

2004-3

Laying Foundations, Building Relationships
in the Diocese of Vincennes

Architects and Builders: Hailandiere, Guerin and Sorin

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23rd Annual Holy Cross History Conference
Evansville, Indiana\
June 10-13, 2004

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Laying Foundations - Bishop Celestine de la Hailandiere

"No one, before or since, has assembled for the diocese the equivalent in priests, religious orders, skilled artisans, housekeepers, equipment, vestments, books, and money" ¹

Thus, Sister Mary Boromeo Brown summed up the accomplishments of Bishop Celestine de la Hailandiere. It was his vision, zeal and tireless efforts that brought about the establishment of the Holy Cross and Sisters of Providence congregations in the Vincennes diocese. Perhaps Hailandiere's greatest gift and legacy to the diocese is the recruitment of Blessed Mother Theodore Guerin, SP and Father Edward Sorin, CSC, both of whom founded institutions of learning that still endure today.

When Hailandiere was consecrated bishop in 1839, he inherited a vast, poor diocese in the wilderness of Indiana and the eastern portion of Illinois. According to Blanchard, there were at that time 24 priests and 23 churches.² When Hailandiere returned to Vincennes after his consecration, he brought with him five German-speaking priests and seminarians from Alsace and numerous priests and seminarians from Brittany. In addition to Father Edward Sorin and Holy Cross Brothers, he also recruited members of the Eudist congregation for the college and seminary at Vincennes. We learn from Mother Theodore's account of the diocesan synod in 1844 that 25 priests were present; eleven priests were unable to attend.³ A total of 36 priests were serving in the diocese at that time.

Hailandiere's greatest gift to Mother Theodore and our congregation was Sister St. Francis Xavier Le Fer de la Motte. It was Monsignor Hailandiere who, when recruiting in France, inflamed her missionary zeal with his passionate and eloquent pleas for the missions. She sought entrance into the French community at Ruille, Brittany, in 1839 with the understanding she

¹ Brown, Sister Mary Borromeo, History of the Sisters of Providence of Saint Mary-of-the-Woods, Vol. 1 1949, 386

² Blanchard, Charles, The Catholic Church in Indiana, Vol. I., 1898, 59

³ Guerin, Mother Theodore, Third Journal, SMWA

would be sent to the Vincennes diocese. Mother Theodore considered Sister St. Francis her spiritual bulwark, loyal confidante and candid councilor, the *"soul of our congregation."*⁴ Mother Mary Lecor, superior general of the French Sisters of Providence in Ruille, had considered Mother Theodore and Sister St. Francis to be the two strongest pillars of the infant community.

Hailandiere encouraged other young women to join the infant congregation at Saint Mary's. There were four awaiting Mother Theodore when she and her five companions arrived on October 22, 1840 and others would follow at his direction. These young women would all play an important role in the foundation of the educational mission of the Vincennes diocese.

Hailandiere not only added to the number of missionaries, but he also astutely purchased land to build churches, seminaries and orphan asylums. Parishes, missions and stations were established, bringing the total to 50 in 1849 to serve about 30,000 Catholics.⁵ Land was purchased at other locations with a view to changing the site of the See when he perceived Vincennes would not grow, as would other cities in Indiana.

At Saint Mary-of-the-Woods Bishop Brute had purchased for a church in 1837 one acre of land from Joseph Thralls for \$15.00. Three years later Bishop Hailandiere purchased 77 more acres of land, animals and equipment from Joseph Thralls at a cost of \$1823, and Mother Theodore gave the last of their money for Thralls' house. It was on this land that Hailandiere began the building projects which included the chaplain's residence, the academy, additions to the Thralls' house and improvements as needed.

Among Bishop Hailandiere's accomplishments which laid the foundation of the Vincennes diocese was the completion of the cathedral which Mother Theodore described in her Journal when she first arrived in Vincennes in 1840. *"Ciel! What a Cathedral! Our barn at Soulaines is better ornamented and more neatly kept. I could not resist this last shock and wept bitterly."*⁶ When in 1844 Bishop Hailandiere held the first diocesan synod, Mother Theodore saw a different cathedral. Alerding tells us that by then *"... all was in order, and in that little village of Vincennes...cathedral, house, grounds, all connected with the church, was transformed from the rudeness and roughness attending the almost frontier place, into a thing of beauty and or-*

⁴ Guerin, Mother Theodore, letter February 8, 1856, SMWA

⁵ Blanchard, Charles, op. cit. 75

⁶ Guerin, Mother Theodore, First Journal, SMWA

*der...Strangers ...were astonished...to find the tasty, elegant completeness of all over which his influence and care extended."*⁷

It was at Hailandiere's invitation that skilled artisans, notably Jean Marie Marcile, architect and builder, James Roquet, builder, and Prosper Eluere, an accomplished ironworker, came from France to construct, not only the Cathedral but also the buildings at Saint Mary's including additions to the convent and the Academy. These artisans left their mark on buildings at various sites in the diocese, but Bishop Hailandiere would always look upon Saint Mary's particularly with pride. Sister St. Francis Xavier Le Fer wrote in her Annals *"Bishop de la Hailandiere liked to come to Saint Mary-of-the-Woods, for this spot was his place of predilection, the object of his dearest affection."*⁸ We would do well to remember Sister Mary Theodosia Mug's tribute to Bishop Hailandiere: *"That he (Hailandiere) encountered many difficulties and hardships in the administration of his diocese is unquestionable, that he made immense sacrifices for it is also beyond doubt and claims grateful recognition."*⁹

Laying Foundations - Mother Theodore Guerin, SP

*"Well, my daughters, ours is a preparation for the generations that will succeed us and eminent good will be done this way by us. You may not live to see it, but you will have sown the seed, and your sisters will come to reap what will have been sown."*¹⁰

When in 1839 Hailandiere, as Bishop Brute's vicar, approached Mother Mary Lecor, superior general of the Sisters of Providence in Ruille, Brittany, France, she responded that there was only one sister capable of establishing a foundation in America. Her selection of Sister St. Theodore Guerin proved Mother Mary to be an astute, perceptive administrator who could recognize the gifts and talents, strengths and weaknesses of the sisters and place them where they would be most valuable and successful. History certainly proved this to be true.

⁷ Alerding, H., A History of the Catholic Church in the Diocese of Vincennes, 1883, 174-175

⁸ LeFer, Sister Saint Francis Xavier, Annals, SMW Archives

⁹ Mug, Sister Mary Theodosia, Life of Mother Theodore Guerin, 1904, 280

¹⁰ Guerin, Mother Theodore, Letter to Sister Basilide Seneschal, April 3, 1854, SMWA

Sister St. Theodore was told she did not have to accept this mission, but after consultation, prayer and reflection on the Ruille Constitutions, she saw this as God's Will for her. She accepted. Mother Mary and her council appointed two other experienced local superiors, Sisters St. Vincent Gage and St. Dominique Chatel, and two novices who had joined the community expressly for the Vincennes mission. Sister St. Theodore assumed leadership early on. For the American foundation, she replaced Sister St. Dominique, because of her perceived frail health, with Sister Basilide Seneschal and accepted Sister Olympiade Boyer, a novice whom Mother Mary had intended to refuse the profession of vows. Both actions were not pleasing to Mother Mary, and several years later Mother Theodore would write to Bishop Bouvier that she blamed herself for the difficult circumstances she faced because she refused to accept the appointment of Sister St. Dominique.¹¹

Mother Theodore's heart sank when she first saw the uncultivated wilderness chosen for the site of their motherhouse and academy. Hidden in the forest was the two-room frame house of Joseph and Sarah Thralls who with their eight children offered hospitality. The Thralls home would now house twenty people: the Thralls family of ten, the six missionaries from France and the four postulants who had been awaiting their arrival. This arrangement lasted about a month when the Thralls moved and Mother Theodore purchased the house. From this humble beginning she and her sisters established their motherhouse, novitiate, academy and free village school.

In a short time adjustments were made. The community's first concern was a chapel which was set up by closing in the porch. Rapid growth required other changes. Two wings were added to the house and two wings to the academy. By the early 1850s the original convent was no longer sufficient to accommodate the growing community. Construction on a brick convent began in 1852 on the site of Providence Hall, the present convent. Completed in 1853, this convent accommodated the sisters, novices and postulants, and, at times, academy students when they were too numerous to be housed in the academy.

The mission flourished not only at Saint Mary's, but also beyond the motherhouse. In 1855 as Mother Theodore's health failed her, she summed up the fifteen years of the Sisters of Providence since their arrival on October 22, 1840:

¹¹ Guerin, Mother Theodore, Letter to Bishop Bouvier, June 24, 1844

"Yes, my dear daughters, hope in God, and you will not be confounded. See what He has already done for you. Fifteen years ago today, October 22, 1840, six sisters arrived in this forest, at that time so savage; they were strangers to the country, to the manners and customs, to the ways of America; they did not know one word of English. Now we are a community composed of sixty; here at Saint Mary's we are eighteen sisters wearing the religious habit and twenty postulants ardently desiring to be clothed in it.

More than twelve hundred children receive religious instructions in our twelve houses of education which already bear abundant fruit. What good remains for them to do, if they are faithful to their holy vocation!"¹²

The account reads like a testament to her sisters as, recognizing her fragile health, Mother Theodore closed with the following words:

"Continue to love one another. Remain attached as you are now and as you have been to your superiors, to your Mother, to your loving God. If it is thus, you will be happy in time and eternity. I promise it to you from the side of God. Your devoted Mother in Jesus Christ, Our Lord. Sister St. Theodore. Pray for the repose of her soul."¹³

Laying Foundations - Edward Sorin, CSC

Those present know better than I about the foundations laid by Edward Sorin, CSC, for the Holy Cross congregation in Indiana. From the humble beginning at St. Peter's to the establishment of Notre Dame University, Sorin bequeathed a legacy which went far beyond the borders of the Vincennes diocese. A congregation of two societies, priests and brothers, and congregations of women religious now carry on the ministries of the early foundation throughout the United States and beyond. It is not my intent to give members of the Holy Cross History Association the history of Holy Cross, but rather to address the relationship that existed between Sorin and Mother Theodore and the early Sisters of Providence.

¹² Guerin, Mother Theodore Financial Ledger, 1855

¹³ *ibid.*

Is the expression "right relationship" in your vocabulary today? The Sisters of Providence have a goal related to this that we take very seriously. However, there are times when we poke fun at ourselves so I chuckled when I read the comic strip, "Frank and Ernest." Frank says to Ernest, "Now that we've invented language, let's talk about our relationship." So, let us turn from a brief review of our foundations to relationships.

Building Relationships - Sorin and Guerin

*"You know that your dear community has the same place in my affection as our own and that I am ready now and at any time to give you all the proofs that you could desire."*¹⁴

We learn from Sister Mary Borromeo Brown, SP, that *"During all the early years, the links of the Community of Saint Mary-of-the-Woods with the celebrated founder of Notre Dame University were very strong. Their difficulties and sorrows were similar. ... He (Sorin) was at Saint Mary's a number of times and also visited the mission schools when he was in their vicinity. Letters of condolence upon the sorrows and of congratulations upon the successes of the two establishments of Notre Dame du Lac and Saint Mary-of-the-Woods were also exchanged, and Father Sorin expressed more than once, both viva voce and in writing, his deep interest in the daughters of Mother Theodore and their work."*¹⁵

Sister St. Francis Xavier Le Fer was the first Sister of Providence Sorin met. It was in 1841 when they traveled by stage to Havre and sailed to America on the same ship, the *Iowa*. Sister St. Francis had entered the Sisters of Providence at Ruille in 1839 with the expressed intention to join the new community in Vincennes. She related during her voyage, *"Father Sorin is very kind, and we shall have Mass on board."*¹⁶ Later she told her sister Cecile that they had Mass six times and that they had *"very poor ornaments; our chalice is copper, but the priest is gold."*¹⁷

In one of his letters to Mother Theodore, Sorin thanked for her gift of a wagon and yoke of oxen. In other letters to her he expressed sympathy upon hearing of the fire of October 2, 1842 which destroyed the barn containing

¹⁴ Sorin, Edward, letter to Mother Theodore Guerin, April 30, 1845, SMWA

¹⁵ Brown, op.cit. p. 753

¹⁶ Lefer, Sister St. Francis, letter to her father, August 8, 1841, SMWA

¹⁷ Lefer, Sister St. Francis, letter to Cecile LeFer, August 28, 1841, SMWA

the community's wheat and hay as well as farm implements; he returned letters of Samuel Byerly, a mutual friend from New York and asked for an interview with her when she went to Fort Wayne; he offered to have the 1835 French SP Constitutions printed in English as he was going to have the Holy Cross Constitutions printed. Sorin often referred to his affection for her and assured the community of his prayerful remembrances.

An event that brought about some misunderstanding between Sorin and the Sisters of Providence concerned a so-called "*accusation*" of Sister St. Francis Xavier. She wrote to Sorin that she thought her community had reason to complain of his conduct if, as they had heard, that he had given his sisters their name and habit and named his academy Saint Mary's. She goes on to say: *"Is that true, Father? I do not think, my good Father, that you have forgotten the seventh commandment, 'The goods of another you shall not take' and still less that you wish to forget the following admonition, 'nor keep them without their knowledge.' ... And after all to gain souls to Jesus Crucified, could your Sisters combat under a more beautiful or more trustworthy banner than that of Holy Cross?"* Sister St. Francis continues in her characteristic style, beautifully written but getting her point across and even promising to pray for his conversion! She concludes her letter writing, *"Perhaps I accuse you unjustly. If so tell me, and I will acknowledge that I was wrong to think even for a moment that you had abandoned the path of simplicity and uprightness. And be assured that I will always be in our Lord, your sincere and devoted Sister under all circumstances and your humble servant."*¹⁸

Sorin did not respond to her letter but referred to the "*terrible accusation*" in a letter to Mother Theodore a year later when he assured her that their sisters' habit had not been changed. As late as June 1854, matters had not changed, however. Mother Theodore wrote to Mother Mary Lecor in Ruille, *"Mr. Sorin has our name, our prospectus, the name even of our academy. He has named his boarding school St. Mary's Academy just like ours. ... This good Mr Sorin is truly a strange person."*¹⁹

Sister St. Francis sent another letter to Father Sorin during Mother Theodore's absence. She admonished him for sending his brothers to the gold fields in California, reminding him of his early ideals and of the impor-

¹⁸ Original in NDUA

¹⁹ Guerin, Mother Theodore, letter to Mother Mary Lecor, June 18, 1854, SMWA

tance of his influence and position. When Mother Theodore heard about this, she was appalled and ordered Sister St. Francis to apologize. This she did, no doubt, with her usual charming humility.

Notwithstanding these concerns, when Sorin wanted to send Mother Mary Cenacle to Fort Wayne for medical care, he requested of Mother Theodore the hospitality of her sisters at their Academy, St. Augustine's. This was gladly and graciously given for the superior and her companion, Sister Assumption. They arrived in February 1848 and were cared for devotedly until Mother Mary Cenacle's death April 28 of that year. A short time later, when Mother Theodore visited St. Augustine's, Sorin asked her to visit Notre Dame and Bertrand to offer support to the grieving sisters. During the week's visit, Mother Theodore noted the growth of the communities and the improvement of their foundations. She was happy to meet friends she had known in Ruille, Brother Vincent and one of the sisters who had ministered as a domestic for Father Dujarie.

While at Notre Dame, Mother Theodore saw at first hand the situation of the community which Sorin governed "*almost independently of diocesan or congregational superiors.*"²⁰ Several sisters confided in her, seeing their community to be in an anomalous position. They believed this to be harmful from a spiritual and temporal point of view and thus feared for their future. Added to this was their grief at the loss of their superior general. We see from Sorin's letter of June 19, 1848 to Mother Theodore that she must have acknowledged listening to their confidences and apologized for it. He assured her that she did not need to apologize and added, "*It is rather I who ought to beg, not so much your kindness as your good prayers and intercession before God, that He would cause to disappear little by little all that you have seen of misery, imperfections, etc. among us. I am not pained in the least that you have this knowledge; you will only pray more earnestly for us.*"²¹

After Sorin gave Mother Theodore gifts²² of appreciation, he asked her to remain for some time at South Bend to assist the community and to direct the young novice who replaced Mother Cenacle. Mother Theodore regretted

²⁰ Schroeder, Sister M. Carol, *The Catholic Church in the Diocese of Vincennes*, Dissertation, Catholic University, 1946, p. 137

²¹ Sorin, Edward, letter to Mother Theodore Guerin, June 19, 1848, SMWA

²² Statue of the Blessed Mother and the works of St. Theresa

having to refuse. Sorin then requested she assign one of her sisters *"to form his little band to the religious life."*²³ When Mother Theodore regretfully refused once again, he took it upon himself to write to Sister St. Vincent Ferrer, superior at Madison. *"We have at present 26 Sisters and 5 postulants, 3 of whom arrived yesterday. All have more or less need of being formed. In brief, my good Sister, if obedience permits, come to me without pretension and without fear. We will bless God together. Dear Mr. Benoit wishes to write you a few lines himself; I hope he will not turn you from the way of God."*²⁴

Sister St. Vincent was not flattered but rather puzzled and hurt, thinking that Mother Theodore had or would sanction this. She sent the Sorin and Benoit letters to Mother Theodore and told her, *"(I) thanked Mr. Sorin for his generous offer. I assured him that I would never leave Saint Mary-of-the-Woods for any reason whatsoever without your pronounced advice and that of our good Father Corbe (chaplain); and that, if, in your opinion, I would be in a position to do more good by transferring to his house, I told him that I would rather leave Indiana to return to Ruille."*²⁵

While Mother Theodore had only 16 years to establish the works of the Sisters of Providence in Indiana, Father Sorin was given many years. Yet one powerful force was at work motivating both leaders and builders of the two congregations - a fervent devotion to Mary, the Mother of God. That devotion remains strong today among Holy Cross religious and Sisters of Providence and pervades their spirituality and relationships.

Building Relationships - Hailandiere and Guerin

*"Bishop de la Hailandiere is always interested in us, never ceasing to give us proofs of it. He is having considerable work done to our house, too much in fact for his resources. He exhausts himself and imposes privations upon himself for us."*²⁶

You will seldom read or hear that quote of Mother Theodore concerning Bishop Hailandiere. Nor this one: *"Yet I am not satisfied. I should like to pay our debts before doing things that are not necessary. On several other points*

²³ Diary, Important Events, 1848, SMWA

²⁴ Sorin, Edward, letter to Mother Theodore Guerin, June 1, 1848 SMWA

²⁵ Gage, Sister St. Vincent Ferrer, letter to Mother Theodore Guerin, June 10, 1848 SMWA

²⁶ Guerin, Mother Theodore, letter to Bishop Bouvier, August 22, 1842, SMWA

*too I am not of his opinion; for instance, as to the reception of subjects, the admission to the Habit and even to the vows and the acceptance of establishments. I am afraid of proceeding too quickly and the Bishop says that in this country nothing is done slowly. However, His Lordship is satisfied with expressing his opinion without making it a law; hence, so far, we have received only the subjects that have suited us, and he has allowed us to send away two postulants chosen by himself before our arrival. As to the first, he allowed us to act but for the second he assisted us with his authority."*²⁷

This is an indication of the relationship between Mother Theodore and Bishop Hailandiere in the early years. However, difficulties would come, stemming from the personalities and different views of the foundress and the bishop.

Bishop Hailandiere was a Breton from Combours, Brittany. Alerding describes him as one who possessed a pleasing appearance and radiated a majestic presence. Other historians have noted that he was an outstanding student in his youth and manifested during his study of law a brilliant mind and persuasive eloquence, able to argue all sides of an issue. Bishop Hailandiere was also viewed as far-sighted with great vision, prophetic discrimination, and energy. Alerding points out that he did not delegate but did everything himself. I think of Hailandiere as a "man of contradictions" and a perfectionist. I recall a definition of a perfectionist which I read years ago. It might apply to the Bishop: *"A perfectionist is one who takes pains - and gives them to others."*²⁸

While Hailandiere was said to have a winning smile, his own relative, Father Ernest Audran, admitted that Hailandiere's frown could make everyone quail. Sister St. Francis Le Fer said he was like an angel on the altar and that she wished he would always stay there! She also noted that he could use insidious charm to win his point of view. Mother Theodore described him as having an exterior *"of icy coldness"* like others of *"the same northern temperature."*²⁹ (She lamented so many of the French missionaries lost their warmth and vivacity to assume the cold temperament of the Americans.)

Mother Theodore was a Breton also, so she possessed some of the same characteristics as Hailandiere. She too was a strong individual, possessing

²⁷ *ibid.*

²⁸ Anon.

²⁹ Guerin, Mother Theodore, letter to A. M. Lottin, May 25, 1841, SMWA

determination, vision, a brilliant mind and executive ability. However, she also possessed a friendly, outgoing personality which attracted many people from all walks of life. She was aware she had an affectionate heart. This caused her great suffering when she experienced the disapproval of Mother Mary Lecor and of Bishop Hailandiere. Both Mother Theodore and Hailandiere, like other Bretons, were considered strong willed and stubborn, no doubt, traits needed by both to accomplish their mission during those early years of hardship. In sharing the heritage of the Breton race, both Hailandiere and Mother Theodore were gifted with a deep faith influenced by the French spirituality of the times.

When one considers the sufferings of Mother Theodore and the Bishop, one must view all the challenges they encountered: barriers of language, customs and culture; prejudice towards Catholics, religious and women; lack of communication with France; poverty; ill health; death of the sisters. This background, inadequate as it is, helps to set the context for the difficulties Mother Theodore and Hailandiere faced in carrying out their role in God's providential plan for the Vincennes diocese.

Some historians, when addressing the encounters that the bishop and our foundress faced, have referred to the following quote of Mother Theodore: *"It is astonishing that this remote solitude has been chosen for a novitiate and especially for an academy. All appearances are against it."*³⁰ However, contrary to the belief of some, Mother Theodore did not wish to pursue at that time a better location, originally chosen by Bishop Brute. The quote continues as follows: *"I have given my opinion frankly to the Bishop, to Father Buteux (the chaplain) and, in fine, to all who have any interest in the success of our work. All have given reasons that are not entirely satisfactory; yet I dare not disregard them. The spirit of this country is so different from ours that one ought to be acquainted with it before condemning those who know more about it than we do; so I await the issue before passing judgment in a positive manner. If we cannot do any good here, you know our agreement, we will return to our own country."*³¹

Other incidents often mentioned in regard to the difficulties experienced by Mother Theodore include the following actions taken by Bishop Hailandiere: (1) withdrawing the two sisters from St. Francisville, Illinois; (2) forming

³⁰ Guerin, Mother Theodore, First Journal of Travel, SMWA

³¹ *ibid.*

two new establishments; (3) giving the habit to two postulants; (4) admitting two novices to vows; (5) and receiving three sisters from another Community. The timing of these actions is important to note. They were performed in 1843 to 1844 during the eleven months that Mother Theodore was absent, having gone to France to solicit funds and to clarify her relationship with the Ruille congregation and with Bishop Hailandiere. The bishop's view was that life had to go on; the retreat should be held, the yearly reception of habit and profession of vows should take place, assignments had to be made. The latter decision was particularly necessary in the case of St. Francisville because Chicago had been established as a separate diocese. The Bishop wanted to recall to the Vincennes diocese all the priests and sisters ministering in the Illinois region.

While replacing Mother Theodore, Sister St. Francis wrote in the Annals that the bishop did ask Father Corbe, the chaplain at Saint Mary's, to obtain the sisters' opinion about accepting the Sisters of Charity of Nazareth who were withdrawing from Vincennes, about accepting that mission for their own and giving him the choice of which Sisters of Providence to send there. Sister St. Francis was not in agreement with accepting sisters from another community, stating that if they were good "*subjects*," she would be sorry to take them away just as she would not want the Sisters of Charity to take the Sisters of Providence. As to "*letting the Bishop name the Sisters for the establishment*," she responded that "*she would do so only when commanded*."³²

What then were the major issues of disagreement between Mother Theodore and Bishop Hailandiere which caused the sisters to refer to the years of 1841 to 1847 as "The Years of Sorrow?" There were two: approval of their Rule and the ownership of the land. Bishop Hailandiere believed accommodations had to be made for the American culture and church. Mother Theodore wanted to adhere to the French Rule as much as possible as this was the Rule the French Sisters vowed to obey but granted the need for some adjustments. At this time the French community at Ruille was still a diocesan congregation. One can see that Bishop Hailandiere did not want to approve a Rule that stated very clearly that the congregation was a society under the protection of the rule and authority of the Bishop of LeMans. Hailandiere viewed the Sisters of Providence in his diocese as a diocesan congregation as did succeeding bishops and objected to the ongoing communication between the American community and the French community and Bishop Bouvier. Hai-

³² Lefer, Sister Saint Francis Xavier, Annals, SMWA

landiere resented that Mother Theodore and the other sisters confided in and sought advice from France.

In regard to ownership of the property, the bishop and Mother Theodore were at an impasse. Mother Theodore did not want to build on land that was not theirs; the Bishop did not want to cede the property to them until he had been assured that they would remain in his diocese. He suspected, with good reason, that the Sisters might relocate to Detroit, New Orleans or Chicago. It seems, lacking trust in one another, both were leaving their options open.

These two issues were resolved during the brief time that Bishop Bazin headed the Vincennes diocese. The sisters' relationship with him and with St. Palais can be deduced from the name given by our sisters to the years 1848 to 1856 - "The Years of Peace."

I do not mean to minimize the suffering Mother Theodore experienced in her relationships with Bishop Hailandiere. She suffered from his demands which she honestly did not believe she could obey; she suffered from his unreasonableness in the administration of the congregation; she suffered from his verbal attacks during his interviews with her; she suffered from the anxiety of never knowing when or how she would displease him. Bishop Hailandiere, in turn, was suffering from his inability to relate to Mother Theodore and to others; from his lack of resources to carry out his vision; from his own disposition and temperament which caused him emotional stress and even depression.

In my humble opinion, to testify to Mother Theodore's holiness, we do not need to paint Bishop Hailandiere to be more difficult than he was. I believe that Mother Theodore achieved sanctity, not by being perfect, faultless and without weaknesses, but rather, through a life of prayer and contemplation, living her faith courageously, hoping in God's Providence when all seemed hopeless and loving God fervently and others in God compassionately.

So, how shall we remember Bishop Hailandiere? I like to recall the words of Sister St. Francis which she left us in her Annals: *(Bishop Hailandiere) would never have suffered so much; he would never have caused us to suffer so much had he loved us less. ... As he understood his rights as Bishop and Superior in a manner contrary to the spirit of our Rules, he regarded our opposition to his views as contempt of episcopal authority, an act of the blackest ingratitude. It is necessary that this be well understood; for there*

*are in the history of our Congregation facts which might be imputed to His Lordship as acts of tyranny, and which will be explained with less difficulty when one reflects that he considered as criminal disobedience what we look upon as sacred obligations."*³³

Sister Mary Borromeo notes that in the "annals of God" the years of the community's relations with Hailandiere were the *"means of its greatest blessings, the refining and perfecting of Mother Theodore's sanctity, the foundation and consolidation of the Sisters of Providence in America, their perfect union and charity cemented by suffering and their integration into the development of the Church in Indiana."*³⁴

The superior general of Ruille, Mother Mary Lecor, wrote to Mother Theodore: *"Do you wish to know, Sister Theodore, of what utility these measures have been to your little Congregation? They have served more than peace and prosperity to establish it on a solid foundation by showing its members the necessity and efficacy of trials borne with courage in a spirit of faith. Prayer, union and love of the cross will then be, as it were, the three principal foundation stones of this edifice erected to the greater glory of God."*³⁵

Mother Theodore herself acknowledged to Bishop Bouvier of LeMans that *"the tribulations which have afflicted our community have produced very precious fruits. Besides the admirable union that exists between persons of different nationalities, of dispositions so opposite, some well informed, others without education, there is also among the sisters a great spirit of faith, piety and a confidence in God which goes as far, I believe, as it can go."*³⁶

Sister Mary Theodosia wrote that there is little to be found in Mother Theodore's *Journals and Letters* in regard to the difficulties with the Bishop. *"The reputation of another was involved here, and she was content to let time bring her vindication."*³⁷ And indeed Mother Theodore was vindicated! Pope John Paul II declared her Venerable July 11, 1992 and Blessed on October 25, 1998.

³³ *ibid.*

³⁴ Brown, *op. cit.*

³⁵ Lecor, Mother Mary, letter January 29, 1848, SMWA

³⁶ Guerin, Mother Theodore, letter December 4, 1847 SMWA

³⁷ Mug, Sister Mary Theodosia, *Journals and Letters of Mother Theodore Guerin*, SMW, IN 1942, xi