it in mind to transfer the Bengalese to the location of the preparatory seminary when it would be built. If the Bengalese were transferred there would not the convent have to go also? At any rate would it not be wiser to wait until after the preparatory seminary is built before building the convent?

But Father Mathis was not to be put off by such arguments. He reminded his Provincial that with both real estate and building at a low ebb in the Washington area, the time was right for the convent. He said, moreover, that while he too was eager for the preparatory seminary for foreign missions, he did not think that project should be allowed to interfere with the convent. He concluded his June 23, 1928,³⁰ letter to Father Burns by saying that in view of the intrinsic need for a foreign mission convent and the commitments already made to the Sisters and their clientele during the past four years in the matter

of the convent, he did not feel in any way obligated to give precedence to the seminary project.

Still, the project languished, even after Father Mathis had negotiated a gift of a large and attractive site nearby from a prominent Washington family.³¹ And after 1931, Father Mathis apparently abandoned all hope for his convent project. At least, there were no more letters on the subject.

Another obstacle in the way of the establishment of a large Mission Convent community, such as Father Mathis dreamed of, appeared even before the convent was built. It took the form of a strange hesitation on the part of Bishop Legrand of Dacca to accept the Sisters of the Holy Cross into his Diocese. As early as 1921, it will be remembered,³² Father Mathis was unable to get a clear statement from the old bishop, even though his assistant, Father Crowley wrote in the fall of 1922 of Bishop Legrand's delight at the prospect of having the Sisters. To quote briefly from a long hand-written letter to Mother Aquina: "Unless all signs conspire to deceive me, the missionaries are one with the Venerable Bishop in regarding your coming as the most hopeful event in their lives for the mission. I set this down as a matter of fact and I need not go into the reasons back of it."³³

Still, the Bishop hesitated, and it was not until after Father Mathis had spent the winter of 1922-23 in Bengal that his invitation came to the Sisters in February, 1923. He begged Mother Aquina to send the Sisters "as soon as possible."³⁴ This expression becomes very significant in the light of developments. Mother Aquina and Father O'Donnell drew up the contract which they

hoped would enable the first Holy Cross Sisters to re-enter the Bengal mission field before the end of 1925; but, as we have seen, papal permissions were slow in coming, and no one could be sent that year. As it appears from Father Mathis' report to Father Donahue in 1927,³⁵ Father Crowley, as representative of Bishop Legrand, again officially made arrangements in 1926 with Mother Francis Clare, then Superior General, for four Sisters to go to India in 1927.

But in January, 1927, the current U.S. Provincial, George Finnigan csc, felt obliged to write to Father Mathis:³⁶

I had a letter from Father Crowley and he is very grateful for the monies he has received up to the present time. All of the reasons that I have given you for going slowly with regard to the house for the Sisters of the Holy Cross have come home to me stronger than ever in a word that Father Crowley puts in his letter. I will quote for you: "I showed Bishop also your check for \$3000.00 for the convent, about which he is to correspond with you. As agreed with Father Mathis, this amount will be held by me until it is quite understood that the Bishop approves of the coming of the C.S.C. Sisters. As I say, Bishop himself is writing to you, and probably at length, on the subject. The conclusion will be that he will accept the Sisters, after he has made clear to you certain canonical points involved." I shall be glad when you have been able to formulate proper plans.

To this, an anguished Father Mathis dashed off, on January 12, a note to his Provincial, concluding it in desperation:³⁷ At least ten times I have thought that it was finally determined, and it is very embarrassing to have it brought into question again. I hope, however, that the canonical details which Doctor Crowley refers to are not such as to bring the question into the field again of the questionable."

On July 28, 1927, after the reading of the Foreign Mission Seminary Convent account, the general chapter was informed by Mother Francis Clare that Sisters Olga, Rose Bernard, Marie Estelle (O'Brien), and Rose Monica (Weber) were to

leave for India in October, with instructions to take supervision of schools in the Dacca District while holding themselves in readiness for any labor for the salvation of souls.³⁸

Relying on Father Crowley's letter of invitation, the Sisters preparing for India were vaccinated, inoculated, and examined physically for life insurance. They also commenced a six-week course in First Aid at Providence Hospital in Washington, DC. On October 6, the departure ceremony - the first of many through the ensuing years - was held at Saint Mary's, and on October 12 a second ceremony was held in Saint Patrick's Church in Washington. Two days later, they sailed from the Port of New York, waving goodbyes to Sisters Patricia and Benildes (Sister Olga's sister) and three Sisters from Saint Paul's Convent in New York City.³⁹ there was general rejoicing and relief over the departure. Apparently, all was well with the missionary venture. Father Mathis wrote on October 10 to Mother Francis Clare:⁴⁰ "I am sure the departure ceremony at Saint Mary's must have been an inspiration and a satisfaction to you and the Sisters. I am also sending you herewith a copy of Bishop Crowley's recent letter to me about the expected arrival of the Sisters in Dacca."

In the light of all the correspondence presented above, one can imagine the surprise of Mother Francis Clare to receive a letter from Bishop Legrand, reading, in part:⁴¹

I must tell you at once that I am most pleased with the good work and high spirit of your dear Sisters. They are wholly earnest in their work. It is indeed highly gratifying to see their eagerness to do more and their impatience to develop their work; this cast of mind bids fair for the future... In February, 1923 I wrote Rev. Mother Aquina a letter to show her my desire to see the Sisters from Saint Mary's come again to Bengal because I thought it would be a cause of joy to Father Moreau in Heaven to see his spiritual offsprings [sic] work side by side in this pagan country; but this call of mine was an indefinite, and not a definite one,

since I mentioned no date, no year, because I did not know how this new house could be maintained... But your Sisters were sent to me unawares. I was pleased to see them coming, but I would have preferred to receive them a little later on when an establishment would have been set up for this reception... But housing was not my main concern. The trouble lying before me was how to maintain the inmates of this establishment... Father General and Father Mathis told me that they will take this obligation into their own hands, so now I am quite at ease, but I have urged that I will be able to develop this foundation in proportion to the financial help... It is why, relying on the aforesaid pledge, I have signed the contract sent me last year.

But the first Sisters of the Holy Cross were in Bengal, to be followed by a small but steady stream of missionaries down to the present time.⁴² The Foreign Mission Seminary Convent was too small for many Sisters, and finally, in 1937, Mother Vincentia (Fannon), then Superior General, informed Father Burns that the Congregation could no longer furnish Sisters for work in connection with the Foreign Mission Seminary or the offices of the Bengalese. This meant the closing of the Foreign Mission Seminary Convent of Holy Cross in June, 1937.⁴³

NOTES

1. Minutes of the meetings of the general council, Congregational Archives of the Sisters of the Holy Cross, Notre Dame, August 6, 1921. Hereafter C.M. (Council Minutes).

2. Latin letter from Giacomo Filipo, Cardinal Franzoni to Moreau. Rome, June 12, 1852:

Although we have already informed you that the desire of the Most Holy Father and of the Sacred Congregation was that you would not refuse the evangelical workers requested by Bishop Thomas Oliffe (Ordinary of Bengal)...we recommend you to furnish him in so far as you can...At the same time it is fitting that you should know that the prompt expedition of these missionaries will tend greatly to the obtaining for your Society the approbation of the Holy See which you so ardently solicit.

English translation quoted in Raymond Clancy, csc. A Brief History of the Church in Bengal 1853 - 1953 (Washington C.D.: Holy Cross Foreign Mission Society, 1953) Vol. 1, p.27. Hereafter Clancy.

3. Father Louis Etienne Barroux, csc, gives details of the tragedies that befell Holy Cross in Bengal in 1855. Clancy Vol. 1, pp. 38-9. The American Sisters in the first group included Sr. Mary of St. Victor, who stayed in Calcutta when the CSC's were recalled and joined the Sisters of Loretto as a lay sister, where she was called Sister Mary Frances; Sr. Mary of Bethlehem, who returned to St. Mary's in late 1855; Sr. Mary des Victoires, who was drowned; Sr. Mary of the Holy Angels (Catherine Muldoon), who arrived in 1860 but was recalled in 1862 because of ill health, made her profession in LeMans, returned to the United States and joined her sisters in the Civil War nursing project. She died in 1871, at the ripe old age of 31!

4. The Sisters sent to Bengal were:

Sister Mariana (Mary Gookin) 1889-96
 Sister M. Bridget (Sarah Hall) 1889-1895
 Sister M. Paula of the Incarnation (Mary Tobin) 1889-96
 Sister M. Adolphine (Nora Duggan) 1889-96
 Sister M. Patientia (Elizabeth Ludwig) 1889-94
 Sister M. Fidelis (Mary Dolan) 1889-92. Died in Akyab.
 Sister M. Euphrasia (Ann Griffin) 1889-96
 Sister M. Columba (Mary Clancy) 1889-96
 Sister M. Paul of the Cross (Anastasia Ryan) 1889-90 Died in Akyab.
 Sister M. Blanche (Mary Ann Reardon) 1889-95

Congregational Archives of the Sisters of the Holy Cross. Hereafter C.A. (Congregational Archives) Box: Holy Cross in India 1852-76, 1889-96, 1927 -

5. C.M. July 9, 1889, p. 449; August 1, 1889, p. 449

6. Copy of a letter in C.A. Box: Holy Cross in India 1852-76, 1889-96 1927 - Correspondence re Saint Annes's Convent and School, Akyab.

7. The Bengalese had been founded in 1919, and the Holy Cross General Chapter of 1920 gave it a great push forward by its commendation. Clancy, Vol 1, pp. 173 and 259.

8. Donahue from Mathis April 29, 1927. In Notre Dame Provincial Archives. Hereafter N.D.P.A. Mathis Papers.

9. C.M. August 3, 1921, p. 60.

10. O'Donnell from Mathis September 4, 1921, N.D.P.A. O'Donnell Papers.

11. Mother Aquina from Crowley September 9, 1922. C.A. Box: Foreign Mission Obsolete Houses.

12. Mother Aquina from Legrand, Dacca, February 17, 1923. Quoted in Donahue from Mathis, April 29, 1927. N.D.P.A. Mathis Papers.

13. C.M. February 22, 1924.

14. Mathis from Mother Aquina, February 23, 1924. N.D.P.A. Mathis Papers.

15. Mother Aquina from Chiavon, August 22, 1925. Foreign Mission Box, C.A.

16. O'Donnell from Mathis, September 10, 1922. N.D.P.A. Mathis Papers.

17. Personal interview with Sister Paulette (Burke), csc, who spent 1933-34 in the Foreign Mission Seminary Convent. The convent had remained unchanged from its foundation in 1924.

18. Mother Aquina from Mathis, August 9, 1924. C.A. Box: Holy Cross in India.

19. Foreign Mission Seminary Convent Archives. Hereafter F.M.S.C.A. Entry for September 15, 1924.

20. *Ibid.*, September 23, 1924.

21. *Ibid.*, October, 1924; November, 1924.

22. "Reorganization of Bengalese Offices" (Fall, 1925) N.D.P.A. Mathis Papers.

23. O'Donnell from Mathis, April 28, 1924. N.D.P.A. O'Donnell Papers.

24. F.M.S.C.A. October, 1928.

25. *Ibid.*, December 23, 1927; April 5, 1928.

26. O'Donnell from Mathis, May 9, 1925. N.D.P.A. O'Donnell Papers.

27. *Ibid.*, May 11, 1926.

28. Cf. p. 4 above.

29. Mathis from Burns, May 21, 1928. N.D.P.A. Mathis Papers.
30. Burns from Mathis, June 23, 1928. N.D.P.A. Burns Papers.
31. Burns from Mathis, No date. N.D.P.A. Burns Papers.
32. Cf. page 5 above.
33. Mother Aquina from Crowley, September 12, 1922. C.A. Box: Holy Cross in India.
34. Mother Aquina from Legrand, February 2, 1923. C.A. Box: Holy Cross in India.
35. Donahue from Mathis, April 29, 1927. N.D.P.A. Mathis Papers.
36. Mathis from George Finnigan, January 27, 1927. N.D.P.A. Finnigan Papers.
37. Finnigan from Mathis, January 12, 1927. N.D.P.A. Finnigan Papers.
38. Minutes of the meetings of the general chapter. C.A. July 28, 1927.
39. FMSCA. Entries from August 15 - October 4, 1927. C.A.
40. Mother Francis Clare from Mathis, October 10, 1927. N.D.P.A. Mathis Papers.
41. Francis Clare from Legrand, April 4, 1929. C.A. Box: Holy Cross in India.
42. The following Sisters of the Holy Cross have served in Bengal (now Bangladesh):

1.	Sister Marie Estelle O'Brien	1927-1959
2.	" Olga Hughes	1927-1935
3.	" Rose Bernard Gehring	1927-1938
4.	" Rose Monica Weber	1927-1930, 1939-1950
5.	" Jarlath Stanton	1929-1931
6.	" Charlita Enright	1930-1946
7.	" Bonavita Cannon	1932-1934
8.	" Helen Xavier Manes	1932-1935, 1938-1939
9.	" Aloise Smith	1933-1946, 1947-1958
10.	" Marie Vianney Stonestreet	1933-1960
11.	" Augustine Marie White	1935-1971
12.	" Francelia Magee	1935-1985
13.	" Canisius Minihan	1939-1947
14.	" Joan of Arc Spates	1946-1955, 1975
15.	" Julia Schaapvold	1949-1952
16.	" Patricia Burke	1949-1957
17.	" Rose Bernard Tarleton	1950-1956, 1958-1963, 1979-
18.	" Carmen Davy	1953-1970
19.	" Francis Bernard O'Connor	1953-1959, 1961-1973
20.	" Margaret Shield	1954-

21.	Sister Timothea Kingston	1954-1958
22.	" Barbara Jean Fehr	1956-1971
23.	" Bruno Biero	1958-1970, 1971-1983
24.	" Maria Gracia Wemhoff	1958-1970
25.	" Perpetua Meyer	1958-1971, 1972-
26.	" Joann Havelka	1959-
27.	" Celeste Miller	1960-1968
28.	" Gloria Valdovinos	1962-1971
29.	" Patricia Mary Murphy	1962-1971
30.	" Joseph Mary Hoess	1963-1971, 1972-
31.	" Patricia Gantz	1963-1967
32.	" Sarita Pena	1963-1969
33.	" Lenora Donnelly	1964-
34.	" Olivia Salazar	1965-1974, 1975-
35.	" James Therese Coursey	1966-1971, 1972-1985
36.	" Marian Teresa Gomes	1966-1975, 1977-
37.	" Anna Rose Markovich	1967-1971
38.	" Mary Carol Quinn	1968-1971
39.	" Sharon O'Connor	1968-1969
40.	" Ellen Mary Taylor	1975-1978, 1985-
41.	" Marie Daniel Bush	1975-1983
42.	" Geralda Lamping	1978-1982
43.	" Pauline Gomes	1979-
44.	" Philomena Quiah	1979-
45.	" Ruth Barbara Holthouser	1979-
46.	" Alma Mary Anderson	1980-1985
47.	" Hashi Margaret Pereira	1980-
47.	" Pushpa Teresa Gomes	1980-1986

Only the first twelve of these Sisters ever spent any time at the Foreign Mission Seminary Convent.